

CONSTELLATION  
MEN'S ENSEMBLE

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JEFFREY DERUS • ROBERT MAGGIO • DAVID LANG

## MAN UP / MAN DOWN - Constellation Men's Ensemble

HOME - Jeffrey Derus (b. 1990) [4:50]

*Soloists: Carl Alexander, Matthew Cummings*

Man Up / Man Down - Robert Maggio (b. 1964)

1. Skate Park Guy 1 [1:16]

2. All The Silences [2:51]

3. Interlude I: Manhood in the 21st Century [0:51]

4. Skate Park Guy 2 [1:06]

5. Jet [4:12]

*Soloists: Matthew Brennan, Micah Dingler*

6. Interlude II: Refrains & Misconceptions [2:32]

*Soloists: Matthew Cramer, Ian Prichard*

7. Skate Park Guy 3 [1:14]

8. Flower Beds [5:39]

9. Interlude III: A life just like their fathers' [3:11]

10. Skate Park Guy 4 [1:18]

11. West Point [4:41]

*Soloist: Ryan Townsend Strand*

manifesto - david lang (b. 1957) [4:08]

*Soloists: Carl Alexander, Dario Amador-Lage, Ryan Townsend Strand*

Total Time: [37:58]

Constellation has been in existence since 2013 and yet, 10 years later, this is our first album to be released. Part of that was simply our longstanding focus on “Music & Brotherhood” that began with Saturday morning rehearsals followed by a “cheers!” in Evanston, IL. Another part of that has been the uphill battle to create, sustain, and grow an arts organization in America today.

But the biggest focus for me has always been the “why” of all of our performances. What place does another vocal ensemble have in the recorded history of music to release albums unless it has something to say? With the creation of *Man Up / Man Down*, I knew we had something important to add to the conversation.

The album features Robert Maggio's large-scale work of the same name, *Man Up / Man Down*, which explores masculinity in America through multiple lenses, including anonymously sourced responses from prompts about pride, parenting, our past, and more. The album begins with Jeffrey Derus' *HOME*, depicting a mother rocking her child to sleep and the world that constantly tries to invade our innermost peace. It ends with david lang's *manifesto* and after a journey of such intense introspection regarding societal norms of masculinity, simply wanting “to be with someone who gets me” is such a perfect close.

Thank you for trusting us with your ears and your minds.

—Ryan Townsend Strand, executive director & tenor

## HOME

Here is a thing my heart wishes the world had more of:  
I heard it in the air of one night when I listened  
To a mother singing softly to a child restless and angry  
in the darkness.  
– Poetry by Carl Sandburg

## Man Up / Man Down

What is manhood? In particular, what does masculinity look and feel like in 21st century America? These were the questions that launched me into writing *Man Up / Man Down* for Constellation Men's Ensemble. The process began with several in-depth conversations on these topics with CME's Ryan Townsend Strand and Kyle Sackett. We wanted this new choral work to explore how masculine identity takes shape in our evolving world; how our personal histories of family, race, religion, education, status, exposure, geography, etc. affect the formation of our male identities. We also wanted to examine the societal pressures to maintain a certain male identity, even if that identity doesn't feel true. We discussed myriad possible sources for texts, initially sparked by an art exhibit Kyle had seen at Richmond College called "Man Up! Man Down! Images of Masculinity..." The catalog for this exhibit featured a quote from American sociologist Michael Kimmel, in which he summarized a long-standing model of masculinity. It begins like this: "No sissy stuff, that's the first rule. You can never do anything that even remotely hints of femininity..." I read much of Kimmel's writings after this, focusing mainly on his book, *Masculinity In America: A Cultural History*. Kyle and Ryan sent out dozens of questionnaires to a diverse collection of friends, asking them to recall images of manliness from their childhoods, and to reflect on what they think manhood is in America today. The questionnaire responses led to the creation of more text ideas, as did scouring the internet for common conceptions and misconceptions of what masculinity is. We also sought out the perspectives of women and non-white writers. From the start of this project, our goal

was to learn more about the different ways identity and perception take shape, to consider the words we use and their effects, and to form a more diverse understanding of CME's charge of creating Music and Brotherhood.

