

A sunset sky with birds flying in a V-formation. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow that transitions into a deep blue sky. Several birds are silhouetted against the sky, flying in a loose V-formation. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

*Women's Voices* CHORUS

*Singing and Dancing the Earth Alive*

Sunday, January 26, 2025, 3:00 p.m.  
First Presbyterian Church, Durham

Laura Sam, Artistic Director  
[womensvoiceschorus.org](http://womensvoiceschorus.org)

# Women's Voices CHORUS

Presents

## Singing and Dancing the Earth Alive

Sunday, January 26, 2025, 3:00 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, Durham NC

### **Community Outreach Fund**

Building on the success of last semester's Negro Spirituals Royalties Project, WVC is inaugurating a Community Outreach Fund. Each semester, we will donate to one local nonprofit organization chosen based on the music we are singing. Funds for this program are included in our budget, but we also welcome donations from chorus and audience members. In light of the recent disaster in Western North Carolina and as a reflection of our concert title, this semester we have chosen to support [Voices in the Laurel](#).

Voices in the Laurel is a Western NC-based non-profit organization of three choirs for children and adults from Haywood, Buncombe, Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties under the direction of Martha Brown. It is an authentic program that focuses on providing young people quality choral education in fun and innovative ways. The program provides a healing community and a safe, loving environment.

Hard hit themselves, members of Voices in the Laurel are collecting donations to create "Boxes of Sunshine" for children who lost most or all of their belongings to Hurricane Helene, buying everything from local businesses. Some of the funds WVC has already donated have been used for this project. Martha wrote in thanks, "Oh, my goodness...I am in tears! I cannot thank you enough!!! We just delivered 98 boxes to students... ." And there is more work to be done. Donations also support their operating expenses and scholarships for students who are unable to pay tuition at this time.

If you would like to help support this organization, you can contribute through WVC via Square or Venmo (see back page of the program; specify Community Outreach in notes) or with cash or check at the display table in the lobby.

### **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.*

## ***Program Notes***

*Singing and Dancing the Earth Alive* celebrates the deep connection between humanity and the Earth, with music serving as a bridge between our inner worlds and the natural world around us. The ancient practice of singing has been used by cultures worldwide to honor the Earth, to invoke the spirits of nature, and to celebrate the rhythms of life. Exploring the connection of mind, body, and spirit with the Earth, we join in harmony to feel and share the profound relationship between ourselves and the vibrant world around us. Featured women composers included in this program are Elaine Hagenberg, Sarah Hopkins, Carolyn Jennings, Sarah Quartel, Jennifer Stasack, and Joan Szymko. – *Laura Sam*

**Guest Musicians:** Julia Reeves, Violin; Debbie Davis, Cello;  
Tim Turkington, Percussion; Amy Glass, Flute; Daran Wallman, Didgeridoo

### **Honour the Earth**

Music and Text: Sarah Hopkins (b. 1958)

*Ann Harrison, Narration; Leandra Strobe, Overtone Soloist*

Hi-ee-ay too way, Hi-yay,  
Hi-ah-ha-hi, Hi-ay too-whah

Honour the Earth as your Mother,  
Honour the Earth as your Friend.

Hyum-ba-lay, Hyum-ba lay-ee-ha  
Hi-ee Ho-o, Hi-ee Ho

Gaia, Honour the Earth as your Mother,  
Honour the Earth as your Friend.

“Honour the Earth” is a song of grateful praise to Mother Earth and a plea for us all to honor her. It brings together many cultural influences from the “earth tribes,” Native American, African, Celtic, Aboriginal, and Mongolian (overtone singing), as well as the music of Nature herself – birdcalls and flowing streams. Using vocables, sounds without specific textual meaning, the singers represent all human inhabitants of the earth. The didgeridoo characterizes a primal energy while the drum contributes a life-affirming heartbeat. Harmonic whirlies, instruments created by the composer, produce celestial-sounding tones and healing vibrations when spiraled through the air. At different speeds, the whirlies can produce six astoundingly pure notes from the harmonic overtone series, giving flourishes of harmonic energy to the piece.

## Here in My Heart

Music and Text: Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)

The wind off the ocean,  
The breeze in the trees,  
A ruffle of feathers,  
A bird on the wing,  
Fill my heart like they're singing.  
  
The scent of the pine trees,  
The dampness of spring,  
The fragrance of lilac, the memory it  
brings,  
Fill my heart like they're singing,  
Here, here in my heart, they're singing.  
  
