

Sauntering Songs

by Nell Shaw Cohen

World Premiere Performances, April 2023

Skylark | Juventas New Music Ensemble | James Moore, Guitar



SKYLARK



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1. Chorus: "Prologue: The Open Road", Text by Walt Whitman
2. Narration & Chorus: "Their Stories", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
3. Song: "First Footsteps", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
Solo: Sarah Moyer

Quotation from John Muir

4. Chorus: "Further Out, Deeper In", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
5. Song: "Just Because", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
Solo: Carrie Cheron
6. Chorus: "One Walks the Flesh Transparent", Text by Nan Shepherd
7. Song: "Best Friend", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
Solo: Erik Gustafson
8. Chorus: "Street Haunting", Text by Virginia Woolf
9. Song: "Woman Walking", Text by Megan Cohen
Solo: Megan Roth
10. Duet: "Rare Bird", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
Solos: Erik Gustafson and Dana Whiteside
11. Chorus: "Where There Was No Path", Text by John Clare
12. Song: "Trespassing", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
Solo: Nathan Hodgson
13. Duet & Chorus: "Solid Ground", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen
Solos: Enrico Lagasca and Sophie Amelkin
14. Chorus: "Their Stories (Reprise)", Text by Nell Shaw Cohen

Quotation from John Francis

15. Song & Chorus: "Epilogue: Fallen Star", Text by Mashuq Mushtaq Deen

Skylark Vocal Ensemble, Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

<u>Soprano</u>	<u>Alto</u>	<u>Tenor</u>	<u>Bass</u>
Sophie Amelkin	Carrie Cheron	Paul D'Arcy	Matthew Goinz
Sarah Moyer	Doug Dodson	Erik Gustafson	Enrico Lagasca
Fotina Naumenko	Megan Roth	Nathan Hodgson	Dana Whiteside

Juventas New Music Ensemble, Oliver Caplan, Artistic Director

Thomas Barth, Cello
Julia Scott Carey, Piano
Stacey Chou, Flute

James Moore, Guitar

Composer's Program Note

In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit describes the ideal of walking as “a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord.” Propelled by longing for freedom and fulfillment, the characters of *Sauntering Songs* each aspire to this harmonious state of flow. Out on the road, trail, or street, their diverse stories invite the question: if walking is an essential way of being, then who may claim the right to be in this world?

My vision for *Sauntering Songs* is rooted in Skylark's stunning artistry as a vocal ensemble, as well as their collaborative generosity and willingness to take risks. They've given me the precious gift of creative freedom, providing an opportunity to weave the many threads of my musical and narrative voice into a single concert-length work. From my early background as a progressive rock musician to my love of Renaissance choral music, it's all here in the songs of these walkers.

I sincerely hope you enjoy listening to *Sauntering Songs* and that it inspires new perspectives, and perhaps a journey of your own—be it ambulatory or imaginative!

Acknowledgements

The score and libretto for this project emerged through engagement with an array of authors, advocates, and activists who have deeply explored walking as a personal, cultural, and political practice.

Several of my literary inspirations are incorporated directly into the cantata as choral pieces: reflective, thematically-driven counterparts to the songs for soloists and chamber ensemble, echoing the structure of a Baroque oratorio. These settings include an excerpt from Walt Whitman's thrilling “Song of the Open Road” from *Leaves of Grass*; Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain*, a transcendent celebration of Scotland's Cairngorm mountains; Virginia Woolf's essay of urban exploration, “Street Haunting”; and 19th century Romantic poet John Clare's “Trespass.”

Spoken recitations of quotations from two visionary American walkers and environmentalists, John Muir (1838-1914), known as the “father of the national parks,” and John Francis (b. 1946), known as the “Planetwalker,” bookend the journey.

Yet there are many other powerful stories that have further inspired and informed this cantata—especially its character-driven songs and duets, which feature a rotation of eight soloists from Skylark's ranks.

The life of Emma Gatewood, who in 1955 became the first solo female thru-hiker of the Appalachian Trail at the age of 67, (very) loosely inspired my song “Just Because.” I consulted Ben Montgomery's *Grandma Gatewood's Walk* to familiarize myself with her story.

The song “Best Friend” was informed by the work of writers and advocates in the disability community, notably essayist and Coast Guard veteran Tenley Lozano's “Submerged” (*Crab Orchard Review*) and interview with Cascade Hiker podcast (“Hiking with a Service Dog”); Syren Nagakyrie's work with DisabledHikers.com; and Bill Irwin's hiking memoir *Blind Courage*.

