

Women's Voices CHORUS

presents



SONGS OF

CELESTIAL SPHERES

Saturday, January 21, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

Laura Sam, Artistic Director

womensvoiceschorus.org

The Alto 2s of Women's Voices Chorus, past and present, honor two of our beloved sisters who are no longer with us. Thank you for the many years of friendship, humor, wisdom, and musicianship.

We miss you every day and sing in your honor always.



"Once an Alto 2, always an Alto 2"
You are forever in our hearts



Elisabeth Curtis
Alto 2
Founding Member 1993



Gail Freeman
Alto 2
Member since 2001

Women's Voices CHORUS

Presents

Songs of

Celestial Spheres

Saturday, January 21, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

University United Methodist Church, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Restrooms are located downstairs as you exit the front left of the sanctuary. See any usher for help.

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!

Program Notes

Songs of Celestial Spheres features music and poetry inspired by the sun, moon, and stars, spanning numerous cultures, languages, historical periods, and musical styles. This repertoire illuminates the emotional complexities of life, death, power, and love as expressed through metaphors of these luminous orbs.

"Yours is the light by which my spirit's born:

- you are my sun, my moon, and all my stars." E.E. Cummings

The mysteries of the cosmos have long inspired scientists, storytellers, poets, artists, musicians, philosophers, religious leaders, explorers – virtually all of humankind from the earliest days of recorded history to the present – to gaze upward and wonder.

Modern scientists have provided us with increasing amounts of knowledge about the solar system, most spectacularly with the first images transmitted from the recently launched James Webb Space Telescope. These images give us a startlingly clear picture of the early universe, showing some of the first galaxies and stars – the dawn of time.

The light of the sun sustains the earth and all living creatures. Reflecting the sun's light, the moon in many ways shapes the rhythms of life on Earth. Stars radiate light, providing points of navigation, and are consistent timekeepers. Astronomer Carl Sagan said, "We are a way for the universe to know itself. Some part of our being knows this is where we came from. We long to return. And we can because the cosmos is also within us. We're made of star stuff."

Laura Sam

Program

Laura Sam, Artistic Director

Deborah Hollis, Pianist

Moon Goddess

Music: Jocelyn Hagen (b. 1980)

Text: Enheduanna (ca. 2300 B.C.) based on adaptation of *The Exaltation of Inanna*

Second piano: Kathleen Jasinskas; Percussion: Emily Turkington, Tim Turkington

O my lady, on hearing your sound, hills and flatlands bow.

O my lady, guardian of all the great essences,
you have picked them up and hung them on your hand.

You are lofty like Heaven. Let the world know!

You are wide like the earth. Let the world know!

You strike everything down in battle.

O my lady, on your wings you hack away the land and charge disguised as a charging storm,
roar as a roaring storm, thunder and keep thundering, and snort with evil winds.

O primary one, moon goddess Inanna of heaven and earth!

On your harp of sighs I hear your dirge.

O my lady, this song has made you great and exalted you.

O my lady, wife of An, I have told your fury!

Moon Goddess was commissioned by the 2011 American Choral Directors Association Women's Choir Repertoire & Standards Commissioning Consortium. Since then, this intricately crafted piece has been performed worldwide by accomplished treble choruses. The text was written by Enheduanna and adapted by composer Jocelyn Hagen, based on adaptations by Aliko and Willis Barnstone, from William W. Hallo and J.J.A. van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

Enheduanna was a moon priestess, the daughter of King Sargon of Agade, who reigned over the world's first empire, extending from the Mediterranean to Persia. Sargon is the first important leader to emerge from the half-light of prehistory into the full light of written record. His daughter, Enheduanna, is the first writer, male or female, in history whose name and work have been preserved. Her personal history survives in highly politicized poems, which in their cosmic vision and ethical outrage recall the prophet Isaiah. In her poems to the Sumerian goddess of love, Inanna, she speaks to a deity who has descended to earth as an ally, as a friend to help her in her need. In the poems' sensuality, surprising metaphors, and intimacy, they recall Sappho's poems to her ally Aphrodite.

– *A Book of Women Poets, From Antiquity to Now*, Ed. By Aliko and Willis Barnstone.