The first sign of sunrise,  
Painting the sky,  
The ribbons of colour,  
Warming, warming,  
Fill my heart like they're singing.

The fresh of the morning,  
The dew on the grass,  
The feathery petals opening, opening,  
Fill my heart like they're singing.  
Here, here in my heart, they're singing.  
  
Gleaming, joyful with voices ringing,  
Here in my heart—singing.  
When my voice sings with them  
Their beauty lingers,  
Echoing on, carrying me to brighter days,  
  
When my voice sings with them,  
The music blossoms,  
Growing strong, rooting deep  
And now I know—  
Here, here in my heart, I'm singing.  
Here, here in my heart, we're singing.

Here in my heart—singing. “Here in My Heart” celebrates the beauty of the Earth and wonder evoked by all of Nature. As the singer and listener connect ever more personally to this sense of awe, “Here in my heart they're singing” shifts to “Here in my heart I'm singing,” and finally, “Here in my heart we're singing!”

## Nigra Sum

Music: Pau (Pablo) Casals (1876-1973). Text: Song of Songs 1:4-5, 2:10-12

Nigra sum sed formosa,  
filiae Jerusalem;  
Ideo dilexit me Rex,  
et introduxit me in cubiculum suum,  
et dixit mihi:  
Surge et veni amica mea,  
jam hiems transiit,  
imber abiit et recessit,  
flores apparuerunt in terra nostra,  
tempus putationis advenit. Alleluia.

*I am dark-skinned but comely,  
daughters of Jerusalem;  
Therefore, the King delighted in me,  
and brought me into his chamber,  
and said unto me:  
Arise my love and come,  
for now the winter is past  
the rain is over and gone,  
the flowers appear on the earth,  
the time of pruning is come. Alleluia.*

Composed in 1942 by the acclaimed Catalan cellist Pau Casals, this widely performed motet for treble voices sets to music verses from the Song of Solomon, celebrating a time of renewal after winter has passed. Casals once said, “To be a musician is a great privilege, but it is also a very great responsibility. One must think that to be a musician is a gift—a gift from Nature... . Music must carry the message of beauty, of love, and of peace.”

## Some Glad Morning

Carolyn Jennings (b. 1936)  
Text: Joyce Sutphen (b. 1949)

One day, something very old happened again.  
The green came back to the branches,  
settling like leafy birds on the highest twigs;  
the ground broke open as dark as coffee beans.

The clouds took up their positions in the deep stadium of the sky,  
gloving the bright orb of the sun before they pitched it over the horizon.

It was as good as ever: the air was filled with the scent of lilacs  
and cherry blossoms sounded their long whistle down the track.  
It was some glad morning.

Composer Carolyn Jennings gives the singers this charge: In “Some Glad Morning,” try to see spring through the poet’s eyes: the early green like “leafy birds,” the ground breaking open “as dark as coffee beans,” the clouds in a spirited ballgame with the sun. Experience the poet’s awe and delight at Nature’s recurring gift which is “as good as ever.”

## Measure Me, Sky!

Music: Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979)  
Text: Leonora Speyer (1872-1956)

Measure me, sky!  
Tell me I reach by a song  
Nearer the stars;  
I have been little so long.

Horizon, reach out!  
Catch at my hands, stretch me taut,  
Rim of the world:  
Widen my eyes by a thought.

Sky, be my depth,  
Wind, be my width and my height,  
World, my heart’s span;  
Loveliness, wings for my flight.

Resonating with emotional depth, “Measure Me, Sky!” evokes the longing to transcend human form and to become limitless. Through dramatic text painting, driving rhythms, and upward modulations, the climax is reached, ultimately bursting forth like a dazzling sun from behind mountainous clouds.

## Sing, My Child

Music and Text: Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)

*Chamber Choir; Soloists: Julianne Vance, Elizabeth Shaver*

Sing for the promise in each new morning.  
Sing for the hope in a new day dawning.  
All around is beauty bright!  
Wake in the morning and sing, my child.

Dance in the joy of the day unfolding.  
Dance as you work and  
dance as you're learning.  
All around is beauty bright!  
Take in the day and dance, my child, dance.

But when troubles come  
and worry is all that can be found,  
Gather your strength and hear your voice.  
Sing, my child.

Laugh in the cool and the fresh of the ev'ning.  
Laugh in your triumph, laugh in succeeding.  
All around is beauty bright!  
Rest in the ev'ning and laugh, my child.

Peace in the stillness and dark of the night.  
Peace in the dreams of your silent delights.  
All around is beauty bright!  
Sleep in the night and peace, my child.

