

I AM LIKE MANY

Vocal Ensemble **VoNo**

led by **Lone Larsen**



VONO VOCALS

MOB MENTALITY, RESISTANCE AND FORBIDDEN LOVE

From a grey mass, a rainbow emerges. Someone dreams of belonging to the group, another longs to leave. Some blend in where others stand out.

I AM LIKE MANY is based on a variety of texts, from poetic love letters and manifestos from the 19th century to opinion articles, poems, and quotes from contemporary LGBTQIA+ pioneers.

The most beautiful but also the most cruel sides of humanity are portrayed, and thoughts about acceptance and belonging are shared by both the audience and the ensemble. With the equal value of humans as a thematic starting point, a colorful potpourri of multi-voiced choral music, poetry, and improvisation is created.

I AM LIKE MANY

Running time: 1 hour without interval

Conductor / Artistic Director **Lone Larsen**

Director / Choreographer **Ulf Evrén**

Set Design **Fanny Senocq**

Costumes **Fanny Senocq & Tove Fagius**

Construction / Manufacture of Decor **Karl Bern**

Photography **Josef Sjöblom**

Sopranos **Himani Grundström, Anna-Kari Frisk, Anna Larsdotter**

Altos **Lisa Fagius Hälling, Tove Fagius, Janna Vettergren**

Tenors **Peder Curman, Martin Åsander, Jonathan von Döbeln**

Basses **Adam Jondelius, André Hasselgren, Anders Butta Börjesson**

PROGRAMME

Henrik Dahlgren

Before the West (2020)
Text: Emily Dickinson

Stuart Beatch

I am like many (2018)
I. Prelude
II. In the House of Commons
III. Debate

VoNo

Improvisation

Dominick DiOrio

The visible World (2014)
Text: Oscar Wilde, Théophile Gautier, Catullus,
Anthony Kennedy, Paul Barwick

VoNo

Improvisation

Saunder Choir (arr.)

True Colors (2015)
Text & Music: Billy Steinberg, Tom Kelly,
Saunder Choi

VoNo

Improvisation

Ann-Sofi Söderqvist

Crossroads (2021)
Text: Malin Hülphers

Gene Puerling (arr.)

Where is love? (1973)
Text & Music: Lionel Bart

Cecilie Ore

Who do you think you are? (2014)
Text: Bibbi Moslet, Cecilie Ore

Marie-Claire Saidon

When a Thought of War Comes (2020)
Text: `Abdul`I-Bahá

VoNo

Improvisation

Stuart Beatch

I am like many (2018)
IV. The Letter

Mats Hålling (arr.)

This is me (2022)
Text & Music: Benj Pasek, Justin Paul

ABOUT THE MUSIC & TEXT

Before the West is a choral piece by composer Henrik Dahlgren with excerpts from the poem "*Behind Me — dips Eternity*" written by Emily Dickinson during the American Civil War in 1863.

"In the music, I've tried to bring out the conflict between death and dawn and musically, I want people to feel that they are on the verge of something they don't know. The fear we feel, standing in the middle looking back, not knowing if we are at the end of

the road, the sunset, or at the beginning of something new, the dawn." Henrik Dahlgren

**Behind Me—dips Eternity—
Before Me—Immortality—
Myself—the Term between—
Death but the Drift of Eastern
Gray, Dissolving into Dawn away,
Before the West begin—**

from *Behind Me—dips Eternity*
by Emily Dickinson



Crossroads is a newly written work by Ann Sofi Söderqvist, based on Malin Hülpher's text.

The work is partly based on Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The section that starts with 'Who are you?' is an attempt to break into a more direct and primitive expression. A little like a counterpoint to charming well-formed sentences.

Malin Hülphers

**Who are you
who you
what about
are
you
from without
are you
from
another
view
who
are
you**

from *Crossroads*
by Malin Hülphers

ABOUT THE MUSIC & TEXT

I AM LIKE MANY is composed by Stuart Beach in conjunction with an exhibition of queer texts at the Senate House Library in London. The result is an interwoven work consisting of newspaper articles and debate contributions from 1958, when the legalization of homosexuality was debated in the British Parliament. The piece is combined with excerpts from the 19th-century poem Don Leon which testifies to the vulnerability of homosexuals and the reform that equated

I. Prelude

*God, like the potter,
when his clay is damp,
Gives every man, in birth,
a different stamp.
Bear witness: man, whate'er
his rank may be.
Who now can say my caste
from stain is free?*

II. In the House of Commons

26 November 1958.
Parliament debates the Wolfenden Report to-day. The House is torn by the problem it faces; by the distinction between sin and crime; by the risk in the remedies it might propose. It is a foregone conclusion that the homosexual laws will not be reformed yet, but that reform must come eventually.

III. Debate

Is such conduct injurious to society?

*Tis hard to say why erring mortals
think This fount is pure, and that unfit
to drink.*

Great nations have fallen and empires been destroyed because corruption became widespread. Is it a matter for the private conscience?

homosexual intercourse with the death penalty. The poem also depicts homoerotic love with descriptions of poet Lord Byron's love affairs with other men.

