



and



Present

Rise Up!

Sunday, January 25, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church, Durham NC

Guest Musicians: Mary Huntimer, Saxophone;
Debbie Davis, Cello; Christina Lowder, Percussion



Rise Up! celebrates the immeasurable contributions of women as musicians, poets, authors, scientists, artists, activists, matriarchs, and peacemakers. Featuring music and poetry composed by women, we honor and amplify stories of resilience, courage, and hope. We pay tribute to those who confront injustice, spark movements, and inspire lasting change—women whose strength lifts others and whose legacy endures.

Community Outreach Fund

Each semester, through our Community Outreach program, Women's Voices Chorus offers material support to a local nonprofit organization that is working to make our community a place where we can all belong. Our budget includes funds for this program, but we also accept donations from chorus and audience members. This semester, based on our theme, we have chosen to donate to Arise Collective and to Sisters' Voices.



Arise Collective supports women whose lives have been impacted by their interactions with the justice system, with a mission to “equip women with the tools and support they need to heal, grow, and thrive, both in prison and in the communities to which they return.” Based in Raleigh, Arise offers chaplaincy

services, transition education, housing, transportation, case management, peer support, and community engagement to women in prison and after their release. To learn more, visit Arise-Collective.org.



Sisters' Voices is a community of girls who love to sing, with six levels of classes and ensembles for girls ages 3-18. “Know your voice. Know your power” is front and center for Sisters' Voices, along with the core values of courage, curiosity, and connection.

This is a place where young women can be known and loved, and can take risks, learn, and grow. For more information, visit SistersVoices.org.

If you would like to support these organizations, please donate to WVC either at today's welcome table or online at WomensVoicesChorus.org/donate (click on the One-Time tab). If you donate online, please put a note in the comment section when you donate to earmark your funds. If you'd like to give to both organizations, be sure to specify how much goes to each group in the notes.

Program

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 on the lower level, accessible by stairs at the back of the church or on the main level across from the lobby. See any usher for help.

What Happens When a Woman?

Music and Text written by
Alexandra Olsavsky of Artemisia in 2017

Soloist: Pasha Strophe

What happens when a woman takes power?
What happens when she won't back down?
What happens when a woman takes power?
What happens when she wears the crown?

What happens when she rules her own body?
What happens when she sets the beat?
What happens when she bows to nobody?
What happens when she stands on her own two feet?

Woah, we rise above. Woah, we lead with love.
Woah, we have won. We are one. We've just begun.

What Happens When a Woman? is a song for the strong women of our world who seek to empower themselves by asking important questions. The Artemisia Trio is named after inspirational women (the ancient Greek naval queen of Halicarnassus, Artemisia I of Caria, the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, and the Greek goddess Artemis). Artemisia's music focuses on themes of female identity, empowerment, and leadership. The trio commissions and performs works by female composers, champions female voices in music, and engages in educational outreach to promote female empowerment.

Wild Embers

Music composed by Melissa Dunphy in 2019
Text written by Nikita Gill in 2017

We are the descendants of the wild women you forgot,
We are the stories you thought would never be taught.
They should have checked the ashes of the women they burned alive.
Because it takes a single wild ember to bring a whole wildfire to life.

In her mission statement, Australian-American composer Melissa Dunphy says: As a composer, I believe that music is not only a form of expression but a means of communication. My primary mission is to connect with my audience so that they discover and understand the ideas, emotions, and narratives in my music. I want my music to be relevant to the world around it and exist in that world. It is inspired by and explores real-world issues of social justice and personal relationships. I am deeply committed to bringing the voices of women and minorities to the stage, either by telling their stories, or telling stories from their perspective.

Nikita Gill is an Irish-Indian poet, playwright, writer and illustrator based in south England. Her poem, *Wild Embers*, explores women's contributions throughout history being marginalized, ignored, and erased— but never fully extinguished. That remaining ember has the potential to spark a whole wildfire.

