

Women's Voices CHORUS



Saturday, May 2, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
United Church of Chapel Hill

Laura Sam, Artistic Director

Deborah Hollis, Pianist

womensvoiceschorus.org

Community Outreach Fund: The Learning Trail

Through our Community Outreach Fund, WVC chooses a local organization to support each semester based on the theme of our music. There are many worthy organizations whose work relates to the idea of flight; this semester our members voted to support The Learning Trail, a local organization that provides academic and social support to children in Chatham County, North Carolina.

In a mobile home community called The Nature Trail, many children from low-income Hispanic families struggle to overcome obstacles to academic success. The Learning Trail seeks to provide the support that they and their families need to overcome those obstacles through early childhood programs, after-school tutoring, enrichment activities, and parent education. Their programs are all offered free of charge, and donations from organizations and individuals make the work possible. For more information, see <https://www.thelearningtrail.org/>.



If you would like to join WVC in supporting The Learning Trail, you can contribute through WVC via Square or Venmo (see back page of the program; specify Learning Trail in notes) or with cash or check at the display table in the lobby.

Negro Spirituals Royalties Project: Kidznotes

Every time we sing spirituals, WVC donates to an organization that contributes to the musical education of Black youth, as a way of “paying royalties.” We do this in recognition that the original creators of these songs were enslaved and cannot be compensated or even recognized. This semester we are donating to Kidznotes in Durham.



Kidznotes is a nonprofit organization that aims to transform the lives of underserved youth through music education. By providing children with instruments, music instruction, and ensemble performance opportunities, Kidznotes seeks to foster a community of young musicians who are empowered to reach their full potential both musically and academically. Kidznotes serves a population of students mirroring that of Durham, where over 50% of citizens reported as non-white through the US Census Bureau. More than 80% of Kidznotes students identify as a person of color (37% Black/African American, 35% Hispanic/Latino, and 8% American Indian, Asian, Hawaiian-Pacific, or multi-racial). For more information, visit Kidznotes.org.

If you would like to contribute as well, you can do so through WVC via Square or Venmo (see back page of the program; specify Kidznotes in notes) or with cash or check at the display table in the lobby.

Women's Voices CHORUS

Presents

Flight

Saturday, May 2, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
United Church of Chapel Hill

Please turn off or silence all cell phones and other noise-making devices before the concert begins. Note that the use of cameras and other recording equipment is strictly prohibited. Thank you!

We strive to host inclusive, accessible events that enable everyone, including individuals with disabilities, to engage fully. If you would like accommodation such as reserved seating or have questions about accessibility, please ask at the box office table or see any usher.

Restrooms are located through the lobby to the left as you exit the sanctuary and at other locations throughout the building. See any usher for help.

Program Notes

Flight illuminates the theme of ascent, both in the natural world and within the human spirit. Highlighting works by women composers and poets, we explore the journey from grounded earth to the infinite reaches of sky and space. The music invites reflection on freedom, transformation, and the enduring human desire to rise beyond boundaries.

– Laura Sam

Guest Musicians: Tim Turkington, Doumbek; Emily Harmon, Oboe;
Julia Reeves, Violin; Leah Peroutka, Violin; Jessica Ronnevik, Viola; Debbie Davis, Cello

Program

Swifter than Flame

Music composed by Elaine Hagenberg in 2024
Text written by Carl John Bostelmann c.1930

Swifter than flame, prevailing tempests race along the lifted steel that bars their way.
From solid street up to the shore of space, each granite edifice transcends the day.
Tower on tower reach a final rung from which winged feet step upward out of night –
To find again forgotten planets hung in orbits measuring a timeless flight.

Elaine Hagenberg is an internationally acclaimed American composer whose music “soars with eloquence and ingenuity” (ACDA Choral Journal). *Swifter than Flame* sets a poem by Carl John Bostelmann, who published four volumes of poetry in the 1920s and 1930s, to music. As a New Jersey resident, Bostelmann may have drawn inspiration from the construction boom of New York City's iconic skyscrapers, which dramatically transformed the Manhattan skyline, including the Woolworth Building (1913), the Chrysler Building (1930), and the Empire State Building (1931). Bostelmann's imagery traces a journey from street level up through towering edifices and into outer space. Phrases like “transcends the day” and “upward out of night” emphasize a yearning to move beyond the limits of imagination and explore the uncharted, to find again “a timeless flight.”

