



WEST VILLAGE CHORALE
2026 WINTER CONCERT

ALL ABOARD: CONDUCTOR'S CHOICE

SUNDAY, MARCH 15TH, 2026
JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH



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2026 WINTER CONCERT

**ALL
ABOARD:
CONDUCTOR'S CHOICE**

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026 AT 5:00 PM
JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH



WEST VILLAGE CHORALE

COLIN BRITT - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

RONG ZHANG - ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

ELENA BELLI - PIANIST

**MEMBERS OF THE
WEST VILLAGE CHORALE
WINTER 2025**

SOPRANOS

Yael Backner +
Sofia Becerra-Licha
Juliette Courreges Bhatnagar
Wei-Ting Duo +
Katie FitzGerald +
Jerise Fogel
Lia Gallitano +
Ellen Gottlieb +
Suzanne Hartman
Jenna Johnson +
Jacqueline Jones
Suky Kwak
Alexa Mamoulides
Denise Mathe +
Maureen McCarthy +
Katie Sanborn-Price +
Evelyn Simon
Sondra Ward + *
Rachel Yohe
Rong Zhang
Ya Ming Zhao +

TENORS

James Dantas
Joseph Hatem + *
Brandon Liu
Sara Mael +
Liam McNamara +
John Onderdonk
Terry Quinn +
David Reinhart +
David Styers +
Tom Terry

ALTOS CONT.

Patricia Aakre
Amy Daly
Ana de Mendoza
Nathalie Fadel +
Grace Goodman
Johanna Henry +
Alexandra Hussey
Erika Iverson
Raquel Lagunas
Jung Min Lee +
Susan Leicher +
Christina Longo
Hannah Marsh
Katherine Melkonian
Juliet Milhofer + *
Catherine Morrison-Garcia
Dianne Patterson +
Sara Schapiro
Katherine Schoonover
Hannah Schuh
Stephanie Serpick
Loren Silber
Deborah Steinglass +

BASSES

Justin Beck +
Teedo Bilecky
J Robert Charles
Jack Darcey +
Donald Gallagher +
Patrick Grice +
John Herzfeld *
Thomas Higgins
Louis Krefsky
Guy Ortmann +
John Stout
Mark Sydel +
Andris Vizbaras

**ALL ABOARD
CONDUCTOR'S CHOICE
PROGRAM**

TAKE THE A TRAIN Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967),
arr. Steve Zegree (1953 - 2015)

Tom Terry, tenor
Guy Ortmann, baritone



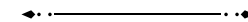
UBI CARITAS Maruice Duruflé (1902 - 1986)

CANTIQUE DE JEAN RACINE Gabriel Fauré (1845 - 1924)



LIEBESLIEDER WALTZES, OP. 52 Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

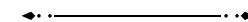
Tom Terry, tenor
Evelyn Simon, soprano



AND THE SWALLOW Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

BAR XIZAM Abbie Betinis (b. 1980)

Ellen Gottlieb, mezzo-soprano
Ya Ming Zhao, soprano
James Dantas, tenor



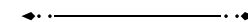
I HAVE NEVER LOVED SOMEONE (THE WAY I LOVE YOU) Shara Nova (b. 1974)

THE TURTLE DOVE Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958)

John Onderdonk, tenor

SEEKING LIGHT Brandon Williams

Jacqueline Jones, soprano
Jung Min Lee, alto



GET ON BOARD, LITTLE CHILDREN Spiritual
arr. André Thomas (b. 1952)

* denotes section leader

2 + performer in "and the swallow" group

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

TAKE THE A TRAIN

BILLY STRAYHORN (1915-1967)

You must take the A train,
To go to Sugar Hill way up in Harlem.
If you miss the A train,
You've missed the quickest way to get to Harlem.
Hurry, get on now, it's comin',
Listen to those rails a thrummin'.
All 'board! Get on the A train,
Soon, you will be on Sugar Hill in Harlem.

You must take the A train,
You must take the A train,
Hurry, get on now, it's comin',
Listen to those rails a thrummin'.
So you must take the A train,
To go to Sugar Hill way up in Harlem.

UBI CARITAS

PAULINUS OF AQUILEIA (C. 726 – 802)

*Ubi caritas et amor,
Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.
Exsultemus et in ipso iucundemur.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.
Ubi caritas et amor,
Deus ibi est. Amen.*

Where there is charity and love,
God is there.
Christ's love has gathered us as one.
Let us rejoice and be glad in him.
Let us fear and love the living God.
And may we love each other with a
sincere heart.
Where there is charity and love,
God is there. Amen.