The Girl With the Numbers

Music and Text written by Marie-Claire Saindon in 2020

Text based on the life of Katherine Johnson (1918-2020)

One one three three one, One two two three one, Se'en se'en three three se'en,
Se'en se'en two two se'en, Three three fi' fi' three...

Can a Black student take part as a scholar, a classmate,
can "separate but equal" finally unite? Why not?
I am no better than anyone, but no one is better than me.

Can a woman pioneer as an expert, a master,
can a "computer in skirts" change the script? Why not?
I am no better than anyone, but no one is better than me.

Can a Black woman challenge as a colleague, an equal,
can the "girl with the numbers" balance the question and reach for the moon? Why not?
I am no better than anyone, but no one is better than me.

Notes from the composer: On February 20th, 1962, John Glenn was the first American to launch into space and orbit the Earth. Friendship 7's success heavily depended on the exactitude of the rocket trajectory's calculations. Glenn said "Get the girl." He trusted his life with only one person to confirm by hand these IBM-generated numbers: Katherine Johnson, 44 year-old mathematician, daughter, sister, widow, wife, mother of three, friend, teacher, community-builder, chorister; the first woman—and African American woman—to join NASA's Space Flight Research Division as research mathematician, and who was part of the Space Task Group for America's first multiple mission to space. Human computer. "The girl with the numbers."

Having been denied an education higher than grade 6 himself, Johnson's father armed her with many tools. One that would propel her beyond many challenges was the following lesson: "You are no better than anybody, but nobody's better than you." Johnson was able to gather the courage and ask many questions that some may not have dared to ask both as a woman and an African American. One of her favorite questions was "Why not?": Why couldn't she integrate the all-white West Virginia State University when the Jim Crow segregation law's justification, "separate but equal," could no longer stand? Why couldn't she do creative and theoretical thinking as a woman instead of being assigned the role of a "human computer" (hence the nickname "computers in skirts")? Why couldn't she, as a Black woman, participate at all-male meetings pertaining to her research? Contribute to one of the first American manuals about space technology? Pen multiple research papers...? At every turn, Johnson girded herself with her strengthening lesson that she would then impart to her students at every opportunity: "I am no better than anyone, but no one is better than me."

In 2015, President Barack Obama awarded Johnson the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The numbers being sung are the musical scale degrees of the tonal centers of this composition (each note in the musical scale is assigned a number from 1 to 7 to indicate its position), about which Katherine Johnson said, "I loved numbers and numbers loved me. They followed me everywhere. No matter what I did, I was always finding something to count."

No Fairy Tale Here

Music composed by Zanaida Robles in 2019

Text written by Robyn Watson in 2019

Narration: Célia Petrie

*Once upon a non-fairy tale was a cocoa-hued tune in shades of blue
good friends of she whose new business boomed
brighter than the fireworks on Independence Day
majority observes jealousy, inflaming the cycle of insanity*

With a shattered, furious, frustrated, fiery heart her rigid pen fought a mighty battle

Lies activated, Cops called, innocence jailed

business literally explodes, then innocence is dragged out
and turned into involuntary ornaments on the local tree. It's not even Christmas yet.
She finds out shattered, furious, frustrated, fiery is her heart and now the rigid P.S.A.s begin.

With a shattered, furious, frustrated, fiery heart her rigid pen fought a mighty battle.

She morphs into a knight, her armor evolves
with ev'ry word she types (with ev'ry word she types)

“Southern Horrors” and “The Red Record” read like the scariest bulk of fiction
and has an equal amount of bloodshed as the Civil War
but they're frigid facts without a stain to be found.

She shouted for humanity and scolded the lack of, without a sound her verbiage stabbed
Confederate flags, Jim Crow, white sheet, masked men, and leaders of the “free world”
without a touch

with a shattered, furious, frustrated, fiery heart her rigid pen fought a mighty battle
without a touch

but it's crazy we still have to fight.

