

Women's Voices CHORUS

presents

# Through the Storm



Sunday, May 1, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

Laura Sam, Artistic Director

[womensvoiceschorus.org](http://womensvoiceschorus.org)

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Presents

## Through the Storm

Sunday, May 1, 2022, 4:00 p. m.

First Presbyterian Church, Durham, North Carolina

*Please remember to wear your masks at all times while indoors and be respectful of distancing.*

*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.*

*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**

*Through the Storm* illuminates the inevitability of life's challenges yet celebrates overcoming fear with courage, adversity with resilience, and uncertainty with action. Through musically compelling works, this repertoire affirms the strength and grace of the human spirit.

We begin our concert with *Prayer for Ukraine*, a beloved song of the people of Ukraine. First published in 1885, the song gained national significance when it was performed by mass choirs during the Ukrainian War of Independence in 1917-1920. It has since been performed regularly at church services and major national functions, becoming well-known as the spiritual anthem of Ukraine. In March, the American Choral Directors Association released the following statement:

*Alongside people throughout the world, American Choral Directors Association joins in the calls for peace as tension and violence continue to mount with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As choral directors, we know the power that music has to inspire action and to bring about peace and healing. Let us use our gift of music to bring hope and show our solidarity with the people of Ukraine.*

Should you wish to explore ways to support the people of Ukraine, please visit our website, [womensvoiceschorus.org](http://womensvoiceschorus.org), and go to the 'Concerts' page for an electronic copy of this program with active links to the following organizations:

[Chorus America.org - Singing Community Lifts Ukraine](#)

[How to Help Ukraine Now](#)

[Ukrainian Association of NC Facebook page](#)

[Ukrainian Association of NC website](#)

[Artists at Risk Resources](#)

The inspirational opening text of *Rise Up*, “Rise up! There shall never be another season of silence,” reflects our joyful emergence of in-person music-making following our 2020-2021 virtual season. Author of the text, Susan B. Anthony, was an American social reformer, writer, lecturer, abolitionist, and women’s right activist who played a pivotal role in the women’s suffrage movement.

*Sing My Child*, by internationally acclaimed Canadian composer and educator Sarah Quartel, includes texts that acknowledge the inevitability of troubles and the strength we find as we face them with spirits soaring, singing, dancing, and laughing in the face of adversity.

*Be Like the Bird* was composed by Abbie Betinis, inspired by her struggle while undergoing cancer treatment for the second time. A two-time McKnight Artist Fellow, advocate for small business and artist rights, co-founder of Justice Choir, and composer of over 80 commissioned pieces, Betinis was named *Musical America's* Artist of the Month in July 2017, with a feature article lauding her “contrapuntal vitality” and her “ability to use her talents to effect social change.”

*Richer for Her*, by ASCAPPlus award-winning composer Andrea Ramsey, includes stanzas from Charlotte Tall Mountain’s *For the Love of the World*, inspired by her kindred connection with Indigenous spirituality. We invite you to reflect on the women in your lives who exemplify the love that enriches your world.

Inspired by the empowering poem by Rabbi Ruth Sohn, *Song of Miriam*, by internationally renowned composer Elaine Hagenberg, describes the journey of a young woman who courageously faces uncertainty and fear with the discovery of “the song that has been in my heart, silent, unknown, even to me.”

Marie-Claire Saindon, Franco-Ontarian composer and recipient of multiple composition prizes, provides the following regarding *The Imaginary Garden*: Mawah Sabet, the author of the poem “The Imaginary Garden” was one of seven Bahá’í leaders in Iran who was sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment as prisoners of faith in 2008. Mrs. Sabet was a school principal and was stripped of her role during the Islamic Revolution because of their adherence to the Bahá’í Faith – but this did not stop her from covertly teaching all the children and youth around her from persecuted communities, Bahá’í or not, who were devoid of the basic human right to education. Despite her hardships in prison, Mrs. Sabet still held firmly to her love of God, and to the utmost conviction that it was still her duty to teach. In this poem, she evokes others who have come before her and, like herself, have found ways to continue their tasks through unconventional means that circumvented the bars keeping them captive. The imagery of the wind picking up her materials to reach those that would be taught by her is what drives this piece.

