

Emergent Universe Oratorio

Sam Guarnaccia

1. The Great Flaring Forth (Orator) 2. Gravity's Law (Chorus) 3. Galaxies Forming-Emanating Brilliance (Orator) 4. EarthRise Amen (Soloists and Chorus) 5. Life's Emergence (Orator) 6. God's Grandeur (Soloists and Chorus) 7. The Passion of Animals (Orator) 8. The Cascade – Lament (Readers – Solo Viola) 9. Turning (Orchestra) 10. Emergence of Human – Planetary Presence (Orator) 11. The Peace of Wild Things (Chorus) 12. Time's Topography (Orator) 13. Morningside Cathedral (Aria for SATB Soloists) 14. Emerging Earth Community 15. Awakening (Chorus) 16. Transformation (Orator) 17. To See a World (Soloists and Chorus) Emergent Universe Oratorio – Libretto

1 The Great Flaring Forth *In the great silence—before space or time— A trembling—a singularity of infinite potential— The first stirring of our shimmering Universe. In that fertile darkness grew an unimaginable attraction— an unbounded possibility— that the Universe would burst into brilliance, flaring forth with inconceivable power. Impelled by cosmic fire— an ecstasy of elementary particles and light— in a micro-instant tthe fireball would inflate— expanding space. As gravity waves shaped the contours of the emerging cosmos. so would begin a journey into magnificence, the blossoming of our universe, a single, multi-form energy event, ever evolving in beauty and complexity. Enfolded in the chaos of primordial particles would be the impulse of matter to bond, igniting the promise of atoms and galaxies, suns and planets, oceans, rivers, trees, butterflies, and songs of love. In the great silence— the Universe poised—in exquisite—anticipation—gathering— awaiting the first breath. Energy— space— time—mass—light— the great radiance unfurled— the story of a living Universe bringing forth all that we know, birthing all that we are and ever shall be. Asking of us now— *How shall we move into this Mystery? How may we know and live this story? How shall we know and love this Earth?* -Peter Adair, with Caitlin Adair, Sam and Paula Guarnaccia*

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 *Emanating Brilliance of Stars* “How are we to understand the beauty of the Universe? What gave birth to all this beauty?” What is the mystery— the ‘primordial vibrations’—the music at the heart of the Universe?— More than one trillion galaxies paint the heavens— majestic Islands in an expanding ocean of dark energy— held together in the fierce embrace of dark matter— each with countless stars— echoes of the Great Flaring Forth. Spiraling galaxies like our Milky Way are wombs of creativity, for along their dancing bejeweled arms density waves pulse, hydrogen clouds contract, and new stars continually burst into brilliance. Like humans, stars are born, flourish, age and die. In their dying, large stars collapse inward— then explode as breathtaking supernovas spewing newly created heavy elements into the vastness of space. The very atoms composing our bodies— carbon, oxygen, magnesium, iron— woven through every leaf, feather, eye or hand— are born in the spectacular explosions of perishing stars. In one great galactic arm, an immense fragment of molecular cloud collapsed— its gas and cosmic dust grains flattening into a disc— the center flaring into our Sun. Poised on the ‘knife edge’ between implosion and explosion, the sun drew these precious grains of dust into ‘the silence of the gravitational embrace’ gradually coalescing into a necklace of unique planets: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune— and Earth, the bountiful Bearer of Life. For countless millennia humans have looked with awe into the night sky, transfixed by the majestic beauty of the heavens, finding nourishment, meaning, guidance. Our world—imaged forth in the wonders of the sun and clouds by day— the stars and planets by night. Now we know— we are children of the Great Flaring Forth— stars are our ancestors— and we—descendants of their radiant and creative being. -*Peter Adair, with Caitlin Adair, Sam Guarnaccia, Paula Guarnaccia*

4 *EarthRise AMEN* In the beginning was the dream, EarthRise Amen -*Thomas Berry*

