

## Kile Smith | composer

"sounds like no other music"—Miami Herald | "spectacular, profoundly contemporary"—Gramophone | "magnificent"—Fanfare | "breathtaking, spellbinding"—Philadelphia Inquirer | "profoundly direct emotional appeal"—Audiophile Audition | "almost preternaturally beautiful"—Philadelphia City Paper

HOME ABOUT BLOG CALENDAR MUSIC RADIO REVIEWS WRITINGS

### Vespers with The Choristers

[Leave a reply](#)

What a stupendous concert with [Vespers](#) and [The Choristers](#)! They are the first non-professional, non-university choir to perform the entire *Vespers*, and it came off brilliantly at Saturday night's concert in the beautiful Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale, Pa.

When their artistic director David Spitko approached me about taking on *Vespers*, the first thing I told him was, "It's hard, you know." This is a bit of an irony for me, since I had spent a good bit of my career writing fairly easy choral music for small church choirs. But [Piffaro, The Renaissance Band](#) commissioned me for a work for which they would hire [The Crossing](#), the contemporary-music choir who can sing anything with one arm tied behind their back. So I made much of it, well, hard, including polyrhythmic (and unmeasured)

chanting, long swaths of unaccompanied singing, and much divisi, including a good chunk of one hymn written in 16 voices.

Piffaro and The Crossing followed up the premiere and recording with more performances a couple years later. University choirs and others took on separate parts of it, some of which used modern-instrument arrangements I made *ad hoc*. Donald Nally, conductor of The Crossing, took it with him for performances with Northwestern University. [Seraphic Fire](#) gave multiple performances this past spring with Piffaro, and there are future concerts in the works.

David said that, yes, he knew it was hard, but that he absolutely had fallen in love with *Vespers*, had already pored over the score ([PDFs come with the CD](#)), was convinced that his group could do it, and was determined to hire Piffaro for the concert. Clearly, Dave had done his homework, and very quickly made all the stars align for this to happen.

His preparation paid off. When I arrived at a rehearsal over a week ago, they had already been looking at it and rehearsing since the summer. I knew at the rehearsal that it was going to work. At the dress rehearsal Friday night, it was glorious.

### Contact

KILE AT KILESMITH DOT COM



FOLLOW VIA EMAIL

Enter your email address to follow my blog and to receive notifications of new posts.

Join 157 other followers

### Coming up

11 Feb 2016. [The Nobility of Women](#), Mélomanie, West Chester University

14 Feb 2016. [The Nobility of Women](#), Mélomanie, Delaware Ctr for the Contemporary Arts

14 Feb 2016. [Where Flames a Word](#). The Crossing, Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, 4:00

17 Feb 2016. [Stationen auf dem Wege zur Freiheit](#) (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). Jacqueline Smith, soprano; Brian Freer, tenor saxophone; Kenneth Bormann, piano. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church,

They opened the concert with three Palestrina works, led by associate conductor Kelly Wyszomierski. Piffaro then performed an instrumental-only set. I talked a bit, there was a short intermission, and the second half was Spitko conducting The Choristers and Piffaro in *Vespers*.

They lifted the roof.

I can't thank David enough for his love of the music and for his doggedness in willing this performance into reality. The soloists were marvelous: Malinda Hasslett, Maren Montalbano, Lawrence Jones, Frank Mitchell, and joining on the Magnificat, Rebecca Siler and Jacqueline Dunleavy. The choir of about 65 rocked! I was thrilled beyond words by their work, dedication, and beautiful sound. Many of them came up to me during rehearsals and after the concert to tell me how much this experience meant to them, and how touched they were by *Vespers*. This means everything.

Thank you, David, thank you, Choristers, thank you, supporters and funders, thank you, Piffaro, thank you, soloists, and thank you friends old and new who came out. It was a special experience I will never forget.

Share this:

Share

Loading...

This entry was posted in [Choral music](#), [Lutheran](#), [new music](#) and tagged [David Spitko](#), [Piffaro](#), [The Choristers](#), [Vespers](#) on [22 November 2015](#).

[← Patriotism and Music](#)

[Scott Joplin Made Ragtime His Own →](#)

Leave a Reply

Email (required) (Address never made public)

Name (required)

Website

Abington, Pa.

Spring 2016. **Grandmother's Garden**. Settlement Music School Gleeksman-Kohn Children's Choir commission. Rae Ann Anderson, music director.

Spring 2016. **Canticle**. Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati commission. Craig Hella Johnson, music director

Summer 2016. **Jeff Quartet** project, The Crossing. Donald Nally, conductor

[the complete calendar...](#)



**[American Spirituals, Book One](#)**

violin, piano

**[American Spirituals, Book Two](#)**

cello, piano

**[And Seeing the Multitudes](#)**

cello concerto

**[Anthems](#)**

**[The Bremen Town Musicians](#)**

narrator, violin, cello

**[The Consolation of Apollo](#)**

SATB, perc

**[Gold and Silver](#)**

overture for orchestra

**[Mass for Philadelphia](#)**

congregation, descant, organ

**[May Day](#)**

SATB, 2-part children's choir

**[The Nobility of Women](#)**

dance suite for chamber ensemble

**[Now ys the tyme of Crystymas](#)**

SATB div. also SATB, opt. piano

**[Plain Truths](#)**

baritone, string quartet or piano

**[The Red Book of Montserrat](#)**

string orchestra

**[Red-tail and Hummingbird](#)**

brass quintet or sextet

**[Three Dances](#)**

new version for string orchestra