

*A Message from  
Musical Director  
Eric Milnes*



Dear Friends of The Vermont Choral Union,

I first learned of The Vermont Choral Union after relocating north from the New York City area in 2020. As I began work at the College Street Congregational Church, I became aware of a vibrant and dynamic community of avocational singers in the region, and of the several ensembles centered around Burlington with which many of these singers are engaged. I was impressed to learn of the scope and level of activity of the various choirs, of their distinguished legacies and admirable commitment to a wonderful and varied repertoire. Having worked with vocal ensembles both amateur and professional across North America, I was intrigued to learn that The Vermont Choral Union, about whom I had heard glowing reports, would be seeking a new director, and that I might be considered as a candidate for the position. I am delighted to have been chosen for the role as this wonderful ensemble charts its future and pursues a mission in the cultural life of the region.

Having just recently commenced work with them, I am in a privileged and fleeting moment of opportunity for a first impression of the ensemble and its members - to see and hear them in the fresh light of a new musical relationship. Many of you, enthusiasts of The Vermont Choral Union have known the group and its work for years, even decades. Others of you may be more recent *aficionados* of the choral art to which our ensemble dedicates itself. Like myself, you will have been struck by the enthusiasm and joy which they bring to their efforts, the dedication which they offer in nourishing it, and the curiosity and sense of discovery with which they embrace new and unfamiliar repertoire as well as their delight in rediscovering the familiar. *The Joy of Singing* may seem a platitude, but amongst the members of The Vermont Choral Union, it is a living and breathing phenomenon. They indulge themselves fully in the limitless pleasure that community music-making can be, and they bring an uncommon energy and sense of purpose to it. It is indeed a privilege to serve them as director, a role in which I view myself as simply a facilitator of the group's pursuit of the sublime in music and excellence in achieving it. I am very excited about the first program we will present in December, and invite you to share the joy of our doing so with your generous support of our efforts.

I believe the Choral Union is entering upon a new chapter of its story, an uncharted and ambitious leg of its journey. It will be my pleasure to share with the ensemble new methods of preparation, new approaches to programming, and a commitment to the kind of diversity in repertoire that invites new modalities and a fresh view of opportunities. I believe that there are relatively unexplored areas of the wondrous vocal canon which will provide new listening delights to our region, and I intend, with the members of VCU, to serve that endeavor.

Would you consider joining me and The Vermont Choral Union in our efforts? I will be bringing forty years of international directing, performing and teaching experience to the work, and I know the singers will be offering all of their musical talents, energy and cumulative experience as well. We ask for you to continue to bring your support and encouragement, without which our efforts might be as "*a tree falling in the forest.*" We are embracing a new day and a new way, and we would like to invite you along on this journey of discovery and delight!

Grateful for your generousities, and looking forward to meeting you at our December events,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric J. Milnes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Eric J. Milnes