(continued on next page)

Writer Lauren Elkin's description of the flâneuse, an archetypal woman who explores urban landscapes, helped provide impetus for "Woman Walking," with lyrics by Megan Cohen; and both "Woman Walking" and "First Footsteps" were sparked in part by Rebecca Solnit's writing in *Wanderlust* on the ways in which women's movement through public spaces has been restricted, and revealed in, through the centuries.

The lyrical works of author, poet, and wildlife biologist J. Drew Lanham (*Sparrow Envy* and *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*) were the animating inspiration behind the duet "Rare Bird," including my use of the title phrase; alongside essays by Carolyn Finney and Evelyn C. White, among others, about their experiences of being Black outdoors.

"Trespassing" was influenced by historical and contemporary "right to roam" movements in Britain (see Ewan MacColl's folk song "Manchester Rambler"); as well as Raja Shehadeh's book *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*, a heartbreaking tribute to the Arab sarha (which means "to roam freely, at will, without restraint").

The intergenerational duet "Solid Ground" emerged as a synthesis of many influences, including my exploration of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail in California; as well as Lauret Savoy's book *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape*.

Robert Macfarlane's *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* was an important companion in the creation of *Sauntering Songs*, and its influence became threaded into my thinking and reading on these subjects.

In addition to the above inspirations (and too many others to list), I'm grateful to several contributors on this project: writer Laura Elliott, sensitivity consultant for "Best Friend"; Dr. Cassandra Ford, sensitivity consultant for "Rare Bird"; Mashuq Mushtaq Deen, lyricist for "Fallen Star"; soprano Laura Strickling, who commissioned the first version of "Woman Walking"; and especially my sister and frequent collaborator Megan Cohen, who wrote brilliant lyrics for "Woman Walking" and also provided key dramaturgical insights that helped give shape to my libretto.

Above all, I'm deeply grateful to Skylark for entrusting me with creating this cantata for their World Premiere performances.

-Nell Shaw Cohen, Composer & Librettist

Nell Shaw Cohen (b. 1988) is a composer, librettist, and multimedia artist. She evokes landscapes, visual art, and the lives of mavericks in her lyrical works for the stage, concert hall, and visual media. Her commissions have included Houston Grand Opera, Skylark Vocal Ensemble, Boston Choral Ensemble, Juventas New Music Ensemble, American Wild Ensemble, The Brass Project, Laura Strickling, and Montage Music Society. Her operas have had workshops with Fort Worth Opera, The American Opera Project, New Dramatists, New York University, and University of New Mexico, and she was first runner-up for the 2020 Zepick Modern Opera Competition. Cohen earned degrees in composition from NYU and New England Conservatory, where her teachers included Herschel Garfein and Michael Gandolfi. Previously Artist-in-Residence with Brush Creek Foundation for the Arts and the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, Cohen has received an OPERA America Commissioning Grant for Women Composers, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Graduate Arts Award, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich Prize from the International Alliance for Women in Music. As Founder & Director of Landscape Music, an international network of composers and performers, she advocates for music inspired by landscape, nature, and place. She lives in the Shawangunk Mountains of New York's Hudson Valley. nellshawcohen.com

Libretto | All texts by Nell Shaw Cohen, except where otherwise indicated.

1. Prologue: The Open Road

Text excerpted from "Song of the Open Road" (1856)
by Walt Whitman (1819-1892).

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open
road!
Healthy, free, the world before me!
The long brown path before me, leading wherever
I choose!

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,
The picture alive, every part in its best light,
The music falling in where it is wanted, and
stopping where it is not wanted,
The cheerful voice of the public road—the gay
fresh sentiment of the road.

From this hour, I ordain myself loosed of limits
and imaginary lines!
Going where I list—my own master, total and
absolute,

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open
road!
Healthy, free, the world before me!
The long brown path before me, leading wherever
I choose!

The cheerful voice of the public road—the gay
fresh sentiment of the road.
The open road!

2. Their Stories

A young woman frees herself from garden walls.
A thru-hiker takes to the trail late in life.
A disabled hiker on a mountain walk.
A solitary woman saunters city streets.
Two friends go birdwatching in the suburbs.
A man trespasses in the countryside.
Two generations tread the same path.
A wanderer walks the American West.

