

“Songs From Here and Éire” celebrates the rich musical traditions of America and Ireland, presenting songs that explore universal themes of joy, love, loss, resilience, and the depth of a shared human experience. With an emphasis on storytelling, these songs highlight the power of music to convey social messages and reflect on historical events, as well as to entertain. Featuring works by Irish and American women, this program includes pieces composed and arranged by Alice Parker, Elaine Hagenberg, Joy Ondra Hirokawa, Rosephanye Powell, Julie Gault, and Sue Furlong.

At our recent spring retreat, Women’s Voices Chorus had the opportunity to delve deeply into our Irish music, especially the pronunciation of the Irish text, with expert guidance from conductor, educator, and composer Dr. Anne Barry. Annie, hailing from Waterford, Ireland, is associate Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Lake Forest College, IL. We are immensely grateful for her generosity and patience and have benefited greatly from her time with us.

Members of Women’s Voices Chorus will embark on a 10-day concert tour of Ireland in August 2024, performing in the historic venues of St. Mary’s Cathedral, Killarney, St. Nicholas Collegiate Church, Galway, and St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin.

### **Will the Circle Be Unbroken**

Traditional Appalachian; arr. J. David Moore (b. 1962)

Lyrics by Betsy Rose, Cathy Winter, and Marcia Taylor

Notes from the arranger: The hymn “Will the Circle Be Unbroken” first appeared in the 1908 *Alexander’s Gospel Songs*, with words by Ada Ruth Habershon and music by Charles H. Gabriel. This hymn was substantially reworked (and the lyrics of the verses replaced) by A.P. Carter for the Carter Family in 1935 and experienced a popular renaissance when it was released by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band in 1972. The updated lyrics in this arrangement were written by folk singers Betsy Rose, Cathy Winter, and Marcia Taylor, and printed in the marvelous folk song resource *Rise Up Singing*. These lyrics were requested by Dr. Cathy Roma and the MUSE Women’s Choir of Cincinnati for a concert celebrating the city’s Appalachian cultural heritage in 2001. The arrangement makes use of two traditional vocal ensemble styles, the bluegrass trio (unapologetically inspired by Dolly Parton’s rendition of “Seven Bridges Road”) and the gospel quartet.

### **Mo Ghile Mear**

Sue Furlong (1962-2018)

Traditional Irish

Caoineadh or Goltraí, both Irish words for lament, describe a song which expresses sorrow and pain, often a longing for an absent loved one.

Various translated as “my gallant hero”, “my gallant star”, and “my dashing darling”, Mo Ghile Mear is a Jacobite love song that is as much about politics as about romance. Inspired as it was by the Jacobite Rising against Protestant England’s rule in 1745, romance and politics do indeed unite in heroic, insurrectionary failure.

Mo Ghile Mear was written in Gaelic [Irish] by poet Seán Clárach Mac Domhnaill after the battle of Culloden which dashed for two and a half centuries the Scots’ dreams of independence. Composed in the convention of Aisling (Gaelic for “dream” or “vision”) poetry, it is a lament by the Gaelic goddess Éire for Bonnie Prince Charlie, Charles Stuart, the “Young Pretender” to the Protestant Hanoverian English Throne that once belonged to the Roman Catholic Stuart clan, and who after the bloody failure of 1745, fled into exile in France.

– <https://howlinginfinite.com/2017/07/20/mo-ghile-mear-in-irish-myth-and-melody/>

Irishmen from Tipperary, Louth, Limerick, and Wexford comprised the Irish Brigade, which fought on the Jacobite side in the Scottish Rebellion.

– <https://thewildgeese.irish/m/blogpost?id=6442157%3ABlogPost%3A8785>

Composer Sue Furlong describes her arrangement as a contrasting duel of rhythmic and lamenting musical styles depicting Bonnie Prince Charles’ endeavors to take possession of the crown. Rousing chorus-like sections entwined with harmonic pathos makes his battle endeavors come alive from the perspective of the loved ones left behind.