Joan Szymko’s *Nothing Short of Grace*, was composed in 2018 as a reflection on challenges that require inner fortitude and is included in Szymko’s *Dare to Be Powerful* series intended to cultivate dialogue and understanding of the challenges facing women today. This work was inspired by the #MeToo movement and dedicated by Szymko to all of those who have taken that courageous first step in breaking their silence around experiences of sexual harassment, assault or abuse.

*Storm Comin'* was first released by The Wailin' Jennys on their 2011 album *Bright Morning Stars*. Based in Canada, this internationally acclaimed folk-roots trio is known for its fresh approach to bluegrass and traditional folk music.

*O Sister* was commissioned in 2017 as a sign of unity between two choirs: The Voices of Hope and the University of Minnesota Women's Chorus, both under the direction of Dr. Amanda Weber. Voices of Hope, a women's prison choir in Minnesota, rehearses once a week and whenever possible, collaborates with musicians from outside of the prison to bridge communities and educate the public about the U.S. criminal justice system. Their mission statement includes, "The Voices of Hope views singing as a powerful tool of restorative justice, seeking to transform perspectives of incarceration and build bridges of healing within the wider community through collaboration and reflection." Voices of Hope singers provided poet D. Allen with words or phrases they felt should be included in the text of *O Sister* and composer Kathleen Allen says, "When other choirs sing this piece, it is as if the voices of incarcerated women are finally able to be heard beyond the fence."

Regarding the text of *She Who Makes Her Meaning Clear* from Audre Lorde's *Cancer Journals*, Joan Szymko's notes include the following: "While researching Lorde, I learned that she spent the end of her life on the Caribbean Island of St. Croix and there, before her death, in an African naming ceremony she took the name, 'Gamba Adisa,' which means: 'Warrior, She Who Makes Her Meaning Clear.' The rhythm and meaning of the name 'Gamba Adisa' inspired me and serves as a central element of the work. The opening measures 'call out' to the strength and spirit of Audre Lorde/Gamba Adisa. The singer then draws on her own courage as she sings the text of Lorde's quotation. Gamba Adisa then returns as a lively celebration of each singer's own 'warrior spirit.'

*What the Heart Cannot Forget* was a highlight of our 2020-2021 virtual season. Commissioned to honor one of WVC's founding members, Elisabeth Curtis, a virtual project was created with singers contributing individual recordings which were then mixed and edited with the addition of complementary images. We invite you to view this project on the WVC YouTube channel. Today is the first time we present this piece in concert as we remember and honor Elisabeth. Set to Joyce Sutphen's poetry (one of Elisabeth's favorites) by talented emerging composer Grace Brigham, this piece embraces the joys and sorrows of life and through all, the depth of love. "The heart remembers everything it loved and gave away, remembers everything it lost and found again, and everyone it loved, the heart cannot forget."

Closing our program with Gwyneth Walker's setting of the Quaker hymn, *How Can I Keep from Singing?*, we leave you with a piece sung by many choirs around the world over the course of the pandemic. "Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing. It sounds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing?" Indeed, Women's Voices Chorus continues to persevere through the storm of the pandemic. We are deeply appreciative of your continued support, both your financial contributions and your attendance at our first in-person performance since January 2020.

Laura Sam

## *Program*

**Laura Sam, Artistic Director**

**Deborah Hollis, Pianist**

**Guest Musicians:** Grace Brigham, violin; Julia Reeves, violin;  
Debbie Davis, cello; Rachel Spencer and Tim Turkington, percussion

### **Молитва за Україну (*Prayer for Ukraine*)**

Боже великий, єдиний,  
Нам Україну храни.  
Волі і світу промінням,  
Ти її осіни.

Світлом науки і знання,  
Нас, дітей, просвіти.  
В чистій любові до краю,  
Ти нас, Боже, зрости.

Молимось, Боже єдиний,  
Нам Україну храни.  
Всі свої ласки й щедроти,  
Ти на люд наш зверни.

