

DECEMBER 2025

2025–26 Season

music dance theater



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Mark Morris Dance Group *MOON*

A Cal Performances Co-commission

Wendall K. Harrington, *projections*

Isaac Mizrahi, *costumes*

In his latest creation, the wildly creative Mark Morris looks upward—at the Moon!—to explore our fascination with our constant celestial companion. *MOON* celebrates the wonder and poetry of the night sky, through arresting visuals, lively music, and exquisite movement.

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—Los Angeles Times

Jan 23–25
ZELLERBACH HALL



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Front cover:
San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus,
Holiday Spectacular 2025!



For one night only (Jan 17), revered conductor **Riccardo Muti** and his beloved **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** return to Cal Performances for a program of orchestral gems by Brahms, Ravel, and Stravinsky. Muti, who turns 84 this year, stepped down as the esteemed ensemble's music director to assume the role of Music Director Emeritus for Life in 2023, but his close rapport with this group of remarkable musicians continues to enchant.

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December 2025 | Volume 4, No. 5

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Jeremy Geffen

Happy Holidays! I'm so pleased that you've chosen to spend part of the season here with us at Cal Performances, especially during these weeks when schedules so quickly fill up with other special events and activities that bring together a host of family, friends, and colleagues. We enjoy seeing you in our halls at any time of the year, but particularly during the busy days of December.

This month's programming places a spotlight on choral music, with three brilliant vocal ensembles offering programs perfectly attuned to this special season. On Saturday afternoon, December 13, esteemed choral director **Marika Kuzma**, a first-generation Ukrainian American and professor emerita of music at UC Berkeley, returns to campus with her acclaimed **Ensemble**

Cherubim, joined by a selection of renowned Bay Area artists who share an admiration of Ukrainian culture. Their stirring program of songs, hymns, carols, and spoken word captures the intimacy of music traditionally sung in Ukrainian homes, churches, and town squares during the holiday season.

Next up, on Sunday afternoon, December 14, the multi-Grammy-winning **Soweto Gospel Choir** returns to UC Berkeley, singing songs of love and peace, from gospel classics and spirituals to feel-good pop songs, all delivered with these singers' superhuman vocal blend and dazzling showmanship.

And rounding out our December programming, on Saturday, December 20, the much-adored **San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus** returns for its annual—and wildly popular—*Holiday Spectacular* program at Zellerbach Hall. The hilarious and heartwarming concert features the chorus in clever sendups of pop culture and national personalities, with chart-topping music hits mixed in with classic holiday carols. Due to overwhelming demand, a second performance has been added this season.

Coming up in the new year, our 2025–26 season will continue with a wide range of talent including conductor **Riccardo Muti** and the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** (a Maria Manetti Shrem Great Artist Performance); vocalists **Joyce DiDonato** and **Renée Fleming**; the **Takács String Quartet**; early-music superstars **The English Concert**, **Jordi Savall**, and **The Tallis Scholars**; jazz greats **Cécile McLorin Salvant** and **Somi**; and appearances by **Silkroad Ensemble with Rhiannon Giddens** and Broadway diva **Kelli O'Hara**.

And our acclaimed dance series continues, distinguished by genre-defining artists and major new productions including the **Martha Graham Dance Company** marking the occasion of its centennial; **The Joffrey Ballet** in an otherworldly celebration of the traditional Scandinavian summer solstice festival; the long-awaited Cal Performances debut of **A.I.M** by **Kyle Abraham**; and, of course, return engagements with the **Mark Morris Dance Group** and the **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**.

As you explore the calendar, I recommend you pay particular attention to our *Illuminations* theme of “**Exile & Sanctuary**,” focusing this season on how issues of displacement can inform bold new explorations of identity and community; and how artistic expression can offer safe harbor during times of unrest or upheaval.

The opportunity to engage with diverse artistic perspectives and share the transformative power of the live performing arts is one of life's greatest pleasures, and I look forward to encountering these profound and entertaining experiences with you in the months ahead.