– Robert Maggio

*Special thanks to Ryan Townsend Strand and Kyle Sackett, for their collaborative genius in helping shape this composition.*

### 1. Skate Park Guy 1 (Michael Kimmel)

Imagine a skate park in Long Beach,  
and it's about seven at night,  
it's just getting dark and everybody's gone home  
except this one lone guy wearing a flannel shirt tied around his waist,  
kind of stringy, oily hair and acne, he's about fifteen.  
He's the kid that gets bullied in school,  
he has no friends,  
he's gonna go home,  
have a quick dinner,  
and then go down to the basement and play video games all night,  
blowing up the rest of the world  
That's his daily routine.

### 2. All the Silences (Rachel Girty)

Sad preacher,  
cowboy with a frozen look.  
I remember a professor  
nostalgic for the days of high camp and the closet.  
I think of my ancestors,

of the word inheritance.  
I think of masculinity  
and go back to my Catholic school Latin class.  
Virtue. Honor.  
I think of video game heroes,  
how silent, how impossible they are.  
I think of Humphrey Bogart's stare.  
A terrible power,  
a terrible responsibility,  
but only in the movies do these little moments make sense  
All the silences.  
How it feels to be shaped by hardness,  
to have to grow to fit its shape

### **3. Interlude I: Manhood in the 21st Century** (*Various*)

I should use my platform as the dominant gender  
to uplift and support the movements of marginalized groups:  
feminism, Black Lives Matter, anti-racism  
I am confident in myself and my sexuality.  
I am emotionally mature.  
I respect boundaries.  
I challenge gender roles  
I am authentically myself.  
I am allowed to cry.  
I can be a caretaker.  
I can be a homemaker.  
I can be a high-heeled, tattooed, glitter bombed, wig wearing, defiance of Dads gone-by.

### **4. Skate Park Guy 2** (*Kimmel*)

And into the skater park come these guys who are like awesome and scary.  
And they start talking to him,  
“Hey, how you doing, what’s up?”  
And by the end of the conversation they say,  
“You should hang with us.  
You’re really cool.  
You should hang with us.  
We have awesome parties.  
You should hang with us.  
Everybody gets really drunk,  
It’s really fun,  
and there’s girls,  
and then, after everybody’s drunk and stuff,  
we all take painkillers  
and we go out in the streets  
and we look for immigrant groups and we have fights with them.  
It’s fantastic.  
Dude, you should definitely come with us.”

### **5. Jet** (*Tony Hoagland*)

Sometimes I wish I were still out  
on the back porch, drinking jet fuel  
with the boys, getting louder and louder  
as the empty cans drop out of our paws  
like booster rockets falling back to Earth  
and we soar up into the summer stars.

Summer. The big sky river rushes overhead,  
bearing asteroids and mist, blind fish  
and old space suits with skeletons inside.  
On Earth, men celebrate their hairiness,  
and it is good, a way of letting life  
out of the box, uncapping the bottle  
to let the effervescence gush  
through the narrow, usually constricted neck.  
And now the crickets plug in their appliances  
in unison, and then the fireflies flash  
dots and dashes in the grass, like punctuation  
for the labyrinthine, untrue tales of sex  
someone is telling in the dark, though  
no one really hears. We gaze into the night  
as if remembering the bright unbroken planet  
we once came from,  
to which we will never  
be permitted to return.  
We are amazed how hurt we are.  
We would give anything for what we have.

#### 6. Interlude I: Refrains & Misconceptions *(Various)*

I should man up.  
I should be stoic.  
I should be strong.  
I should be a protector.  
I should be big and brave.

I should be competent.  
I should have it all together.  
I should pretend I don't need any help.  
I should be able to do it on my own.  
I should be able to deal with everything on my own.  
I should be able to handle anything.  
I should be a great lover.  
I shouldn't express affection.  
I should have an insatiable appetite for sex.  
I shouldn't be emotional.  
I should have sex, money and power.  
I shouldn't be weak.  
I shouldn't break down.  
I shouldn't cry.  
Emotions are scary, weak, and problematic.  
I am ashamed about being seen doing therapy.  
The thought of going to therapy and crying with another person is scary.  
I am going to try other solutions first: isolation, substance use, aggression.  
We all cheat.  
We all want sex.  
We are only nice to you so we can sleep with you.  
We can't express our feelings.  
We have no feelings.  
We are the opposite of women.  
We cannot handle successful women.  
We are mama's boys.  
We have it easy.