Two Eastern Pictures II. Summer

Music: Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Text: Kalidasa (4th-5th Century CE), English translated from Sanskrit

The fierce glaring day is gone.
Gentle night hath spread her mantle cool and refreshing.
Lit by rays of a thousand stars and by the golden moon.
The moon shineth on yon roof.
Here lie maidens, crowned with jasmine, clad in silk Raiment,
on their ankles are rings that tinkle sweetly as they move.
Wafted by jewel covered fans, sweetest perfume floats o'er each breast,
Song and harp unite with warbling birds to rouse from sleep the god of love.

Two Eastern Pictures 2. Summer was composed by Gustav Holst in 1909-10 during a period in which he became interested in Hindu mysticism and spirituality. This interest led to the composition of several works set to translations of Sanskrit texts, which Holst translated himself after enrolling at University College in London to study the language. The poetry of this piece was written by Kalidasa, a Classical Sanskrit author of 4-5th century CE, considered to be ancient India's greatest poet and playwright. The harmonic language of this composition is based on Raag Yaman, known as one of the most fundamental and basic ragas in the Hindustani tradition.

Bright Morning Stars

Music: arr. Jay Althouse (1951)

Text: Traditional – Kentucky Folk Hymn

Soloists: Brystanna Kaufman, Anne Menkens, Jasmine Trinks-Reese

Bright morning stars are rising. Day is breaking in my soul.
Oh, where are our dear fathers? They are in the valley praying.
Oh, where are our dear mothers? They are gone to heaven a-shouting.
Bright morning stars are rising. Day is breaking in my soul.

Bright Morning Stars was collected in 1937 by Alan Lomax in Harlan County, Kentucky. Lomax was an American ethnomusicologist best known for his numerous field recordings of folk music of the 20th century. The origin of this song predates Lomax's recording and was referenced in *The Sweet Songster*, a Baptist hymnal from Kentucky, published in 1854. The morning star is the planet Venus, which shines so brightly that it is the first "star" to appear in the sky after the sun sets, or the last to disappear before the sun rises. Its orbital position changes, thus causing it to appear at different times of the morning or evening throughout the year.

The words of this song are typical of the shape-note hymn, especially in the apostrophe of the ancestors (father, mother, and so forth), but the original singer probably delivered their own version which throws the ordinary strict-tempo melody into an alternation of 5/4 – 4/4 – 3/4 measures.

– from the *Archive of American Folksong in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

The Dawn is Not Distant

Music: Christine Donkin (b. 1976)

Text: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Musician's Tale*; *The Saga of King Olaf*
Genesis 15:5 from the Latin Vulgate with Apocrypha, 5th century

Soloist: Jennifer Canada

The dawn is not distant, Nor is the night starless.

Suspice caelum, et numera stellas. (*Look at the heavens and count the stars*).

The Dawn is Not Distant, composed by Canadian Christine Donkin, contrasts the legato choral phrases with the piano's points of sounds, representing stars. It joins fragments of text from two very different sources: the Latin translation of Genesis Chapter 15 and *Tales of a Wayside Inn* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. When read together out of their original context, a new meaning is created.

"Around the time that I began writing this piece, I was thinking about earlier times of my life, and in particular one event that left me heartbroken. *The Dawn is Not Distant* contains the message of hope and optimism that I would convey to my former self if I were able to travel back in time." – Christine Donkin

Izar ederrak

Music and Text (Basque): Josu Elberdin (b. 1976)

Izar ederrak

argi egiten dau zero altuan bakarrik,
ez da bakarrik,
lagunak ditu, Juan zerukoak emanik.

Zazpi aingeru alboan ditu,
zortzgarrena gaixorik.

Zazpi mediku ekarri deutez
India Madriletatik.

Arek igarri nundik dagoan gaixorik:
Amore minak badituz onek erraietan
sarturik.

The beautiful star

*That shines alone in the high heavens,
she's not alone,
she has friends that God gives her.*

*She has seven angels,
the eighth is sick.*

*They brought seven
Indian doctors from Madrid.*

*One doctor says about the angel:
"This is the heartbreak in her soul."*

Josu Elberdin, born in northern Spain, was commissioned by the Federation of Choirs of Gipuzkoa as part of the Choral Creation grant program to compose *Izar Ederrak*. The Basque text tells the story of a beautiful, shining star surrounded by eight angels, one of whom is 'lovesick' for the star. The inscription reads:

"For Ainhoa, my beloved wife, who gives me the most important reason to live each day.
Love forever."