If walking is an essential way of being—
Free and unafraid
As our full, solitary selves—
Then who may claim the right to be in this world?
And what are their ways of walking?

Freed from a future that has been planned for her.
Freed from decades of being defined by others.
Finding peace outdoors with their best friend.
Taking it all in and going nowhere in particular.
Spotting rare birds together.

Reclaiming his ancestral homeland.
Retracing the ways of the past.
Searching for home in the starry sky.

If walking is an essential way of being—
Free and unafraid
As our full, solitary selves—
Then who may claim the right to be in this world?

They are the walkers who are longing,
Who are searching,
Who are becoming themselves.

They are the walkers who are longing,
Who are searching,
Who are becoming themselves.

And what are their ways of walking?
What are their stories?

3. First Footsteps

*This song is dedicated to women and girls who walk
beyond the boundaries they are given.*

Strolling in the garden,
Taking steps on sun warm tiles;
The place that is my own,
The place where I have grown...
All my life.
Breathing in the flowers,
Idling for hours
On my walks.
Pulling the weeds,
Meeting my needs for air and light and motion;
But I'm not satisfied.

Considering
My first footsteps outside these walls—
Can I face what is forbidden?
It may destroy me, I am told.

Watching out the window,
Wandering all around the world;
The place that is unknown,
The place where I would go...
If I could.
Sequestered like a queen;
A lady's never seen,
I am told.
Passing the days
Accepting praise for youth and quiet beauty;
But I'm not satisfied.

So, I'm planning
My first footsteps outside these walls—



Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen

Can I face what is forbidden?
It may destroy me, I am told;
Yet I feel called to be bold!

Mountains and deserts and oceans
Unseen, unwalked;
Companions and strangers and lovers
Unmet, undiscovered;
And the versions of my selves
Decorating the shelves of my room
Like portraits of a life un-lived.
A life un-lived...

I'm taking
My first footsteps outside these walls,
My first footsteps outside these walls—
I will face what is forbidden!
It may destroy me, I am told;
Yet I feel called to be bold,
To be bold!

I am here.
I am born.
I am bold.

4. Further Out, Deeper In

...the winding of a footpath,
the leading line that draws you out and onwards into
the land;
the thread of retracing footsteps,
of the journeys you can never know;
the winding footpath.
The winding footpath.

Drawing you further out,
Luring you deeper in.

...the secrets of a forest,
the covering shade that draws you out and onwards
into the wood;
the darkening understory
of the canopy you'll never know;
the secret forest.
The secret forest.

Drawing you further out,
Luring you deeper in.

...the edge at the horizon,
the reaching sight that draws you out and upwards into
the sky;
the distance of boundless spaces,
of the places you can never go;
the vast horizon.
The vast horizon.

...the thread of retracing footsteps,
the darkening understory,
the distance of boundless spaces...
The winding footpath.

5. Just Because

*This song is dedicated to those who venture down new
paths late in life.*

They don't expect to see
An old woman like me out here.
"Why do you walk the trail?" They ask.
I tell them:
Because it's there.
Because I can.
Just— because.

Mountains I want to claim,
But not for fame;
Forests that call for me,
They know my name!
Children are gone and grown,
They walk alone;
Husband has finally left,
I am my own!

I'm no philosopher—
I just love the
Feeling of the dirt packed firm beneath my boots,
The resistance of rocks and brambles over roots,
The dew settled on my blanket at dawn,
The citrus scent of pine sap in the afternoon,
And the hum of anonymous campers at twilight.

But...
After a thousand miles,
My feet swell up like footballs!

"How do you keep it up?" They ask.
"Don't you get tired?" They ask.
Yup!
So what!
I tell them:
A long, hard life
Prepares you for long, hard fun!
I'm no philosopher—
But these calluses are hard won...

So what if I'm tired?
It's mine to feel.
It feels real...
Because it's there.
Because I can!
Just... because.



Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen

6. One Walks the Flesh Transparent

Excerpt from Nan Shepherd, "The Living Mountain: A Celebration of the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland" (1977).

Walking thus, hour after hour, the senses keyed, one walks the flesh transparent. But no metaphor, transparent, or light as air, is adequate. The body is not made negligible, but paramount. Flesh is not annihilated but fulfilled. One is not bodiless, but essential body. It is therefore when the body is keyed to its highest potential and controlled to a profound harmony deepening into something that resembles trance, that I discover most nearly what it is to be. I have walked out of the body and into the mountain. I am a manifestation of its total life.

