

YOUR

FRIDAY

Song of Songs festival blossoms with new works

BY MICHAEL UPCHURCH
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Seattle's gardens are opulent with new spring blooms. And two local choirs — taking their inspiration from the Song of Solomon, with its garden-rich imagery — are also blossoming forth with new works premiering this weekend and next.

The choirs are Seattle Pro Musica and the Medieval Women's Choir. And the occasion is "Song of Songs," a music-and-art festival at St. James Cathedral.

Seattle Pro Musica kicks things off Friday and Saturday with a program that includes Hebrew chant and works by John Dunstable, Thomas Tomkins and other Renaissance composers, along with modern fare by William Walton and others.

The premieres include Ivan Moody's "Canticum Canticorum IV," a Seattle Pro

Musica commission. The piece has its antecedents in a work composed for the Hilliard Ensemble in 1987. Moody, though British, lives in Lisbon where he is a former cantor and ordained Orthodox Church priest. His new work sets the Hebrew text of "Song of Solomon" to music. You can sample his work: www.ivanmoody.co.uk.

The other three premieres are by Pacific Northwest composers: Sheila Bristow of Pacific Lutheran University, Harold Owen of the University of Oregon School of Music and Seattle Pro Musica's own artistic director, Karen P. Thomas. (Thomas' "Yonati" can be heard on www.seattlepromusica.org.)

Thomas premieres another piece, "Behold, thou art fair,"

with the Medieval Women's Choir on May 22. It's part of a program that includes works by Dunstable and Hildegard of Bingen, along with Hebrew cantillations and medieval selections. Harpist-fiddler Shira Kammen has two works on the bill, one also a premiere.

Last but not least, there's a group show of artwork inspired by the biblical text, with a focus on flower forms, on display in the Cathedral Chapel through May 31.

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"Wild Tomato" is on display as part of a group show of artwork at the Song of Songs Festival.