My Lord, What a Morning

Music: arr. J. David Moore (1962)

Text: Traditional Spiritual

Soloist: Kinley Russell

My Lord, what a morning! O my Lord, what a morning!
O my Lord, what a morning! When the stars begin to fall.
You'll hear the trumpet sound to wake the nations underground
Looking to my God's right hand when the stars begin to fall.
You'll hear my sisters shout 'cause there's a new day come about,
Looking to my God's right hand when the stars begin to fall.

Commissioned by her family to honor Catherine Roma, retiring founding conductor of Muse (Cincinnati's Women's Choir), *My Lord, What a Morning* was arranged by J. David Moore. The rich history of this piece includes the following:

Eileen Southern (1920-2002) credits *A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors* (Philadelphia, 1801) by Richard Allen (1760-1831) for the inspiration behind *My Lord, What a Morning*. Allen was the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first independent African American denomination. While many spirituals have been conceived on plantations in the southern United States, Southern contends that free African Americans also composed them "in the independent black congregations of the North, where black congregations, freed from the supervision of white clergymen, could conduct their religious services as they wished" (*Southern, 1972, p.11*). *My Lord, What a Morning* appears to have been one of those composed in the North.

The numerous apocalyptic images in this hymn have scriptural foundations. "The falling stars" is a particularly powerful metaphor. Revelation 6:12-14 provides a stark description of the end of the world: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Another prominent image is the reference, "nations underground," a vision of global humanity on earth, under the ground of heaven, viewed from the perspective of heaven, the source of the trumpet's sound. – C. Michael Hawn



Song to the Moon (La Luna)

Music: Z. Randall Stroope (b. 1953)

Text: freely paraphrased and inspired by Jaroslav Kvapil (1868-1950);
portions written by Z. Randall Stroope

Flute: Amy Glass; Oboe: Michele Price

La Luna,
Your light sees through endless time,
Tell, o tell me where my love lies.
O moon e'er you pass, wake my dreaming lover,
I am waiting, I am calling,
Tell him come, O moon. Tell him light his place.

Moon help him,
help him remember and dream of me,
Tell him who is waiting, who is longing!
I am waiting, Longing!
Tell him come, Tell him, o moon.

Help to remember our laughter and tears, mem'ries of summer nights.
Help him remember our triumphs and fears,
May this remembrance waken him!
Tell that I am holding firm for at least awhile,
Tell him, moon.

Moon, o moon don't disappear,
O moon, silver moon in the deep, dark sky,
Your light sees through endless time,
Tell, o tell me where my love lies.
Tell him come!

Song to the Moon (La Luna) was composed by Z. Randall Stroope for the Cantabile Women's Chorus, Kingston ON Canada.

The text of *Song to the Moon (La Luna)* is a very free paraphrase of a small portion of the original Jaroslav Kvapil (1868-1959) text in Czech, written in 1899. Antonin Dvorak used Kvapil's libretto in his masterful opera, *Rusalka*, completed in 1900. Jaroslav Kvapil's plot in the complete text centers around a water nymph (named Rusalka) who lives in a fairy-tale kingdom of the Czech imagination. She yearns to be human so she can fall in love with a human prince who has been coming to her pond to bathe. The text used for this work, *Song to the Moon (La Luna)*, appears at the beginning of the story when Rusalka asks the moon to find her lover (the prince) and tell him that she loves him. – Z. Randall Stroope

Par' o Era Estrellero

Music: arr. Eleanor Epstein (1950)

Text: Traditional from Turkey (Ladino – Judeo-Spanish)

Par' o era 'strellero,
Salio una noche al sereno,
Vido una 'strella divina,
Havia que nacer Moshe.

Mando llamar a las comadres,
Cuantas en Aifto son,
A todas las conjuro,
Que no recivan a Judio,

Las comadres eran Judias,
Del Dio eran queri das.
Arecivian y fui van,
Empero nacio Moshe.

Su hermana la Levia,
Entera la pezledeo,
Rio Nilo la echo.
Par' o era 'strellero.