Flying

Music composed by Rachel DeVore Fogarty in 2011
Text based on the writing of Amelia Earhart in 1936

After midnight the moon set, and I was alone with the stars.
I need no other flight to convince me that the reason flyers fly,
whether they know it or not, is the appeal of flying.
The stars seemed near enough to touch and never before have I seen so many.
I always believed the lure of flying is the lure of beauty,
but I was sure of it that night.

Rachel DeVore Fogarty is a composer and collaborative pianist based in New York where she serves as Associate Artistic Director of the Young New Yorkers' Chorus. Her choral works have been performed across the United States and internationally. The text of *Flying* is drawn from a private letter written by celebrated aviator Amelia Earhart in 1936 to Marie Bullock, founder of the Academy of American Poets. In the letter, Earhart describes a solo night flight and articulates her conviction that the impulse to fly is fundamentally an aesthetic one, a response to beauty rather than a pursuit of adventure or achievement for its own sake. Earhart shattered gender barriers in flight, becoming the first woman to fly solo nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean in 1932. She set numerous aviation records and was the first woman to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross. Amelia Earhart disappeared while attempting to become the first woman to circumnavigate the globe in 1937.

Flying Away

Music composed by Karin Kuulpak in 2016

Text written by Kristiina Ehin, translated by Ilmar Lehtpere

Narrator: Ann Harrison

*I rose from where you were into the sky.
From where you were rooted,
Up over the fir tree tops,
From beside you at your ear,
Up into the blue expanse.*

Singing my delicate shell against you.
Sawing my giant fiddle's bow against you.
I rose from where you were into the sky.

From where you were rooted,
Up over the fir treetops,
From beside you at your ear,
Up into the blue expanse.

I looked down at your sleepy roof
with my ears locked, sleep stuck in my throat.
I disappeared behind the clouds.
*Yet, where you were, where you were rooted,
The sky was more sky-like.*

Karin Kuulpak is an Estonian composer and choral conductor. The text is by Kristiina Ehin, one of Estonia's most celebrated poets, whose work is rooted in the country's folk traditions. The English translation is by Ilmar Lehtpere, an Irish-Estonian poet and Ehin's primary English translator. Women's Voices Chorus has a personal connection to this work. During its 2017 tour of the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), the chorus performed *Flying Away* under the direction of Artistic Director Allan Friedman, with the composer, Karin Kuulpak, in attendance.

Flight Song

Music composed by Kim André Arnesen in 2016

Text written by Euan Tait in 2016

All we are, we have found in song:
you have drawn this song from us.
Songs of lives unfolding
fly overhead, cry overhead:
longing, rising from the song within.
Moving like the rise and fall of wings,
hands that shape our calling voice
on the edge of answers
you've heard our cry, you've known our cry:
music's fierce compassion flows from you.
The night is restless with
the sounds we hear, is broken,
shaken by the cries of pain:

for this is music's inner voice,
saying, yes, we hear you,
all you who cry aloud,
and we will fly, answering you:
so our lives sing, sing,
wild we will fly,
wild in spirit we will fly.

Like a feather falling from the wing,
fragile as a human voice,
afraid, uncertain,
alive to love, we sing as love,
afraid, uncertain,
yet our flight begins as song.