But when troubles come  
and worry is all that can be found,  
Gather your strength and hear your voice.  
Sing, my child. Dance my child.  
Laugh my child. Peace my child.

The optimistic text of this piece is realized through buoyant, dance-like rhythms and tight harmonies. In spite of the troubles and worries of life, we are encouraged to gather our strength and hear our voice because "all around is beauty bright!"

## Earth Song

Music and Text: Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

*Chamber Choir*

Sing, Be, Live, See.  
This dark stormy hour,  
The wind, it stirs.  
The scorched earth cries out in vain:

O war and power,  
You blind and blur,  
The torn heart  
Cries out in pain.

But music and singing  
Have been my refuge,  
And music and singing  
Shall be my light.

A light of song  
Shining strong: Alleluia!  
Through darkness, pain, and strife, I'll  
Sing, Be, Live, See... Peace.

In composing "Earth Song," Ticheli first wrote the music and then later created the poetry to articulate the feelings conveyed by the music. Asked about its meaning, Ticheli replied, "The music and message of 'Earth Song' are timeless, but perhaps they are even more meaningful in the world we live in today. When illness, poverty, and fear threaten us on every side, music remains a constant support in our lives—helping us remain grounded and secure no matter what comes our way. "Earth Song" serves as a perfect reminder of that fact. May we continue to always find peace in music—even when life overwhelms us and pulls us apart."

## I Am

Music: Joan Szymko (b. 1957)

Text: Catherine de Vinck (1922-2021)

I am the woman dancing the world alive:  
birds on my wrists  
sun-feathers in my hair  
I leap through hoops of atoms;  
under my steps  
plants burst into bloom  
birches tremble in their silver.  
Can you not see the roundness of me:  
curve of the earth  
maternal arms of the sea  
encircling you wetly as you swim?  
I am the birthing woman  
kneeling by the river

heaving, pushing forth a sacred body  
not mud, not stone: flesh and blood.  
Round, round the wind  
spinning itself wild  
drawing great circles of music  
across the sky.  
Round the gourd full of seed  
round the moon in its ripeness  
round the door through which I come  
stooping into your house.  
I am a God of a thousand names:  
why cannot one of them be  
Woman Singing?

“I Am” immerses singer and listener in the Divine Feminine, with its roundness, vibrance, and life-giving energy. Catherine de Vink, poet and theologian, describes her writing as “soaked in the theology of hope, that is, in the knowledge that death has no dominion, that light overcomes darkness, and that love is a divine power of transformation and renewal.”



### “Birds on my wrists, sun-feathers in my hair!”

One hot July morning, I came across a crow perched on a low tree branch, completely still, even as I approached. After several scorching days of 100+ degrees, I suspected the bird might be heat-stressed. Wanting to help, I brought out a bowl of water with apple bits and gently brushed some of the water on its head and back. At first, it remained unresponsive, but then it took a small sip. To my amazement, the crow hopped onto my wrist. It stayed there for over an hour, drinking water and pecking at the apple pieces, gradually regaining its energy. Watching it recover—and having it calmly perched on my wrist—was truly magical, a moment I’ll never forget. - Laura Sam

## Sky Dances

Music: Roy Brown (1925-1981), Arr. Jennifer Stasack (b. 1956)

Text: Jimmie Durham (1940-2021)

Sky dances, Willows dance like women  
Dance like snakes  
Willows dance before the mirror  
Fish dance in the mirror,  
Turtles dance  
Oaks dance like bears,  
Clouds sing like sky bears  
Pines dance, They are stars.

Storm has come here to kill the grubs,  
To kill worms  
Seeds dance, Water dances,  
It is proud sky horses  
The corn will grow and dance with us  
Lances of storms are with us  
New plants grow, New things ride this way  
Sky dances.

American singer-songwriter and activist Holly Near originally recorded “Sky Dances” in 1989. The song caught the attention of Muse, Cincinnati’s Women’s Choir, a founding social justice women’s choir in the United States that advocates for peace and empowerment through song. In 1990, Muse commissioned Dr. Jennifer Stasack to create a women’s choral arrangement.

Dr. Stasack, a professor of composition, world music, and contemporary music theory at Davidson College, was our guest clinician at WVC’s fall retreat in October. She shared her creative process and gave us a deeper understanding of the text and musical structure of the piece: “By intention, the “pointillist,” shimmering notes of the opening measures evoke a starscape, not bound by gravity but floating, into which the voices move—you are the sky! Textual and musical themes are introduced singly but their linear aspect becomes less distinct as the layers build, representing the interconnectedness of everything on Earth. Change, although it can be destructive, is part of life moving forward: it brings new things.”