*Pharaoh was a stargazer.
He went out one night to look at the moon.
He saw a divine star
foretelling that Moses would be born.*

*He commanded that the midwives be called,
all that were in Egypt.
To all of them he warned
Don't catch a Jewish baby!*

*The midwives were Jewish,
beloved by God.
They caught the babies and fled,
and so Moses was born.*

*His sister, the Levite,
made him a basket covered with pitch
and placed it in the Nile.
Pharaoh was a stargazer.*

Par' o Era Estrellero was composed for Zemer Chai, one of the nation's leading Jewish choirs, conducted by founding director and composer, Eleanor Epstein. Its characteristic sound is the Spanish Phrygian scale, also known as the Jewish scale. This scale occurs in Spanish, Indian, Middle Eastern, Eastern European, Central Asian, Arabic, and Egyptian music and is used in Hebrew prayers and Klezmer music.

This ancient song, written in the Judeo-Spanish language, Ladino, celebrates the quiet but indispensable role that women played in the redemption of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. – Eleanor Epstein



Lakutshon 'Illanga

Music: Mackay Dvashe (1920–1972), arr. Allan Friedman (b. 1976)

Text (Xhosa): Miriam Makeba (1932-2008)

Lakutshon 'illanga, Zakubu y'inkomo,
Nda kucinga ngawe, Lakutshon 'illanga.

*When the sun sets, When cattle return,
I will think about you, When the sun sets.*

Ja kuvel inyanga, Phesheya kolwandle,
Zukubu y'intaka, Lakutshon 'illanga.

*When the moon rises, Across the sea,
When the birds stop singing, When the sun sets.*

Ndo ham ba, Ndikufuma Ezidlini na se tradweni,
Ezibhedlela, Etrongweni, Ndide ndi kufumane.

*I will search for you in houses and streets,
In hospitals, in prisons, Until I find you.*

Lakutshon 'Illanga, composed by Mackay Dvashe, was arranged by former Women's Voices Chorus Artistic Director, Allan Friedman, when he was studying abroad and singing in a jazz choir in Durban, South Africa.

Lakutshon 'Illanga is known and beloved by South Africans because many relate to its lyrics. During the apartheid era, freedom fighters would get arrested by the government and many would later be found in prisons, hospitals, or mortuaries. Some would never be found by their loved ones again. *Lakutshon 'Illanga* narrates a story of someone searching for their loved one who has gone missing. She promises that she will think of him with every sunset, and she will search everywhere and every day even when the sun sets, until she finds him. – Thabilé

Mēnestinis Nakti Brauca (*The Moon Rode at Night*)

Music: Laura Jēkabsone (b.1985)

Text: Traditional Latvian folk song

Mēnestinis nakti brauca
zvaigžnu sega mugu rāi.
Rīta zvaigzne, vakareja,
tie mēnesa kumelini.

The Moon rode through the night
starry mantle on his shoulders.
The Morning Star and Evening Star
are the Moon's horses.

Saule bāra mēnestinu,
kam tas dienu nespīdēja,
Mēnestinis atbildēja:
Tev dienina, man naksnina.

The Sun scolded the Moon
for not shining in the day.
The Moon replied:
The day for you, the night for me.

I saulīte, mēnestinis
jāj uz vuena kumelin'.

Both Sun and the Moon
ride on the same horse.

Mēnestiņis Nakti Brauca, a Latvian folk song, was arranged by Latvian composer, Laura Jēkabsone, internationally renowned for her choral and orchestral works.

It isn't easy to have an obvious translation of any Latvian folk song because mostly, they talk in symbols. In mythology, the Sun and Moon symbolize young love, so "Mēnestiņis Nakti Brauca" could be considered a wedding song. – Laura Jēkabsone

I Got the Sun in the Morning

from Annie Get Your Gun

Music and Text: Irving Berlin (1888-1989)

Arr. Kirby Shaw (b. 1941)

Soloist: Rah Bickley

Taking stock of what I have and what I haven't, what do I find?
The things I have will keep me satisfied.
Checking up on what I have and what I haven't, what do I find?
A healthy balance on the credit side.

Got no diamond, got no pearl, still I think I'm a lucky girl,
I got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.
Got no mansion, got no yacht, still I'm happy with what I've got,
I got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.

Sunshine gives me a lovely day, moonlight gives me the Milky Way.
Got no checkbooks, got no banks, still I'd like to express my thanks,
I got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.
And with the sun in the mornin' and the moon in the evenin',
I'm alright.

Got no butler, got no maid, still, I think I've been overpaid,
I got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.
Got no silver, got no gold, what I've got can't be bought or sold,
I got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.

