



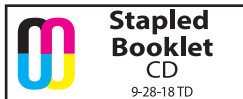
Back Cover

Front Cover



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skylark vocal ensemble
it's a long way



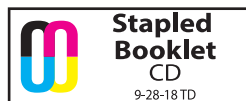
it's a long way

1	I Conquer the World with Words	Jonathan Woody	3:43
2	Qui habitat a24	Josquin des Prez	5:17
3	A Game of Cards <i>Solo: Fiona Gillespie, self-accompanied</i>	Traditional Folksong	2:10
4	Nunc Dimittis – 1. Nunc dimittis	Arvo Pärt	1:46
5	Te lucis ante terminum	Thomas Tallis	1:56
6	Sure on This Shining Night <i>Solo: Nathan Hodgson</i>	Samuel Barber	2:05
7	Heu me domine	Vicente Lusitano	3:10
8	Nachtlied	Max Reger	2:43
9	Der Doppelgänger <i>Solo: Enrico Lagasca</i>	Franz Schubert	4:11
10	Feathers	Gregory W. Brown	5:25

Tracks 6, 9, and 14 feature pianist David McGrory

11	Wayfaring Stranger <i>Solo: Carrie Cheron</i>	Traditional	3:06
12	L'Automne <i>Solo: Helen Karloski</i>	Georges Dupuy de Mèry	4:37
13	Nunc Dimittis – 2. Quia viderunt oculi mei	Arvo Pärt	3:07
14	Goodnight Moon <i>Solo: Alissa Ruth Suver</i>	Eric Whitacre	4:58
15	In Remembrance <i>from Requiem</i>	Eleanor Daley	2:19
16	The Parting Glass <i>Features Megan Roth, Violin</i>	Traditional, arr. the Wailin' Jennys	3:30
17	Nunc Dimittis – 3. Gloria	Arvo Pärt	1:23
18	It's a Long Way	Nell Shaw Cohen	2:31
19	Nature Boy <i>Solo: Dana Whiteside</i>	Eden Ahbez	2:35
20	My Soul Hath Found Refuge in Thee <i>Solo: Jonas Budris</i>	Evelyn Simpson Curenton	5:52

Total Running Time: 66:27





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Album Introduction

It's a Long Way explores our collective experience of living through the 19 months since our last Skylark concert. It has been a time of great disruption, of isolation, of fear, and of loss, but also a time for reflection, for hope, for growth, and for action.

When we completed our *Once Upon a Time* album launch tour in February of 2020, we had no idea that it would be our last experience performing for an audience for nearly two years. For musicians whose very identity is often tied to being part of a communal whole, having our community splintered indefinitely has been profoundly difficult.

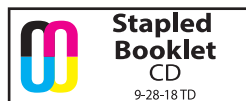
While not arranged in a strictly chronological sense, the album explores a range of emotions we have experienced in 2020 and 2021. In addition to pieces arranged for choir, more than half a dozen Skylark singers are featured as soloists on an album that was recorded in a range of formats and formations over four months.

Several extensive pieces were recorded by 24 individual Skylarks in isolation (at home, or alone in a studio), reflecting the impossibility of assembling our full nationwide roster during a pandemic. Other pieces were recorded live in two recording sessions with a vaccinated and tested group of Skylark artists.

Like many of our programs, this album includes a variety of musical styles. Sometimes the mood swings between pieces are wide and jarring. We think of each piece as a window into an experience that one or more of us had in the last 19 months.

Anchoring the album are three remarkably different settings of Psalm 91, a prayer for times of darkness, that includes the words:

You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.



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Interspersed through the program are three sections of the *Nunc Dimittis* by Arvo Pärt, a foreboding but beautiful piece that seems to capture the emotions I have had related to the pandemic.

It's a Long Way includes four world premiere recordings: three were commissions by Skylark for the year 2020, and one is a re-discovered gem composed by Georges Dupuy de Mèry in the fall of 1942, during another time of global fear and upheaval.

The album joyously culminates in a large group performance of a stunning setting of Psalm 91, titled *My Soul Hath Found Refuge in Thee* by American composer Evelyn Simpson Curenton. Though we do not yet know if our planned return to live performance after 19 months in October 2021 will be possible, the twentieth track of the album celebrates the profound joy we know we will experience whenever that moment arrives.