Composer Zanaida Robles is an award-winning Black American female composer, vocalist, conductor, and teacher. Authentic interpersonal connection and relationship-building are core principles of her teaching and performance methods. She is an advocate for diversity and inclusion in music education.

No Fairy Tale Here tells of the extraordinary writing and artistry of Ida B. Wells (1862-1931) and how she fought racism and oppression through literature. Ida B. Wells challenged segregation seventy-one years before Rosa Parks, and her campaign against violence and for equality laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement, yet most of her efforts were for a long time largely unknown due to the fact that she was African American and a woman. Wells was an integral part of the progressive movement, using her passion about social justice and her skills as a journalist to fight for racial and gender equality. She was a pioneering investigative journalist who created the first comprehensive, statistical reports on lynching (*Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* and *A Red Record*), and led many anti-lynching campaigns.

The Radium Girl

Music composed by Michael Bussewitz-Quarm in 2019

Text written by Chantal Sellers in 2018

I was sheltered in darkness
Now night's overtaken by day,
And I paint it to life 'til the
Starlight is scattered like rain.

*Refrain: You steal my face and settle
Down deep in my bones.
Sleeping is restless
When truth is the bed
And they urn the stones.*

Peace isn't easy to buy
But I'm bargaining piece by piece,
Tasting the days slip away
In radiant, bitter retreat.

I drip from the tip of a brush
While the hours mark time on a dial,
Each one the sum of my life
With nary a lip left to smile.

Composer Michael Bussewitz-Quarm is an award-winning composer whose choral music engages with pressing social and environmental issues, fostering understanding and empathy through art. Her work is shaped by a deep belief in the power of resilience and a unique personal journey, allowing her to create music that gives voice to marginalized communities. Questions Michael explores include: What transition can we sing about? What joy? What celebration? What sorrow? Can our music subvert the given narrative? Can our song persevere? Can we triumph?

Poet Chantal Sellers is a historian and writer whose work has appeared in numerous national publications. As a Native American (Anishinabe-kwe), Chantal endeavors to give voice to those whose history might otherwise be forgotten.

Even when terminally ill from radium poisoning, which they had ingested while painting watch faces, the Radium Girls fought back against their employer who denied that the radium was the cause of their illnesses and subsequent deaths. Seriously ill and with only months to live, five women, including Grace Fryer, Quinta McDonald, Edna Ussman, Albina Larice, and Katherine Schaub, were able to bring to light the dangerous workplace conditions in the factory. The legacy of the Radium Girls can't be overstated. Their lawsuit, filed in 1925 against the U.S. Radium Corporation, was among the first in which a company was held responsible for the health and safety of its employees, and it led to a variety of reforms as well as the creation of the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The stomping during the refrain and at the end of the piece symbolizes solidarity as well as activism. Through generations, the march has become a very powerful and meaningful way of expressing strength in numbers.

WVC is a member of the commissioning consortium of this piece.



Hands Upon the Plow

Music composed Jocelyn Hagen in 2019

Text written by Barbara Saxton in 2019

She likened our Movement to mosaic tiles: more vibrant and stronger when linked
by the mortar of women, our undaunted will.

She placed trembling hands upon the true plow, told us not to let go,
to push hard till we reached the end of each row.

She claimed *No New Worlds* without female power—
peace, progress, discovery all grow in our hearts, our wise voices, our votes. VOTE!

As a fierce advocate for gender equality and inclusivity, Jocelyn Hagen's Compose Like a Girl initiative amplifies female-identifying composers, helps conductors diversify their concerts, and works toward more equality in music programming and commissioning.