Jeremy Geffen
Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances



music dance theater

Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

2025–26 Season

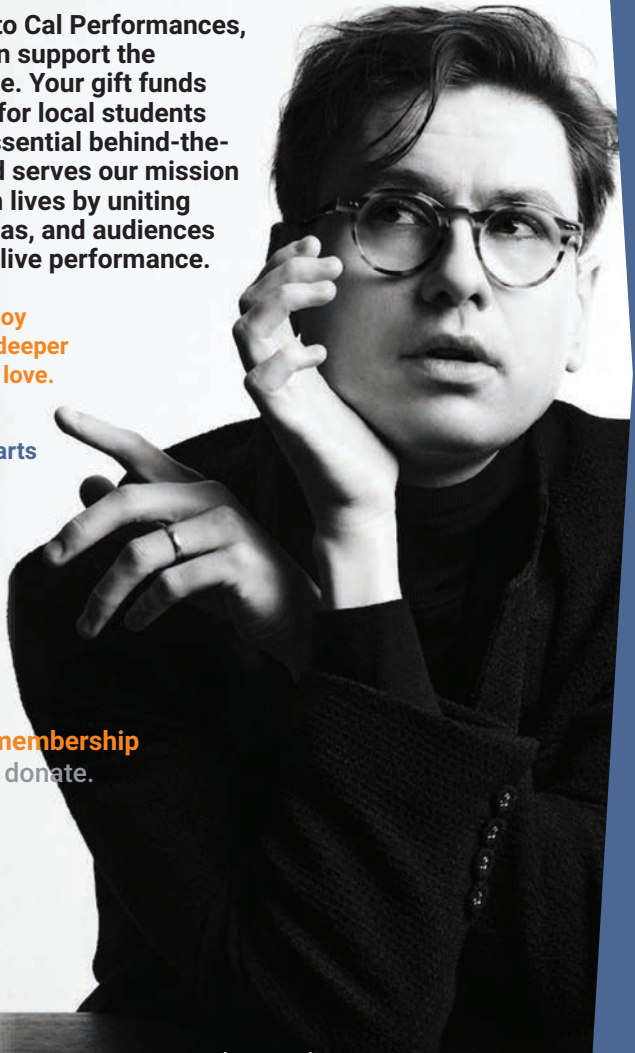
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2025–26 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

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Saturday, December 13, 2025, 2pm
Zellerbach Hall

Carols of Birds, Bells, and Peace from Ukraine: A Holiday Celebration

Ensemble Cherubim Chamber Chorus
Marika Kuzma, *director*

with

Frederica von Stade, *mezzo-soprano*

L. Peter Callender, *narrator*

Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir
Eric Tuan, *director*

Karen Bentley Pollick, Patrick Russell, and Cookie Segelstein

PROGRAM

*We invite you to enjoy each set of short pieces as a continuous flow of carols.
All works sung in Ukrainian unless marked CS for Church Slavonic,
CT for Crimean Tatar, and YD for Yiddish.*

PART I

Koliadky

Breath, Creation, and Miracles

- | | |
|--|---|
| Oldest known Ukrainian folk carol
arr. Marika Kuzma | Koly ne bylo (Before there was a world)
Soloists: Phoebe Rosquist, Emma Reed, Montana Smith |
| Kyivan chant | Vsiakoye dykhaniye
(Let everything that has breath) (CS)
Soloist: Alex Guerrero |
| Kyrylo Stetsenko (1882–1922)
Folk carol arr. | Dnes' poyushche (Today let's sing!) |
| Dmytro Bortniansky (1751–1825) | Choral Concerto No. 6, "Slava vo vyshnikh Bohu" (Glory to God in the highest) (excerpt, CS)
Soloists: Katherine Growdon, Alex Guerrero |

Heaven and Earth Rejoice!

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Hrihorii Skovoroda (1722–1794) | Anhely—snyzhaiteisia!
Angels—come downward!
Narrator: L. Peter Callender |
| Stetsenko
Traditional carol arr. | Nova radist' stala (New joy has come)
Soloist: Brian Thorsett |
| Stetsenko
Folk carol arr. | Po vsiomu svitu (All around the world)
Soloists: Angeliqye Zuluaga, Emily Ryan |
| Stetsenko
Traditional carol arr. | Nebo i zemlia (Heaven and Earth) |



The Wonder of Mary

- | | |
|--|---|
| Kyivan-Halytsky chant | O Tebi raduyetsia (All creation rejoices)
(excerpt, CS)
Soloist: Agnes Vojtko |
| Volodymyr Yakymets (b. 1979) | Prechystaya Diva (The Immaculate Virgin) |
| Vasyl Barvinsky (1888–1963)
Folk carol arr. | Shcho to za predyvo (What a wonder)
Soloist: Katherine Howell Sadler |
| Stetsenko/M. Kuzma
Folk carol arr. | Oy dyvneye (O, how wondrous)
Soloists: Kyle Picha, Miriam Anderson, Agnes Vojtko |
| Iryna Alekseychuk (b. 1967) | Svitla mama Mariya (Luminous Mother Mary)
(<i>West Coast Premiere</i>)
Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir |

