

Albany Pro Musica presents
Emergent Universe Oratorio

COMPOSER Sam Guarnaccia

SET DESIGN **Design & Paintings:** Cameron Davis | **Animation:** William Tipper

LIBRETTISTS Sam Guarnaccia, Paula Guarnaccia, Cameron Davis, John Cimino

COMPOSER'S STATEMENT

The Emergent Universe Oratorio was born from a desire to create a profound experience of belonging to and within our *Earth* and *Universe* home. A musical and poetic composition for chorus, orchestra, and orator, it tells the Great Story of our vast evolving Universe, the new scientific cosmology of our cosmic birth, to galaxies, stars, Earth, life, of human emergence and transformation. *It is a response to the greatest crisis in the history of humanity, and if we can respond as one thread in the tapestry of living Earth, it is also its greatest opportunity.* It emerged from the staggering realization that the most viable path to a thriving human future—is a new and visionary understanding, a new framework for deeply knowing *who, what, and where* we are—integral with all matter and life—with both the power and responsibility to transform ourselves to become a life supporting presence within the whole Earth community.

The music arose naturally as I listened for what the great poems that comprise the choral movements, embracing the scientific-poetic narratives of the recitatives in response to their stunning recital of the thresholds of cosmogenesis—the Universe's relentless movement toward greater complexity, diversity, interiority, and communion. And always the *emergence* of more beauty, transcending what came before while including the underlying levels of being and relationship. Working with the incomparable visual artist Cameron Davis, the music became a river of color, a landscape of multiple dimensions, textures, and a celebration of the senses. Both scientific-poetic texts—and the gifts of sight, taste, touch, and smell—evoke music that is emergent: that cannot be predicted, and is the reflection of the deepest nature of the cosmos: the essence of our planetary home.

Earth and Universe are alive! They are **us**—living systems of indescribable complexity and beauty, only faintly understandable in their wholeness and their movement. We are them in human form, and music is the modality that most resembles them. Here, there is no 'background' music, but voices of a primordial aliveness that has no adequate descriptors. We examine—listen—feel—imagine, only beginning to see or write the shadows of their **being**, of their becoming.

In collaboration with the exceptional technical competency, exquisite artistry and purposeful intention of director Maestro José Daniel Flores-Caraballo, the EUO's vision of celebrating a new planetary-human relationship comes to life. I see APM as taking its place as a regional, national, and even world leader in recognizing music and the arts as a transformational force—necessary at this critical evolutionary moment. Together, it is an invitation to become an ecological civilization in harmony and rhythm with each other, Earth, and the Cosmos.

About the EUO Set Design

The video animation uses details from over 20 paintings by Cameron Davis. Their abstractions of plant patterns with moving elements created in partnership with animator William Tipper suggest a living Earth and Universe, core to the Oratorio content.

Emergence

Emergence describes the phenomenal appearance of new properties in new levels of complexity developing over time. The sciences have given us evidence of our universe beginning 13.82 billion years ago, and almost immediately, quarks formed relationships that produced protons and neutrons. There has been a continuous birthing of relationships ever since, within evermore complex relationships—from protons to atoms, stars, galaxies, chemicals, our solar system, our Earth, tectonic plates, changing oceans and continents, amino acids, proteins, cells, multicellular life forms, a stunning diversity of plants and animals in the sea and on land, and—some 200,000 years ago—humans. We emerged from an extremely long past in which at first there were none of those relationships, entities or systems. But atoms, cells, and vastly more did develop and eventually coalesced in us.

Among those relationships were the 100 trillion synapses of the 100 billion neurons within each of our brains—the most complex relationships of matter in the universe of which we are aware. We are that part of the known universe that can reflect on itself. Our electrical and chemical neuronal exchanges enable self-consciousness, language, symbolic thinking, memory, imagination, wonder, interpersonal relationships, and creativity.

Could it be said that the self-conscious creativity of humans is an outgrowth of a very long history of emergent complexity? We interacted with the environment from which we emerged, imagining and creating tools, agriculture, stories, sculpture, symphonies, industry, computers, and other cultural achievements. Among these are our great philosophies, sciences, arts, and religious traditions, which seek dialogue between the ancient and the new. This performance is part of that dialogue.

