

Sally Ahner is a musician, visual artist, and teacher of the Alexander Technique, a mind-body discipline that helps us undo habits that keep us from moving freely, thinking clearly, sensing deeply. She holds music degrees from Salem College (NC) and the Eastman School of Music. Additional training in German Lieder came with master teachers at the Franz Schubert Institut in Austria. She has sung with regional orchestras in Tennessee, Texas, and Arkansas, and given many recitals locally at the Blair School of Music where she taught voice and related subjects for 14 years.

In 1998, she had a major life-change, and trained to teach the Alexander Technique, which she has taught at Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music since 2003.

Her interest in spiritual matters took her to the Vanderbilt Divinity School for religious studies. Along with the life-change came training in energy healing at The Estuary in Nashville and with Healing Touch teacher Bonnie Johnson.

Around West End, she is known as a spiritual teacher and the composer of the much-loved communion setting used in worship. She also leads the Sacred Journeys Sunday school class and the Taizé Service of Prayer and Healing, both of which feature training and experience in the contemplative way of being.

Still to Come in the Series

March 12	Elizabeth Smith , organ
March 26	Nicholas Bergin , organ
April 2	Andrew Risinger , organ

Each half-hour concert begins at noon in the sanctuary. Following the concert, lunch is available at 12:30 p.m. in McWhirter Hall for \$11.

Lunch requires a reservation. Register online at westendumc.org/lentenconcerts or call the church at 615.321.8500 by noon on Wednesday, one day prior to each concert.

LENTEN CONCERT SERIES

March 12, 2020 • 12 Noon

Sally Ahner, soprano



West End United Methodist Church

2200 West End Avenue • Nashville, Tennessee 37203 • 615.321.8500

Emily Dickinson Poet and Contemplative



Please hold your applause until the end of each half of the program.

I'm Nobody Vince Persichetti (1915-1987)
"In Truth, I'm Emily..."

The Letter Lee Hoiby (1926-2011)
"It is Sunday now..."

The Sabbath Arthur Farwell (1872-1952)
"There is that which is called an 'awakening'..."

Why do they shut me out of Heaven? Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
"When I was 32..."

Will there be a morning? Richard Hundley (1931-2018)



Five Emily Dickinson Songs Sally Ahner (b. 1948)

I dwell in Possibility
Tell all the Truth
To make a prairie
There's a certain Slant of light
Hope is the thing with feathers

Program Notes

Emily Dickinson is one of this country's best-loved poets. Born in 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts, she died there in 1886. She lived an interior life of much richness even while keeping mostly to her family home in Amherst. At one point she stopped going out altogether, and wrote in a letter, "I do not cross my Father's ground to any House or town."

Emily had a pert and irreverent sense of humor, and she suffered from what we might today call "depression." She wrote numerous letters, and they became her dominant mode of communicating outside her immediate family and our greatest source besides her poetry of how she viewed life.

Her spiritual life was deep and her intellectual acumen great. She loved her garden and spent many hours in Nature, whom she called, "the Gentlest Mother." She was not, however, particularly interested in institutional religion, preferring to stay at home rather than to go to church. But she loved music and would sit outside in good weather to "listen to the anthems." She seems to have come into this contemplative lifestyle simply by being herself.

The first half of this program is excerpted from a full-length recital I gave about 20 years ago entitled, "In Truth, I'm Emily." It was a kind of "music-drama," with words (mostly hers) spoken between songs, as I will do here.

The second half of this program consists of five songs I composed using her poetry. Either there was no setting of one of my favorite poems (*Tell all the Truth*) or I felt the existing setting did not quite fit with my idea of the meaning of the poem (*Hope is the thing with feathers*). Also, at this stage in life, after singing very difficult music for most of my performing life, I wanted something simpler yet still doing justice to her poetry. Whether or not I have succeeded, you can be the judge of that!