Kim André Arnesen is a Norwegian composer whose choral music is performed by ensembles around the world. Setting the poetry of Welsh-Scottish poet Euan Tait, Arnesen says, "*Flight Song* was written as a gift to Dr. Anton Armstrong and the St. Olaf Choir. I had the pleasure of working with the choir in 2013, and was impressed not only by the artistic work, but also the personal development and safe environment Armstrong has given to so many young singers." Poet Euan Tait offers, "This is the first piece that Kim and I worked on together. I live in a house that overlooks two great British rivers, the Wye and the Severn, and the air is constantly alive with the sound of seabird wings and calls. When Kim came to me with the idea of writing a piece for the amazing young musicians, the idea of flight as a metaphor for the beginning of a young adult life, and a tribute to a great conductor, came to me first. A human life preparing to take off, and the movements of a conductor's arm like the beating of a soul's great wings, are the images at the heart of this piece."

Now Let Me Fly

Music arranged by Stacey V. Gibbs in 2014

Text based on a Traditional Spiritual
incorporating *I'll Fly Away* written by Albert E. Brumley in 1929

Some glad morning when this life is over, I'll fly away.
Let me fly away to a home on God's celestial shore.
Now let me fly to Mt. Zion, yes, Lord, now let me fly.

Way down yonder in the middle of the field,
See the angels workin' on the chariot wheel.
I'm not so partic'lar 'bout the workin' of the wheel,
But I just wanted to see how the chariot feel.

See that hypocrite on the street, good Lord,
First thing he do is show his teeth, my Lord,
Next thing he do is to tell a lie,
And the best thing to do is just pass him by.

I got a mother in the Promised Land,
And I ain't gonna stop 'til I shake-a her hand,
No, I'm not so partic'lar 'bout shaking her hand, Lord,
I just want to meet her in the Promised Land.

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!"

Brumley composed *I'll Fly Away* in 1929. 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*."

The spiritual tradition of flight carries even deeper historical resonance. 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.”



Slaves Waiting for Sale, Richmond, Virginia by Eyre Crowe, c. 1853-1860, via Encyclopedia Virginia; with They Went So High, Way Over Slavery Land, by Constanza Knight, watercolor, via Constanzaknight.com

Some things that fly there be

Music composed by Emma Lou Diemer in 2002

Text written by Emily Dickinson in 1859

Chamber Choir

Some things that fly there be,
Birds, hours, the bumble bee.
Of these no elegy.

Some things that stay there be,
Grief, hills, eternity.
Nor this behooveth me.

There are, that resting, rise.
Can I expound the skies?
How still the riddle lies!

Emma Lou Diemer was one of the most prolific American composers of the twentieth century, credited with more than 400 works. She returned to Emily Dickinson's poetry many times throughout her career. Dickinson wrote about 1,800 poems, mostly unpublished until after her death, focusing on themes of death, nature, and immortality. *Some things that fly there be* sorts the world into things that fly and things that stay but offers comfort in neither category. The final stanza introduces a paradox: some things rise only when at rest, suggesting renewal through stillness. In the context of this program, Dickinson's riddle reminds us that not all ascent is outward. Some flight begins within.

Bumble Bee

Music and text written by Anders Edenroth in 2009

Chamber Choir

From flower to flower
Hour after hour
Be humble, be humble bumble bee
They all say you can't fly
Tiny wings to take you high
Be humble, be humble bumble bee
And I've heard you can't die
Heaven knows if that's a lie
Be humble, be humble bumble bee

From flower to flower
Hour after hour
They all say you can't fly
And I've heard you can't die
Be humble, be humble
Be humble, be humble bumble bee
From flower to flower
Hour after hour

Anders Edenroth is a founding member of The Real Group, the Swedish vocal ensemble known for its influence on contemporary *a cappella* music worldwide. The text plays on the notion that the bumblebee should not be able to fly according to the laws of aerodynamics, using it as a gentle argument for humility. Edenroth advises that “the piece should be performed in a fixed tempo without any *ritardandi*, thus creating an impression of a bumble bee eagerly flying in a sunny meadow, where the key changes indicate her visit to different flowers. The message is that we should try not to take the wonders of life for granted, whether evident or yet unknown.”

Be Like the Bird

Music composed by Abbie Betinis in 2009

Text written by Victor Hugo in 1835

Be like the bird that,
pausing in her flight awhile on boughs too slight,
feels them give way beneath her,
and sings, and sings, and sings knowing she hath wings.

