

Randall Thompson (1899-1984)

Randall Thompson has been described as American in spirit and universal in appeal. His choral works are a high point in American choral literature. He taught at Harvard, the Curtis Institute of Music, and the University of Virginia. The West Valley Chorale is performing two of his works on the December concerts, "Last Words of David" and "Alleluia," and one on the April concerts, "Choose Something Like a Star" from Frostiana with words by Robert Frost.

"The Last Words of David" (1949) 2 Samuel 23:3, 4

He that ruleth over men must be just,
Ruling in the fear of God.
And He shall be as the light of the morning,
When the sun riseth,
Even a morning without clouds;
As the tender grass springing out of the earth
By clear shining after rain
Alleluia. Amen.

It was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in honor of the 25th anniversary of Serge Koussevitzky's directorship. The chorus of the Berkshire Music Center (now Tanglewood Music Center) performed it with the BSO for the work's premier.

"Alleluia" (1940)

This commission from Koussevitzky was for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, which he founded in 1940. It was to be a fanfare but with WWII looming, Thompson chose instead to compose an introspective work. Alleluia is the Latinized form of the Hebrew word meaning "praise the Lord." It is the tradition to start each summer session at Tanglewood with the singing of this piece.

Koussevitzky (1874-1951) was a Russian-born conductor, composer and double-bassist, known for his long tenure as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1924 to 1949. He was a champion of modern music who commissioned many works for the BSO including the premier of Gershwin's Second Rhapsody.