Mother and Child: Lullabies

- | | |
|--|--|
| Avram Goldfaden (1840–1908)
arr. Maurice Rauch (1910–94)/M. Kuzma
with prelude from Michael Tilson Thomas (b. 1944)
arr. Peter Grunberg | Rozhinkes mit mandlen
(Raisins with almonds) (YD)
Soloist: Frederica von Stade; Violinist: Karen Bentley Pollick |
| Fr. Bohdan Hanushevsky (1912–2001) | V tini pal'my (In the shade of a palm tree)
Soloist: Frederica von Stade; Violinist: Karen Bentley Pollick |
| Fr. Yosyp Kyshakevych (1872–1953)
arr. M. Kuzma | Spy, Isuse, spy (Sleep, Jesus, sleep) |

God With Us

- | | |
|---|---|
| Yakiv Yatsynevych (1869–1945)
Folk carol arr. | Yerusalymski dzvony (The Bells of Jerusalem)
Soloist: Glenn Miller |
| Skovoroda
adapted by M. Kuzma | Angels—Come downward!
Narrator: L. Peter Callender |
| Fr. Petro Turchaninov (1779–1856)
Kyivan chant harmonization | Z namy Boh (God is with us)
Soloist: Simon Barrad |

INTERMISSION

PART II

Shchedrivky

Carols! Greetings!

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Traditional <i>Vinshuvannia</i> | Siyu, siyu, posivayu! (I am sowing seeds!)
Greeter: Aviram Vartanian |
| Pylyp Kozytsky (1893–1960) | Oy koliada, koliadnytsia (Carol! Carol!) |
| Lesia Ukrainka (1871–1913) | From <i>Sviatyi vechir obrazochky</i>
(<i>Christmas Eve sketches</i>)
Narrator: Patrick Russell |

Birds, More Birds, and a Moon

- Stetsenko Oy syvaya ta i zozuleńka
Folk carol arr. (The grey-winged cuckoo)
Piedmont East Bay Children's Chorus
- Mykola Leontovych (1877–1921) Shchedryk (Carol of good cheer)
Soloists: Emma Reed, Andrea Mich
- Alexander Jacobchuk (b. 1952) Shchedrivka (Little carol of good cheer)
- Lesia Dychko (b. 1939) Shchedrivka, excerpt from *Pory roku*
(*The Seasons*)

Good Evening to You!

- Vinshuvannia* I greet you!
Greeters: Nicholas Kotar, Glenn Miller, Miriam Anderson
- Stetsenko Dobryi vechir tobi! (Good evening to you!)
Traditional carol arr.

Windows, Dreams, Reminiscence

- Crimean folk song Pendzhereden khar geliyur
arr. Cookie Segelstein (At my window snow is falling) (CT)
Soloist: Yumi Tomsha; Violinist: Cookie Segelstein
- Folk lullaby Oy khodyt' son kolo vikon
arr. Barvinsky/M. Kuzma (A dream wanders by the windows)
Soloists: Teryn Kuzma, Montana Smith
- Marika Kuzma (b. 1959) Pyrohy and Poetry
Narrator: Marika Kuzma
- Yuriy Alzhnyev (b. 1949) Shchedrivka, first movement
of his choral concerto *Spivomovky*
Soloists: Emma Reed, Andrea Mich, Rita Barakat,
Flacia Chen, Axel van Chee, David Hess

God Eternal

- Bohdan Lepky (1872–1941) Na sviatyi vechir (On Christmas Eve)
Narrator: L. Peter Callender
- Alexander Koshetz (1875–1944) Boh predvichnyi (God eternal)
Traditional carol arr.
- Vinshuvannia* Well wishes
Greeters: L. Peter Callender and Patrick Russell
- Folk carol U Vyfleyemi (In Bethlehem),
arr. Hanna Havrylets (1958–2022) from *Barbivska koliada* (US Premiere)
Vsi i vsia (whole company of angels):
Ensemble Cherubim
Piedmont East Bay Children's Chorus
Extra angels
Victor Avdienko (pre-recorded bells)
Karen Bentley Pollick
L. Peter Callender
Patrick Russell
Cookie Segelstein
Frederica von Stade

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one that honors our venues as places of respite, openness, and respect.
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CAROLS OF BIRDS, BELLS, AND PEACE FROM UKRAINE

*New joy has come, the pride of the heavens.
A bright star above a manger has illumined
the whole world.*

—from the traditional
Ukrainian carol “Nova radist stala”

It is an honor and a joy to present this unique concert today with so many voices, so many artists joining in celebration. There is much to celebrate.