"This piece is probably one of the most meaningful works I've written: recognizing the path to LGBTQ+ rights in the UK, but ending in a celebration of queer love & joy." Stuart Beach

*And tell us, casuists, were statutes
meant to scourge the wicked or the
innocent?*

These persons are a malignant cancer; if allowed to grow it would eventually kill what is known as normal life.

*That little spot, which constitutes our
isle, is not the world! Its censure or
its smile can never reason's fabric
overthrow.*

IV. The Letter

People have no idea of the life of fear and dread we live. I want them to look upon this debate with kindness and sympathy, and think, *There, but for the grace of God, go I.*

*Love, love it was, that made my eyes
delight to have his person ever in my
sight.*

I do not pretend that I am good but I am like many.

from *I am like many*
by Stuart Beach

ABOUT THE MUSIC & TEXT

The Visible World is a work by conductor and composer Dominick DiOrio consisting of a number of quotes and excerpts from works by Oscar Wilde, Théophile Gautier, Catullus, Anthony Kennedy, and Paul Barwick. From *De profundis*, the eloquent letter Oscar Wilde wrote during his imprisonment for "gross indecency", DiOrio has chosen to focus on the parts that most clearly describe Wilde's love relationship with Lord Douglas.

"The petitioners are entitled to respect for their private lives. The State cannot demean their existence or control their private destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime."

I'm looking forward to when this generation will be able to go off and get married and not realize there was a battle to allow that right."

Paul Barwick, an LGBTQ+ rights activist, was the first person in U.S. history to file a lawsuit seeking to legalize same-sex marriage in 1971

"Sorry it took so long."

Poster outside Seattle City Hall in connection with the legalization of same-sex marriage in the state of Washington in 2012

"Without question, I am one of the lucky ones. I was born into a world where the march of progress has been ever-accelerating. By and large, I have never known the same world of secrecy, disease, heartache, and separation experienced by my gay friends born just a few decades earlier. Yet, their struggles do not ring hollow. I do not take for granted my freedom to live a life of relative safety and security."

Dominick DiOrio

***Your honeyed eyes, Juventius!
If one would let me kiss them,
I would kiss them three hundred
thousand times,
and I would never seem to have
enough not even if the thick, dry
stalks are the crop of our kisses.***

from Catullus *Carmina* 48

"Je suis un homme pour qui le monde visible existe."

Théophile Gautier, Author

I wanted to eat of the fruit of all the trees in the garden of the world ... And so, indeed, I went out, and so I lived."

from *De profundis* by Oscar Wilde



ABOUT THE MUSIC & TEXT

This is Me is a song from the musical and film *The Greatest Showman*, written by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. It is a song about breaking free, loving oneself for who one is, and stepping out of the shadows.

**When the sharpest words
wanna cut me down
I'm gonna send a flood,
gonna drown 'em out
I am brave, I am bruised
I am who I'm meant to be, this
is me**

from *This is me* by Benj Pasek & Justin Paul

True Colors is an arrangement by composer and conductor Saunder Choi, originally written for the multi-award-winning Philippine Madrigal Singers, and now sung by choirs around the world. The original song from 1986, performed and produced by artist Cyndi Lauper, with lyrics by Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly, became a major hit and quickly reached number 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

The song has since been called a kind of "anthem of liberation" for its recognition of LGBTQIA+ people's rights in society. *True Colors* is one of several works that Choi has written for and/or dedicated to the LGBTQIA+ movement.

**Let go of the pain
And fight through the struggle.
Come out of the dark and show
the world who you are.
We'll see our lives
In living technicolor
When all of humanity
become one**

from the arrangement *True Colors* with text by Saunder Choi



ABOUT THE MUSIC & TEXT

When a Thought of War Comes

is a largely wordless choral piece by Marie-Claire Saidon. The work begins with a quote from `Abdu'l-Bahá, the leader of the Bahá'í Faith from 1892, which was spoken in a speech in 1913 at the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

"Here, you will find the battle to root out thoughts of war and hatred from one's mind."

Marie-Claire Saidon

"When a thought of war comes. Oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love."

`Abdu'l-Bahà



ABOUT THE MUSIC & TEXT

Where is Love? is a song from the British musical *Oliver!* from 1960, written by Lionel Bart. The musical is based on the Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist* from 1838.

Where is love? Does it fall from sky above? Is it underneath the willow tree that I've been dreaming of?

Where is She who I close my eyes to see? Will I ever know the sweet hello that's meant for only me?

Who can say where She may hide? Must I travel far and wide? Till I am beside the someone who I can mean something to?

Where is love?

**Every night I kneel and pray:
Let tomorrow be the day
when I see the face of someone
who I can mean something to.**

Where is love?

from *Where is love?*
by Lionel Bart

Who do you think you are? is a piece for a solo female voice (soprano, alto, or mezzo-soprano). The work explores how men's sexual harassment and threats of violence against women prevent women from fully participating and taking up space in the public sphere. The piece is based on quotes from the internet in which men express themselves in a threatening way about women. The text also contains excerpts from the Norwegian Constitution on freedom of speech, as well as criticism of men's verbal and written harassment of women.