Дай йому волю, дай йому долю,  
Дай доброго світу, щастя,  
Дай, Боже, народу  
І многая, многая літа

Music by Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912)

Text by Oleksandr Konysky (1836–1900)

*Oh Lord, Great and Almighty,  
Protect our Ukraine,  
Shine on her your blessings  
Of freedom and light.*

*With the light of learning and knowledge,  
Enlighten us, your children.  
In pure love everlasting  
Let us, oh Lord, grow.*

*We pray, oh Lord Almighty,  
Protect our Ukraine.  
Grant our people  
All your kindness and grace.*

*Bless us with freedom,  
Bless us with wisdom,  
Bless the world, oh Lord with good fortune  
Forever and evermore.*

### **Rise Up**

Music by Jake Runestad (b. 1986)  
Text 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!

## **Sing, My Child**

*Soloists: Amy Glass, Wendy Hua*

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.

Music and Text by Sarah Quartel (b. 1982)

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.

## **Be Like the Bird**

Music by Abbie Betinis (b. 1980); Text by Victor Hugo (1802–1885)

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

## **Richer for Her**

Music by Andrea Ramsey (b. 1977).  
Text by Charlotte Tall Mountain (1941–2006)

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.

## Song of Miriam

Music by Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979); Text by Rabbi Ruth Sohn (1954)

I, Miriam, stand at the sea  
and turn to face the desert  
stretching endless and still.  
My eyes are dazzled  
The sky brilliant blue  
Sunburnt sands unyielding white.  
My hands turn to dove wings.  
My arms reach for the sky  
and I want to sing  
the song rising inside me.  
  
My mouth open, I stop.  
Where are the words?  
Where the melody?  
In a moment of panic  
My eyes go blind.  
Can I take a step  
Without knowing a destination?  
Will I falter, will I fall  
Will the ground sink away from under me?

The song still unformed –  
How can I sing?  
  
To take the first step –  
To sing a new song –  
To close one's eyes and dive  
into unknown waters,  
For a moment knowing nothing risking all.  
  
But then to discover  
The waters are friendly.  
The ground is firm,  
the song rises again.  
Out of my mouth  
come words lifting the wind,  
And I hear for the first time,  
the song  
in my heart,  
silent,  
unknown, even to me.

## The Imaginary Garden

Text by Mahvash Sabet (b. 1953), translated into English by Bahiyyih Nakhjavani (b. 1948)

*Soloist: Kinley Russell*

There once was a woman  
green as the spring,  
who planted her hands in a garden.  
And another woman, red as her heart  
who plucked light  
from the bars of a prison.  
And now here I am  
with my own path of soil,  
growing a garden in this small cell,  
with poppies full of love for each pane.  
  
You need just one flower –  
that's all it takes –  
to open the windows of sight.

Music by Marie-Claire Saindon (b. 1984)

A single verse is quite enough  
to illumine the eyes with light.

So I'll tie my bags to the foot of the breeze  
and soar high up to the top of the trees  
in my garden that grows inside.  
And I'll spread my wings to reach you  
and soar high to teach you  
how windows can open wide.  
You don't need much: one poppy is all  
it takes to be open to love.  
One verse is sufficient  
to fill the eyes  
with the shining beams from above.

## **Nothing Short of Grace**

Music and Text by Joan Szymko (b. 1957)

To take one step takes courage. To take one step takes heart. It takes heart.  
But to keep going, never knowing what may lie ahead;  
to choose the unknown and look fear in the face: That is nothing short of grace.

To take one step takes courage. To take one step takes heart. It takes heart.  
Sister, keep going, though you may not know what lies ahead;  
to choose the unknown and look fear in the face: That is nothing short of grace.

## **Storm Comin'**

Music and Text by Ruth Moody (b. 1975), The Wailin' Jennys

When that storm comes, don't run for cover,  
Don't run from the comin' storm, 'cause there ain't no use in runnin'.

When that rain falls, let it wash away,  
Let it wash away, that fallin' rain, the tears and the troubles.

When those lights flash, you hear that thunder roar,  
Will you listen to that thunder roar and let your spirit soar.

