



skylark
it's a long way

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I Conquer the World with Words	Jonathan Woody
A Game of Cards	Traditional Folksong
Nunc Dimittis – 1. Nunc dimittis	Arvo Pärt
Te lucis ante terminum	Thomas Tallis
Sure on This Shining Night	Samuel Barber
Heu me domine	Vicente Lusitano
Nachtlied	Max Reger
Der Doppelgänger	Franz Schubert
Feathers	Gregory W. Brown
Wayfaring Stranger	Traditional
L'Automne	Georges Dupuy de Mèry
Nunc Dimittis – 2. Quia viderunt oculi mei	Arvo Pärt
In Remembrance <i>from</i> Requiem	Eleanor Daley
The Parting Glass	Traditional, arr. the Wailin' Jennys
Nunc Dimittis – 3. Gloria	Arvo Pärt
It's a Long Way	Nell Shaw Cohen
Nature Boy	Eden Ahbez
Geistliches Lied, Op. 30	Johannes Brahms

skylark artists

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Sophie Amelkin	Carrie Cheron	Paul D'Arcy	Michael Hawes
Fiona Gillespie	Doug Dodson	Nathan Hodgson	Christopher Jackson
Sarah Moyer	Helen Karloski	Robbie Jacobs	Enrico Lagasca
			Dana Whiteside

Matthew Guard, Artistic Director
David McGrory, Piano

program 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 concert explores a range of emotions we have experienced in 2020 and 2021. In addition to pieces arranged for choir, half a dozen Skylark singers are featured as soloists.

For the album version of this program, 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, today's program 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.

In the center of the program is a new setting by Gregory Brown 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.

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 premieres: 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.

Our concert concludes with a profoundly calm and joyful offering from Johannes Brahms. A miraculous double canon at the ninth scale degree, this piece may contain the most gorgeous "Amen" in romantic music.

We have been waiting for this day for a long time, and we are so pleased that you are here with us.

Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

notes, texts, and translations

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 program, 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.

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
secundum verbum tuum in pace peace 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, Rerum Creator poscimus, Ut solita clementia Sis praesul ad custodiam.	Before the ending of the day, Creator of the world, we pray, that with thy wonted favour thou wouldst be our guard and keeper now.
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Procul recedant somnia, Et noctium phantasmata: Hostemque nostrum comprime, Ne polluantur corpora.	From all ill dreams defend our eyes, from nightly fears and fantasies; tread under foot our ghostly foe, that no pollution we may know.
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Praesta pater omnipotens Per Jesum Christum Dominum Qui tecum in perpetuum Regnat cum Sancto Spiritu. Amen.	O Father, that we ask be done, through Jesus Christ thine only Son, who, with the Holy Ghost and thee, doth live and reign eternally. Amen.
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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, quia pecavi nimis in vita mea: quid faciam miser, ubi fugiam, nisi ad te, Deus meus?	Alas, Lord, for we have sinned too much in my life! poor wretch, what shall I do, where shall I flee, but to you, my God?
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Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremenda, quando celi mouendi sunt et terra.	Free me, Lord, from eternal death on the awful day; When Heaven and earth move.
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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.
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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!
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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.
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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 Zei	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 a group of Skylarks to record and perform in isolation at home, without being able to see or hear one another, and without a conductor. 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
Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

The piece creates the sensation of searching for connection that may be unattainable.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 populorum:	Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae	To be a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of
Israel.	thy people Israel.

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)

...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 persistent grief.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto, Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.	Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
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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.

Geistliches Lied, Op. 30 Johannes Brahms

Our concert concludes with a profoundly calm and joyful offering from Johannes Brahms. A miraculous double canon at the ninth scale degree, this piece may contain the most gorgeous “Amen” in romantic music.

Laß dich nur nichts nicht dauren Mit Trauren, Sei stille! Wie Gott es fügt, So sei vergnügt Mein Wille.	Let nought afflict thee with grief; Be calm, as God ordains, And so may my will be contented.
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Was willst du heute sorgen Auf morgen? Der Eine steht allem für; Der gibt auch dir das Deine.	Why take thought for the morrow? The one God who gives thee What is thine watches over all.
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Sei nur in allem Handel Ohn Wandel, Steh feste! Was Gott beschleußt, Das ist und heißt das Beste.	All in thy doings be steadfast And true. What God decrees Is best, and this it is acknowledged.
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Amen. Amen.