This album is dedicated to two people - my Godmother, Martha Laird Bowen, who passed away from COVID-19 in January of 2021, and our dear family friend and Godfather to our son Harry, Kirk Lee, whose life was tragically cut short on the day when the vast majority of this album was recorded. May the beauty of this music reflect the beauty and love they shared with the world.

-Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

GRAMMY®-nominated conductor MATTHEW GUARD is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and thoughtful programmers in American choral music. Praised for his “catalyzing leadership” (Q2/WQXR) and “musically creative and intellectually rich” programming (Opera Obsession), Matthew is passionate about communicating something unique in each concert and recording. He scours the world of available repertoire for each program, exhaustively researches each piece, and crafts concerts and printed programs that captivate audiences with their hidden connections and seamless artistry.

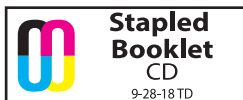
I Conquer the World with Words Jonathan Woody

Skylark commissioned composer Jonathan Woody to write a piece for our educational outreach projects in late 2020. We were in search of new pieces that could be sung by a student or professional choir, that could be rehearsed and performed either in person or virtually, and that explored the events of the year 2020. Choosing a text by Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani, Woody created an exciting and important piece that speaks to the power of language to create positive change in the world. We think of this piece as a prologue to our album, as a statement on the importance of poetry as art that can both soothe individual hearts and change collective minds.

I conquer the world with words,
conquer the mother tongue,
verbs, nouns, syntax.
I sweep away the beginning of things
and with a new language
that has the music of water the message of fire
I light the coming age
and stop time in your eyes
and wipe away the line
that separates
time from this single moment.

Qui habitat a24 Josquin des Prez

Our first setting of Psalm 91 was written by Franco-Flemish composer Josquin des Prez, perhaps in the year 1520 (the year before his death, and the same year that the Aztec Empire was wiped out by smallpox). The piece is a remarkable composition in 24 parts, with each of the four individual lines (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) replicating itself six times; when fully realized, the piece is four concurrent six-part canons sounding together. 24 Skylark artists recorded their parts in isolation (many from their own homes) to bring this piece to life.



Qui habitat in adjutorio Altissimi, in protectione Dei cæli commorabitur.	He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
Dicet Domino: Susceptor meus es tu et refugium meum; Deus meus, sperabo in eum.	I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.
Quoniam ipse liberavit me de laqueo venantium, et a verbo aspero.	Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.
Scapulis suis obumbrabit tibi, et sub pennis ejus sperabis.	He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.
Scuto circumdabit te veritas ejus: non timebis a timore nocturno;	Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
a sagitta volante in die, a negotio perambulante in tenebris, ab incursu, et daemonio meridiano.	Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.
Cadent a latere tuo mille, et decem millia a dextris tuis; ad te autem non appropinquabit.	A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.
Verumtamen oculis tuis considerabis et retributionem peccatorum videbis.	Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

A Game of Cards Traditional Folksong

Skylark soprano Fiona Gillespie has a varied career that encompasses classical vocal work, choral performance, and folk music. Here, she offers a frivolous English folksong, self accompanied with her Irish whistle and Bodhrán. This piece is meant to represent our collective state of obliviousness in early 2020; we were inhabiting a life and culture that had no idea what was about to transpire. Soon, even the most basic and mundane social interactions would seem like remarkable luxuries.

Nunc Dimittis – 1. Nunc dimittis Arvo Pärt

The opening moments of the *Nunc Dimittis* by Arvo Pärt are calm and beautiful. However, it soon shifts to an aura of ominous foreboding.

Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace
secundum verbum tuum in pace according to thy word.

Te lucis ante terminum Thomas Tallis

Te lucis ante terminum is a simple prayer for the onset of evening.

Te lucis ante terminum, Before the ending of the day,
Rerum Creator poscimus, Creator of the world, we pray,
Ut solita clementia that with thy wonted favour thou
Sis praesul ad custodiam. wouldst be our guard and keeper now.

Procul recedant somnia, From all ill dreams defend our eyes,
Et noctium phantasmata: from nightly fears and fantasies;
Hostemque nostrum comprime, tread under foot our ghostly foe,
Ne polluantur corpora. that no pollution we may know.

Praesta pater omnipotens O Father, that we ask be done,
Per Jesum Christum Dominum through Jesus Christ thine only Son,
Qui tecum in perpetuum who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,
Regnat cum Sancto Spiritu. Amen. doth live and reign eternally. Amen.