We don't experience pressure.  
We love fixing things.  
We are sloppy.  
We live for sports.  
We like violence.

### 7. **Skate Park Guy 3** (*Kimmel*)

So he goes with them,  
he goes to parties,  
they go fight,  
they do all these things,  
and they're telling him,  
"You're one of us,  
you're a pal,  
you're a comrade."  
And so what he gets, at that moment, has nothing to do with ideology.  
They haven't even talked about it yet.  
They talk about how he's a cool dude,  
how he hangs out with the guys,  
how he's one of them,  
he's part of the family,  
he feels completely a sense of connection, community, camaraderie

### 8. **Flower Beds** (*Jericho Brown*)

I come from a family where generation after generation, we, for the sake of beauty, tended our houses, our land, our lawns, our flower beds. There were gardens in the backyard where you

grew greens, beans, tomatoes, and potatoes, but in the front yard, you had a flower bed for no reason other than the fact that it was beautiful. Those are the kinds of things we don't know or see about each other, particularly when we think about Black men.

That's who my dad was. He was also a lot of awful, but I have to remember that he taught me that. I can share that feeling with him now because I have a yard; I didn't understand it before. I remember turning the corner to our house when I was a kid, entering the driveway, and hearing him say, "Ooh that's pretty." I got to see something in him that isn't what people automatically think about him when they simply think of his image.

This is why I'm interested in this thing called masculinity. I'm interested in the fact that it could exist, but in our minds, in our perceptions, we keep leaving stuff out of it. People have to fall in love. People have to take care of their kids. I want to make sure men know it's possible for them to have feelings and that those feelings are okay to have. I think our world would have us believe they're not okay to have.

### 9. **Interlude III: A life just like their fathers'** (*Kimmel*)

"I will work my ass off at a job that I hate  
for a boss that I hate,  
who's an idiot,  
but I will work hard,  
I will pay my taxes.  
And in return for that,  
like my daddy before me and my grandfather before him,  
I will be able to support a family by myself,  
and I will be able to buy a house by myself."

So this is the bargain they feel like they wanted,  
and it's gone;  
they can't do it.  
And they feel like they've been betrayed.  
And now they have to talk about gender-neutral bathrooms?  
And now they have to talk about same-sex marriage?  
Their heads are exploding.  
It's not that they're against these reforms;  
they're completely bewildered.  
They don't know what to do  
I think we do ourselves a great disservice  
if we don't pay attention,  
not to the opposition  
but to the anguish that comes  
from being so bewildered by the extent and the rapidity of this change.  
If we don't pay attention to that,  
we will lose them.

#### **10. Skate Park Guy 4** (*Kimmel*)

And they say,  
"You're a real man, you're awesome."  
And then, and only then,  
do they start saying,  
"You have a sacred mission.  
You have to preserve the white race.  
You, as a man, have to do this.  
You have to preserve the white race."

We have to do this together.  
You're one of us,  
you're a pal,  
you're a comrade."

#### **11. West Point** (*Kimmel*)

(Hail, Alma Mater, dear!  
To us be ever near...)

I was at West Point,  
an auditorium full of cadets,  
(Help us thy motto bear,  
Thru all the years.)  
and I asked them,  
"What does it mean to be a good man?  
(Let Duty be well performed.  
Honor be e'er untarn'd.)  
You wake up in the morning,  
you look in the mirror, and you say to yourself,  
'You're a good man.  
(Country be ever armed,  
West Point, by thee!)  
You're a good man.  
What does that mean?"  
Here's what they said (now this is West Point):  
"Honor, duty, integrity, sacrifice,  
do the right thing,  
stand up for the little guy,

be a provider,  
be a protector.

I asked, “Where did you learn that?”

And they said,

“Well, it’s everywhere.