Born in Waterford, Ireland, Sue spent most of her working life in Wexford. Her celebrated musical career spanned the fields of composition, education, performance and conducting.

– <http://www.suefurlongmusic.ie/sue-furlong/>

### **Swing Low**

Arr. Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

Traditional Spiritual

Rosephanye Powell has been hailed as one of America's premier women composers of solo vocal and choral music. She has an impressive catalogue of works published by some of the nation's leading publishers, including the Hal Leonard Corporation, the Fred Bock Music Companies, Gentry Publications, Oxford University Press, Alliance Music Publications, and Shawnee Press. Dr. Powell's works have been conducted and premiered by nationally and internationally renowned conductors and have been premiered at distinguished halls around the country, including Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center, and Spivey Hall, to name a few. Dr. Powell's works have been commissioned by professional choral ensembles, including Cantus and the Grammy award-winning men's vocal ensemble Chanticleer.

From the Composer: This work was commissioned by Kim Mitchell for the 20th anniversary of the Girls Choral Academy, Grand Rapids, MI. These three songs were sung to Ms. Mitchell and her sister when they were children, by her father. I would like to share excerpts from the letter that she wrote to me which I found truly inspiring, and which gave birth to this medley:

"A cherished memory is my father singing to my older sister and me when he would put us to bed. He had a smooth, deep baritone voice. First, he would sing Swing Low Sweet Chariot for my sister, standing by her bed in our room...Then he would stand by the door and sing Deep River...This was my first introduction to spirituals. I am Catholic...This music was beautiful, but formal and strange, distancing. The God of my father's spirituals was almost a grandfatherly presence. You could come to Him and tell Him your troubles in everyday, deeply personal language. He might not solve them in this world, but He would when you came home to Him. Knowing He would listen eased life's pain and the stories of the life to come gave hope to keep on. This is a God who comforts. This hope of comfort is why I love spirituals, and what I want to capture in the piece. And I believe that hope is universal. When my choir went to Ireland, we gave a concert in an old church in Kinsale. The priest must have made some threat or offered indulgences because the place was filled. They were an appreciative crowd and clapped after every song. In the choir loft was a family with several children, including a little curly haired girl. We did some traditional American hymns. Then we sang a spiritual. The crowd was silent for a moment after we finished. Then the church just seemed to explode. I looked up, and the little girl was hanging over the railing, tears running down her cheeks. The spiritual is how we all want to speak to God. In spirituals we give our blues to God...When I decided I wanted to commission a piece of music I was stumped about the subject. I was frozen for over a year. Then I assembled a picture book for the 70th birthday of my oldest sister, who had lung cancer. I looked at all the old black and whites, and remembered things I hadn't thought about for years. And I thought about the music we grew up with, remembering the bedtime ritual. I played Mahalia Jackson's version of Deep River, by far my favorite of those songs, on my phone. She got to the bridge and I was struck speechless. This was not the song my father sang. The deep river part was, but instead of the bridge, he sang: "Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down. Oh yes Lord. Sometimes I'm almost to the ground. Oh Yes Lord." Thinking about it, I realized that came from Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen. Yet it worked perfectly with Deep River. I tried singing pieces of other spiritual and they fit together. And then I knew what I wanted to commission: a medley or compilation of great spirituals so that people could hear, understand, and love them, even white bread choirs like mine...I am very excited at the prospect that this will be my legacy to my parents and to the choirs that have meant so much to me. But this is also a gift to myself. These are the songs I want to hear as I leave this world. I want my family to sing them as I am buried. I sang some of them by my sister's grave. These are the songs I know I will hear if there is a hereafter. And I hope you will make this all possible. Thank you."

Is that not inspiring and motivational? That is what the African-American spiritual is about. Ms. Kim's desire for these three songs to be sung together as a beautiful, lyrical gift to those who hear them—as a soothing balm, as

words of hope and comfort was and is truly compelling. I am Black and she is White. We grew up and live in different parts of the country and are from different generations. But what we feel in our hearts and our love for these songs and their message unite us. This is the power of song!