CANTIQUE DE JEAN RACINE

JEAN RACINE (1639 – 1699)

*Verbe égal au Très-Haut,
notre unique espérance,
Jour éternel de la terre et des cieux ;
De la paisible nuit nous rompons le silence,
Divin Sauveur, jette sur nous les yeux !*

*Répands sur nous le feu de ta grâce puissante,
Que tout l'enfer fuie au son de ta voix ;
Dissipe le sommeil d'une âme languissante,
Qui la conduit à l'oubli de tes lois !*

*Ô Christ, sois favorable à ce peuple fidèle
Pour te bénir maintenant rassemblé.
Reçois les chants qu'il offre à ta gloire immortelle,
Et de tes dons qu'il retourne comblé !*

Word equal to the Most High,
our unique hope,
eternal day of the earth and of the heavens,
we break the silence of the peaceful night;
Divine Savior, cast your eyes upon us;

Spread over us the fire of your
powerful grace
so that all of hell flees at the sound
of your voice.
Dispel the slumber of a languishing soul
which drives it to forget your laws!

O Christ, show favor to these faithful people
now assembled to bless you.
Receive the songs that they offer
to your immortal glory,
and of your gifts, which they return, fulfilled.

LIEBESLIEDER WALZER, OP. 52

GEORG FRIEDRICH DAUMER (1800 - 1875);
TRANSLATION ©EMILY EZUST, FROM THE LIEDERNET ARCHIVE

1.
*Rede, Mädchen, allzu liebes,
das mir in die Brust, die kühle,
hat geschleudert mit dem Blicke
diese wilden Glutgefühle!*

*Willst du nicht dein Herz erweichen,
willst du, eine Überfromme,
rasten ohne traute Wonne,
oder willst du, daß ich komme?*

*Rasten ohne traute Wonne,
nicht so bitter will ich büßen.
Komme nur, du schwarzes Auge.
Komme, wenn die Sterne grüßen*

2.
*Am Gesteine rauscht die Flut,
heftig angetrieben;
wer da nicht zu seufzen weiß,
lernt es unterm Lieben.*

3.
*O die Frauen, o die Frauen,
wie sie Wonne tauen!
Wäre lang ein Mönch geworden,
wären nicht die Frauen!*

4.
*Wie des Abends schöne Röte
möcht ich arme Dirne glühn,
Einem, Einem zu gefallen,
sonder Ende Wonne sprühn.*

1.
Speak, maiden, whom I love all too much,
who hurled into my once aloof heart,
with only one glance,
these wild, ardent feelings!

Will you not soften your heart?
Do you wish to be chaste
and remain without sweet bliss,
or do you want me to come to you?

To remain without sweet bliss -
I would never make such a bitter penance.
So come, dark-eyes,
come when the stars greet you.

2.
Against the stones the stream rushes,
powerfully driven:
those who do not know to sigh there,
will learn it when they fall in love.

3.
O women, O women,
how they melt one with bliss!
I would have become a monk long ago
if it were not for women!

4.
Like the evening's lovely red,
would I, a poor maiden, like to glow,
to please one, one boy -
and to then radiate bliss forever.

5.
*Die grüne Hopfenranke,
sie schlängelt auf der Erde hin.
Die junge, schöne Dirne,
so traurig ist ihr Sinn!*

*Du höre, grüne Ranke!
Was hebst du dich nicht himmelwärts?
Du höre, schöne Dirne!
Was ist so schwer dein Herz?*

*Wie höbe sich die Ranke,
der keine Stütze Kraft verleiht?
Wie wäre die Dirne fröhlich,
wenn ihr das Liebste weit?*

6.
*Ein kleiner, hübscher Vogel
nahm den Flug
zum Garten hin,
da gab es Obst genug.
Wenn ich ein hübscher,
kleiner Vogel wär,
ich säumte nicht,
ich täte so wie der.*

*Leimruten-Arglist
lauert an dem Ort;
der arme Vogel
konnte nicht mehr fort.
Wenn ich ein hübscher,
kleiner Vogel wär,
ich säumte doch,
ich täte nicht wie der.*

*Der Vogel kam
in eine schöne Hand,
da tat es ihm,
dem Glücklichen, nicht and.
Wenn ich ein hübscher,
kleiner Vogel wär,
ich säumte nicht,
ich täte doch wie der.*

5.
The green hops vine,
it winds along the ground.
The young, fair maiden -
so mournful are her thoughts!

You - listen, green vine!
Why do you not raise yourself heavenwards?
You - listen, fair maiden!
Why is your heart so heavy?

How can the vine raise itself
when no support lends it strength?
How can the maiden be merry
when her sweetheart is far away?

6.
A small, pretty bird
took flight
into the garden -
there was fruit enough there.
If I were a pretty,
small bird,
I would not hesitate -
I would do just as he did.