It’s our culture, it’s Homeric, it’s Shakespearean,  
it’s the Judeo-Christian heritage.

“So, that’s what it means to be a good man.

tell me if those show up for you when I say this:

‘Man up, be a real man.’”

“Oh no, that’s completely different.

And they said,

“Tough, strong, never show weakness,  
win at all costs, suck it up,  
play through pain, be competitive,  
get rich, get laid.

I said. “Where did you learn that?”

And they said, in order,

“My father, my coach, my guy friends, my older brother.”

### **manifesto**

*manifesto* was commissioned by Cantus Vocal Ensemble for a concert about love. It is a subject I am very curious about, and, as I so often do, I went to the internet to find out more. In the hopes of finding the essential qualities of a loving relationship, I ended up searching for things that people say they look for in a romantic partner. I searched the phrase “I want to be with someone who.” and then assembled the text out of the auto-completions. Not all of them - not the ones that were insulting to other people or were pornographic, or were unique to a certain

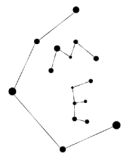
culture or nationality or religion. I really only wanted to find the answers that seemed most universal. I was hoping to imagine a larger community of people, all actively in search of love, listing the characteristics of lovers they could believe in. And because it ended up reading like a statement of belief, I called it manifesto.

– david lang

I want to be with someone  
who won’t get tired of me  
who wants to be with me for who I am  
who will never leave me  
I want to be with someone  
who is actually afraid to lose me  
who values open communication  
who really knows me  
I want to be with someone  
who cares about me, supports me, encourages me  
who makes my heart jump when I hear their key in the door  
who wants to be with me  
who is exactly what I’ve said I always wanted  
who accepts me for who I am  
who I find so interesting and exciting and understands my thinking  
who’s going to be healthy for the long haul  
who is smarter than that, with more depth and more soul  
who feels the same way  
who won’t clip my wings  
who laughs at my jokes  
who won’t leave



who likes to have fun  
who will want to be with me  
who is very comfortable  
who respects all the other aspects of me  
who gets me  
who can see a future with me  
who is comfortable  
who wants to work  
I want to be with someone  
who matches me  
who teaches me  
who wants to be  
– words and music by david lang



## CONSTELLATION MEN'S ENSEMBLE

Michael Kimmel's writings were used with permission of the author, published in the Summer 2018 issue of *Signs* in the article "Ask a Feminist: Michael Kimmel and Lisa Wade Discuss Toxic Masculinity."

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**Constellation Men's Ensemble** is a Chicago-based vocal group dedicated to creating distinct performances in unique spaces, empowering the next generation of singers through educational engagement, and expanding the repertoire for tenor/bass vocal music by commissioning new works from both emerging and established composers.

Since 2019, Constellation has begun partnering with other local nonprofits to raise awareness and funding for impactful organizations to the Chicagoland community through their Community Uplift program. Organizations to date include Center On Halsted, Boys & Girls Club of Metropolitan Chicago, Fostering Dignity, and the Alzheimer's Association of Illinois.

In 2016, CME founded our new music series NOVA—"New. Original. Vocal. Art." NOVA seeks to capitalize on their mission of commissioning new works and expanding the repertoire for tenor/bass voices. In 2022, NOVA V premiered works dealing with the theme of *humanhood* including our largest commission to date, Robert Maggio's *Man Up/Man Down*, exploring how masculine identity takes shape in our evolving world; how our personal histories of family, race, religion, education, status, exposure, geography, etc. affect the formation of our identities.

CME has partnered with Music of the Baroque's Strong Voices program to bring their music and passion to students within Chicago Public Schools. Workshop performances focused on careers in music, the joy of community through singing, and the multitude of ways that music can remain a part of your life after high school. Pre-COVID, they toured to New England and Maine, working with over 2,000 middle and high school students through their passion of connecting with the next generation of singers.