Swing Low: A Spiritual Medley begins with a lullaby of Swing Low in the piano as an intro. It is followed by Deep River, with the piano accompaniment sounding the “flowing river” theme. This is followed by Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen which has an accompaniment that is both “dreamy” and “flowing water”. I envisioned Ms. Mitchell and her sister, nodding off, as their father sang to them. There is a child-like playfulness at “sometimes I’m up, sometimes I’m down,” as the girls get delight hearing and being near to their father. When the partner song begins (all three songs sounded at the same time), the lullaby feel returns as the girls start dozing off and their father slowly leaves the room. Here the melodies mingle in the girls’ minds and ears as they work to stay attentive while falling asleep. The song ends as it began with the piano sounding the “Swing Low” melody which carries the girls into the land of sleep (home).

- <https://www.rosephanyepowell.com>

### **‘Tis the Gift to Be Simple**

Words and Music by Joseph Brakett (1797-1882); arr. Alice Parker (1925-2023)

The lyrics and music were written by Shaker Elder Joseph Brackett while at the Alfred Shaker Community in 1848 during what the Shakers called an “Era of Manifestations” or “Mother’s Work.” During this time many Shakers received what they considered “gift” songs from the spiritual realm. As the years passed, the song went beyond the Shaker villages and headed out into the “world.” The song began its rise to popularity in 1944 when it was used by Aaron Copland in the ballet *Appalachian Spring*. Many listen to the tune and think it has a Celtic background. With its lyrical sound, it’s easy to imagine someone playing the song on a flute as they dance across green fields. Of course, the Shakers didn’t have musical instruments in their worship until very late in their history. Their voices were their musical instruments. “Simple Gifts” has been adapted and arranged many times over the years. John Williams incorporated the tune into “Air and Simple Gifts” that was performed at President Obama’s inauguration in 2009. The song has gone off to school and been a popular piece for various schools’ drum corps and marching bands including the West Virginia Mountaineer Marching Band. The Shakers might have liked the idea of people marching to their song since many of their dances were marches. While singing this particular song about the gift to be simple, they bowed and turned as they danced and sang.

- Excerpts from Ann H. Gabhart’s essay, Simple Gifts – A Shaker Song that Went out into the World <https://www.annhgabhart.com/2015/07/22/simple-gifts-a-shaker-song-that-went-out-into-the-world/>

Alice Parker, an internationally renowned composer, conductor, and teacher, studied composition and conducting at Smith College and the Juilliard School where she began her long association with Robert Shaw. The many Parker/Shaw settings of American folksongs, hymns and spirituals from that period formed an enduring repertoire for choruses all around the world. Her list of published compositions had over five hundred titles, ranging from operas through song cycles, cantatas and choral suites to many individual anthems. She was commissioned by hundreds of community, school and church choruses, and her works appeared in the catalogs of a dozen publishing companies.

- <https://www.ecspublishing.com/composers/p/alice-parker.html>

### **The White Rose**

Michael McGlynn (b. 1964)

Traditional Irish with additional English Text by Michael McGlynn

Comprised of both traditional Irish text and newly composed English text, The White Rose exemplifies the timelessness of a traditional Caoineadh (lament).

McGlynn specializes in composing music for voices and his extensive output includes a number of pieces that have entered the standard repertoire of choirs and vocal ensembles all over the world. While he is deeply passionate

about creating music in the Irish language, his music is expansive, spanning genres, languages and exploring the links between film-making and musical creativity.

In 2017, McGlynn was the recipient of the University College Dublin Alumni Award in Arts/Humanities. He founded the vocal ensembles Anúna (1987), M'anam (2018), and Systir (2019).

– <http://www.michaelmcglynn.com>

### **Now Let Me Fly**

Traditional Spiritual arr. Stacey V. Gibbs (b. 1964)

Incorporating the traditional spiritual *I'll Fly Away* by Albert E. Brumley (1905-1977)

Arranger Stacey V. Gibbs writes about this piece, "This setting of Now Let Me Fly celebrates overcoming life's challenges and obstacles. The introductory hymn, *I'll Fly Away*, serves as a catalyst from trial and longing to victory and triumph!"