Sure on This Shining Night Samuel Barber

Tenor Nathan Hodgson and pianist David McGrory offer one of Samuel Barber's nearly perfect compositions, *Sure on This Shining Night*, an art song from 1940. The text comes from a larger poem by James Agee, published 6 years earlier. The text excerpted by Barber isolates a tender moment in the poem where there is hope in darkness.

Heu me domine Vicente Lusitano

Vicente Lusitano, a 16th century Portugese composer of African descent, is now believed to have had a strong influence in the development of chromaticism in harmony. *Heu me domine* is a highly effective and disorienting setting of a requiem text translated below. Seemingly endless rising (and later, falling) semitones create the sensation that the earth is trembling beneath our feet and that our connection with reality itself may be slipping away.

Heu me, Domine, Alas, Lord,
quia pecavi nimis in vita mea: for we have sinned too much in my life!
quid faciam miser, ubi fugiam, poor wretch, what shall I do, where shall I flee,
nisi ad te, Deus meus? but to you, my God?

Libera me, Domine, Free me, Lord,
de morte aeterna, from eternal death
in die illa tremenda, on the awful day;
quando celi mouendi When Heaven
sunt et terra. and earth move.

Nachtlied Max Reger

Inspired to write sacred music of a 'new simplicity' at the start of World War I, German composer Max Reger wrote *Nachtlied* as part of a larger set of eight sacred songs in 1914. The text is from a prayer for evening by Petrus Herbert. When Reger died in 1916, the publisher print proofs of this final set of songs was found at his bedside.

Die Nacht ist kommen, Drin wir ruhen sollen; Gott walt's, zum Frommen Nach sein'm Wohlgefallen, Dass wir uns legen In sein'm G'leit und Segen, Der Ruh' zu pflegen.	The night has fallen, And we should rest; God is there, to care for us By his good will, So that we settle In his company and blessing, To maintain the peace.
---	--

Treib, Herr, von uns fern Die unreinen Geister, Halt die Nachtwach' gern, Sei selbst unser Schutzherr, Schirm beid Leib und Seel' Unter deine Flügel, Send' uns dein' Engel!	Father, drive the evil spirits Far away from us; Keep the night watch; Be our protector; Shield both body and soul Under your wings; Send us your angels!
--	---

Lass uns einschlafen Mit guten Gedanken, Fröhlich aufwachen Und von dir nicht wanken; Lass uns mit Züchten Unser Tun und Dichten Zu dein'm Preis richten!	Let us go to sleep With good thoughts, Happily awaken And never waver from you; Let us, with rearing, Focus our deeds and words On your glory!
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Der Doppelgänger Franz Schubert

Bass-baritone Enrico Lagasca offers Franz Schubert's art song on a text by Heinrich Heine. The text and music create the sensation of gathering madness.

Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen, In diesem Hause wohnte mein Schatz; Sie hat schon längst die Stadt verlassen, Doch steht noch das Haus auf demselben Platz.	The night is quiet, the streets are calm, In this house my beloved once lived: She has long since left the town, But the house still stands, here in the same place.
--	---

Da steht auch ein Mensch und starrt in die Höhe, Und ringt die Hände, vor Schmerzengewalt; Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe, - Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt.	A man stands there also and looks to the sky, And wrings his hands, overwhelmed by pain: I am terrified – when I see his face, The moon shows me my own form!
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Du Doppelgänger! du bleicher Geselle! Was äffst du nach mein Liebesleid, Das mich gequält auf dieser Stelle, So manche Nacht, in alter Zeit?	O you Doppelgänger! you pale comrade! Why do you ape the pain of my love Which tormented me upon this spot So many a night, so long ago?
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Feathers Gregory W. Brown

Composer Gregory W. Brown wrote *Feathers* specifically for 24 Skylarks to record and perform in isolation at home, without being able to see or hear one another, and without a conductor. Like the Josquin piece, it sets words from Psalm 91, focusing a powerful metaphor that portrays the Almighty as a benevolent bird.

He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust

While the Josquin creates the impression of everyone living their parallel lives in relative harmony and in synch with one another, this piece creates the sensation of searching for connection that may be unattainable.



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Wayfaring Stranger Traditional

Skylark mezzo-soprano and singer-songwriter Carrie Cheron offers one the most powerful songs in our American musical canon.