7. Best Friend

This song is dedicated to walkers who are tough in ways others don't always understand.

(Hot sun,
Dry air,
Dusty path,
Gentle breeze.)

Don't pet him, please.
C'mon, Stickeen—

(Bird song,
Airplane,
Insect hum,
Rattle seeds.)

Don't pet him, please.
(He's not here for you.)
No more questions, please.
(I'm not here for you.)

Now it's just us, Stickeen.
Let's keep going.

(Quench thirst,
Check map,
Sniff ground,
Hold leash.
Heart pumps,
Blood hot,
Deep breath,
Aching feet.)

(Take a rest.)

And my best friend.
My best friend.)



Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen

Best friend,
You live up to your namesake:
John Muir's little mountaineer.
Two great dogs, but
Different strengths.
Muir and his dog—
They could do anything;
The toughest athletes of their time. But,
You and me,
We know there are many different ways to be tough;
Yeah, there are many different ways to be tough.
And we are tough!

(Long stride,
Leash tug,
Perked ears,
Warm tongue.)

(On days like this,
I feel like myself.
I'm not here for them;
I'm only here for me—
And my best friend.
My best friend.)

8. Street Haunting

Excerpt from "Street Haunting: A London Adventure" (1927) by Virginia Woolf. Used by permission of The Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Estate of Virginia Woolf.

The hour should be the evening and the season winter, for in winter the champagne brightness of the air and the sociability of the streets are grateful. [...] The evening hour, too, gives us the irresponsibility which darkness and lamplight bestow. We are no longer quite ourselves. As we step out of the house on a fine evening between four and six, we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room. [...] To escape is the greatest of pleasures; street haunting in winter the greatest of adventures.

9. Woman Walking

Lyrics by Megan Cohen. Arranged from the original version of "Woman Walking" for soprano and piano, commissioned by Laura Strickling.

This song is dedicated to women who walk the city.

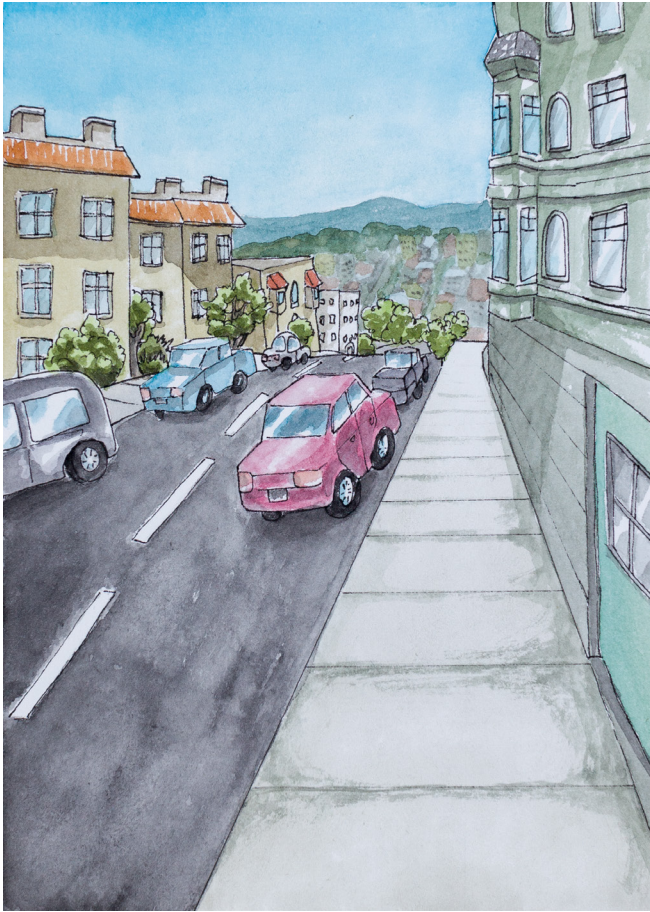
A pair of men, walking.
Another man, walking.
Oh, look: a man. Walking.
A woman!
... jogging.

Why are the women always jogging gotta get some-
place, lose five pounds, yoga mat, never stop, work the
job then jog home clean the house paint the nails do it
all on hard cement.

Oh, look: a man. Standing.
Watching the woman jogging.
Watching the woman jogging.