It was in 1929 that Brumley composed "*I'll Fly Away*." He recalled that he was picking cotton and singing a popular song, "If I Had the Wings of an Angel." Suddenly, he thought about flying away. He later said, "Actually, I was dreaming of flying away from that cotton field when I wrote '*I'll Fly Away*.'" However, the song took on a spiritual meaning. Brumley's first submission to a publisher was "*I'll Fly Away*." As a result, the song, written during The Depression, was carried to the nation by radio and traveling Southern Gospel quartets. People everywhere were receiving renewed hope as they listened to "*I'll Fly Away*" and other Brumley compositions.

<https://www.staugustine.com/story/lifestyle/faith/2015/12/31/story-behind-song-ill-fly-away/16254717007/>

The legacy of slavery's horrors in the United States continue to be felt today, but that legacy also includes a history of strength and resilience by the people who were enslaved and their ancestors. People who were forcibly brought to this country during the era of slavery also carried with them the African tradition of people being able to fly, and that tradition and the surrounding stories fed their resilience and longing for freedom. In a March 2019 New Yorker [article titled "Revisiting the Legend of Flying Africans,"](#) experimental-documentary filmmaker Sophia Nahli Allison wrote, "The story of flying Africans has been passed down from generation to generation since slavery — a secret, suppressed gift of our ancestors ... flight became a secret language for runaway slaves, and it continues to represent black mobility toward liberation."

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/revisiting-the-legend-of-flying-africans>

<https://www.wpr.org/history/folk-music-shares-african-tradition-people-being-able-fly>

### **Down By the Salley Gardens**

Arr. Michael Cleveland (1937-2016)

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

The poem by Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, was set to music by Herbert Hughes to the traditional air "The Maids of Mourne Shore" in 1909. Salley is a form of the Standard English word 'sallow,' a tree of the genus *Salix*. It is close in sound to the Irish word 'saileach,' meaning willow. It has been suggested that the location of the "Salley Gardens" was on the banks of the river at Ballysadare near Silgo where residents cultivated trees to provide roof thatching materials.

– [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Down\\_by\\_the\\_Salley\\_Gardens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Down_by_the_Salley_Gardens)

### **Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy**

Words and Music by Don Raye (1909-1985) and Hughie Prince (1906-1960); arr. Ed Lojeski (1942-2020)

Originally performed by the Andrews Sisters in the Abbott and Costello comedy film, *Buck Privates*, Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy, composed in the style of jump blues, reached number six on the U.S. pop singles chart in the spring of 1941 when the film was in release. A remake recorded by Bette Midler peaked at number eight in 1973 on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart and most recently, Pentatonix published an a cappella cover of the song in 2017.

An article published in *Stars and Stripes* on March 19, 1943, claimed that Clarence Zylman of Muskegon, Michigan, was the original Boogie Woogie Bugler. Drafted at age 35, Clarence had been performing for 20 years with several big bands including the Tommy Tucker Orchestra. He brought his playing style to England where he was bugler for an engineer company, playing Taps and Reveille before eventually being transferred to an army band. A sculpture of Zylman as the Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy has been dedicated in his hometown.

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boogie\\_Woogie\\_Bugle\\_Boy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boogie_Woogie_Bugle_Boy)

### **Stand By Me**

Ben E. King (1938-2015), Jerry Lieber (1933-2011), and Mike Stoller (b. 1933); arr. Julie Gaulke (b. 1966)

Recorded and released in 1961, “Stand By Me” is the rare pop song that almost immediately becomes a timeless classic. King, Lieber, and Stoller created magic that day in the Atlantic Records studio and made a song that can never be forgotten. It started with a simple chord progression, one that had appeared in hundreds of soul and doo-wop songs already but that was used here with such effective grace that it came to be known as the “‘Stand By Me’ changes.” A seamless combination of gospel and doo-wop, a love song, a protest anthem, a declaration of enduring friendship, a worship song – this incredible composition is all of these and more. “Stand By Me” has been covered by over 400 other musicians, including John Lennon, Maurice White, and Florence + the Machine, who each rearranged the classic song into something new while retaining its powerful message.