Malicious lime-twigs
lurked in that place;
the poor bird
could not escape.
If I were a pretty,
small bird,
I would have hesitated,
I would not have done that.

The bird came
into a pretty girl's hand,
and it caused him no pain,
the lucky thing.
If I were a pretty,
small bird,
I would not hesitate --
I would do just as he did.

LIEBESLIEDER WALZER, OP. 52 CONT.

7.
*Wohl schön bewandt
War es vorehe
Mit meinem Leben,
Mit meiner Liebe;
Durch eine Wand,
Ja durch zehn Wände,
Erkannte mich
Des Freundes Sehe;
Doch jetzo, wehe,
Wenn ich dem Kalten
Auch noch so dicht
Vor'm Auge stehe,
Es merkt's sein Auge,
Sein Herze nicht.*

8.
*Wenn so lind dein Auge mir
und so lieblich schauet,
jede letzte Trübe flieht
welche mich umgrauet.*

*Dieser Liebe schöne Glut,
laß sie nicht verstieben!
Nimmer wird, wie ich, so treu
dich ein andrer lieben.*

9.
*Am Donaustrande,
da steht ein Haus,
da schaut ein rosiges
Mädchen aus.*

*Das Mädchen,
es ist wohl gut gehegt,
zehn eiserne Riegel
sind vor die Türe gelegt.*

*Zehn eiserne Riegel
das ist ein Spaß;
die spreng ich
als wären sie nur von Glas.*

7.
Quite fair and contented
was I previously
with my life
and with my sweetheart;
through a wall,
yes, through ten walls,
did my friend's gaze
recognize me;
But now, oh woe,
if I am with that cold boy,
no matter how close
I stand before his eyes,
neither his eyes
nor his heart notices.

8.
When your eyes look at me
so gently and lovingly,
you chase away every last anxiety
that troubles my life.

The lovely glow of this love—
do not let it disappear!
No one else will ever love you
as faithfully as I.

9.
On the banks of the Danube,
there stands a house,
and looking out of it
is a pink-cheeked maiden.

The maiden
is very well-protected:
ten iron bolts
have been placed on the door.

But ten iron bolts
are but a joke;
I will snap them
as if they were only glass.

10.
*O wie sanft die Quelle sich
durch die Wiese windet!
O wie schön, wenn Liebe sich
zu der Liebe findet!*

11.
*Nein, es ist nicht auszukommen mit den
Leuten;
Alles wissen sie so giftig auszudeuten.*

*Bin ich heiter, hegen soll ich lose Triebe;
bin ich still, so heißt's, ich wäre irr aus Liebe.*

12.
*Schlosser auf, und mache Schlösser,
Schlösser ohne Zahl;
denn die bösen Mäuler will ich
schließen allzumal.*

13.
*Vögelein durchrauscht die Luft,
sucht nach einem Aste;
und das Herz, ein Herz begehrt's,
wo es selig raste.*

14.
*Sieh, wie ist die Welle klar,
blickt der Mond hernieder!
Die du meine Liebe bist,
liebe du mich wieder!*

15.
*Nachtigall, sie singt so schön,
wenn die Sterne funkeln.
Liebe mich, geliebtes Herz,
küsse mich im Dunkeln!*

16.
*Ein dunkeler Schacht ist Liebe,
ein gar zu gefährlicher Bronnen;
da fiel ich hinein, ich Armer,
kann weder hören noch sehn,
nur denken an meine Wonnen,*

10.
O how gently the stream
winds through the meadow!
O how lovely it is when Love
finds Love!

11.
No, there's just no getting along with people;
they always make such poisonous
interpretations of everything.

If I'm merry, they say I cherish loose urges;
if I'm quiet, they say I am crazed with love.

12.
Locksmith - get up and make your locks,
locks without number;
for I want to lock up
all the evil mouths.

13.
The little bird rushes through the air,
searching for a branch;
and my heart desires a heart, a heart
on which it can blessedly rest.

14.
See how clear the waves are
when the moon gazes down!
You who are my love,
you love me back!

15.
The nightingale, it sings so beautifully,
when the stars are twinkling.
Love me, my beloved heart,
kiss me in the dark!

16.
Love is a dark shaft,
a very dangerous well;
and I, poor man, fell in.
I can neither hear nor see,
I can only think about my bliss,
I can only moan in my woe.
das Auge mir.

LIEBESLIEDER WALZER, OP. 52 CONT.

