

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Many if not all of us have had the pleasure of watching choruses of young people sing. It's an experience rich with affirmation, it seems to me. Here is a lovely poem by Tim Nolan, an attorney in Minneapolis.

At the Choral Concert

The high school kids are so beautiful
in their lavender blouses and crisp white shirts.

They open their mouths to sing with that
far-off stare they had looking out from the crib.

Their voices lift up from the marble bed
of the high altar to the blue endless ceiling

of heaven as depicted in the cloudy dome—
and we—as the parents—crane our necks

to see our children and what is above us—
and ahead of us—until the end when we

are invited up to sing with them—sopranos
and altos—tenors and basses—to sing the great

Hallelujah Chorus—and I'm standing with the other
stunned and gray fathers—holding our sheet music—

searching for our parts—and we realize—
our voices are surprisingly rich—experienced—

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth—
and how do we all know to come in

at exactly the right moment?—*Forever and ever*—
and how can it not seem that we shall reign

forever and ever—in one voice with our beautiful
children—looking out into all those lights.

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