I do not go jogging.
I take my time.
Dallying on every corner; cars stop for me.
In the window my reflection; I stop for me.

Sensual pleasure of a worn awning, painted sign,
a crowded place then sudden quiet on another block.
Miles and elevation
Cannot map the living city.
I live with, in, on, the city.



Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen

Smell it like a lover's neck
Except the perfume of garbage.

Oh look, some men walking.
And there's a man walking.
He watches me walking.
He says "Where you goin'?"
But I just keep walking.
Look down and keep going.

I'm going everywhere before I go home.
Taste the pavement like an oyster under every step.
A bit of sky between two buildings; it has time and so do I.

Look down and keep going.
I'm going everywhere before I go home.
Taste the pavement like an oyster under every step.
A bit of sky between two buildings; it has time and so do I.

10. Rare Bird

This duet is dedicated to walkers for whom being outdoors alone isn't always safe.

Binoculars? Check. Field guide? Check.
Water, Sunscreen, Trail mix, Check check check!
Seems like nobody walks in the suburbs— Except for us! It's hardly pristine wilderness, But we'll take what we can get.

I hear a boisterous Blue Jay barking.
Birding is better together.
You ID most species quicker than me!
I see a ravenous Red-tailed Hawk out scouting for squirrels.
Birding is better together.
And you know I would never go alone.

Listen! My favorite forager: the Tufted Titmouse.
We are his only audience.
Seems like nobody walks in the suburbs— Except for us!

And you know I would never go alone...
...As a Black man, In this neighborhood.
With wary eyes watching from windows and lawns,
I can't be seen lingering in the wrong place,
At the wrong time.
Birding is safer together—For a rare bird like me.

Wait— Would you look at that!
It's an Indigo Bunting!
That brilliant blue...
An iridescent hue...
I've never seen one before in this neighborhood.

A rare bird, a rare bird like me.



Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen

11. Where There Was No Path

Text from "Trespass" by John Clare (1793-1864).

I dreaded walking where there was no path
And pressed with cautious tread the meadow swath
And always turned to look with wary eye
And always feared the owner coming by;
Yet everything about where I had gone
Appeared so beautiful I ventured on
And when I gained the road where all are free
I fancied every stranger frowned at me
And every kinder look appeared to say
"You've been on trespass in your walk today."
I've often thought, the day appeared so fine,
How beautiful if such a place were mine;
But, having naught, I never feel alone
And cannot use another's as my own.



Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen

12. Trespassing

This song is dedicated to walkers whose homelands have become someone else's property.

Done with another long week of labor.
My day is free—I'll spend it rambling!

Up the hill, out on the moor,
Through the wood,
Over the stream, lost in my daydream...

Over there,
I see the spot where my ancestors slept.
(Grandfather, Grandmother,
I feel you with me at every step.)
I'll take a closer look,
Though I'll be trespassing...

How could love of the land
Make me a criminal?
Our storied countryside
Severed by borders.
How did our ancient home
Become the rich man's playground?

He can say it's his property.
But today, My feet, my sweat, and my time are my property!
So, I'll spend them rambling!

Up the hill, out on the moor,
Through the wood, over the stream,
Lost in my daydream...

Grandfather, Grandmother,
I feel you with me at every step
In the spot where my ancestors slept.

13. Solid Ground

This duet is dedicated to walkers who seek their purpose in the routes of the past.

What winding path did our family take to make this life we lead?
When I asked, you would only say: "The past is in the past."

It did not seem to matter all that much when I was young;
But now you've left me on my own, I search for solid ground.

This winding path must our family take to make the life you'll lead.
When you ask, I hope they will say: "We're grateful for our past."

It did not seem to matter all that much when I was young;
But now you've left me on my own,
But now I've left our only home,
I search for solid ground...

I've traveled hundreds of miles of highways,
Through overpass and under hill,
To find myself here at the start.
A strange, remote place where I retrace their steps.

I've traveled hundreds of miles of pathways,
Through mountain pass and under hill,
To find myself here at the end.
A strange, remote place
Where I retrace their steps.
Where I will face what's next.

Straining to sense their presence here.
Struggling to have faith in my choice.
Grasping for clarity past the fear!
Dreaming of a future life...

Shadows of experience extend beyond our time,
Inscribed with a line in the land.

To feel our soles press firm against the dirt—
To know that we are all part of this earth— It is a miracle.