17.
*Nicht wandle, mein Licht, dort außen
im Flurbereich!
Die Füße würden dir, die zarten,
zu naß, zu weich.*

*All überströmt sind dort die Wege,
die Stege dir;
so überreichlich tränke dorten*

18.
*Es bebet das Gesträuche,
gestreift hat es im Fluge
ein Vögelein.
In gleicher Art erbebet
die Seele mir, erschüttert
von Liebe, Lust und Leide,
gedenkt sie dein.*

17.
Do not wander, my light, out there
in the field!
Your feet, your tender feet, would get
too wet, too soft.

All flooded are the paths there,
and the bridges,
so amply there did my eyes weep.

18.
The bushes are trembling;
they were brushed by a
little bird in flight.
In the same way,
my soul trembles,
overcome by love, pleasure and sorrow,
as it thinks of you.

AND THE SWALLOW

PSALM 84

How beloved is your dwelling place,
O lord of hosts.
My soul yearns, faints
My heart and my flesh cry
The sparrow found a house,
And the swallow, her nest
Where she may raise her young
They pass through the valley of bakka
They make it a place of springs
The autumn rains also cover it with pools

BAR XIZAM

KHWAJEH SHAMS AL-DIN MUHAMMAD HÂFEZ-E SHIRAZI (CA. 1320-1390)
TRANSLATED BY ERIC BANKS AND THE COMPOSER,
AFTER RENDERINGS BY MICHAEL BOYLAN AND H. WILBERFORCE CLARKE
(1840-1905)

Moždeye vasle to ku, kaz sare jân bar xizam? Waiting, where is the harmony of your voice, so that,
free from the desires of this life: I might rise?

Tôyere qodsamo azdome jahân bar xizam. I am a dove from paradise, but out of this worldly cage: I
shall rise.

Bevaloye to, ke gar bandeye xišam xoni, If, in your devotion, you call upon me to serve you, then I
azsare [jano jahân] bar xizam. promise, from the desires [of life and this
world]: I will rise.

Yâ Rab, azabre hedoyat berasân bôrâni, O Lord, from the cloud of your grace, let your rain fall
over and over,

pištar zônke, čo gardi, zemiyan bar xizam. Before this, from the midst of it all, like a handful of
dust: Let me rise.

Xizo bôlo benamoy bote širin harakot, O rise up, with sweet gesture, and show me your
stature: lofty, like the cypress,

kaz sare jano jahân dast fešon, bar xizam. So that, free from the desires of this life and this
world, with clapping hands: I may rise.

...raqs konan, bar xizam. ...with dancing feet: I rise.

Ruze margam, nafasi, mohlate didor bedeh, On the day that I die, in the span of a single breath,
grant me but a glimpse of you,

tô, čo Hôfez, zesare jano jahân, bar xizam! And then, like Hafez, free from the desires of life
and this world: upward, I rise!

I HAVE NEVER LOVED SOMEONE (THE WAY I LOVE YOU)

SHARA NOVA (B. 1974)

I have never loved someone the way I love you
I have never seen a smile like yours
And if you grow up to be king or clown or pauper
I will say you are my favorite one in town

I have never held a hand so soft and sacred
When I hear you laugh, I know heaven's key
And when I grow to be a poppy in the graveyard,
I will send you all my love upon the breeze
And if the breeze won't blow your way, I will be the sun
And if the sun won't shine your way, I will be the rain
And if the rain won't wash away all your aches and pains
I will find some other way to tell you you're okay
You're okay
You're okay
You're okay

THE TURTLE DOVE

FOLK SONG

Fare you well, my dear, I must be gone
and leave you for a while;
If I roam away I'll come back again,
Though I roam ten thousand miles, my dear
Though I roam ten thousand miles.
So fair though art my bonny lass,
So deep in love am I;
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till the stars fall from the sky, my dear,
Till the stars fall from the sky.
The sea will never run dry, my dear,
Nor the rocks never melt with the sun,
But I never will prove false to the bonny lass I love,
Till all these things be done, my dear,
Till all these things be done.
O yonder doth sit that little turtle dove,
He doth sit on yonder high tree,
Amaking a moan for the loss of his love,
As I will do for thee my dear,
As I will do for thee.

SEEKING LIGHT

CHARLES ANTHONY SILVESTRI (B. 1965)

I have lived rich, and loved well,
Traveled the world, called many places home.
I have lived rich, and loved well,
And now I travel, travel on.

Refrain:

I travel through the darkness
and through the night,
Along my pilgrim road, seeking light.
I travel through the darkness
and through the night,
Seeking light, seeking toward the light.

I have drunk my fill of the cups of life,
Of joy and of fear,
Of anguish and boundless bliss.
I have drunk my fill of the cups of life,
And now I travel, travel on.

[Refrain]

My spirit journeys on into the moonlight,
With steady steps and sure,
Along the well-trod pathway
Between here and forever.

[Refrain]

GET ON BOARD, LITTLE CHILDREN

SPIRITUAL

Get on board, little children,
Get on board today.
Get on board, little children,
Get on board today.