CME is the 2019 winner of the American Prize in Choral Performance, professional division. [www.constellationensemble.org](http://www.constellationensemble.org)





Jeffrey Derus is an American composer, producer, and musician. His music has gained a worldwide presence with commissions and performances from ensembles such as Choral Arts Initiative, The Jason Max Ferdinand Singers, Constellation Men's Ensemble, Inversion Ensemble, KC VITAS, and INSPIRARE. Hailed as “powerful, dramatic, lucid” (Sonograma Magazine), his music is “akin to that of Holy Minimalism.” (AllMusic)

Derus' premiere concert work, *From Wilderness: A Meditation on the Pacific Crest Trail*, received its debut in April 2022 with Director Brandon Elliott and Choral Arts Initiative. *From Wilderness* is praised for its “fascinating and multifaceted sound world.” (CD Hotlist) Ranked #3 on the Billboard Charts (Traditional Classical Albums), #2 Best Seller on iTunes Classical Charts, and #1 New Release Opera/Vocal Albums on Amazon.

Jeffrey is the recipient of the 2023 ACDA Brock Prize for Professional Composers as well as a Britten-Pears and Holst Foundation residency in Aldeburgh, UK. He is a proud member of ACDA, Chorus America, and the Recording Academy. As a founding board member and choral artist of Choral Arts Initiative; he is called to perform new choral works and compose “music with pros he can proudly rub elbows with.” (Midwest Records) [www.jeffreyderus.com](http://www.jeffreyderus.com).



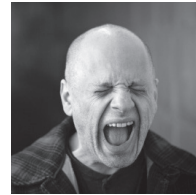
Robert Maggio is a composer, songwriter, and music educator. He has written music for orchestra, band, chorus, vocal soloists and chamber ensembles, as well as musical theatre, incidental music for plays, and scores for ballet and modern dance. He is a Professor of Theory and Composition at the West Chester University's Wells School of Music, and has been an artist in residence for school districts, arts councils, dance companies, community choirs, concert bands, and professional ensembles nationally.

Maggio is the recipient of grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, American Academy of Arts and Letters, Pew Fellowships in the Arts, American Composers Forum, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, New Jersey State Council on the Arts, ASCAP, BMI, and New Music

USA.

Published by Theodore Presser Company, Hickman Music Editions, TrevCo, and Yelton Rhodes, Maggio's music is recorded on the Summit, Albany and New World/CRI labels. A graduate of Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania, Robert Maggio lives with his family in Lambertville, New Jersey.

[www.robertmaggio.com](http://www.robertmaggio.com)



David Lang is one of the most highly esteemed and performed American composers writing today. His works have been performed around the world in most of the great concert halls.

Lang's *simple song #3*, written as part of his score for Paolo Sorrentino's acclaimed film *YOUTH*, received many awards nominations in 2016, including the Academy Award and Golden Globe. His opera *prisoner of the state* (with libretto by Lang) was co-commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Rotterdam's De Doelen Concert Hall,

London's Barbican Centre, Barcelona's l'Auditori, Bochum Symphony Orchestra, and Bruges's Concertgebouw, and premiered June 2019 in New York, conducted by Jaap van Zweden. *prisoner of the state* received its UK premiere in January 2020 with the BBC Symphony. The other European premieres were upended by the Covid-19 pandemic, and are now re-scheduled for 2023 beginning May 17 in Bochum, Germany and continuing to De Doelen in Rotterdam (Netherlands) on May 20, the Concertgebouw Bruges (Belgium) on May 23, the Malmö Opera (Sweden) on June 2, and L'Auditori de Barcelona (Spain) on July 22.

Lang is a Professor of Music Composition at the Yale School of Music and is Artist in Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. He is co-founder and co-artistic director of New York's legendary music collective *Bang on a Can*.

His music is published by Red Poppy Music and G. Ricordi & Co., New York (ASCAP) and is distributed worldwide by the Universal Music Publishing Group.

[www.davidlangmusic.com](http://www.davidlangmusic.com)

**Constellation Men's Ensemble:** Carl Alexander, Dario Amador-Lage, Matthew Brennan, Matthew Cramer, Matthew Cummings, Micah Dingler, Ian Prichard, Ryan Townsend Strand

Cover Artist Rūta Kuzmickas is a pianist, visual artist, poet, and singer-songwriter.

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## MAN UP / MAN DOWN - CONSTELLATION MEN'S ENSEMBLE

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