5 *Life’s Emergence* Across the broad field of space— the planets—suspended on the outstretched arms of our spiral galaxy. One planet – a fertile mix of Churning oceans, roiling magma, and charged atmosphere— breathes into being single-celled organisms to become a *Living Earth*. Over three billion years ago the first fragile membrane formed separating the cell from its surroundings, becoming the first locus of perception, choice, sensation— determining what was nourishing, what was safe, what was to remain. Within its DNA, life remembered, encoding successes, rejecting failures— evolving patterns of adaptation and reproduction— intertwining spirals of memory mirrored in the unfolding fern, the spider web, the nautilus, the snail— a patient, probing, innovative wisdom, a single expanding responsiveness. As these primeval cells spread throughout the Earth— some turned toward the Sun, their source of warmth and light, inaugurating the miracle of photosynthesis— sunlight becoming food for the planet. Preparing the way for Green algae, fungi, mosses, slime molds, sporophytes, the slithering fishes, frogs, turtles, lizards, bright wings across the sky— and the skinny shrew, small, warm blooded, among the first of the beautiful mammals. Life is

self-organizing, self-renewing, self-transcending; a rhapsody of form and color, movement, sentience, sound— a dynamic planetary system co-evolving to become ever more — through life— Earth awakened to itself and the Universe. Emerging—‘through a glorious sequence of transformations,’ from the flaring forth—to galaxies—to stars— to living earth, infinitely interdependent—because... “Nothing is itself without everything else.” -*Peter Adair, with Caitlin Adair, Sam Guarnaccia*

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 reck 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 Ravens in flight release twigs, then swoop down gracefully to catch them again. Porcupines dance on their hind legs, swaying rhythmically from side to side. Coyote cubs tussle and tumble by day, and after nightfall sing with their elders to the glory of the moon. Six hundred million years ago, animals emerged from single-celled life. With unique powers of movement, they colonized new territories, bringing forth a kaleidoscope of creatures— pervading air, land and sea with sensual, emotional and instinctual life. Animals sensitize the planet, bringing forth symphonies of sound and smell, taste and touch: Bees and wasps see ultraviolet light patterns leading them to pollen and nectar; Bats navigate the dark with echoing sound waves. Dogs sniff a landscape of odors, while tiny spring peepers join returning birds, filling the springtime world with vibrant song. Through the passion of animals, life unleashes an explosion of consciousness and sensitivity— by constantly signaling and sensing each other— from the flash patterns of fireflies at night to the rescue of humans at sea by dolphins— their perception creates intricate webs of interconnectedness, predation, and caring. Red-crowned cranes leap and float in a balletic mating dance. Crows slide playfully down snowy inclines on makeshift sleds of their own invention. Elephants become delirious with excitement at the birth of a calf. Young mammals revel in the pure joy of exuberant play, rapturous pleasure evoking inventive behavior, flexibility, and the stretching of boundaries. Their play is practice for the high stakes of life and death in the protected grace of parental care. ‘The ancient powers of their emotions’ — ‘sculpted by the realities of survival’. One day, Nature would produce a mammal with a prolonged period of youthful curiosity and exploration – a being with a passion for learning, creativity, and wonder. -*Peter Adair, with Caitlin Adair, Sam Guarnaccia*

8 The Cascade: A Dialogue -*Amy Seidl, Paula Guarnaccia; Lament, viola solo*

9Turning, Orchestral Interlude

10 Planetary Presence From primates, our ancestors emerged a new breed, curious and playful, a dream-making animal, spontaneous, astonished, compelled to try everything! language sputtered and sung into being. — Through language, each human carried an entire universe within, saturated with dreams and laughter and blazing with imagination. Every place we went, we became that place, as the Spirit of seashore, forest, tundra captivated our imagining. Diverse human cultures met and mixed and mingled from wandering tribes into settled communities taming, inventing, expressing, exploring. Earth became permeated with human presence. Consciousness gave birth to symbols, which then magnified consciousness. Language and symbol set fire to human possibility. With writing, art, music, technology, life's creativity burst beyond biological coding. Human culture became a new DNA outside the body, changing the face of Earth and the dynamic of evolution. With human emergence, the universe created a space where depths of feeling are concentrated, where wonder is birthed, where an ocean of experience and understanding gave rise to a planetary species. We belong here. We are a planet-altering species, a juvenile species playing havoc with the air, the climate, the rivers, the oceans. We live on a different planet now, a planet where the human profoundly affects the course of evolution. *Yet we belong here.* This dream-making animal — riding a wave of conscious evolution we awakened to find ourselves here telling the story of the universe, a story that is also telling us. -Peter Adair, with Caitlin Adair