One step at a time, I search for what is mine.
I find solid ground.



Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen

14. Their Stories (Reprise)

If walking is an essential way of being—
Free and unafraid
As our full, solitary selves—
Then who may claim the right to be in this world?

They are the walkers who are longing,
Who are searching,
Who are becoming themselves.

They are the walkers who are longing,
Who are searching,
Who are becoming themselves.

And these are their ways of walking.
These are their stories.

15. Epilogue: Fallen Star

Lyrics by Mashuq Mushtaq Deen.

This song is dedicated to walkers searching for home.

A black moon's hanging in the sky tonight
So many stars light this old road
Friends shining down on a lonely life
I'm a fallen star, just tryna walk home

Walking through town in Abilene
A woman stumbles out for a cigarette
She's got Venus written on her jacket back
Cold brown eyes tell you where she's been

Who's the brightest star tonight?
Venus rises first before all the rest
She's gotta funny way with that knowing smile
She hangs low in the sky just to catch my eye

I say, "What're you doin' on a night like this?"
She says—"Whaddya care? You're just a fallen star."
I say, "You sure are pretty when you're bein' mean."
She gives me a wink that's worth all her smiles...

A crescent moon'll rise later on tonight
Whole lotta stars still light this road
Friends shining down on a lonely life
I'm a fallen star, just tryna walk home

I'm in a little diner in Santa Fe
The waitress brings me a piece of pie
The name "Callisto" is on her little tag
She's dead on her feet with hours to go

Who's pointing out the North Star light?
Callisto in the sky is gonna show the way
She's got a little boy she goes home to
She feeds him on dreams of better days
I say, "Hey Big Dipper, what's goin' on?"
She says—"A whole lotta nothin', what's it to you?"
"Is that your son in the picture frame?"
Her heart opens wide and her eyes light up—

There's so many people in the sky tonight
So many stories, so many worlds
They're all movin' round, no end in sight
But they take the time to light my road

Friends shining down on a lonely life
On this fallen star just tryna get home

Once in a while there's a full moon bright
Can't see no stars in that kinda light
Those days it's harder to keep up the faith
And I wonder if home is a real place...



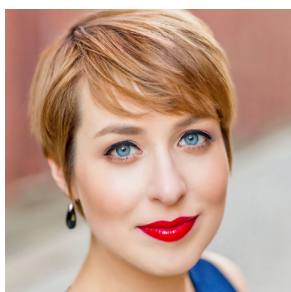
Artwork by Nell Shaw Cohen



SOPHIE AMELKIN is an NYC based artist whose career includes classical, choral, musical theater and rock. In the spring of 2021, Sophie was a semi-finalist in the American Traditions Vocal Competition. When not singing with Skylark, Sophie is performing on tour in the US and Europe. Recent theatrical roles include Vi Petty (*The Buddy Holly Story*) for which Sophie also played keys, and her New York City theatrical debut playing the title role in the new musical *My Princess Diana* as a benefit for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.



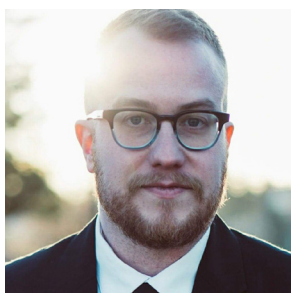
Soprano SARAH MOYER's recent and upcoming solo work includes performances with the Colorado Bach Ensemble, Aspen Chamber Symphony, Bourbon Baroque, Lost Dog New Music Ensemble, Emmanuel Music, and Boston Modern Orchestra Project, with American premieres by Melani and Nørgård, and world premieres by Harbison, Kallembach, Theofanidis, and Runestad, among others. She regularly appears with GRAMMY®-nominated groups Skylark, Seraphic Fire, Conspirare, Clarion, True Concord, as well as Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Variant 6, and Artefact. She loves being a mom, plays the ukulele, races triathlons, and enjoys hiking with her husband and their beautiful catahoula leopard dog.



FOTINA NAUMENKO, soprano, has been praised for her "radiant voice" (Boston Globe), described as "angelic" (MusicWeb International) and "capable of spectacular virtuosic hi-jinks" (Boston Musical Intelligencer). Fotina's singing encompasses a wide variety of genres including oratorio, opera, art song, choral and contemporary music, both as a soloist and ensemble musician. Ensemble credits include Conspirare, Artefact, the Experiential Chorus, Clarion, Cappella Romana, among many others. Fotina is a Fulbright scholar specializing in Russian/Slavonic diction and teaches at Shenandoah Conservatory. She lives in the Washington, DC area with her husband Steve, their son Gabriel, and their two cats, Pumpkin and Noodle.