When that love calls, will you open up your door,  
You gotta stand on up and let it in, you gotta let love through your door.

When that storm comes, don't run for cover,  
Don't run from the comin' storm, 'cause you can't keep a storm from comin'.

## **O Sister**

Music by Kathleen Allan (b. 1989); Text by D. Allen (b. 1986)

*Soloists: Trisha Rae Socias, Rachel Spencer*

O sister, the wind's picking up, the sky's gone dark too early,  
O sister, please be my rain, please be my roots, keep us steady through the storm.  
O sister, as the lightning breaks, as the thunder shakes our shoulders,  
O sister, let it be our voice, let it be our song, to keep us steady through the storm.

O sister, when your bones are sore, and your legs can go no further,  
O sister, come sit with me, come speak your truth, keep us steady through the storm.  
O sisters, lift your voice with mine, keep us steady through the storm.  
O sisters, tell me of your life, keep us steady through the storm.

O sister, my body it aches, my work's been long, I'm weary.  
O sister, please sit with me, please hear my hurts, keep us steady through the storm.  
O sisters, rest your aching heart, come and sit with me, keep us steady through the storm.  
O sister, let it be our voice, our song, keep us steady through the storm.

## **She Who Makes Her Meaning Clear (Gamba Adisa)**

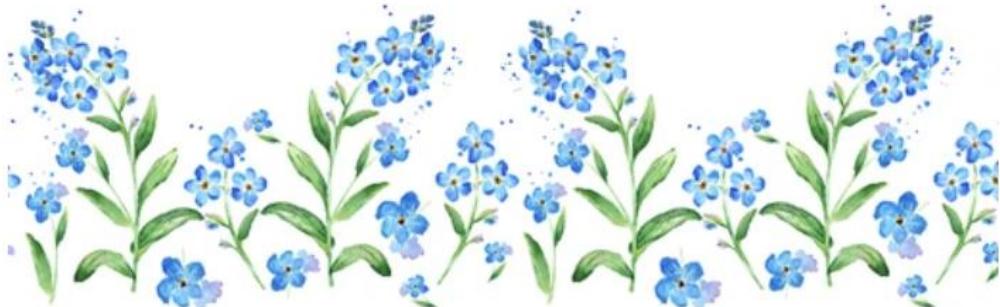
Music by Joan Szymko (b. 1957)

Text by Audre Lorde (1934–1992)

Gamba Adisa!

When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision  
then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

Gamba Adisa!



## **What the Heart Cannot Forget Commission**

An important part of the mission of Women's Voices Chorus is to commission works by women composers. In celebration of her love of all things Women's Voices Chorus and her 27 years of singing with the chorus, it was proposed that we commission a new piece of music to honor and celebrate founding member, Elisabeth Curtis (A2). Elisabeth sang with WVC since the very beginning and supported the choir in numerous ways. She believed strongly in the mission of the chorus to put forward new pieces by female composers.

Laura Sam identified for us a very talented young composer, Grace Brigham, who was not only enthusiastic about the project, but graciously accepted input about characteristics of interest and agreed to an accelerated timeline. The poem by Joyce Sutphen chosen for the text entitled *What the Heart Cannot Forget* is one that Elisabeth shared as a celebration of life and all the experiences that shape us.

Grace shared her inspiration for the piece as follows: "As soon as Laura presented me with Joyce Sutphen's poem, *What the Heart Cannot Forget*, I found it strikingly beautiful and inspirational. The first emotion that came to mind was nostalgia. This past year, we've all experienced isolation, and have been deprived of so many things that our hearts love. ... What I know we all miss is having the opportunity to be singing together right now. My inspiration for this piece came from reminiscing on what life felt like before the pandemic, and the hope I have that we can soon return to normalcy."

*What the Heart Cannot Forget* was performed by WVC as a virtual choir in spring of 2020. Today's presentation is the first in-person performance of the piece.