## Sing, Wearing the Sky

Music: Jake Runestad (b. 1986)

Text: Excerpts of poetry by Lalla (1320-1392); English translation: Coleman Barks (b. 1937)

Meditate within eternity. Don't stay in the mind.  
The soul, like the moon, is new and always new again.  
Since I scoured my mind and my body, I too, Lalla, am new, each moment new.  
My teacher told me to “live in the soul.” When that was so, I began to go naked and dance!  
Dance, Lalla, with nothing on but air. Sing, Lalla, wearing the sky.  
Look at this glowing day, what clothes could be more beautiful or more sacred?

Acclaimed American composer Jake Runestad created this evocative piece in 2014–15. The poetry by Lalla describes a spiritual cleansing and renewal that frees people to “live in the soul.” Runestad wrote: “Lalla, a 14th century Sufi-mystic poet from the Kashmir region of India, believed strongly in the development of the self while reaching enlightenment. The metaphor of dancing while feeling free or naked exemplifies the beauty of empowerment and self-worth. This work uses influences of Classical Indian music and other vocal effects to allow Lalla’s message to come to life.”



## **I Love You/What a Wonderful World**

Arranged: Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1962)

I Love You: Larry Norman (1947-2008) and Randy Stonehill (b. 1952)

What a Wonderful World: George David Weiss (1921-2010) and Bob Theile (1922-1996)

*Soloist: Kinley Russell;*

*Small Group: Jennifer Canada, Kate DeAlmeida, Shira Greer, Brystana Kaufman*

We can be together now and forever;

I love you, I love you.

And when I'm prayin', I hear him sayin'

"I love you, I love you."

People all over the world,

they're opening up, they're coming around

and they're sayin' "I love you."

I see skies of blue and clouds of white,

Bright, blessed day, and dark, sacred night;

And I think to myself, "What a wonderful world."

The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky,

Are also on the faces of the people going by.

I see friends shaking hands, sayin', "How do you do?"

They're really saying, "I love you, I love you."

I hear babies cry, I watch them grow;

They'll learn much more than I'll ever know,

And I think to myself, "What a wonderful world."

The contrasting yet complementary themes of these two pieces, woven together by American composer Craig Hella Johnson, create a poignant and joyful expression of gratitude for the inherent good in humanity and the simple beauty of Nature. To listeners who might question just how wonderful this world is, Louis Armstrong offered context and vision in a spoken introduction to a 1970 recording:

Some of you young folks been saying to me, "Hey Pops, what you mean 'What a wonderful world'? How about all them wars all over the place? You call them wonderful? And how about hunger and pollution? That ain't so wonderful either." Well, how about listening to old Pops for a minute. Seems to me, it ain't the world that's so bad but what we're doin' to it. And all I'm saying is, see, what a wonderful world it would be if only we'd give it a chance. Love baby, love. That's the secret, yeah. If lots more of us loved each other, we'd solve lots more problems. And then this world would be a gasser.

## ***About Women's Voices Chorus***

Women's Voices Chorus has evolved into the 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.



**Artistic Director Laura Sam** began her tenure with the chorus in summer 2019. A North Carolina native, she has been a choral conductor and music educator since 1984, directing choruses at Meredith College, North Carolina State University, Cary Academy, North Carolina Governor's School East, and Walter M. Williams High School. Laura received a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where she studied conducting, voice, and choral methods. When not immersed in choral music, she 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. Deb is an active recitalist and maintains a private piano studio.

# Women's Voices Chorus

Artistic Director: Laura Sam

Director's Assistant: Kay Johnson

Pianist: Deborah Hollis

## Soprano 1

Katie Barton	Marissa Goodall	Elizabeth Shaver ✧	Marley Steffens
Rachel Bowman-Abdi	Wendy Hua ✧	Ellie Sheridan	Shelley Turkington
Rebecca Bruening ☿ ✧	Brystana Kaufman	Trisha Socias ✧	Julianne Vance ✧
Jennifer Canada ✧	Lauren Keller ★ ✧		

## Soprano 2

Hannah Andrews	Linda Coerr	Allison Mangin ✧	Leandra Merea Strope
Ellie Bautista	Kate DeAlmeida ✧	Shipra Patel ✧	Sheila Williams
Talia Brenner	Beverly Du	Mia Prior	Darcy Wold ✧
Carly Bunch ★	Virginia Byers Kraus ☿ ✧	Kinley Russell ✧	Diane Wold ✧