Notes from the poet, Barbara Saxton: I feel the greatest gratitude and personal empathy toward suffragist and women's rights champion Alice Paul (1885-1977). I have voted in every election since 1968, and doing so is a right I've taken for granted. Of course, I was aware of "the Movement," but until I researched the life and work of Alice Paul and other women's rights pioneers, I didn't realize how long they had labored nor how deeply they suffered to obtain this gift of rightful participation in the democratic process for American women! Alice never married or had children. She organized, marched, confronted for decades—she was even painfully force-fed through a nose tube while on a hunger strike. She knew exactly how difficult it was to wield that heavy plow through the muddy fields of prejudice, distrust and ignorance women faced as they tried to obtain even the most basic rights in a democracy. And that is why she entreated women to never stop pushing for equal rights until we reached the end of each row, or obstacle. We've come a long way, but we're not there yet... Some of the lines of my poem are quotes from Alice herself—e.g., "the movement as mosaic" and "no new worlds without female power." Other original lines were inspired by her incredible bravery and persistence, ending (as any poem or song about Alice and her fellow suffragists must) with an exhortation to lift our voices and VOTE!

Rise Up

Music composed by Jake Runestad in 2016

Text taken from speeches and writings by Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906)

Rise up! There shall never be another season of silence.

Deepen your sympathy then convert it to action.

Pray every single second of your life, not on your knees but with your work.

Think your best thoughts, speak your best words, do your best work.

There is so much yet to be done. Rise up!

Composer Jake Runestad's works are described as "steeped in a belief that music has the power to initiate positive change, that are socially conscious, and that explore authentic human emotions and experiences. In a desire to make an impact beyond the music itself, Jake uses a portion of the proceeds from his music sales to donate to non-profit organizations connected with the themes of his works."

Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) was an American social reformer and women's rights activist who played a pivotal role in the women's suffrage movement. She co-founded the National Woman Suffrage Association and served as its president. She also worked for the American Anti-Slavery Society, demonstrating her commitment to equality across multiple fronts. Susan B. Anthony's tireless efforts and leadership were instrumental in the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. Though she died before its ratification, the amendment is sometimes referred to as the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment" in her honor.

Womankind

Music composed by Emily Drum in 2024

Text written by Taylee Heldt in 2018

Sisters' Voices

I am the breeze bearing life and shaking color from the trees.
I am the hum that fills your ears and the buzzing of the bees.
I am the stream that cools your feet and washes away your fears.
I am the sun that gives you warmth and dries up all your tears.

I am the moon that tires your eyes, the keeper of your dreams.
I am the tide that ebbs and flows pushing and pulling with ease.
I am the hills that roll about gifting you miles of green.
I am the stars that glimmer in your eyes and sprinkle the sky with a sheen.

But if you dare disrespect my name or treat me like I am yours to claim,
I will be the eye of the hurricane that swallows you whole.
I will be the tsunami of emotion that holds a mirror to your soul.
I will be the earthquake crumbling the pedestal beneath your feet.
I will be the landslide dragging you down as you wallow in defeat.

For I am the strongest, most resilient force no man could ever match.
I am not a game to win or a treasure you can catch.
I am the mothers, the sisters, the partners, the daughters.
I am queen to the highest land and to the deepest of the waters.
I am womankind.

From the composer: The text and essence of *Womankind* arise from 17-year-old Taylee Heldt's profound reflection on the multifaceted strength and resilience of women. The piece is rich with vivid nature metaphors, portraying women as a powerful and unstoppable force. Both the lyrics and the music aim to capture the diverse and dynamic nature of feminine strength.

Today, Taylee Heldt, a graduate of The Chicago High School for the Arts (2019) and The University of Arizona (2024), is a teaching artist at Goodman Theater in Chicago, IL.

Water Women

Music composed by Joan Szymko in 2016

Text written by Alla Bozarth in 1974

Chamber Choir

We do not want to rock the boat, you say, mistaking our new poise for something safe.
We smile secretly at each other,
sharing the reality that for some time we have not been in the boat.
We jumped or were pushed or fell and some leaped overboard.
Our bodies form a freedom fleet, our dolphin grace is power.

We learn and teach and as we go each woman sings— each woman's hands are water wings.
Some of us have become mermaids or Amazon whales and are swimming for our lives.
Some of us do not know how to swim. We walk on water.

Composer Joan Szymko states that she is "...drawn to texts that invoke divine grace, speak to the universal yearning for good, and that nurture a compassionate heart."