## **What the Heart Cannot Forget**

Music by Grace Brigham (b. 1998)

Text by Joyce Sutphen (b. 1949)

*Soloists: Janet Huebner, Rachel Spencer*

Everything remembers something. The rock, its fiery bed,  
cooling and fissuring into cracked pieces, the rub  
of watery fingers along its edge.

The cloud remembers being elephant, camel, giraffe,  
remembers being a veil over the face of the sun,  
gathering itself together for the fall.

The turtle remembers the sea, sliding over and under  
its belly, remembers legs like wings, escaping down  
the sand under the beaks of savage birds.

The tree remembers the story of each ring, the years  
of drought, the floods, the way things came  
walking slowly towards it long ago.

And the skin remembers its scars, and the bone aches  
where it was broken. The feet remember the dance,  
and the arms remember lifting up the child.

The heart remembers everything it loved and gave away,  
everything it lost and found again, and everyone  
it loved, the heart cannot forget.

## **(Encore) How Can I Keep from Singing?**

Arranged by Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947)

Text Quaker Hymn (c. 1800)

My life goes on in endless song above earth's lamentation,  
I hear the real though distant song that hails a new creation.  
Through all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing,  
It sounds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing?

What though the tempest loudly roars, I hear the truth, it's living!  
What though the darkness 'round me close, songs in the night it's giving.  
No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I'm clinging.  
Since I believe that love abides, how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble when they hear the bells of freedom ringing.  
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?  
In prison cell, in dungeon dark, our thoughts to them are winging.  
When friends hold courage in their heart, how can I keep from singing?

## **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 in August 2021. 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 for the past 37 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, Deb 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. Deb is an active recitalist and maintains a private piano studio.

## *Women's Voices Chorus*

**Artistic Director:** Laura Sam

**Pianist:** Deborah Hollis

### Soprano 1

Mariah Hoye	Lauren Keller	Rachel Spencer ♫
Wendy Hua ★	Anne J. Menkens	Shelley Turkington
Brystana Kaufman	Trisha Rae Socias	

### Soprano 2

Hannah Andrews	Amy Glass	Kinley Russell
Linda Coerr	Virginia Byers Kraus ♫	Sheila Williams
Patty Daniel	Allison Mangin	Darcy Wold
Marsha Ferguson	Shipra Patel	

### Alto 1

Rah Bickley ★	Jan French	Jacqueline Little
Cheryl Denardo ♫	Kay Johnson	Susan Regier
Nancy Donny	Rebecca Kameny	Jasmine Trinks
Sheryl Fowler	Diane Kirkman	

### Alto 2

Susan E. Brown	Susanna Lambert	Kimberly Slentz-Kesler
Karla Byrnes	Betty Schumacher	Sharon Smith ★
Diana Coble	Doris Sigl	Jaclyn Walters
Janet Huebner ♫		

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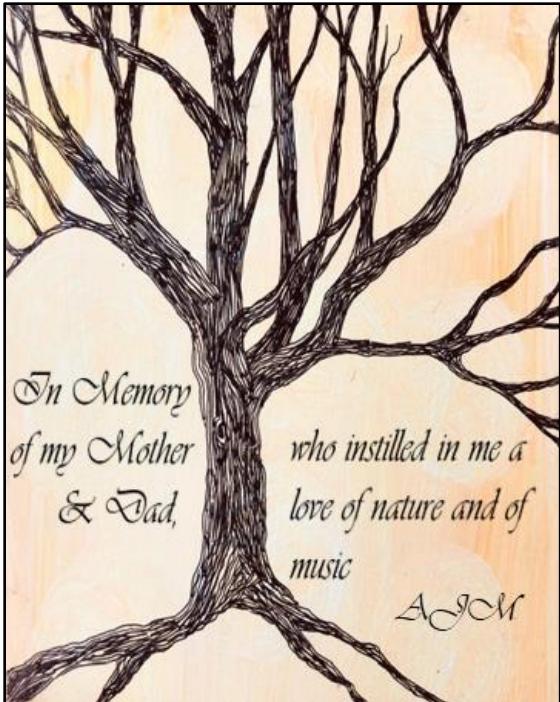


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## Elisabeth Curtis

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With love, Laura Sam



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