## Alto 1

Christa Abedi ✧	Marsha Ferguson ✧	Shira Greer	Anne J. Menkens
Rah Bickley ✧	Sheryl Fowler	Ann Harrison	Susan Regier
Allison Blaylock ★	Jan French	Kay Johnson ☿ ✧	Pauline Robinson
Bri Bryan	Susan Gidwitz	Jacqueline Little	Clare Strayhorn

## Alto 2

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

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★ **Membership Liaison**

✧ **Chamber Choir**

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		Laura Sam, <i>Artistic Director</i>

## Emeritus Members

*(If you sang with the chorus 5 years or more and would like to be listed, please let us know.)*

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 pleasure and message  
 of love Women's Voices brings*  
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*In Honor of Susan E. Brown*  
 Melody Bryan  
*In Honor of Bri Bryan*  
 Emily Canada  
 Barbara and Peter Fish  
 Del Hunt Helton  
*In Honor of Rah Bickley*  
 Scott Hill  
 Marlene Koschmann  
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 Kinley and Debbie Russell*  
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 Perrin Rubin  
*In Honor of Susan E. Brown*  
 Doris Sigl  
 John Strickland - *In Memory of  
 Don Thomas and Bill Strickland*  
 Adam Touw - *In Honor of  
 Kate DeAlmeida's birthday*

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 Rebecca Bruening  
 Mary Bushnell  
*In Memory of Elisabeth Curtis*  
 Lori Drum  
*In Honor of Doris Sigl*  
 Sue Gidwitz  
*In Honor of Susanna Lambert*  
 Karen and Ed Gill  
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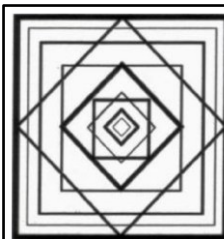


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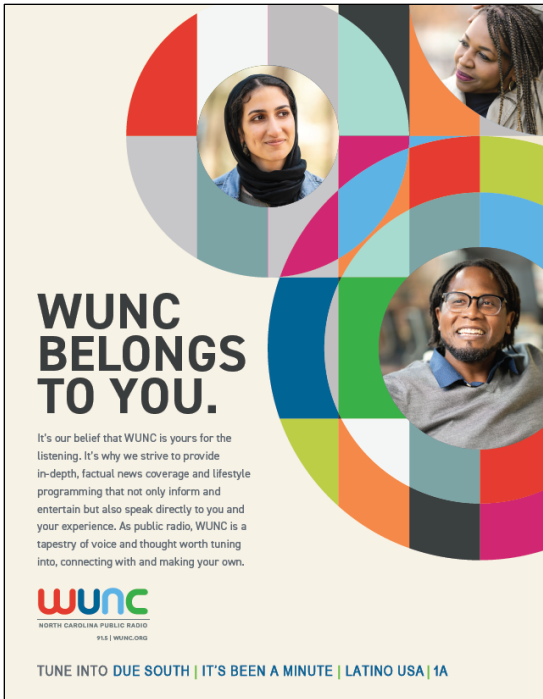
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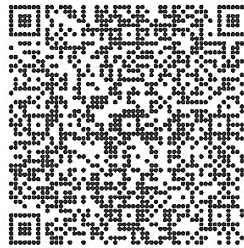
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It takes more than love of music to keep a chorus running. Ticket sales, grants, and singers' dues payments help pay the bills, but private donations, large and small, make the difference between merely surviving and truly thriving. If you would like to support WVC with a donation, baskets are available at the door. You can also visit the [donate page](#) of our website, donate via Venmo @WomensVoicesChorus, or scan one of the QR Codes below.



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### ***Spring Concert: Coming Home***

**Saturday, May 3, 2025, 3:00 p.m., United Church of Chapel Hill (UCCH)**

*Coming Home* explores the many facets of what it means to search for, discover, and return to a place we can call home, whether that home is a physical location, an emotional state, or a spiritual sanctuary. Through our program, we express the joy of reunion, the pain of separation, and the nostalgia for places left behind. The path to finding home can be complex and varied, involving a journey across lands and seas, an inner search for self-identity, or a quest for emotional and spiritual grounding. Our songs offer a musical narrative that resonates with everyone who has ever sought a place to call their own and to feel the welcome of belonging.

**Women's Voices Chorus, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 2854, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2854**

**contact@womensvoiceschorus.org, www.womensvoiceschorus.org**

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