LIBRETTO

1 | THE GREAT FLARING FORTH

In the great silence –
The first stirring of a shimmering Universe.

In the darkness of unbounded possibility,
Our Universe about to flare forth,
To rise into being,
Shaping the contours of the emerging cosmos.

Immanent within the chaos of primordial particles—
The impulse of matter to bond,
The promise of atoms and galaxies,
Suns and planets, oceans, rivers,
Butterflies, trees, and songs of love.

In the great silence ...
Ineffable mystery...
Of the first breath.

Energy – Space – Time – Mass – Light
The *dawning* of our universe—
Summoning forth all that we know,

All that we are,
All that may ever be.

And...asking of us *now* —
How do we embrace this mystery?
How do we *live* this story?
How shall we know and love this Earth?

2 | GRAVITY'S LAW

How surely gravity's law,
Strong as an ocean current,
Takes hold of even the smallest thing
And pulls it toward the heart of the world.

Each thing —
Each stone, blossom, child —
Is held in place.
Only we, in our arrogance,
Push out beyond what we each belong to
For some empty freedom.

If we surrendered
To earth's intelligence
We could rise up rooted, like trees.

Instead we entangle ourselves
In knots of our own making.
And struggle, lonely and confused.

So, like children, we begin again
To learn from the things,
Because they are in God's heart;
They have never left him.

This is what the things can teach us:
To fall,
patiently to trust our heaviness.
Even a bird has to do that
Before it can fly.

– Rainer Maria Rilke
Translated by Joanna Macy and Anita Barrows

3 | GALAXIES FORMING - EMANATING BRILLIANCE OF STARS

More than a trillion galaxies paint the heavens –
Each with countless stars—
Flickering emanations of the Great Flaring Forth.

*“What gave birth to all this beauty?”
What is this music at the heart of the Universe?*

Spiraling galaxies are wombs of creativity,
Where new stars burst into brilliance.

The stars ignite, flourish, age and die—
And in their dying, the largest of them collapse,
Exploding as supernovas,
Spewing forth new, heavier elements into
the vastness of space.

The very atoms comprising our bodies –
Carbon, oxygen, magnesium, iron—
Woven through every leaf, feather, hand, and eye –
Are formed—for the first time,
In the spectacular explosion of perishing stars.

In *one great arm* of our Milky Way Galaxy
An immense fragment of molecular cloud collapsed—
Its center flaring into our Sun.

Poised between implosion and explosion,
The new sun drew into its embrace precious
grains of stardust,
Coalescing them into a necklace of unique planets:
Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune –
And Earth, a lavish Bearer of Life...

For countless millennia, we humans have looked with
awe into the night sky
Transfixed by the majesty of the heavens –
And found there, nourishment, meaning, guidance.

WE are children of the Great Flaring Forth –
And—our ANCESTORS...are the *STARS!*

4 | EARTHRISE AMEN

In the beginning
Was the dream,
EarthRise
Amen
– Thomas Berry

5 | LIFE'S EMERGENCE

Across the broad field of space and deep time,
Star systems and their planets...
Have raced through gravity's ethereal ocean
Suspended in light and darkness.

*One planet – a mix of
Churning seas, roiling magma,
And charged atmosphere –
Breathes into being
Minute single-celled organisms...
And so—becomes a *Living Earth*.*

As the first fragile membrane formed,
Imparting to the *cell* its boundary of identity,
There arose within—the miracle of DNA—
Molecular encoding—
Combining, recombining, remembering.

From emerging PATTERNS of adaptation and invention,
The cell now becoming the first locus of perception,
sensation, action —
From which arose every other living thing.

Spirals of memory are mirrored in the unfolding fern,
The spider web, the nautilus, the snail.

As these earliest forms
Made their home upon burgeoning Earth,
Some among them, responding to the energy of the Sun,
Turn toward the light —
Inaugurating the wonder of *photosynthesis*.
Sunlight, now food for the planet!

Algae, fungi, mosses,
Slime molds, sporophytes, the slithering fishes,
Frogs, turtles,
Every species of bird
Stretching their bright wings across the sky.
And the skinny shrew,
Small, warm blooded, among
The first of the beautiful mammals.