Abbie Betinis, a Minnesota-based composer, set this four-line poem by Victor Hugo as a five-part canon. In describing this work, Betinis says, “I wrote this canon just after completing cancer treatment for the second time. My family and I sent it out as our annual Christmas card. And, while I couldn't have foreseen it at the time, it would turn into my mantra over the next year, while I underwent a third cancer diagnosis and bone marrow transplant.

“My cousin Sarah Riley and I discovered the text quite by accident. In October 2009, our grandfather, the Rt. Rev. John H. Burt (a.k.a. Christmas reveler and merry-maker, lover of music and literature, and inspiring leader and activist) died. After his funeral, and after an impromptu family round-sing (common in the Burt family), Sarah and I were sitting on Grandpa's old couch, reading through some of the sermons he had written and delivered throughout his long life.

“Sarah is co-director of an incredible program called High Rocks, a comprehensive and unique school for girls founded by her mom, Susan Burt, in the mountains of rural West Virginia. Sarah and I realized that Grandpa had quoted this lovely Victor Hugo text in a few sermons over the years, always to inspire courage in the face of adversity. It struck me as a surprisingly hopeful text befitting a difficult year, but it also moved me to tears to think of the work that my Aunt Susie and now my cousin herself, sitting there next to me on the couch, are doing to change the world, one girl at a time. Out of that afternoon came both a piece and a purpose, so I dedicated this carol to High Rocks for Girls.

“May High Rocks continue to educate, empower, and inspire each girl to know that ‘she hath wings.’”

Koowu

Music and text written by Maryam Khoury in 2006

I have a caged bird who longs to fly away.
Her name is Koowu.
I have a caged bird who is weeping.
I dare not set her free.
Her song is mine and I am keeping.
But soon this Dove will die,
If she does not get the chance to fly.

I have a caged bird who is weeping.
Koowu do not cry.
If it is freedom that she is seeking,
Then my bird must fly away.
I am Koowu and her keeper.
Taste the wind, Breathe the air,
I’ll be waiting for you there, Koowu.

Maryam Khoury composed *Koowu* as an undergraduate at Northern Arizona University. The work draws on stories Khoury's father told her about growing up in Palestine and reflects on how different her own life might have been had he not immigrated to the United States. The poem uses the image of a caged bird longing for freedom but gives that image an added layer: the speaker is both the bird and the one who keeps it caged, suggesting that freedom requires an inner as well as an outer release. Koowu is the Arabic word for strength.



Jump!

Music composed by Elizabeth Alexander in 2009

Text written by Ray Bradbury in 1995

Narrator: Darcy Wold

J-u-m-p

Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off. Build your wings on the way down.

Minnesota-based composer Elizabeth Alexander spent her childhood in the Carolinas and Appalachian Ohio. She has a catalog of over 100 songs and choral works that have received numerous national and international awards. Of *Jump!*, Alexander writes, “The musical parameters given to me by Northfield Youth Chorus were few and open-ended, exactly the kind of commission which offers a composer both structure and freedom: a treble choir, a handful of auxiliary instruments, and the following theme: ‘To remember and renew.’ I’d been musing about the theme for several weeks before my imagination took off, and when it finally did so, it was on an airplane trip! ‘What comes between remembrance and renewal?’ I was wondering. As I looked down at the clouds from my seat on the plane, I remembered Ray Bradbury’s pithy quote about taking risks: ‘Go to the edge of the cliff and jump off. Build your wings on the way down.’ Of course, I thought. Leaps of courage! Blind faith! Guts! In the end, I surprised myself (and the choir!) by not setting Bradbury’s entire quote to music. In fact, the choir only sings the single word, ‘jump.’ Within this tiny word lies a plethora of phonetic possibilities: ‘j,’ ‘uh,’ ‘um’ and of course, the final ‘p.’ Using only these vocal building blocks, I created a sonic landscape tracing Bradbury’s journey from solid ground to thin air, as the chorus considers, hesitates, jumps, falls – and finally flies.”