[Refrain]

Get on board, little children,
Get on board, little children,
Get on board, little children,
There's room for many-a-more.

Get on board, little children,
Get on board, little children,
Get on board, little children,
There's room for many-a-more.
The Gospel train is coming;
I hear it just at hand.
I hear the car wheels moving,
And rumbling through the land.

[Refrain]

Get on board, little children,
Get on board today.
Get on board, little children,
Get on board today.

I hear that train a-comin';
She's comin' round the curve.
She's loosened all her steam and brakes
And straining every nerve.

[Refrain]

The fare is cheap, and all can go;
The rich and poor are there.
No second class aboard this train,
No difference in the fare.

[Refrain]

Get on board, little children,
Get on board today.
Get on board, little children,
Get on board,
Get on board today.
Get on board!

PROGRAM NOTES

Anniversaries invite us to contemplate transitions.

As I approached this performance, the twenty-fifth concert I am conducting with the West Village Chorale in the middle of my tenth season, I started thinking a lot about transitions. About journeys and milestones. About arrivals and departures. About constancy and change. The world is certainly a different place than it was 10 years ago, and the same is likely true for many if not all of us—I for one now have two children, a new teaching job, and I even live in a new state. My life now looks vastly different from how it looked when I first began my tenure with this fine organization, just as the membership and programming of our ensemble have evolved. (For context, I just counted—only twenty-one of the sixty-plus singers performing tonight predate my appointment!)

I also thought about travel, about the thousands of miles I have driven or trained each Tuesday for our weekly rehearsals at Judson, and about the experience I have on those trips. Since 2023, I have commuted via Amtrak or Metro-North nearly every week from Massachusetts, and by my most conservative estimate I've racked up about 31,200 commuter miles; that's enough to circumnavigate the world and then some! But the marvelous thing about trains is that they're not just a means of transportation—they're an office, a place to rest, an opportunity to reflect and unwind. I half-joke that with my schedule and family life, the train is the only place where I can get any work done—but it's truly where I feel I can be most productive and focused, free of interruptions (no matter how important—or adorable—they are).

And so "All Aboard: Conductor's Choice" started to take shape. Aside from the obvious pun, many of our selections today center on themes of transitions, travel, and trains, both literal and figurative. We have a handful of older classics from the traditional Western canon, like Duruflé's much beloved *Ubi Caritas*, Vaughan Williams's *The Turtle Dove*, and Brahms's playful *Liebeslieder Waltzes*. We have contemporary gems like Abbie Betinis's *Bar xizam* and Caroline Shaw's *and the swallow*. And we have songs of travel like Brandon Williams's *Seeking Light* and Andre Thomas's arrangement of *Get On Board, Little Children*. There is no overarching "plot" or message behind this collection of pieces, but rather an exploration of the common themes of transition and travel in this music. Oh, and of course, they're all pieces I truly love. I hope you will love them too.

If you ask me about my commute on Tuesday nights, I would tell you that after I arrive in Penn Station, I regularly **Take the A Train** to West 4th Street. But for **Billy Strayhorn**, that title came from directions given by Duke Ellington to his house in Sugar Hill. Strayhorn wrote what would become the signature tune of the Duke Ellington Orchestra in 1939, although at the

time he had discarded the music due to thinking it sounded too much like a Fletcher Henderson arrangement. Later versions were recorded by various artists, including Ella Fitzgerald, and the present arrangement by Steve Zegree pays homage to her signature scatting. The choir begins with a fanfare-like imitation of the original piano intro, then quickly settles into the familiar tune (originally played by saxophones).

Despite having a long and prolific career, French organist **Maurice Duruflé** published relatively few compositions and even fewer choral works. Including his beloved *Requiem*, all of his choral music is sacred, and largely based on plainchant. *Ubi Caritas* is one of Duruflé's best-known motets, and similarly takes all of its motivic ideas from the medieval chant. Like so much of his music, Duruflé's harmonization is where the true magic lies, and the choral accompaniment is lush and expressive, while always preserving the clarity of the original melody.

While his greatest musical idiom is probably that of the French art song (of which he wrote roughly one hundred), **Gabriel Fauré** also excelled as a composer of sacred choral music, most famously his *Requiem*. This owed partly to his extensive work as an organist and choirmaster at Saint-Sulpice and L'église de la Madeleine. *Cantique de Jean Racine* is Fauré's setting of Racine's French translation of the medieval hymn *Consors paterni luminis*. Written when Fauré was only 19 years old, it is a simple yet richly melodic piece for four voices and piano. As is often the case in Fauré's writing, the piano is given as much (and sometimes more) melodic interest than the vocal lines. The piece has a flexible interplay of motivic material and a warmly chromatic middle section contrasting with the smooth lyricism of the outer passages.