L'Automne Georges Dupuy de Mèry

Georges Dupuy de Mèry was a church organist and composer in Paris in the first half of the twentieth century, and was also the grandfather of a close family friend. When given the opportunity to peruse the composer's original manuscripts, I was drawn immediately to this poignant setting from September of 1942 on a text by Lamartine. Skylark mezzo-soprano Helen Karloski sings the solo in a way that to me captures the essence of what it must have felt like to be in France during that particular Autumn.

Salut! bois couronnés d'un reste de verdure!
Feuillages jaunissants sur les gazons épars!
Salut, derniers beaux jours! Le deuil de la nature
Convient à la douleur et plaît à mes regards.

Terre, soleil, vallons, belle et douce nature,
Je vous dois une larme aux bords de mon tombeau!
L'air est si parfumé! la lumière est si pure!
Aux regards d'un mourant le soleil est si beau.

La fleur tombe en livrant ses parfums au zéphire ;
A la vie, au soleil, ce sont là ses adieux .
Moi, je meurs; et mon âme, au moment qu'elle expire,
S'exhale comme un son triste et mélodieux.

Hello, fair wood crowned with the residual green!
Yellowing foliage scattered on the lawn!
Hello, last beautiful days! Nature's mourning
Suits the pain and is pleasing to my sight.

Earth, sun, valleys, beautiful and sweet nature,
I owe you a tear on the edges of my tomb!
The air is so fragrant! The light is so pure, To the
eyes of a dying one the sun is so very beautiful.

The flower falls while giving off its perfume to the
zephyr; To life, to the sun, this is its farewell.
I am dying, and at the moment my soul expires,
It rises up as a sad and melodious sound.

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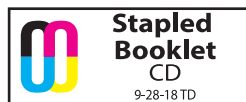
Nunc Dimittis – 2. Quia viderunt oculi mei Arvo Pärt

The second excerpt of Pärt's *Nunc Dimittis* oscillates between extremes of disembodiment and rage in a way that feels particularly unsafe. I think of this excerpt as a musical expression of the loss of a loved one that so many experienced during this pandemic.

Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum	For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Quod parasti ante faciem omnium	Which thou hast prepared before the face of all
populorum:	people;
Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et	To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the
gloriam plebis tuae Israel.	glory of thy people Israel.

Goodnight Moon Eric Whitacre

Parents during the pandemic have faced the daily challenge of putting on a brave face and not showing our fear during a time of uncertainty. Each night, there is still a bedtime story, a gesture of love and care that is even more treasured when the world seems upside down. Skylark soprano Alissa Ruth Suver performs Eric Whitacre's gorgeous setting of the classic children's story by author Margaret Wise Brown.





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In Remembrance from Requiem Eleanor Daley

For those who have lost someone, Eleanor's Daley's setting of this glorious text is musical solace...

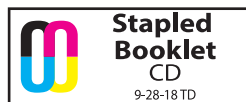
Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow;
I am the diamond glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain;
I am the gentle morning rain.
When you wake in the morning's hush,
I am the sweet uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there; I did not die.

The Parting Glass Traditional (arr. The Wailin' Jennys)
Performed by Sarah Moyer, Sophie Amelkin, and Helen Karloski, with Megan Roth, Violin

...and this traditional parting song is a heartfelt goodbye...

Nunc Dimittis – 3. Gloria Arvo Pärt

...while the final excerpt of Pärt's *Nunc Dimittis* is resignation and acceptance of a grief that will always persist.



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It's a Long Way Nell Shaw Cohen

The companion piece to our commission by Jonathan Woody, Nell Shaw Cohen's *It's a Long Way* sets a hopeful text by Harlem Renaissance poet William Stanley Braithwaite. The composer explains her inspiration here:

"William Stanley Braithwaite was a self-taught, African American writer, editor, and critic, celebrated for his contributions to the development of 20th century American poetry. His poem "It's a Long Way," although published in 1904, speaks powerfully to me in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us have had to put dreams on hold for an unknown length of time, delaying pivotal steps in our personal lives, careers, or education, awaiting the day we may be reunited with loved ones. In this moment of widespread uncertainty and personal yearning, we're also experiencing a powerful collective yearning for a just society to emerge from the crucible of current events. Braithwaite gives voice to a sentiment I've been holding onto these past months, in light of all of the above: "It's work we must, and love we must, / And do the best we may, / And take the hope of dreams in trust / To keep us day by day." I've sought to honor Braithwaite's bittersweet words of hope and determination with a choral setting for all of us striving to safely arrive at our journeys' shore."