Flight

Music and text written by Craig Carnelia in 1992

Arranged by Ryan Murphy in 2021

Let me run thru a field in the night, let me lift from the ground ‘til my soul is in flight.

Let me sway like the shade of a tree, let me swirl like a cloud in a storm on the sea.

Wish me on my way thru the dawning day.

I wanna flow, wanna rise, wanna spill, wanna grow in a grove on the side of a hill.

I don't care if the train runs late, if the checks don't clear, if the house blows down.

I'll be off where the weeds run wild, where the seeds fall far from this earthbound town.

And I'll start to soar. Watch me rain ‘til I pour. I'll catch a ship that'll sail me astray,
get caught in a wind, I'll just have to obey ‘til I'm flyin; away . . .

Let me leave behind all the clouds in my mind.

I wanna wake without wondering why, finding myself in a burst for the sky. High!

I'll just roll. Let me lose all control.

I wanna float like a wish in a well, free as the sound of the sea in a shell.

I don't know, but maybe I'm just a fool. I should keep to the ground.
I should stay where I'm at. Maybe everyone has hunger like this,
and the hunger will pass. But I can't think like that.

All I know is somewhere, thru a clearing,
there's a flickering of sunlight on a river long and wide,
and I have such a river inside.

Let me run through a field in the night, let me lift from the ground 'til my soul is in flight.
Let me sway like the shade of a tree, let me swirl like a cloud in a storm on the sea.

Wish me on my way thru the dawning day.
I wanna flow, wanna rise, wanna spill, wanna grow on the side of a hill,
wanna shift like a wave rollin' on,
wanna drift from the path I've been traveling upon, before I am gone.

Craig Carnelia is an American composer and lyricist whose work in musical theater includes contributions to the musical *Working* (1978) and other productions. Arranger Ryan Murphy is a well-known choral composer, arranger, and conductor. The song follows a speaker who feels a deep pull toward a different kind of life and works through every reason to stay put before deciding the longing is too strong to ignore.

Your World

Music composed by Joan Szymko in 2019

Text written by Georgia Douglas Johnson in 1922

Your world is as big as you make it.
I know, for I used to abide
In the narrowest nest in a corner,
My wings pressing close to my side.

But I sighted the distant horizon
Where the skyline encircled the sea
And I throbbed with a burning desire
To travel this immensity.

I battered the cordons around me.
And cradled my wings on the breeze,
Then soared to the uttermost reaches
With rapture, with power, with ease!

Joan Szymko is among the most prominent American composers of choral music for women's voices, with over 100 published works and a Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission from the American Choral Directors Association. The text is by Georgia Douglas Johnson, a central figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Johnson's poem describes moving from a cramped, constrained life to one of expansive freedom by choosing to push past the boundaries around her.

About Women's Voices Chorus

Women's Voices Chorus is a premier Triangle chorus for sopranos and altos. While performing a wide and diverse repertoire, we remain steadfast in support of our threefold mission: to provide a welcoming place in the Triangle for singers to share the joy of singing together, to promote choral works written by and for women, and to strive to achieve the highest standards of musical excellence. WVC strives to foster a climate of purposeful inclusion. A diverse, multicultural, multiracial choral community enriches a chorus and its music. We welcome sopranos and altos regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, culture, religion, disability, or educational, financial, or class status. We rehearse from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Mondays from late August through late April and give concerts in January and April or May. We invite singers who are interested to consider auditioning in late August. Information will be posted on the "Sing" page of our website.



Artistic Director Laura Sam began her tenure with the chorus in summer 2019. A North Carolina native and UNCG graduate, she has been a choral conductor and music educator since 1984, directing choruses at the middle, high school, and collegiate levels. Laura was honored as the NC High School Choral Director of the Year (2007) and was inducted into the NC High School Choral Director's Hall of Fame (2018). She was honored in 2020 as the NC ACDA Lara Hoggard Award recipient in recognition for her distinguished service to choral music in NC. When not immersed in choral music, Laura serves as the director of the North Carolina Governor's School East, leading a summer residential program for intellectually gifted high school students.