Poet Alla Renée Bozarth is an Episcopal priest who wrote this poem before the historic Philadelphia Ordinations in which eleven women put a significant crack in the Episcopal Church's stained-glass-ceiling by being ordained in 1974. Bozarth said, "I wrote the poem and read it aloud by outdoor firelight at a gathering of participants the night before the Philadelphia Ordinations to bolster our spirits. For we had no idea what would come of it all, we sensed there would be great personal cost to ourselves. And there was."

Malala

Music composed by Joan Szymko in 2014

Text adapted from quotes by Malala Yousafzai

Narration: Isha Bansal

I am Malala, their bullet did not stop me.
I am Malala, their bullet gave me power to raise my voice.
Hear my voice: *One child, one teacher, one pen, one book—can change the world.*
I am Malala. I am afraid of no one.

United Nations Messenger of Peace Malala Yousafzai became an international symbol of the fight for girls' education after she was shot in 2012 for opposing Taliban restrictions on female education in her home country of Pakistan. In 2009, Malala began writing a blog under a pseudonym about the increasing military activity in her hometown and about fears that her school would be attacked. After her identity was revealed, Malala and her father Ziauddin continued to speak out for the right to education.

The Taliban's attack on Malala on 9 October 2012 as she was returning home from school with her friends received worldwide condemnation. In Pakistan, over 2 million people signed a right to education petition, and the National Assembly ratified Pakistan's first Right to Free and Compulsory Education Bill.

In 2013, Malala and her father co-founded the Malala Fund to bring awareness to the social and economic impact of girls' education and to empower girls to demand change. In December 2014, Malala became the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Secretary-General António Guterres designated Malala as a United Nations Messenger of Peace in 2017 to help raise awareness of the importance of girls' education.

Be Like Jane

Music and Text written by Michael Bussewitz-Quarm in 2023

Survive! Persevere! Persist! Fight and run!
Go live! Love and dream!

She was creeping, crawling
through the forest o'er steep hills and
through thick thorns and
through undergrowth.
She had goals to study the primates.
She struggled,
Though she almost gave up,
she pushed on and changed the world.
She also heard the human cry
of crippling poverty, lack of good education,
degradation of land.

She set pathways to take a stand.

She was so alone and so far away,
from her family, from her friends.

Would she be OK?

Even though the people surrounding her
were the same,

it's such a shame - it wasn't a fair game.

Live here! Not over there!

Sit there! Not over here!

Be quiet, don't make a sound!

Or our world will become unbound!

Be like Jane! Fight! Live! Love! Dream!

Be like Jane!

She ran and ran and ran....

Jane, she had a goal

to live in each moment

to persevere in life

and in all its beauty.

"You are gravely ill, yet
you can lead a normal life"
is what she wanted survivors to hear.
She ran through the pain
She ran through the suffering,
She ran for those who surrounded her
And through the finish line.

Go be like Jane!

Fight! Live! Love! Dream!

Be like Jane!

Pain is not unusual

In our journey to find ourselves.

Clear the way for confidence.

Clear the way for boldness.

Clear away the ceaseless doubt.

Make way for my acceptance.

Put the mettle to the pedal

Ring around with who surrounds you.

Put the mettle to the pedal

Sing a round with who surrounds you.

Bring courage and radiance

Everywhere you go.

Strength o'er pain brings beauty.

Strength o'er pain brings love and beauty.

Strength o'er worry, pain, and fear
brings love and beauty.

Strength o'er worry, pain, and fear
brings courage and confidence.

Go be like Jane! Fight! Live! Love! Dream!

Be like Jane! Go be like Jane!

Composer Michael Bussewitz-Quarm writes: *Be Like Jane* is the embodiment of dedication, perseverance, and determination. This piece is inspired by three influential women all with the same name, Jane. Jane Goodall, Jane Bolin, and Jane Tomlinson have all shown remarkable strength throughout their lives; each having their own struggles but continuing to fight their way toward a better future in the process. These women have become inspirations and heroes to many. The lyrics “Pain is not unusual in the journey to find ourselves” speak to having the courage to move forward even when it seems like there is no light at the end of the tunnel, so be like Jane. Always fight, live, love, and dream!

