



DEBORAH SIMPKIN KING, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & FOUNDER



Social change, seen in music and poetry of Ellington, Gershwin and Langston Hughes

Ember ensemble choral concert explores post-WWI issues surrounding racial and gender equality through song

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: New York, NY, April 4, 2018 -- The [Ember](#) ensemble of [Schola Cantorum on Hudson](#) under the direction of conductor, [Deborah Simpkin King, Ph.D.](#), will perform the concert, *Safe for Democracy*, on May 19th in NYC and May 20th in Montclair, NJ. The concert will feature five poems by Langston Hughes set to music and popular works from the Harlem Renaissance and post-WWI composers, Duke Ellington and George Gershwin, among others.

The concerts will continue Ember's year-long examination of the human impact of military conflict, in this case through the lens of ongoing sociological changes in America that were dramatically intensified as a result of WWI. Issues surrounding gender and racial equality, as well as the emergence of increasingly noteworthy American-trained musicians against the backdrop of the immigration of many post-war European artists, will all be represented through music of the period.

"*Safe for Democracy* takes as its point of departure Woodrow Wilson's statement justifying his declaration of war, that the world 'be made safe for democracy,'" says Ember's artistic director, Deborah Simpkin King. "Thousands of African Americans and Native Americans responded to the call to serve, yet returned home to a country that still denied them the most basic rights. WWI also provided a poignant context for expanding roles among women, many of whom took on jobs formerly held only by men, sometimes even positions of great peril behind battle lines," explains King.

One musical highlight of *Safe for Democracy* is William Averitt's settings of five poems by Langston Hughes, for voices and four-hand piano. Another favorite is Bigler's setting of Hughes' "I Dream a World," which strongly prefigures Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech." In addition to choral arrangements of tunes by Ellington and Gershwin, the concert will feature choral arrangements of spirituals which were emerging during the post-War period as a new form of art music.

Ember commemorates the centennial anniversary of WWI throughout an entire year's concert activity, by examining what can be learned from what took place as a result of the war. This year-long focus culminates in Armistice Day concerts in November of 2018. **Veterans will be recognized and honored at every performance and given red lapel poppies, the WWI symbol of solidarity with soldiers.**

Safe for Democracy will be performed on Saturday, May 19th, at 7 PM at St. John's in the Village Episcopal Church, 218 West 11th Street (at Waverly Pl) NYC and on Sunday, May 20th at 5 PM at Church of the Immaculate Conception, 30 N. Fullerton Ave., Montclair, NJ.

[Tickets](#) for both concerts can be purchased in advance online for \$20, or at the door for \$25. Veterans can reserve their [complimentary ticket in advance](#) online. Seniors/students, \$15; children 12 and under are free of charge. For more information go to www.ScholaOnHudson.org or call 888-407-6002 Ext.5.

About Ember

[Ember](#) is the performing ensemble of [Schola Cantorum on Hudson](#), founded in 1995 by Deborah Simpkin King, PhD, as an independent nonprofit organization. Ember performs its entire concert season in Manhattan and in Montclair, NJ. Its unique programming features new music (largely by living composers) with a socially pertinent message.

The internationally recognized new music initiative, [PROJECT: ENCORE™](#), was founded through Schola and the organization supports a multi-pronged education and engagement programs in addition to its performing activities. Ember draws singers from eleven counties throughout New York and New Jersey. Schola is supported by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the Marjorie Bunnell Foundation, and many other generous individuals, foundations and business partners.

About Deborah Simpkin King, Ph.D.

Deborah Simpkin King, Ph.D., is the Founder and Artistic Director of [Ember](#), the vocal ensemble of Schola Cantorum on Hudson (Schola), and of PROJECT : ENCORE™. Dr. King Chairs the New York Choral Consortium (NYCC) and serves as the Interim Director of Music at Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church and the Artistic Director of the Crescent Concert Series in Plainfield, NJ. Known as a visionary conductor, educator and advocate of new music and the choral community, Dr. King is a frequent presenter at professional conferences and active as a guest conductor and teacher of master classes and choral workshops.

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