Ukraine has thousands of winter carols. Thousands. Our program shares (a mere) 25 of them, spanning traditional miniatures to more extended choral fantasies. Some of them have never been heard on the West Coast. One of them, our concert finale, has never been performed outside of Ukraine. Perhaps only one of these carols is familiar to American ears, the ubiquitous “Carol of the Bells” that we hear every year in concerts and on the air waves. Yet, even this carol is seldom recognized as being Ukrainian, and its original lyrics are rarely known. It is even more beguiling in its original meaning!

Let the introduction begin—our introduction to an ancient culture that is nevertheless new to American audiences. Which songs to keep and which to leave out? Particularly at this time of prolonged war in Ukraine, I feel responsible to give ample voice to this country and its glorious, multi-ethnic culture. Our concert cannot represent *all* of Ukraine’s many regions or music styles, but it can offer a sample. These program notes cannot cover all of the background information on this concert’s pieces and composers, but they offer some explanation as to the rituals and history that surround the music and spoken words you will be hearing this afternoon.

Rituals and Themes

Ukraine’s rituals and vast body of music for the holidays are unique. In Ukraine, carols are sung continuously between Christmas Eve, called *Sviatyi vechir* (Holy Night), and a holiday called *Shchedryi vechir* (Generous Eve), a holiday of both generosity and gratitude, traits Ukrainians see as inextricably intertwined. Singing carols is integral to all holiday gatherings. In the mountains of Ukraine, carolers even believe that spring will not come unless they sing for every person in every home of their village.

There are two basic genres of Ukrainian carols, reflecting these two holidays. In general carols that refer to the Christian Nativity Story are called *koliadky*, while those associated with New Year’s or *Shchedryi vechir* are *shchedrivky*. Similarly, our concert is divided into two halves: the first more sacred and the second more secular.

The first half of our concert presents a series of *koliadky* that express wonder at miracles. The opening piece is the oldest documented song from Ukraine: a pre-Christian *koliadka* of creation. It is followed by a series of Christmas carols about the wonder of Christ’s birth. Next come pieces devoted to the *Prechysta Diva* (Immaculate Virgin, or Blessed Virgin Mary): from an ancient chant to a recently composed ode. Ukrainians feel a profound closeness to Mary, a relationship perhaps deepened by their ancient, pre-Christian worship of the feminine divine. Overall, *koliadky* express the awe Ukrainians feel at the Star in the East and the Nativity Story. In their folk imagination, magical bells rang and flowers blossomed at the birth of Jesus. Also, many of the pieces you will hear in the concert’s first half—the excerpt from Bortniansky’s Choral Concerto No. 6 as well as several carols—describe how the celestial and the terrestrial realms came together as one continuum at Christ’s birth, including the descent of angels from heaven to earth to sing with shepherds in chorus.

The second half of our concert features a series of *shchedrivky*: carols for the New Year and *Shchedryi vechir*. Many of these carols feature birds in their lyrics: cuckoos, swallows, falcons. Why birds? In earlier centuries, Ukrainians celebrated New Year's at the start of spring, a time of winged returns. In Ukraine and in its carols, birds are often symbols of good luck, prosperity, and fertility. The famous "Shchedryk" that most Americans know in its English version as "Carol of the Bells" is one such *shchedrivka*. A *lastivka* (swallow)—the harbinger of spring—flies into a farmer's yard to insistently remind him of all that he has. The carol is about the bounty of nature and gratitude. In Alzhnyev's *shchedrivka*, a falcon—a symbol of virility—lands on a windowsill to wake a household of brothers. The name of the leading brother, Vasyl, is related to New Year's Day in Ukraine: also called the Feast day of St. Basil (Vasyl). In folk tradition, Ukrainians believe that if a young man is the first to arrive with caroling at a home on New Year's Day and a meets a young woman, marriage and good fortune are sure to follow.

