

# MAY FESTIVAL

## Choral Music of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century

### Harmonium (1981) by John Adams

In the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, atonality (no key) and dissonance were reaching a breaking point, and composers searched for expressions that were less abrasive, but still stood apart from 19<sup>th</sup> century compositions. *Minimalism* describes an approach that softens dissonance by placing quick, repetitive rhythms against a backdrop of very slow-moving harmonies. The result was easier to grasp for the average listener, but still dramatically different from the music of previous centuries.

3:45-5:42: The chorus notes are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way down the page.

Note the high energy, repetitive rhythms from the orchestra surrounding the choral music. The text (John Donne) is:

For sense and understanding may Know what gives fuel to their fire;  
My love, though silly, is more brave; For may I miss, whene'er I crave,  
If I know yet what I would have.

### A Child's Prayer by James MacMillan

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we rarely hear music in the "uncompromising" minimalist vein of the late 20<sup>th</sup>, but the contributions of *minimalism* still hold sway in the form of very slowly changing harmonies, and a freedom about chord choices in relation to the key of the music.

The Youth Chorus previously performed *The Halie Speerit's Dauncers*, music considerably outside of James MacMillan's typical style.

If you don't believe minimalism continues to play a role in our time, listen to most of the [film music by Hans Zimmer](#) – (OK, not Lion King.)