This piece celebrates the achievements of three extraordinary women named Jane:

Jane Goodall - (1934-2025) Jane Goodall was an English Zoologist and Primatologist. In 1960, Dame Jane Goodall set out on an adventure to the forest of Gombe to better understand the life of chimpanzees. On her difficult path, she discovered things that would transform life as we knew it. Her persistence to make a positive impact on the world was honorable and heroic.

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

— Jane Goodall



Jane Bolin - (1908-2007) Judge Jane Bolin was born into a world of discrimination, having to fight and claw her way to the top. Through her inspirational perseverance, she became the first Black woman to graduate from Yale Law School and to be appointed a judge in the United States. Her advocacy paved the way for justice and equal rights for women and children for almost half a century.

“Those gains we have made were never graciously and generously granted. We have had to fight every inch of the way — in the face of sometimes insufferable humiliations.”

— Jane Bolin

Jane Tomlinson - (1964-2007) Diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2000 but determined to live the life she wanted to its fullest, Jane Tomlinson was an amateur English athlete who raised 1.85 million pounds for charity by completing a series of athletic challenges—the London Marathon three times, the London Triathlon twice, the New York Marathon once—and cycling across the US and Europe. Her determination to show that you can still lead a normal life after your diagnosis was an inspiration to survivors everywhere. Even through her pain and suffering, she managed to be a bright light for those who surrounded her.

“What am I going to do: sit in a chair and be sad? There’s still life to be lived. I’d rather get on with it.”

— Jane Tomlinson



Richer for Her

Music composed by Andrea Ramsey in 2015
Text by Charlotte Tall Mountain published in 2006

For the love of a tree, she went out on a limb,
For the love of the sea, she rocked the boat,
For the love of the earth, she dug deeper,
For the love of the stars, she let her light shine.

For the love of spirit, she nurtured her soul,
For the love of the Goddess, she drew down the moon,
For the love of a good time, she sowed seeds of happiness,
For the love of family, she reconciled differences.

For the love of her enemies, she suspended judgment,
For the love of community, she mended fences,
For the love of herself, she acknowledged her worth,
And the world was richer for her.

American composer, conductor, scholar, and music educator Andrea Ramsey describes herself as a product of public education and the first in her family to attend college. Andrea grew up in rural Arkansas where she experienced firsthand the power of music to provide opportunities, a sense of community, and better understanding of our humanity.

Poet Charlotte Tall Mountain (1941-2006) was an artist and poet of Iroquois Native American heritage. Her poem *For the Love of the World* celebrates women and all that they offer in the world.

Like a Mountain

Arranged by Joan Szymko in 2005
Music and Text written by Naomi Littlebear Morena in 1977

Nobody can push back an ocean; it's gonna rise back up in waves.
And nobody can stop the wind from blowin', stop a mind from growin'.
Somebody may stop my voice from singing but the song will live on and on

You can't kill the spirit. It's like a mountain, old and strong; it lives on and on.
Nobody can stop a woman from feelin' she has to rise up like the sun.
Somebody may change the words we're saying but the truth will live on and on.

This feminist resistance anthem was composed by singer-songwriter Naomi Morena (b. 1950) when she was just 19 years old and has the power and feel of a tried-and-true folk song. It has been sung all around the world, most notably as the adopted theme song of the women at the Greenham Common peace camp in Berkshire, England, in the 1980s. On 12 December 1982, 30,000 women held hands around the 6-mile perimeter of the military base in protest against the decision to site American nuclear cruise missiles there.

Naomi Morena is a visionary warrior for justice whose support and passion for the lesbian community runs deep and long. Her songs, poetry and essays reflect the world around her, the LGBTQ+ community, and particularly the lives of Latinas. Naomi is recognized internationally as the songwriter of *Like a Mountain (Can't Kill the Spirit)*, but few know she also founded perhaps the first LGBT choir in the US.