- Nell Shaw Cohen

Nature Boy Eden Ahbez

Baritone Dana Whiteside offers a lesson learned for all of us, in the form of an early American standard by Eden Ahbez, made famous by Nat King Cole.

My Soul Hath Found Refuge in Thee Evelyn Simpson Curenton

The album joyously culminates in a large live group performance of a stunning setting of Psalm 91, titled *My Soul Hath Found Refuge in Thee* by American composer Evelyn Simpson Curenton.

It's a Long Way

It's a long way the sea-winds blow
Over the sea-plains blue,—
But longer far has my heart to go
Before its dreams come true.

It's work we must, and love we must,
And do the best we may,
And take the hope of dreams in trust
To keep us day by day.

It's a long way the sea-winds blow—
But somewhere lies a shore—
Thus down the tide of Time shall flow
My dreams forevermore.

William Stanley Braithwaite

for Martha and Kirk

with profound thanks for the generosity of
all our supporters, especially for M. Duffany
Builders and the Duffany family, who made
this project possible

Sklark Artists

Soprano

Sophie Amelkin
Fiona Gillespie
Sarah Moyer
Fotina Naumenko
Janet Stone
Alissa Ruth Suver

Alto

Luthien Brackett
Carrie Cheron
Doug Dodson
Carolyn Guard
Helen Karloski
Clare McNamara
Megan Roth

Tenor

Jonas Budris
John K. Cox
Paul D'Arcy
Erik Gustafson
Nathan Hodgson
Robbie Jacobs

Bass

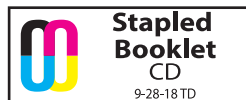
Eric Alatorre
Matthew Goinz
Michael Hawes
Christopher Jackson
Enrico Lagasca
Peter Walker
Dana Whiteside

David McGrory, piano (tracks 6, 9, 14)
Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

About Sklark

GRAMMY®-nominated SKYLARK, “the cream of the American crop” (BBC Radio 3), is a premier vocal ensemble of leading American vocal soloists, chamber musicians, and music educators. Sklark’s dramatic performances have been described as “gripping” (The Times of London), “exquisite...thrilling” (Gramophone Magazine), and “awe-inspiring” (Boston Music Intelligencer). With “some of Boston’s best singers” (Boston Globe), the voices of Sklark “can sway you softly into calm and then all but throw you across the room with sheer harmonic force” (Thought Catalog). Sklark’s albums *Seven Words from the Cross* and *Once Upon A Time* were nominated for GRAMMY®-Awards in 2019 and 2021.

Sklark strives to set the standard for innovative and engaging programs that re-define the choral experience for audiences and singers alike. Artistic Director Matthew Guard’s well-researched and creative programs have been described as “engrossing” (WQXR New York) and “original, stimulating, and beautiful” (BBC Radio 3). Sklark’s most recent three recordings all reached the top 10 of Billboard’s Traditional Classical Chart, earning praise for “imaginative” programming (Limelight Australia) and “singing of the highest standard for any area or any repertoire” (Classics Today).



it’s a long way

Producers: Dan Merceruio and Matthew Guard (Tracks 2 and 10)
Editing: Dan Merceruio and Matthew Guard (Tracks 2 and 10)
Mixing and Mastering: Daniel Shores
CD Booklet: Matthew Guard
Liner Notes: Matthew Guard
Original photography: Gregory W. Brown

Tracks recorded at various locations over four months:

Tracks 2 and 10 recorded separately by Sklarks in isolation from home, April-June 2021
Tracks 6, 9, and 14 recorded at Futura studios in Boston, MA, June 2021
Tracks 3 and 20 recorded at Sono Luminus Studios in Boyce, VA, June and August 2021
Remaining tracks recorded at St. Barnabas Church in Falmouth, MA, June 2021

A note on Sklark’s approach to music-making

Many members of the ensemble lend their expertise in Sklark’s collaborative artistic environment (creating editions/transcriptions, coaching pronunciation, suggesting repertoire, discussing project concepts, and lending historical/cultural/musical expertise). The creative energy of the entire group shapes our work, and our performances benefit greatly from this spirit of collaboration. Not only are our Sklark artists great voices, they are also great minds and hearts.