- Excerpts of an essay by Amanda Rodgers, guest contributor to The Library of Congress
- <https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/StandByMe.pdf>

Arranger Julie Gaulke creates multitrack music videos on YouTube as a solo artist and with the virtual a cappella ensemble, Chapter Six. Her arrangements in the contemporary a cappella style are a fun and challenging addition to the more traditional Women’s Voices Chorus repertoire.

### **My Favorite Things**

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979); arr. Joy Onda Hirokawa (b. 1957)

Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960)

The hit song, My Favorite Things, was originally composed for the 1959 Broadway musical, *The Sound of Music*, by the award-winning and celebrated theater-writing team, Rodgers and Hammerstein. This highly successful musical endeavor, based on the story of the Austrian von Trapp Family, was their last work together.

My Favorite Things has been covered by numerous artists, often appearing on Christmas albums because of the holiday references to sleighbells, snowflakes, and silver white winters. The first jazz arrangement was popularized by John Coltrane in 1961, becoming a signature song for Coltrane in concert. Other notable covers include Diana Ross and the Supremes, Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass, Lorrie Morgan, Chicago, and Ariana Grande.

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My\\_Favorite\\_Things\\_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Favorite_Things_(song))

Arranger Dr. Joy Hirokawa is the Artistic/Executive Director of the Mosaic Youth Chorus, established in 2023 to provide an opportunity for diverse youth to create community, build empathy, and effect positive social change through artistic and expressive choral singing. As the previous Artistic Director and founder of The Bel Canto Youth Chorus of The Bach Choir of Bethlehem for 30 years, the BCYC performed locally, nationally, and internationally to great acclaim, and appeared at numerous choral conferences. Dr. Hirokawa is in demand as a guest conductor and clinician, presenting regularly at numerous international, national, and state conferences, and conducting elementary and secondary regional and all-state honor choirs. She is a passionate advocate for creating musical spaces in which youth can express themselves through the choral art as they navigate and learn about a complicated world.

- <https://mosaic youthchorus.org/choir-leadership/>

### **The Times They Are A-Changin'**

Words and Music by Bob Dylan (b. 1941); arr. Adam Podd (b. 1986)

Bob Dylan wrote of this song, "This was definitely a song with a purpose. I was influenced of course by the Irish and Scottish ballads... 'Come all Ye Bold Highway Men', Come All Ye Tender Hearted Maidens'. I wanted to write a big song, with short concise verses that piled up on each other in a hypnotic way. The Civil Rights Movement and the folk music movement were pretty close for a while and allied together at that time."

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Times\\_They\\_Are\\_a-Changin%27\\_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Times_They_Are_a-Changin%27_(song))

Notes from the arranger: One great joy of being a choir director who arranges music as well, is the possibility it gives to reimagine familiar songs through a different lens which may better suit a particular concert program, church service, etc. Bob Dylan's music and lyrics are, of course, among the best in the world. As the director of a church choir, I thought The Times They Are A-Changin' would be a perfect text for any service or concert with themes of social justice. My hope with this arrangement is that the reharmonization and contrasting musical style to the original version of the song would bring a new attention and poignancy to these well-known words, and also to give this song a second musical home with choirs and in concert halls where it might not normally be found. I invite you to approach this piece with the reverence, respect, and awe you would any art song.