Johannes Brahms is unarguably one of the most influential and enduring voices of the German Romantic school, and he composed in nearly every genre of the time, including symphonies, concertos, large-scale secular and sacred choral music, and chamber and solo music. His *Liebeslieder Waltzer, op. 52*, along with the later *Neue Liebeslieder Waltzer, Op. 65*, occupy a small but important category of his compositions, namely "Hausmusik," or so-called parlor music. In the 1860s, Brahms was new to Vienna and was heavily involved in a project editing unpublished Schubert compositions, and the influence of the earlier composer—along with that of the "waltz king," Johann Strauss II—is apparent throughout the piece.

Brahms may not have conceived of the piece as a complete set meant to be performed in order, but rather as an assortment of waltzes, and surviving documents show that Brahms struggled a bit with the order of the 18 movements. The texts are translations of Eastern European poems by Georg Friedrich Daumer, and their themes, mostly about love, range from youthful infatuation to stoic determined longing. Brahms makes use of the varying emotions in each poem, showcasing his aptitude for melody, harmony,

rhythmic play (including blurring the perception of meter such that 3/4 doesn't even sound waltz-like in some cases), and text painting. The four-hand piano accompaniment is showy but never ostentatious, often playing a "character" in the narrative of each song. The choral writing is polished and elegant, and one can imagine a quartet of singers standing around a piano reading through the set, probably with a beverage in hand.

While Brahms's larger-scale choral compositions, in particular his *German Requiem*, have overshadowed the *Liebeslieder Waltzes* in the concert hall, they are nonetheless a substantial part of the Western canon. They are gems of melody and form, and strung together they are a very fulfilling and enjoyable collection of musical morsels. And their legacy is felt in many genres, including musical theater—for example, modern productions of Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* now refer to the Greek chorus in that show as the "Liebeslieders"!

Caroline Shaw rocketed into fame in the choral world after winning a Pulitzer Prize in 2013 for her *Partita for 8 Voices*, written for and performed by the virtuoso group Roomful of Teeth. Since then, many of her other choral works have become regular staples of the concert hall. *and the swallow* was premiered by the Netherlands Chamber Choir in 2017, as part of the Lincoln Center White Light Festival's "The Psalm Experience." Shaw begins her setting of Psalm 84 in a still, tightly contained pattern in the lower voices, before expanding into more intricate counterpoint. At the end of the piece, the choir emulates the sound of raindrops—"the autumn rains also cover it with pools."

Written in 2007 for The Esoterics, *Bar xizam* is **Abbie Betinis's** rapturous and rhapsodic setting of one of Persian mystic poet Khwajeh Shams al-Din Muhammad Hâfez-e Shirazi's nearly 400 ghazals, or lyric poems. Hâfez' text is at once desperate and resolute, expressing the assurance that out of "this worldly cage," the speaker will rise. The poem excerpted for *Bar xizam* is also the one written on Hâfez's tombstone. Betinis portrays the spirit of breaking free from earthly bonds with three primary compositional devices: first, the repeated modulation upward and increase in dynamics at each new line of text; second, the gradual opening from vocal confinement (humming through closed lips) to unrestricted sung melody; and third, a repeated ascending glissando figure that imitates the Shepard scale, an auditory illusion that implies perpetual ascent. The music builds dramatically through each stanza of the poem until, at last, the chorus breaks through in a glorious exultation, as if finally standing in the presence of the divine. After such a euphoric climax, all that can be uttered is a simple yet reverent prayer for even a glimpse of that divinity.

Shara Nova is a vocalist, guitarist, singer-songwriter, and classical composer based in Detroit. Her concert music often blurs the lines between pop and classical music; for example, *I Have Never Loved Someone* is actually

an arrangement of a solo song from a 2010 album by her solo project "My Brightest Diamond." This song was originally written following the birth of her son, and to me, the lyrics describe the overwhelming love I felt when holding my children for the first time. The present version was arranged by Nate Thatcher for the professional choir *Conspirare* and was featured on their Grammy-nominated album "House of Belonging."

Ralph Vaughan Williams occupies a central role in British concert music in the first half of the 20th century. His music marked a departure from the denser, German-influenced Romantic style of the 19th century, and his compositions show a strong influence from folk music. *The Turtle Dove* is one such piece, an arrangement of an English folk melody, and Vaughan Williams gives the tune an expressive and emotional treatment. After a baritone solo accompanied by wordless choral hums, the music begins to open up, first in a call-and-response style between low and high voices, and then finally into a soaring climax with a soprano descant.