LIFE!
Through *life* Earth awakened to itself
AND to the Universe.
From the Flaring Forth – to galaxies –
to stars – to Living Earth,
Ahhhhh ...
Because—*nothing is itself
without everything else.*

6 | GOD'S GRANDEUR

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell:
the soil is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and ah! bright wings.
— Gerard Manley Hopkins

7 | THE PASSION OF ANIMALS

It was four - BILLION - years - ago -
Single-celled life appeared,
Enveloping Earth,
Specializing, co-mingling,
Combining and cooperating through symbiosis,
Surrendering to larger complexities,
in a continuing creative drama.

A mere six hundred MILLION years ago...
ANIMALS emerged!
From those first single cells—to cell communities—
coevolving Into an immeasurable
profusion of diverse beings.
And from that awesome well of creativity,
there arose life forms
With unique powers of movement,
Colonizing new territories,
And bringing forth myriad multiform creatures.
Pervading air, sea, and land,
They gifted the planet with dazzling senses,
And—new instinctual, emotional life.

Animals *awakened* Earth
With symphonies of sound, smell, taste, and touch,
Their *passion* igniting an explosion of consciousness.

Exuberant play — practice for the high stakes
of life and death —
Evoked ever more inventive behaviors
Magnifying the emergent creativity.

ONE DAY,
Nature would produce a mammal
With a prolonged period of intense curiosity,
A being with a passion for learning, creativity—
and WONDER.

8 | MUSICAL INTERLUDE: "TURNING"

9 | PLANETARY PRESENCE – EMERGENCE OF THE HUMAN

Our ancestors emerged in *wonder*:
Curious, inventive, playful.
Every place we went, that place we *'became'*.

Earth had been seeded with human presence.
Meeting, mixing, mingling.
Wandering tribes exploring, colliding, inventing,
Learning the ways of others,
Forging communities, alliances, rivalries.

In time, language and symbol emerged,
Illuminating an inner landscape,
And creating another universe within.
For the first time, human possibility burst beyond
biological coding.
Human culture became a *second* DNA,
Changing the face of Earth,
And transforming the dynamics of evolution.

Yet, despite our stunning inheritance of
unbounded creativity,
We were, and are, *still* – a juvenile species,
Unsure of ourselves, *too* sure of ourselves,
Reckless and self-absorbed in our powers.

We live on a wounded planet now.
We have ravaged the air, the rivers, the oceans, the soils,
Decimating the living systems on which all life depends.
We are in danger of losing our only home.

Yet, *we too*, BELONG here!

*We live our lives forward into mystery
and ceaseless creativity
Entwined in the fabric of our
Unfolding Cosmos.
We are Dreaming Animals,
On a wave of ever more conscious evolution—
Dream-making animals,
Awakening—
To find ourselves ... HERE.*

10 | CASCADE: LAMENT

I.

Increasingly, human activity threatens animal well-being. Tens of thousands of species are declining; others are already gone.

Thin-Spined Porcupine, Polar Bear, Bengal Tiger, Hazel Dormouse.

Bat populations are overwhelmed by disease and die in their hibernaculum each winter. Other winged animals fall into peril.

Little brown bat, Bay Checkerspot, Fender's Blue, Giant Ibis, Forest Owllet.

The skin of amphibians is pervious to the chemical environments around them — they are some of life's most vulnerable.

California red-legged frog, Puerto Rican crested toad, Blue Spotted salamander, Anderson's Crocodile newt.

Honeybee colonies mysteriously collapse and vanish from their hives, while native pollinators around the world are lost.

Hawaiian yellow faced bee, Salt Creek Tiger beetle, Idaho Stonefly, Black-Breasted Puffleg Hummingbird

II.

Increasingly, human activity is unraveling our natural systems endangering the foundations of life's intricate web.

Trees, in forests across the world, struggle to adapt to environmental changes.

Hinton's Oak, African Blackwood, Monkey Puzzle, Four-Petal Paw-Paw, Sugar Maple.

Glaciers are being lost — receding and evaporating into the atmosphere.