Pianist Deborah Lee Hollis is highly respected for her sensitivity and skill as a collaborative partner. In addition to working with many prominent music organizations in the Triangle area, Deb has conducted master classes with pianists and vocalists at Shenandoah, Furman, and Longwood Universities, served on faculty at Wheaton and Guilford Colleges and UNC-Greensboro, and as collaborative pianist/coach at Duke University and UNC-Chapel Hill. Hollis holds piano performance degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and received her Doctor of Musical Arts in Collaborative Piano from UNC-Greensboro.

Women's Voices Chorus

Director's Assistant: Kay Johnson

Artistic Director: Laura Sam

Pianist: Deborah Hollis

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Rachel Bowman-Abdi	Jennifer Canada ✧	Ellie Sheridan ✧	Marley Steffens
Rebecca Bruening ⌘	Mariah Hoye	Trisha Socias	Shelley Turkington
Carly Bunch	Brystanna Kaufman ★✧		

Soprano 2

Hannah Andrews	Beverly Du	Shipra Patel ✧	Leandra Merea Strobe
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Sarah Cabell	Allison Mangin ✧	Julia Rinehart	Darcy Wold ✧
Kate DeAlmeida ★	Carol Mansfield	Kinley Russell ✧	Diane Wold ✧

Alto 1

Christa Abedi ✧	Marsha Ferguson	Ann Harrison ★	Susan Regier
Rah Bickley ✧	Sheryl Fowler	Kay Johnson ⌘	Pauline Robinson
Allison Blaylock	Jan French	Jacqueline Little	Clare Strayhorn
Phoebe Bull	Susan Gidwitz	Anne J. Menkens	Edie Stuber
Kristin de Havilland	Cecelia Gulley Massamilla		

Alto 2

Meg Berreth ✧	Janet Huebner ⌘ ✧	Caryl Thomason Price	Diana Skeffington
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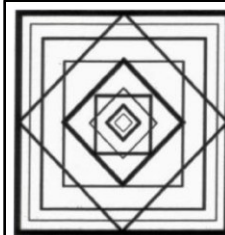


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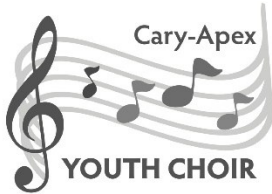
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*"So our lives sing, sing
wild we will fly,
wild in spirit we will fly."*

With deepest gratitude for Women's Voices Chorus.

Laura Sam





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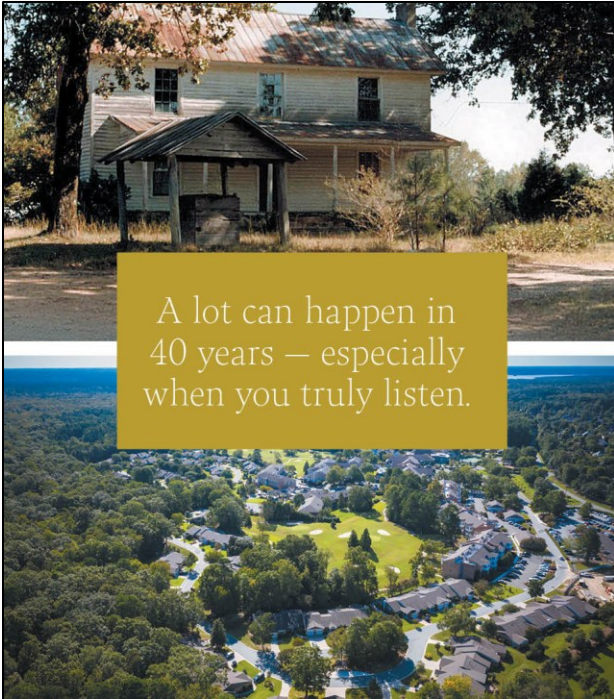
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-the Soprano 2 section



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 This program is supported by the Orange County Arts Commission and by the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.  North Carolina Arts Council
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Women’s Voices Chorus, Inc.
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