SOPHIE AMELKIN performs in musical theater, contemporary opera, and professional chamber ensembles across the country. Stage appearances include the title role in *My Princess Diana* (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater), *The Buddy Holly Story* (San Antonio Broadway Theatre), chamber opera *The Dybbuk*, *Cabaret Soloist* (Tabletop Broadway), a recital of Ladino and Yiddish art song, Bach's *Coffee Cantata* (Skål Chamber Collective). Operatic credits include *Despina* (*Così Fan Tutte*), *St. Teresa of Avila* (*Four Saints in Three Acts*), *Bianca* (*La Rondine*), and *Witch* (*Hansel and Gretel*). Sophie enjoys hanging out with her wonderful spouse Matt Goinz and the world's cutest beagle, Lucy.



Praised for having “the voice of an angel,” mezzo-soprano and contemporary vocalist CARRIE CHERON defies the definition of genre. She has performed as a soloist with and as an ensemble member of such groups as the Boston Baroque, the Handel + Haydn Society, the American Classical Orchestra, Arcadia Players, Yale Choral Artists, and Atlanta's New Trinity Baroque. Carrie is also a nationally recognized, award-winning, performing singer/songwriter and has shared the stage with such acclaimed artists as Sweet Honey In The Rock, The Barra MacNeils, David Jacobs-Strain, Anais Mitchell, and Edie Carey. She is on the voice faculty at Berklee College of Music. www.carriecheron.com



PAUL D'ARCY is in demand nationally as a soloist and chamber musician. Recent solo appearances include Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Austin Symphony, as well as Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, and Mozart *Requiem Undead*. Concert work in NYC includes *Musica Sacra*, *St. John the Divine*, *Trinity Wall Street*, *Musica Viva*, American Classical Orchestra, and *Orchestra of St. Luke's*. National ensembles include *Seraphic Fire*, *San Diego Bach Collegium*, *True Concord*, *Ensemble Origo*, and *Spire*. Discography includes *Harmonia Mundi*, *Reference*, *Naxos*, and *PBS*, including *Conspirare's* 2015 Grammy winning CD. Paul also enjoys making barrel-aged cocktails, cooking, and traveling.



With a voice hailed as “vivid” (*Wall Street Journal*) and “unusually sparkling” (*Kansas City Star*), DOUG DODSON is making his mark on opera and concert stages throughout the United States. Notable recent engagements include *The United Way* in the American premiere of *Tod Machover's Death and the Powers* with American Repertory Theater, *Nireno* in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* with Boston Baroque, *Cupid* in *Blow's Venus and Adonis* with the Oregon Bach Festival, and *Ottone* in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with the Aldeburgh Music Festival's prestigious Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme. Originally from Spearfish, SD, he holds degrees in both voice and anthropology.



FIONA GILLESPIE is a Classical and folk singer, songwriter, and music educator based in Philadelphia, PA. In addition to singing with professional choral ensembles around the country, Fiona appears frequently as a guest artist with crossover groups and chamber ensembles, and her Celtic/Americana folk band, *The Chivalrous Crickets*. She plays the Irish whistle and flute, and has recently begun learning the hurdy-gurdy. Passionate about owning more books than she can properly fit on her shelves, Fiona reads every day, and enjoys finding natural bodies of water - no matter how cold - to jump into while hiking.



MICHAEL HAWES is a Bass-Baritone Singer and Trumpeter living in Chicago. Music Director of *St. Cornelius Church*, he is also a member of *Axiom Brass*, an award winning Brass Quintet that tours the world. Michael sings with the *Clarion Choir*, *Seraphic Fire*, and is so honored and excited to join ranks with *Skylark* this season. Recent performances have taken him to Taiwan, Russia, the Dominican Republic, France, England, Canada and across the United States. In his spare time you'll likely find him chasing frisbees into Lake Michigan, as thrown by his wife Nini. You can learn more at michaelhawesmusic.com.