In addition to serving as the Director of Choral Activities at Rutgers University (my alma mater!), **Brandon Williams** is also an accomplished composer and arranger. *Seeking Light*, his setting of Charles Anthony Silvestri's poem, expresses the optimism and nostalgia of embarking on a new journey in life. Silvestri writes:

I was inspired to write this poem to honor my Uncle Vince, who passed away in 2019. He was what I would call a Las Vegas character, and had lived a full, rich life. The poem honors his many journeys and adventures, and calls to mind the idea that death is but another stage in the journey of our continued existence. The poem is also inspired by a painting by British artist Pamela Colman Smith. Her series of mystical illustrations is the inspiration for a series of poems entitled *Minor Arcana*, whence this poem comes.

Williams also incorporates a subtle nod to the Tarot cards that make up the Minor Arcana, with piano figures representing the numbering of the cards.

André Thomas has enjoyed a long and prolific career as a conductor, composer, and arranger. Many of his arrangements of spirituals and gospel music have become staples of the modern choral repertoire. *Get On Board, Little Children* adapts the spiritual in a driving, rhythmic setting, making ample use of the piano as the engine of the song. After two verses and refrains, the piano drops out for an exuberant choral feature, followed by a rising bass figure that evokes a train chugging along.

-Colin Britt

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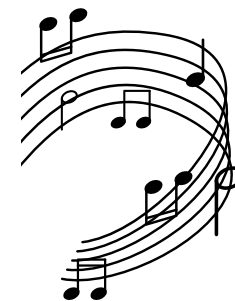
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Praised by the *New York Times* as possessing a “well-blended sound,” the West Village Chorale is a seventy-voice avocational ensemble founded in 1971 by Gwen Gould. Originally established in connection with the 150th anniversary of the Church of St. Luke in the Fields as the St. Luke’s Community Chorus, the group incorporated in 1975 as the West Village Chorale. In 2010 the Chorale moved to its current home, the historic and acoustically magnificent Judson Memorial Church, designed by Stanford White.

Following Gwen Gould was interim Director Andrew Megill (1998–2000), and Artistic Director and Conductor Michael Conley (2000–2015). Michael developed the Chorale into an auditioned ensemble, and—in partnership with a devoted and energetic board and a motivated, talented group of singers—helped bring the Chorale to new levels of musicianship and accomplishment. Malcolm J. Merriweather led the Chorale as Artistic Director for the 2015–16 season, continuing a tradition of excellence. Since his appointment as Artistic Director in 2016, Colin Britt has further expanded the Chorale’s repertoire and reach.

The Chorale’s members are talented avocational singers with varied professional backgrounds (attorneys to Zumba instructors) but one shared goal: to make beautiful music. Our members give voice, leadership and passion to the Chorale.

The Chorale typically performs several concerts per year, with repertoire ranging from traditional and major works choral staples to contemporary pieces (including several world premieres and commissions in recent years). We also host an annual Caroling Walk that regularly sends hundreds of singers out around the Village, and a series of weekly Summer Sings, which allow the many choral singers in the area the chance to gather and sing through classic pieces while the choruses are on summer hiatus.

The Chorale has also had the opportunity to participate in a variety of other activities—including singing with Patti LuPone and indie rock band Sky-Pony at the 2016 Park Avenue Armory Gala, at Carnegie Hall in 2017 with tenor Amine Hachem, as part of the 2018 Mile-Long Opera on NYC’s High Line, at the United Nations with the Qatar Philharmonic in celebration of UN Day in 2019, and caroling live on WNYC the past three Decembers..

Thank you for sharing this evening with us, and we hope to see you at a future event!

COLIN BRITT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR



Now in his tenth season as Artistic Director and Conductor of the West Village Chorale, **Colin Britt** also serves as Director of Choral Activities at Mount Holyoke College and Director of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, both in Western Massachusetts. Prior to his current appointments, he served for seven years as Choir Director at Rutgers Preparatory School and for ten years as Director of Music at Grace Church Van Vorst in Jersey City. He has also served on the conducting faculty at SUNY New Paltz and the Hartt School, as director of Amuse Singers and North River Sing, and he

is the founding director of Terpsichore Ensemble, a professional chamber choir dedicated to performing music by emerging composers, especially from historically marginalized communities. In spring 2023, Colin was one of the principal conductors for the Lincoln Center premiere of Jonathan Dove’s *Search for Spring*.

Colin’s compositions have been performed by ensembles at Rutgers, Westminster Choir College, Hartt, Yale, and Seraphic Fire, the Yale Schola Cantorum, the Yale Alumni Chorus, C4, VOCE, and the Riverside Choral Society, and by ensembles across the country and on four continents. In April 2019, the Rutgers University Voorhees Choir premiered his work *Imagination* at Carnegie Hall. He was the commissioned composer for the Maine Bicentennial, the 100th anniversary of the Hartt School, and the 2020 ACDA Eastern Division Honor Choir, and his composition won first prize in the 2021 Missoula Community Chorus competition, *The Way Through*.