"Threats are not protected by freedom of speech, so why are they allowed to flourish within the realm of the internet or other forms of communication?"

from the preface to *Who do you think you are?* by Bibbi Moslet & Cecilie Ore

Shall I tell you what I found in my mailbox today?

**Keep your mouth shut, you cock-sucking whore.
Keep your mouth shut, you have nwo intelligence.
Keep your mouth shut, your mouth shut!
One day I will cut your throat**

Why do I have to keep my mouth shut? There shall be freedom of expression, but for whom?

Shall I tell you what I found in my mailbox today?

**Who do you think you are?
Go drown yourself, go drown yourself, you ugly, stupid, stinking bitch! Time has come...**

Where does this anger come from? I am a journalist, a politician, a writery, a musician and an artist...-I am a woman. Why must I be silenced?

Shall I tell you what I found in my mailbox today?

**I want you dead, want you dead,
Die, just die! I want you dead!
Die, just die! Die, just die!**

from Who do you think you are?
by Bibbi Moslet & Cecilie Ore

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QUESTIONS TO

LONE LARSEN

Conductor and Artistic Director

What is the best thing about the show?

- I AM LIKE MANY is a colourful celebration of life conveyed through amazing choral works with roots in our time.

There is a presence in the music, lyrics and theme that strikes a chord with me on many different levels at the same time. We work with both seriousness and humor, and that creates a sincere and inclusive expression for me.

How does it differ from previous shows you've done with VoNo?

– We wanted to find a new angle we hadn't had before, and we decided to start with the set design and collaboration with the set designer Fanny Senocq.

Normally, set design comes in at a much later stage, but we wanted to turn it upside down and see what creative impulses we got from Fanny's sketches and ideas. It's an interesting journey to see how a globe, a box, or a colour can be both abstract and evoke different emotions

How did you choose the music?

– When I look for music, the theme and the moods we want to create are always present. Then, of course, there are a lot of things to consider, such as vocal range, soundscape, musical language, or whether it is a

commissioned work. I let my musical intuition do the work and think a lot about the individual voices of the singers.

– It's wonderful when it finally falls into place. In addition to the written music, VoNo works with improvisation, which creates presence and focus in every performance. I love that I am always surprised by the music that arises in the moment, even though I know the ensemble so well.

– I am quite childish and playful, and improvisation keeps that part of me alive even when we work with serious topics.

ULF EVRÉN

Director & Choreographer

What's the difference in doing choreography for theatre, dance or a choir?

- When I choreograph theater, I am often focused on a classic story with a beginning, middle, and end. In dance choreographies, the focus is on rhythm and the body's dancing expression. In my work with VoNo, I have focused on images and the group's form. The storytelling and rhythm are underneath and support the group's visual expression.

What do you mean when you say, "Build a Renaissance statue" to the singers?

- Many Renaissance statues express for me the perfect mix of human suffering, drives, weaknesses, and classical beauty ideals. Images of humanity that tell us who we are through a beauty filter. An expression that I think goes well with the classically modern music that is found in the performance.

What's the best thing about I AM LIKE MANY?

- For me, music is essential, there is no art form that moves me as music does. Getting to work with well-crafted music performed by professional singers is a great privilege for me. Every note and every word is weighed on a golden scale. The entire piece has, in addition to musical drama and beauty, a message that is engaging and important.

FANNY SENOCQ

Set designer and Artist

What do the colours of the rainbow mean to you?

- I found a quote by Mark Chagall that I think fits the performance so well:

"All colors are friends with their neighbors and lovers of their opposites." In this project, I wanted to work with contrasts in both the set design and the costumes. The absence of strong colors in a conforming grayscale and strict uniform decorative elements that turn into a fireworks display of different colors and shapes.

What's been the biggest challenge?

– The task of creating a light and portable set design that the ensemble could transport themselves by train or car, that did not require advanced rigging, while still being able to create a variety of stage scenes and fill a stage area of 10x10 meters!

What's the best thing about the show?

– It is wonderful that I get to work with a professional ensemble that, under the leadership of Lone Larsen, dares to break the "taboos" about what a choir can and cannot do. It is wonderful when my scene set ideas come to life through the artists, director, and choreographer! – I AM LIKE MANY addresses many important and difficult topics, with seriousness and humor in a fine balancing act. The theme of human rights is always incredibly important, but especially now.

ABOUT VONO

”VoNo points the way to a new, vibrant, humane, and personal re-creation of the choral art.”

André de Quadros, fd ordförande i
International Federation for Choral Music

For over two decades the vocal ensemble VoNo has received great attention both in Sweden and internationally for its innovative performances. With traditional a cappella as a foundation, they are constantly exploring new expressions within ensemble singing, improvisation, and stage performance.

VoNo has an extensive touring schedule in Sweden and Europe.

The ensemble consists of twelve singers under the direction of conductor and artistic director Lone Larsen.

VoNo has previously appeared in performances such as Earth Call (2021), In the dark (2019, Konstakademien) and The Little Match Girl Passion (2018, Folkoperan).

Learn more about upcoming tours and concerts at vono.se

I AM LIKE MANY is supported
by Musikverket & Kulturrådet

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