### **I'm Beginning to See the Light**

Words and Music by Harry James (1916-1983), Duke Ellington (1899-1974), Johnny Hodges (1907-1970), and Don George (1909-1987); arr. Gwyn Arch (1931-2021)

As biographer James Lincoln Collier points out in his book *Duke Ellington*, "I'm Beginning to See the Light" is in the form of the classic American popular song. "But more than most composers of popular songs, [Ellington] tended to write more consecutive melodies, made up of quite different, even contrasting, phrases, producing more the effect of speech or dialogue. When well done, this system of writing inevitably produces a more interesting and melodically richer tune, although one perhaps correspondingly less acceptable to the ordinary ear."

Don George's lyric for "I'm Beginning to See the Light" deals with romantic images such as "lantern-shine" and "rainbows in my wine" to which the singer was impervious until falling in love. In *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley* Philip Furia praises George's witty use of a list of "light" images and his ability to deal with a difficult song. "Ellington's tune was particularly hard to set, since each A section consists of the same, driving vamp-like phrase repeated three times over before the melody finally changes. In one way, George heightened this musical insistence, using the same rhyme for the first three lines of each section. George ends by rekindling one of the oldest songwriting cliches, mixing his metaphors of light and heat: 'but now that your lips are burning mine, I'm beginning to see the light.'"

- [https://www.jazzstandards.com/compositions-2/imbeginningtoseethelight.htm#:~:text=In%201944%20bandleaders%20Duke%20Ellington,the%20Blues"%20that%20same%20year.](https://www.jazzstandards.com/compositions-2/imbeginningtoseethelight.htm#:~:text=In%201944%20bandleaders%20Duke%20Ellington,the%20Blues)

### **A Stór, a Stór, a Ghrá**

Arr. Thomas Quigley (b. 1949)

Traditional Irish

The traditional Irish song, A Stór, a Stór, a Ghrá was arranged by the prolific Irish composer/arranger, Thomas Quigley, who has composed and arranged numerous works for both orchestra and choir. A graduate of University College Dublin, Quigley served as Head of Music and Choral Director at Maryfield College Secondary School, Dublin, where his choirs won prestigious prizes at the Feis Ceoil (Music Festival) and the Cork International Choral Festival. A Stór, a Stór, a Ghrá uses a particular style of Irish singing in the accompanying voice parts known as *lilting*, similar to scat singing in jazz. The *lilting* syllables, *bap ba da bap*, and *dú bi dút dú*, are non-lexical and add to the rhythmic and playful mood of the piece.

- <https://thomasquigley.musicaneo.com/about.html#:~:text=Thomas%20Quigley%20has%20arranged%20music,on%20various%20albums%20for%20R.T.E.>

### **You Do Not Walk Alone**

Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979)  
Traditional Irish Blessing

Irish blessings have a long and storied history, with roots that stretch back centuries. These beautiful and poetic blessings have been passed down through generations of Irish families and have become an important part of Irish culture and tradition. Today, Irish blessings are cherished all around the world and are often used to celebrate special occasions and to bring comfort in times of need. The history of Irish blessings dates back to ancient Celtic times. The Celts were a pagan people who worshiped nature, and they had a rich tradition of oral storytelling and poetry. As Christianity spread throughout Ireland, many of the old pagan traditions were incorporated into the new religion. The Celtic love of poetry and storytelling was embraced by the Christian monks, who began to write down and preserve these ancient blessings. Irish blessings are typically short poems or prayers that are meant to convey a message of hope, happiness, and good fortune. They often feature beautiful imagery and symbolism drawn from the natural world, such as the sun, the sea, and the stars.

- <https://www.irishcentral.com/culture/history-irish-blessings>

Elaine Hagenberg's award-winning compositions are performed worldwide and frequently featured at American Choral Directors Association conferences, All-State festivals, Carnegie Hall, and other distinguished international concert halls from Australia to South America and throughout Europe. In addition to composing full-time, Elaine actively engages in bringing her music to life as the guest artist and featured clinician for professional conferences and festivals both in the U.S. and abroad as a composer, conductor, and accompanist of her work. With over fifty commissioned works, she has composed new music for the American Choral Directors Association, professional choirs, colleges and universities, community choirs, high schools, and churches.

- <https://www.elainehagenberg.com/about>