Colin holds degrees from the Hartt School, the Yale School of Music, and Rutgers University. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife Victoria, their daughters Amelia and Lilah, and their dog Mari.

RONG ZHANG
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR



Rong Zhang holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Kent Tritle and Dr. Ronnie Oliver. She earned a Bachelor of Music degree with academic honors from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, a Master of Music degree and a Graduate Diploma from the New England Conservatory in choral conducting. During her time at NEC, she studied with Erica Washburn and has regularly conducted the NEC Chamber Singers and the Concert Choir, and served as a graduate assistant to William Drury with the NEC Symphonic Winds.

Rong has appeared as a guest conductor with the Navy Band Northeast, Cambridge A cappella Group, Shanghai Opera House Chorus, and the Choir of the Shanghai University for Science and Technology. Besides her experience as a conductor, Rong is also a trained pianist and won first prize in the Hong Kong International Piano Competition.

Before taking on her role as the assistant conductor at the West Village Chorale, Rong directed a few ensembles in Massachusetts and New York City. She previously served as assistant conductor at the Lincoln Center Search for Spring Project and the Oratorio Society of New York, where she had the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall. Currently, she has appeared as the guest conductor with the Berlin Radio Choir, working closely with the chorus master Simon Halsey, and directed a concert with them at St. Elisabeth Kirche in Berlin.

ELENA BELLI
PIANIST AND ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR



Elena Belli is a versatile concert artist and influential teacher who has appeared nationally and internationally as both soloist and chamber musician. A sought-after collaborator, she has performed with prestigious instrumentalists and vocalists from leading ensembles, including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Orpheus, and the New York Philharmonic. She has toured throughout Europe with members of the Berlin Philharmonic, and been hailed "*a captivating performer...elegant and poetic*" by the *Correio del Povo* in Brazil. Closer to home, she has been heard in NYC's major venues, as well as on WNYC and WQXR, and been the featured

soloist with local orchestras. Always a champion for new music, she has played a broad array of world premieres, some composed expressly for her. She takes an active role in promoting young talent, is often invited to conduct Master Classes for aspiring young pianists, and for over a decade chaired the AMTL Young Musicians Concerts at Carnegie Recital Hall.

Ms. Belli holds both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Manhattan School of Music. Past faculty positions have included The New School and Concordia College. Currently, she is on the piano faculty of the Manhattan School of Music Precollege Division, and the Hoff-Barthelson Music School. A devoted and valuable part of the WVC community, Ms. Belli has been the pianist for the West Village Chorale since 1988.

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Mail your check to West Village Chorale, 239 Thompson Street, New York, NY 10012, hand it to a chorale member, or make a donation through our website at westvillagechorale.org.

For information about donating securities, or via your donor-advised fund, please contact us at westvillagechorale@gmail.com and thank you!

JOIN US!



If you are a singer who is looking for a choral "home" in NYC, we hope you will consider auditioning to join us!

We are a highly participatory choir, composed of experienced volunteer singers with strong sight-reading ability, excellent vocal technique, the ability to blend—and the willingness to contribute their other diverse gifts (photography, graphic/website design, fundraising skills,

culinary artistry) towards the success of our work.

We keep our membership to around seventy people, so every voice and every personality counts. And we are always looking for new voices and new talents to add to our mix!

Rehearsals are Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 9:45 pm at Judson Memorial Church, on Washington Square South, in the beautiful Greenwich Village section of Manhattan, with occasional additional rehearsals in advance of concerts and other events.

To schedule an audition, please contact us at westvillagechorale@gmail.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR OUR UPCOMING EVENTS THIS SPRING!

Viva Vino

Thursday, April 30th at 7:00pm

Our annual wine and music fundraiser pairs a flight of wines curated by our in-house tenor/sommelier James Dantas with performances by the Chorale and some of our most talented friends. Be a patron of the arts and join us! This fun evening of singing and toasting supports our musical and community endeavors all year long!

This Land is Your Land

Sunday, May 17th at 5:00 pm

Our final concert of the season brings us together in collaboration with Jersey City-based dance troupe Nimbus, in observance of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. We'll be sharing the world premiere of *Angel Island Lamentations*, a piece we've commissioned from acclaimed composer Saundra Choi, as well as his *New Colossus*, a setting of the Emma Lazarus poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty, among other works.

Both events take place at Judson Memorial Church (enter at 243 Thompson Street, south of Washington Square Park.)

Sign up for our email list at westvillagechorale.org to stay updated on all of our events.