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 Streams wind down from the heights, converging like branches of a tree. John Muir, from his Sierra ridge, could see Yosemite's lakes as apples on those rippling boughs. Merced, sweet river of mercy, broadening through the valley, was the trunk. Here in the thickening woods of clear-cut and recovering Vermont we see our watersheds as maples, fluctuating in the muddy spring. On freezing nights twigs suck sap up to see them through and barred owls call their mates across the starry dark. Come sun-warmed morning, sap slides down the river of this trunk. Matter expends itself in the limbs of life, surges back into the pulsing core. Persuaded by time's loving heat, even rocks keep metamorphosing "into monarch butterflies, blue herons and the exalted music of Mozart." Like wolves, larger and grayer every year, coyotes down from Canada imprint the empty snow of March while lifting their own wild songs into the clamor of those amorous owls. Time wells and eddies, spiraling outward and inward in this tidal forest of a world, bringing sweetness to our mouths, strength

to our bones, then homecoming and release. Our separate lives find confluence here. -*John Elder*

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." Revolutionary discoveries have led us to an astounding breadth of knowledge— a phenomenal awareness— calling us to responsibility, reaffirming what we already knew... What we do to Earth, we do to ourselves! Perhaps our destiny is to journey into the depths of things — to drink so deeply of the powers of this living universe, that we recognize the profound dimensions of our radical mutuality— and learn the languages of mountains, of rivers, of trees, the languages of the birds, all the animals and insects— and the languages of the stars.' The great new understanding is this: Our universe - -- a single, irreversible, sequential, celebratory event— Is not simply a place, but a story in which we are immersed, to which we belong and out of which we arose. We — live — our — lives — forward — into — mystery— within the Community of EARTH— a "magnificent diversity... in the coherence of an unparalleled unity"— where the biosphere and human culture are not only emergent but radically and ceaselessly and astonishingly creative. How can we find a way to sink into these immensities? How can we embrace this intimate and ineffable journey into grandeur? *Cameron Davis, Paula Guarnaccia and Sam Guarnaccia*

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 Something of wonder is happening— We are awakening!!— to a renewed awe in the presence of mystery— in the presence of what is. 'Like the ocean with its power to pour through boundaries'— we are capable of 'a profound intimacy of relationship' with the winds, sea, land— all the unnumbered forms of life in the great community of Earth 'Something radically new' has emerged— "the capacity to experience the world" through another— imagination— infused with empathy—moved by compassion— living within "an undivided wholeness"— 'a unified, glorious outpouring of being.' "For just as the Milky Way is the universe in the form of a galaxy and an orchid is the universe In the form of a flower, we are the universe In the form of a human. And every time we are drawn to look up into the night sky reflecting on the awesome beauty — we are actually the universe reflecting on itself. And knowing this—changes—everything!!" -*Cameron Davis, Sam Guarnaccia*

17 To See a World To see a world in a grain of sand And a heaven in a wild flower, Hold infinity in the palm of your hand And eternity in an hour. -*William Blake*

For Libretto citations visit: www.samguarnaccia.com

Emergent Universe Oratorio – Composer’s Notes

The Emergent Universe Oratorio tells the Great Story of the Universe from the Big Bang to the emergence of Earth’s global consciousness, in a series of alternating intensively scored recitatives with major lyrical choral sections. It is chiefly inspired by the axial work of cultural historian and author Thomas Berry, successor to French scientist and priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, cosmologist Brian Swimme and Confucian scholar and author Mary Evelyn Tucker’s Journey of the Universe, and draws from the poetic works of Rainer Maria Rilke, Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Blake, Wendell Berry, and John Elder.