NATHAN HODGSON is a New York based tenor specializing in early music, chamber music, and choral singing. He sings with the *Schola Cantorum* at The Church of Saint Vincent Ferrer in New York City and performs with ensembles across the nation. A native of DFW, Nathan studied at the University of North Texas and, after receiving a Bachelor of Music in Music Education, sang regularly in the Dallas area with ensembles including the *Orpheus Chamber Singers*, *Dallas Bach Society*, and *Denton Bach Society* before moving to New York City in 2015. Nathan's extramusical pursuits include baking, hiking, and kickboxing.

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON, Bass, is Skylark's Director of Educational Outreach and in his sixth year as a core member of the ensemble. He is a professional singer, conductor, and music educator, now beginning his third year as the Head of Choral and Vocal Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Christopher is regularly sought as guest conductor for high school festivals, and he has sung with a variety of professional ensembles across the country, including Roomful of Teeth, South Dakota Chorale, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity Lutheran of NYC. Cat-person, cook, reader, traveler, and whiskey enthusiast.



ROBBIE JACOBS studied Music at King's College Cambridge, where he was the Senior Choral Scholar under Stephen Cleobury, and holds a Master's in Choral Conducting from the Royal Academy of Music. He has sung with Tenebrae, The Sixteen, and The Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula at the Tower of London. As a conductor, he is the Co-Artistic Director of Reverie Choir, was the Acting Artistic Director of the London Youth Choir, has worked extensively with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, and was the inaugural Conducting Scholar for Genesis Sixteen, under Harry Christophers and Eamonn Dougan. He is currently Director of Artistic Programming for the Boston Children's Chorus.



Mezzo-soprano HELEN KARLOSKI has been praised for her "genuine mezzo timbre" (Opera News) and a voice "beautifully suited for oratorio" (Santa Fe New Mexican). Ms. Karloski made her Lincoln Center debut in Mozart's Solemn Vespers with the Mostly Mozart Festival and her Carnegie Hall debut performing Mozart's Mass in C Minor with the Oratorio Society of New York. Recent appearances include Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, (Harry Bicket), Dvořák's Stabat Mater (Omaha Symphony), Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (American Classical Orchestra), Handel's Messiah (TENET), and Mendelssohn's A Midsummer Night's Dream (New York City Ballet). Helen enjoys exploring the world with her husband Paul.



With "a beautiful sound" (New York Times), Filipino-American bass-baritone ENRICO LAGASCA enjoys his national career as a chamber artist. He performs with the choirs of Trinity Wall Street, the Metropolitan Opera, St. Ignatius Loyola, Holy Trinity Lutheran, Musica Sacra, Tenet Vocal Artists, Clarion Music Society, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Bach Collegium San Diego, Conspirare, Spire, Skylark, and Seraphic Fire. Solo appearances with New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's, American Classical Orchestra, among many others, and can be heard on countless award-winning albums. Enrico studied at the University of the Philippines and at Mannes College of Music. He loves cooking.



Soprano SARAH MOYER's recent and upcoming solo work includes performances with the Aspen Chamber Symphony, Bourbon Baroque, Lost Dog New Music Ensemble, Emmanuel Music, and Boston Modern Orchestra Project. She has performed American premieres by Melani and Nørgård, and world premieres by Harbison, Kallembach, Theofanidis, and Runestad, among others. As a choral artist, she appears with GRAMMY® nominated groups Skylark, Seraphic Fire, Conspirare, Clarion Music Society, True Concord, as well as Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Variant 6, Artefact, and Spire. She enjoys playing the ukulele, and racing triathlons and hiking with her husband Josh. www.sopranosarahmoyer.com.



DANA WHITESIDE's solo appearances include concert, opera and recital. A product of Longy School of Music, New England Conservatory and Tanglewood Music Center, he has received critical acclaim for his voice of "noble clarity throughout powerful and resonant" (The Washington Post). Recent highlights include The Magic Flute with Boston Baroque; the role of Count Carl Magnus in Sondheim's A Little Night Music; Carmina Burana at Mechanics Hall; Verdi's Requiem; and Sea Symphony at the Kennedy. Dana holds a degree in economics and parlays his skills and interest organizational development as President of the Board of Directors of Emmanuel Music.



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.



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