With a career of repertoire that spans the musical sphere, mezzo-soprano and multi-genre contemporary vocalist CARRIE CHERON has been hailed as having the "voice of an angel" with "unfeigned expression," and has graced many stages across New England and beyond. Highly sought-after as both a classical performer and crossover artist, Carrie performs regularly as a soloist and ensemble member of Skylark, Emmanuel Music, Boston Baroque, Lorelei Ensemble, and folk/baroque collective Floyd's Row, among others.



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.



Mezzo-soprano MEGAN ROTH enjoys a varied career in opera, oratorio, art song, and chamber music. Recently she performed the roles of Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* and Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and regularly performs as the alto soloist in *Messiah*. As an ensemble artist, she performs regularly with renowned national ensembles including Skylark, True Concord, Yale Choral Artists, and Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble. Megan is also the artistic director of Calliope's Call, which presents unique and culturally relevant programs of art song. She enjoys swimming and hiking with her husband Adam and their two totally spoiled Boston Terriers, Bronx and Brooklyn.

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.



Tenor ERIK GUSTAFSON is nationally active as an oratorio soloist and choral artist, and teaches voice at University of the South in Sewanee, TN. Erik has collaborated on two GRAMMY® Award-winning recordings with the Phoenix Chorale, and albums with *Skylark*, *Bach Collegium San Diego*, *Conspirare*, *True Concord*, *Spire Chamber Ensemble*, and *Sounding Light*. He performs regularly with *Seraphic Fire* and *Santa Fe Desert Chorale*, and is a founder of *Quadrivium*. Past solo highlights include Bach's *St. John Passion* with Arizona Bach Festival, Handel's *Messiah* with Tucson Symphony Orchestra, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with Oregon Bach Festival. Erik is a connoisseur of craft beer.



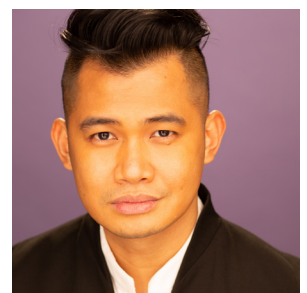
NATHAN HODGSON is a New York based tenor specializing in early music, chamber music, and choral singing. He sings with the Schola Cantorum at The Church of Saint Vincent Ferrer in New York City and performs with ensembles across the nation. A native of DFW, Nathan studied at the University of North Texas 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.



Conductor, pianist, and baritone MATTHEW GOINZ has performed in venues around the world, created arrangements that have been heard from California to South Korea, and enjoyed collaborations with prominent artists of our day. He maintains active relationships with Grammy-nominees *Skylark*, *Seraphic Fire*, and *True Concord*, is an active collaborative pianist, and was previously a member of and tour manager for the acclaimed vocal chamber ensemble *Cantus*. Matthew makes his home in New York City with his wife, soprano and actor *Sophie Amelkin*, and *Lucy*, the sweetest beagle that ever was, and fancies himself a pretty excellent cook. mt-tracks.com | matthewgoinz.com



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*, *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.



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" (*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 Center*. Dana holds a degree in economics and parlays his skills and interest organizational development as President of the Board of Directors of *Emmanuel Music*.





About Skylark

Three-time GRAMMY®-nominee Skylark, “the cream of the American crop” (*BBC Radio 3*), is a premier chamber choir comprised of leading American vocal soloists, chamber musicians, and music educators. Skylark’s dramatic performances have been described as “gripping” (*The Times of London*), “exquisite...thrilling” (*Gramophone Magazine*), and “awe-inspiring” (*Boston Music Intelligence*). Skylark’s mission is to be the most exciting and innovative vocal ensemble for audiences and artists alike, and to provide inspiring educational activities that positively impact students’ lives. Skylark sets the standard for innovative and engaging programs that re-define the choral experience for audiences and singers alike – three of its most recent albums have received GRAMMY® nominations, and Artistic Director Matthew Guard’s well-researched and creative programs have been described as “engrossing” (*WQXR-NY*) and “original, stimulating, and beautiful” (*BBC Radio 3*).

