

Be grateful for what I have *Practice more! Smile and laugh without fear*
CHERISH EVERY DAY *Inspire myself*
Go to bed early! Love **Be love** *live in the moment* *Enjoy the beautiful music* *Make my bed*
Enjoy the little things that **THANK GOD** **STRIVE** *for excellence*
make life worth living **FOR MY LIFE** **love** *MAKE SOMEONE*
Make sure the people I love know that I **REFUSE** *SMILE*
Remember to find my song and my joy in myself **TO BECOME**
Be kind to a stranger **REMEMBER TO CHERISH EVERY DAY.** **A HATER**
BE CONTENT WITH WHO I AM **YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN IT COULD BE YOUR LAST**
Water the *Appreciate* those in my life that make **Live Loved**
plants it possible to enjoy things around me *Accept that my parents did the best they*
could for where they were and what they had **Love and see** **Be inspired by**
Enjoy the beautiful music **love all around** **Joe Miller's**
Make sure to tell my mom **me like it is** **my last day choir** *Choose to be happy*
just how much I love her *Kiss my wife* **Be kind**
REMEMBER TO BE GRATEFUL **MUSIC** **WITH THOSE I LOVE** *even if I don't want to be*
ENJOY THE GIFT OF

'Today I Will' project continues with new composition

03/31/2020

Ellen Gilson Voth '97 uses audience responses in new choral work.

How would you finish the sentence, "Today I will...."

That was the question the Westminster Choir asked audiences during the ensemble's 2017 tour. Titled "A Thousand Years to Live," the tour program focused on the opportunities and challenges that each day presents to us. At each concert, the choir invited audience members to consider how they would spend the next 24 hours and communicate their intention by completing the sentence: Today I will....

During intermission, the audience wrote their responses on cards and gave them to the choir members, or tweeted them with the hashtag #wccctodaywill. During the second half of the concert, choir members paused between works to read some of the messages.

"The response to this question was quite overwhelming and inspiring," says conductor Joe Miller, who developed the project with Anne Sears, Westminster's director of external affairs. "They were joyous, sad, spiritual, humorous, profound and mundane. They honestly reflected what it is to be human."

Later that year, Miller and Sears described the project during a presentation titled "The Creative Process of Programming: Giving Voice to Community" at the American Choral Directors Association's National Conference in Minneapolis. Westminster alumna Ellen Gilson Voth MM '97 heard their presentation and, later that spring, contacted Westminster about her idea for a choral composition and her interest in spending time with the audience responses. Moved by their messages, she composed a choral work titled *Today I Will* using several of the responses for text. The piece was first premiered by the Western CT State University Choir while Voth served as guest faculty there. With permission for use, ECS Publishing released Voth's composition in 2019.

"I chose some responses to the "Today I will" prompt that eventually took shape in four parts," Voth says. "The texts in the first section speak to our immediate surroundings, and the second connects our surroundings to our need for beauty and hope. In the third section I combine statements about simple activities in our day-to-day lives with statements of resolve for the ways we aspire to live our lives. The final section is a broad statement about our notes "in the great choir of humankind.""

“Of course there was no way to know that this piece would begin to circulate in 2020 just as a world health crisis was emerging. I’m amazed for how these words capture so much of our human experience and speak on even deeper levels in the time we are facing now. My hope is that each singer and conductor who spends time with this piece will be as inspired by these responses as I was in the process of writing.”

Voth received a bachelor's degree from the Conservatory of Music at Wheaton College, a master's degree from Westminster Choir College and a doctorate from The Hartt School, University of Hartford. She brings a broad background as pianist, organist, choral conductor and educator to her work as an arranger and composer. She is also artistic director of the Farmington Valley Chorale based in Simsbury, Conn. Learn more about her at ellengilsonvoth.net.

The score for *Today I Will* is available for review and purchase at ecspublishing.com.

A video about the *Today I Will* project with photos is at rider.edu/wcctodaywill.



Anne Sears, Joe Miller, Ellen Gilson Voth at the ACDA Eastern Region Conference