Greenland Ice Sheet, Gangotri Glacier, Muir Glacier, Antarctica

Coral reefs are one of the most bio-diverse habitats on Earth. Many face extinction by mid-century.

Great Barrier Reef, Florida Keys, Caribbean coral reefs, Surin Islands, Seychelles.

III.

Increasingly, human activity is unraveling social systems inflamed by ecological and climate disruption,

Threatening civilizational breakdown.

Loss of tolerance, contested cultural and institutional resilience, diminished mental wellbeing, fragmented communities, fractured peace.

We have legalized theft of the future by our shortsighted policies.

Beacons of democratic hope around the world are faltering or being extinguished. (citation)
Measures of freedom are being downgraded.

For these desecrations and for all life,
going or gone forever,
We share our lament.

11 | THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the least sound
In fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
Rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
Who do not tax their lives with forethought
Of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
Waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world and am free.
— *Wendell Berry*

12 | TIME'S TOPOGRAPHY (INSTRUMENTAL)

13 | MORNINGSIDE CATHEDRAL

Whale song from
the deep of the sea.
Wolf cry from the forest.

Heartbeat
of a planet.

This cry
Our Revelation
As the sun
Sinks lower
In the sky
Over a wounded
World.

And the healing
Of the wound
Is there in
A single cry
A throat opened wide
For the wild
Sacred sound...
Hovering over
The darkening earth,

Beseeching humankind
To bring back the Sun,
To let the flowers
Bloom in the meadows
The rivers run
Through the hills
And to let
The Earth and all
Her living creatures
Live their wild fierce
Serene and abundant life.
— Thomas Berry

14 | EMERGING EARTH COMMUNITY

This is our moment—
*"The Universe is holding its breath
Waiting for us to take our place."*

Could it be OUR destiny to journey into the depths of things,
To question, to ponder, to re-imagine,
To know that our lives
Require nothing less
Than re-inventing what it means to be Human -
within the living web
of Earth?

Could it be we are being invited
to learn the language of mountains,
Rivers, and trees,
the language of birds,
All the animals and insects —
The winds, soils, and seas,
their living networks,
And yes, the language of the stars
Are they not the languages of our kin?

Can we open ourselves to these voices –
To this exquisite affinity
...To this deep belonging,
with every living being?—

How *then*, will we choose to live?

15 | AWAKENING

*"We are beings
In whom the universe
Shivers in wonder at itself —
The space where earth dreams."
— Brian Thomas Swimme, Mary Evelyn Tucker*

16 | TRANSFORMATION

As never before...
Humanity is invited to SEE with new eyes,
To FEEL what- is -not -yet.

As never before...
Our Awakening to the present moment is to realize...
What-we-do-matters!
Who-we-are-matters!

Creatures of imagination...
With powers of language, metaphor, and empathy—
We can experience ourselves as one with all of life —
Immersed in the moment by moment unfolding,
Evoking felt response-ability for our world
As we live our lives forward into mystery—
Charged with uncertainty—yet boundless possibility.
*

Knowing "life is regenerative, creative, and intelligent"—
Can we see beyond our present crisis—
That we are in a metamorphosis
of conscious evolution?

What -we- do- matters!
Who-we-are-matters!
Unfolding, refolding back into the Whole of Life.
*

Love is the desire to give life, and life seeks more life.
The whole Cosmos IS that desire—
The ceaseless Emergence of a Living Universe!!

Can you FEEL it beckoning?
The luminous horizon — of a world in transformation?

17 | TO SEE A WORLD IN A GRAIN OF SAND

And a heaven in a wildflower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.
— William Blake

EMERGENT UNIVERSE ORATORIO BIOGRAPHIES

Sam Guarnaccia

Sam Guarnaccia, composer, classical guitarist, scholar–writes music almost exclusively in the service of supporting an evolved consciousness of humanity’s responsibility to, and interconnectedness with, the entire Earth Community, within the great scientific story of Cosmogogenesis and the Epic of Evolution. His work owes a debt to the extraordinary vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and many contemporary scientific philosophers in their understanding of the ‘undivided wholeness’ of matter, pattern, process, and spirit.