Still I Rise

Music and Text written by Rosephanye Powell in 2005
inspired by the poem of the same name by Maya Angelou published in 1978

Soloists: Kinley Russell, Carly Bunch

Though I have been wounded; aching heart full of pain.
Jus' like a budding rose, my bloom is nourished by rain.
Haven't time to wonder why, though fearful I strive.
My pray'r and faith uphold me 'til my courage arrives.

Still I rise as an eagle, soaring above ev'ry fear.
With each day I succeed, I grow strong an' believe
That it's all within my reach; I'm reaching for the skies,
Bolstered by courage, yes, still I rise.

Gentle as a woman; tender sweet are my sighs.
Strength is in my tears and healing rains in my cries.
Plunging depths of anguish, I determine to strive.
My pray'r and faith uphold me 'til my courage arrives.

Though you see me slump with heartache; heart so heavy that it breaks.
Be not deceived I fly on bird's wings, rising sun, its healing rays.
Look at me, you see a woman; gentle as a butterfly.
But don't you think, not for one moment, that I'm not strong because I cry.

Dr. Rosephanye Powell is celebrated as one of America's foremost women composers of choral music, earning widespread recognition for her exceptional contributions to the art form. An internationally acclaimed African American composer, conductor, and educator, she was inspired by Poet Laureate Maya Angelou's (1928-2014) poem *Still I Rise*. It is a women's anthem, saluting the strength of women to persevere through life's difficulties – low self-esteem, physical and emotional abuse, rape, incest, prejudice, abandonment, and such. Though a woman's life or past may be filled with tears and heartache, with each day that she finds herself still living, she finds that she has grown stronger and has risen a little higher because her circumstances have not overcome her. Thus, every new day can be one of hope and joy because regardless of the past, today, "still I rise"!

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 women 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 early February. Information will be posted on the "Sing" page of our website.

Board of Directors

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Darcy Wold, *At Large*

Laura Sam, *Artistic Director*



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.

About Sisters' Voices

[Sisters' Voices](#) is a choral community of girls, within which each is known and supported while being challenged to grow as a musician and as a person. We are based in Chapel Hill, NC, and serve girls and young women in pre-kindergarten through high school. Sisters' Voices performs concerts each fall, winter, and spring, appears at local music and arts festivals, and collaborates with local artists and other choral ensembles.

Our work to educate young voices includes both excellent choral training and a Leadership curriculum through which middle and high school singers explore their personal values, build intention around their relationships with their families and friends, and explore issues in the broader world. The friendships that are built during our singing and leadership work are central to the lives of our singers.

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Alexandra Figueroa

Leandra Merea Strope is the founder and Artistic Director of Sisters' Voices, established in 2008 as a secular choral community empowering girls and young women to explore and share their voices. She completed her undergraduate work at Meredith College and her graduate work at Yale and Indiana Universities; she also holds a diploma from the Body Therapy Institute. Leandra's teaching experience spans pre-K through college. Through Sisters' Voices, Leandra has built a progressive choral and leadership program serving singers from pre-kindergarten through high school, creating a space where singers develop confidence, competence, and courage to share what is in their hearts and minds.



Accompanist Brandon Long is a collaborative pianist with longstanding experience supporting choral ensembles and instrumentalists. A Pennsylvania native, he was a four-year singer and accompanist with the Juniata College Concert Choir, touring internationally and continuing to create rehearsal tracks for the program after his graduation in 2007. Since moving to North Carolina, Brandon has collaborated with community choirs, provided audition support for PlayMakers Repertory Company at UNC–Chapel Hill, and serves as a pianist for Mother Teresa Catholic Church in Cary. He also performs regularly as a solo pianist throughout the Triangle.



