



“The Legend of Bijan and Manijeh” will have its US Premiere in February 2024 with Key Chorale and Orchestra, Joseph Caulkins conducting

New York/Sarasota, June 7, 2022 – Key Chorale will present the US premiere of “The Legend of Bijan and Manijeh” by Iranian composer Farhad Poupel for piano, choir, and orchestra with pianist Jeffrey Biegel in February 2024. This evocative work is based on an ancient Persian love story taken from the Shahnameh (The Book of Kings), an epic poem by Persian poet Ferdowsi written between 977 and 1010 CE.

The friendship between artistic director Joseph Caulkins and pianist Jeffrey Biegel led to this opportunity for Key Chorale. They have done numerous projects together, including one memorable performance of Beethoven’s “Choral Fantasy” in 2018 with the Chorale.

“In addition to the traditional repertoire for piano, I have enjoyed exploring the many possibilities to continue adding to the repertoire by way of commissioning composers to write new music for piano and orchestra, as well as adding chorus,” says pianist Jeffrey Biegel. “This project with Farhad Poupel is the first time I have created a project with a composer outside of the US. His music speaks a language of harmonies and melodies reflecting his heritage, which is precisely what I had proposed. I have no doubt this work by Poupel will become a staple of the repertoire and will be enjoyed for many generations to come.”

Farhad Poupel initially approached Jeffrey Biegel regarding his solo piano music, and conversations led to Biegel inquiring if Poupel would compose a new work for piano, orchestra and chorus based on a Persian theme. As a result, “The Legend of Bijan and Manijeh” will have its World Premiere in November 2022 with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Robert Franz conducting, and, the US Premiere in February 2024 with Key Chorale and Orchestra, Joseph Caulkins conducting. The story of 'Bijan and Manijeh' is about two lovers

from rival countries. As typical for many Shahnameh's stories, it helps us see the humanity beyond nationality, religious, gender, family ties or political wars. Here is the audio demo of the work:

<https://soundcloud.com/farhad-poupel-688829638/farhad-poupel-the-legend-of-bijan-and-maniyeh-1>

“I am deeply honored that this new piece of mine will be presented for the first time in the US by the distinguished forces of Jeffrey Biegel, Joseph Caulkins and Key Chorale,” says composer Farhad Poupel. “I am very excited to share my new music with US audiences. Without performers, our pieces are just dots on the paper, and in concerts, the music comes to life more than we had imagined in our minds.”

“Key Chorale is thrilled to present the US premiere of this evocative and magisterial setting of this ancient Persian love story,” says Maestro Caulkins. “Poupel’s music is full of deep, rich orchestral colors with an incredible sensitivity to how the voices and piano interact with the orchestra. I was blown away by the craftsmanship and emotional connection I had with the piece on my first hearing. That, along with the opportunity to work with pianist Jeffrey Biegel again, makes this premiere one that I welcome enthusiastically. What a rare opportunity to present a Persian story written by an Iranian composer here in Sarasota, Florida. I know our audiences will be taken on a wonderful journey with this new composition.”

For more information about Poupel, please visit his website: <http://www.farhadpoupel.com>

For more information about Biegel, please visit his website: <http://www.jeffreybiegel.com>

For more information about Key Chorale and Maestro Caulkins, please visit their website: <https://keychorale.org>

For details about this commissioning project, please contact Jeffery Biegel at biegel88@yahoo.com