Paula Guarnaccia

Paula Guarnaccia is a creative partner for the *Emergent Universe Oratorio (EUO) Project* with composer Sam Guarnaccia and visual artist Cameron Davis. She has provided significant intellectual content and emotional direction for both the EUO libretto and music, and was instrumental in the planning and co-production of three prior performances in Vermont, Cleveland, and Philadelphia.

Cameron Davis

Cameron Davis is a painter and Senior Lecturer, Emerita, with the University of Vermont Department of Art & Art History, and UVM Environmental Program Affiliate. Davis taught drawing, painting & advised theses on Art & Ecology. Her paintings are part of public and private collections nationally.

John Cimino

John Cimino is an operatic and concert performer, composer and librettist with more than 20 national and international prizes to his credit. His “Concerts of Ideas” and other programming innovations have been featured in projects of the White House, the United Nations, the Aspen Institute, the Center for Creative Leadership and numerous universities and professional associations on six continents. He studied biology and physics at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and completed his musical training at the Manhattan and Juilliard Schools of Music. He is founder and president of Associated Solo Artists, Creative Leaps International and the Renaissance Center for Knowledge Integration, Interdisciplinary Thinking and Advanced Applications of Imagination.

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We offer our deepest gratitude to the many people who have supported the *Emergent Universe Oratorio Project* over the past decade. It truly reflects the libretto, *that nothing is itself without everything else*. The project has been a delightful weaving of contributors, partnerships, participants and helpers.

First, we would like to acknowledge the seminal thinking of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry who have been our inspiration. We offer our special thanks to Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Brian Swimme who further deepened our understanding of Berry’s work with their *Journey of the Universe* story which anchors the content of the Libretto. We continue to thank them for their ongoing support through the Thomas Berry Foundation.

There have been several iterations of the Libretto as it has evolved over the last decade. We thank our earlier librettists whose hearts still echo through our latest edits. Thank you to Peter and Caitlin Adair, Amy Seidl (the Lament), and John Elder.

Ursula Goodenough, Stuart Kauffman, and Jude Currivan ensured the libretto’s scientific accuracy. We are so grateful for their clarity of intellect and heart.

Thank you to our friend Tim Guiles who generously created the piano reduction of the score which has been essential for rehearsals.

The EUO project has been as much a study group as a collaboration. We appreciate so many thinkers who contributed insights to our own evolving understanding of the “perils and promise” (Earth Charter) of these times. There are several we would specifically like to thank whose work informed the libretto directly and indirectly: David Whyte, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Fritjof Capra, Andreas Weber, Stuart Kauffman, and Jeremy Lent, to name a few.

Above all, our deepest thanks go to Albany Pro Musica for their persistent support of the Oratorio despite the delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. APM’s Executive Director Emily Sturman, and Director of Operations Jared Shortmeier deftly navigated endless details to make the performance shine. Finally, we stand in awe and gratitude of Artistic Director José Daniel Flores-Carabello whose vision, brilliance, and courage as a conductor has brought forth this truly inspirational performance.

Who made this happen:

We want to acknowledge the individuals and organizations who provided financial assistance to this performance including Richard Carpenter, John G. Livermore, Brendan Lucey, Susan Mazer-Smith, Paul Shipman, and Nancy G. Wright. We thank APM Board member Gwen Kraus and Emily Piccirillo for their fundraising assistance.

In addition, the concert would not have been possible without the Thomas Berry Foundation and the New Perennials Project at Middlebury College grant.

Tonight is the premiere performance of the EUO set design by Cameron Davis with animator William Tipper with Albany Pro Musica. The set was made possible through additional grants from the Thomas Berry Foundation, the Vermont Arts Council, New Perennials Project at Middlebury College, and two University of Vermont Retired Faculty Awards. Technical expertise and consultation was provided by Ben Bach Cinematography, Fletcher Bach Creative Technology, Lindsay Ramondjack Photography, Kristen Iemma Creative Consultant, Myles Jewell (UVM) Animation Consultant, Danshi Antinoph (UVM) Animation Intern.

We are further both humbled and deeply grateful for the wide community of family and friends for their unquestioning trust and generosity for making the creation of the set design possible. Thank you!

Emergent Universe Oratorio Set Design funders:

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