Sisters' Voices

Artistic Director: Leandra Merea Strope

Accompanist: Brandon Long

SV5 Ensemble

Amina Kasim	Jacqueline Pei	Jessica Bai Yan	Lian Petrella
Calliope DeAlmeida	Jasper Peak	Jossie Xiao Zhong	Pasha Strope
Célia Petrie	Jay DeAlmeida	June Johnson	Ruby Lou King
Isha Bansal	Jennie Siqi Liu	Kiran Downs	Vishali Beatie

Women's Voices Chorus

Artistic Director: Laura Sam

Director's Assistant: Kay Johnson

Pianist: Deborah Hollis

Soprano 1

Katie Barton	Deb Gauldin	Brystana Kaufman	Marley Steffens
Rachel Bowman-Abdi	Marissa Goodall	Ellie Sheridan ✧	Shelley Turkington ★
Rebecca Bruening ☞	Mariah Hoye	Trisha Socias	Julianne Vance
Jennifer Canada ✧	Wendy Hua ✧		

Soprano 2

Hannah Andrews	Kate DeAlmeida	Carol Mansfield	Leandra Merea Strope
Ellie Bautista	Beverly Du	Shipra Patel	Sarah Town
Talia Brenner	Virginia Byers Kraus ☞	Julia Rinehart	Darcy Wold ✧
Carly Bunch ★	Allison Mangin ✧	Kinley Russell ✧	Diane Wold ✧
Danielle Crosson			

Alto 1

Christa Abedi ✧	Sheryl Fowler	Kay Johnson ☞	Susan Regier
Rah Bickley ✧	Jan French	Jacqueline Little	Pauline Robinson
Allison Blaylock	Susan Gidwitz	Cecelia Gulley Massimilla	Clare Strayhorn
Kristin DeHavilland	Casey Griffith	Anne J. Menkens	Edie Stuber
Marsha Ferguson ✧	Ann Harrison ★		

Alto 2

Meg Berreth ✧	Janet Huebner ☞ ✧	Debbie Russell ✧	Sharon Smith ★
Susan E. Brown ✧	Diane Kirkman	Betty Schumacher	Ann Sundberg
Karla Byrnes ✧	Susanna Lambert	Doris Sigl	Jaclyn Walters
Megan Hast	Caryl Thomason Price	Diana Skeffington	

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✧ **Chamber Choir**

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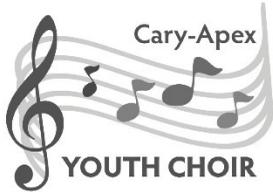
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With deepest gratitude,



Laura Sam

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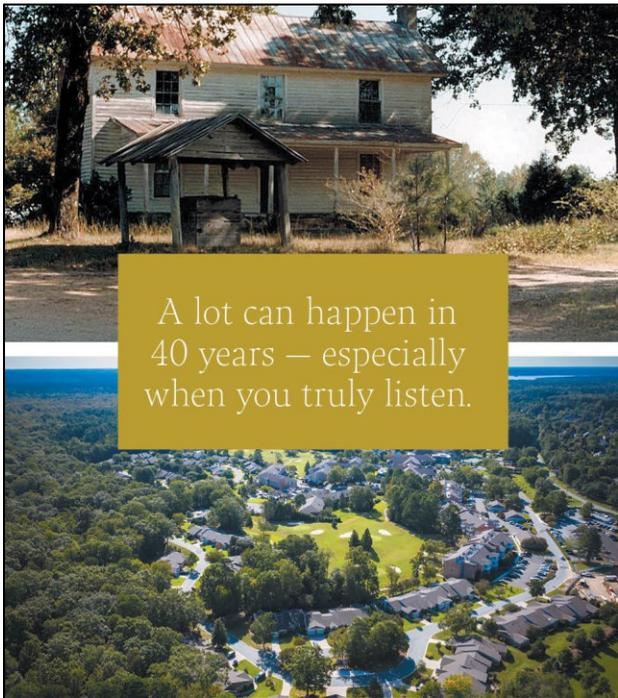
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