Three-time GRAMMY®-nominee 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-NY*) 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. Matthew lives in Bedford, NY, with his wife Carolyn and sons Harry and Arthur.

About Juventas New Music Ensemble

Juventas New Music Ensemble is a contemporary chamber group with a special focus on emerging voices. Juventas shares classical music as a vibrant, living art form. We bring audiences music from a diverse array of composers that live in today’s world and respond to our time. Since its founding in 2005, Juventas has performed the music of more than 300 living composers. The ensemble has earned a reputation as a curator with a keen eye for new talent. It opens doors for composers with top-notch professional performances that present their work in the best possible light. Recognition for the ensemble’s work includes the American Prize in Opera Performance and support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Massachusetts Cultural Council, and Boston Foundation. Juventas is featured on albums by Innova Recordings, Parma Records, and New Dynamic Records. Juventas has a storied history of dynamic collaboration with artists in other media, including dancers, painters, scientists, poets, puppeteers, and robotics engineers.



Cellist THOMAS BARTH enjoys a varied career as a chamber musician throughout the United States. He frequently performs diverse repertoire with ensembles such as the Handel and Haydn Society, Glissando Concert Series, Boston Festival Orchestra, A Far Cry, and Boston Baroque. In 2022, he served as the cellist for the critically acclaimed Broadway revival of *1776* and will play in the band for the upcoming production of *Evita* at the American Repertory Theater this summer. He enjoys taking long walks with his dog, Trevor.



A founder of Juventas New Music Ensemble, pianist JULIA SCOTT CAREY is an accompanist for Tanglewood Festival Chorus, Boston Symphony Children's Choir, Metropolitan Chorale of Brookline, and Dedham Choral Society. She previously served as the pianist for Handel and Haydn Society's Educational Vocal Quartet and Boston Children's Chorus. Her compositions have been performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops. She also arranged a folksong for Yo-Yo Ma and Lynn Chang to play at Deval Patrick's inaugural ball. Julia lives



Originally from Long Island, STACEY CHOU earned her Graduate Performance Diploma and her Master of Music degree from the Longy School of Music of Bard College, and earned her Bachelor of Music degree with Distinction from the Eastman School of Music. She is an active performer in both piano and flute and maintains a private piano and flute studio, in addition to playing flute and piccolo around the United States with the Air National Guard Band of the Northeast. When not traveling or performing, Stacey enjoys improvising music with friends, visiting Disneyland, and catching the latest episode of Doctor Who.



JAMES MOORE is a composer, guitarist, and bandleader who has earned the titles of "local electric guitar hero" by Time Out New York and "model new music citizen" by The New York Times. He enjoys an active career as a chamber and orchestral musician, soloist, and collaborator in theater, dance, and multimedia projects, and can be found playing with the raucous electric guitar quartet Dither, the whimsical acoustic group The Hands Free, and the avant-grunge/sloppy-math band Forever House.

Coming soon

CLEAR VOICES IN THE DARK Featuring Francis Poulenc's *Figure Humaine*

May 28th, Bedford, NY | May 29th, Falmouth, MA | June 3rd, Newburyport, MA | June 4th, Chestnut Hill, MA



Francis Poulenc's *Figure Humaine* is one of the greatest works ever composed for unaccompanied choir – composed in 1943 in occupied France, and based on resistance-inspired poems by Paul Éluard, it is a stunning 8-movement exploration of the grim realities of war, culminating in an optimistic and embattled cry for liberty in the face of oppression. Skylark's innovative concert program, *Clear Voices in the Dark*, is a powerful cross-cultural statement about the expressive power of the arts, and specifically the human voice, in times of tragedy. Interspersed between Poulenc's stirring and complex settings, Skylark offers far simpler (but no less beautiful) musical images from the American Civil War era. Skylark shares some well-known pieces that have remained in the popular consciousness, as well as beautiful war-inspired songs that have long since been forgotten (and only found thanks to the Duke University Historical Archives).

Support Our Mission

Skylark's mission is to be the most exciting and innovative vocal ensemble for audiences and artists alike, and to provide inspiring educational activities that positively impact students' lives.

Even the best musical groups in America can only count on ticket sales to cover 50% of operating costs. We rely on your generous donations to help us with the balance of our operating budget.

Skylark is a registered 501(c)(3) organization – gifts are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. The names listed below reflect gifts received between September 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list – please accept our sincere apologies for any mistakes or omissions.

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