Sunshine gives me a lovely day, moonlight gives me the Milky Way.
Got no heirlooms for my kin, made no will, but when I cash in,
I'll leave the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night.
And with the sun in the mornin' and the moon in the evenin',
I'm all right.

I Got the Sun in the Morning was composed by Irving Berlin, whose body of work forms a large part of the *Great American Songbook*. It is from the 1946 Broadway musical, "Annie Get Your Gun," a fictionalized version of the life of Annie Oakley, a sharpshooter who starred in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. In Act II, Annie sings *I Got the Sun in the Morning* after deciding to sell her sharpshooting medals worth one hundred thousand dollars, received from all the rulers of Europe, to finance the merger of two shows - Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's after discovering both shows are broke. In this song, Annie Oakley rejoices in the simple things.

When You Wish Upon a Star Music: Leigh Harline (1907-1969); arr. Pete King (1914-1968)
from Walt Disney's "Pinocchio" Text: Ned Washington (1901-1976)

When you wish upon a star,
Makes no difference who you are,
Anything your heart desires will come to you.

If your heart is in your dream,
No request is too extreme,
When you wish upon a star as dreamers do.

Fate is kind,
She brings to those who love,
The sweet fulfillment of their secret longing.

Like a bolt out of the blue,
Fate steps in and sees you thru,
When you wish upon a star, your dream comes true.

When You Wish Upon a Star was written for Walt Disney's animated classic, *Pinocchio*. The original version of the song was sung by Cliff Edwards in the character of Jiminy Cricket at the beginning and end of the movie. It won the 1940 Academy Award for Best Original Song and was the first Disney song to win an Oscar. The Library of Congress deemed Edwards's recording of the song "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" and inducted it into the National Recording Registry in 2009. In Japan, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark, the song became a Christmas tradition, often referring to the Star of Bethlehem.

According to animation director, Woolie Reitherman, "When You Wish Upon a Star" became one of Walt Disney's favorite songs, indicative of how he liked to "dream big, to attempt the impossible." Aside from its catchiness, the song's popularity in the US can be pinned, in part, to the context of the period. Disney's rise came at the tail end of the Great Depression and *Pinocchio*, like *The Wizard of Oz*, responded to the public's need for escapism. "When You Wish" — sung, let's not forget, by a character dressed in the tattered rags of a drifter — embodied a Disneyfied infantilization of the American Dream. Its schmaltzy optimism spoke to those who longed for something better, and Harline's melody — which opens, like "Over the Rainbow", with a searching, octave leap — seemed to reflect a collective yearning. Perhaps the composer was mining his own life story. He was the 13th child of Swedish immigrants whose rise from Utah obscurity to Hollywood royalty is the stuff dreams are made on. — Timmy Fisher of Financial Times, September 19, 2022

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. 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 sopranos and altos who are interested to consider auditioning on February 2, 2023. Information is 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 for the past 38 years, 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, Deborah has conducted masterclasses 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. Deborah is an active recitalist and maintains a private piano studio.

Women's Voices Chorus

Artistic Director: Laura Sam

Pianist: Deborah Hollis

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Rachel Bowman-Abdi	Wendy Hua	Anne J. Menkens
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Marsha Ferguson	Sally Molyneux	Sheila Williams
Amy Glass	Shipra Patel	Darcy Wold
	Mia Prior	Diane Wold

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Rah Bickley ★	Susan Gidwitz	Jacqueline Little
Nancy Donny	Ann Harrison	Susan Regier
Sheryl Fowler	Kay Johnson ☘	Clare Strayhorn
Jan French	Diane Kirkman	Jasmine Trinks-Reese

Alto 2

Meg Berreth	Janet Huebner ☘	Doris Sigl
Susan E. Brown	Susanna Lambert	Sharon Smith ★
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My Soul is Awakened includes repertoire conveying themes of renewal, transformation, enlightenment, and self-realization through the lenses of varied cultures, languages, and musical styles. Women composers of note featured on this concert include Elizabeth Alexander, Marjan Helms, Susan LaBarr, Marie-Claire Saindon, Joan Szymko, Sarah Quartel, Gwyneth Walker, and Lana Walter.

Women’s Voices Chorus, Inc.

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

contact@womensvoiceschorus.org, www.womensvoiceschorus.org

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