Interspersed in the second half of our concert are traditional holiday greetings, called *vinshuvannia*. Caroling in Ukraine begins or ends with greetings of blessing. Quasi-improvised, these greetings are typically delivered at a quick pace in rhyming couplets. Sometimes they are polite and grandiloquent, sometimes irreverent and comic. Poetry recitation and story-telling, as in the pieces by Skovoroda, Ukrainka, and Lepky, are also part of Ukraine's holiday lore.

Because Ukraine embraces various ethnicities, religions, and languages, our concert includes songs in Yiddish and Crimean Tatar as well as Ukrainian. Many poetic themes and melodic motives resonate across ethnic lines. Within the set of three lullabies in our concert's first half, Avram Goldfaden's, about a prosperous future, is regarded as a metaphor for the exile of Jewish people and their promised redemption.

Fr. Bohdan Hanushevsky's lullaby about Mary's wish to protect Jesus from Herod as they flee to Egypt relates to the plight of Hanushevsky's refugee congregation, sheltering in a displaced person's camp at the end of World War II. All three lullabies in the set (as well as the Crimean song "Pendzhereden khar geliyur" and lullaby "Oy khodyt son" in the second half of our concert) express a universal longing for peace, union with those we love, and a safe place to dream.

The Nature of the Music

Virtually all pieces in this concert are performed *a cappella*. (Within Jewish and Tatar culture, singing is typically accompanied by instruments, hence the violin obligato provided for their songs). Most of the pieces are quite short—one of the carols clocks at just 45 seconds—and we group them into continuous sets of three or four.

The brevity and modesty of scoring of Ukrainian carols comes not from a lack of creativity or skill among its composers but from ecclesiastical and political circumstances. Ukrainian composers have met each constraint with determination and ingenuity. Sacred music for the Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholic Church are *a cappella* by definition: instruments are not allowed in worship services. Thus, Dmytro Bortniansky treats his chorus symphonically, changing vocal textures with almost every measure to create brilliant contrasts of sound.

The colonization of Ukraine during the Russian empire limited composers economically: wealth (and access to orchestras) was concentrated in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Further, the Russian tsars suppressed the Ukrainian language: an edict in the 1870s prohibited the publication of any and all Ukrainian words, even within songs. Thus, at the turn of the 20th century, composers like Koshetz, Leontovych, and Stetesenko wrote short, masterful pieces for *a cappella* chorus that could easily be copied by hand, taught by rote, and taken on concert tours.

After the fall of the Russian Empire, the Bolshevik leadership and eventual Soviet regime lifted the official ban on the Ukrainian language but continued cultural oppression in other ways. Carols were banned as expressions of religion. Composers were assassinated (Leontovych), displaced (Yanytsevych), ostracized (Koshetz), their manuscripts burned wholesale (Barvinsky), and their music generally kept in the shadows as unworthy of international promotion. The history of Ukrainian choral music is indeed full of tragic stories. Yet the brutality of the Russian tsars and Soviet leaders toward Ukraine's composers speaks just how powerful these carols were in galvanizing Ukrainians as a nation and reviving their spirits.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukrainian composers have been able to write, publish, and publicize choral music freely—pieces of any length and scoring. Yet they continue to write and treasure miniatures for a *cappella* chorus. The tradition continues, and their inventiveness with carol arrangements is often stunning.

Composers and Poets

Given an appropriate place of honor in this concert, Kyrylo Stetsenko (1882–1922) was the first composer to recognize that Ukrainian carols were worthy of sharing not just in village homes but also in formal concert halls and elevated choir lofts. He arranged at least 50 if not 100 village carols, and together with his colleague Alexander Koshetz, organized the first Christmas concerts in Kyiv in the 1910s. One of those concerts in 1916 presented the premiere of Mykola Leontovych's ear-catching "Shchedryk."

In 1919–21, "Shchedryk" and various other Ukrainian choral pieces traveled the world during a tour of the Ukrainian National Choir. Symon Petliura, the president of a briefly independent Ukraine between the Russian Revolution and Soviet rule, sent this choir to the Paris Peace Confer-

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ence on an unusual diplomatic mission. With its concerts, the choir was to assert Ukraine's distinct identity and right to sovereignty at the time that world leaders were determining the fate of many nations post World War I. It performed widely, selling out concert halls across Europe *enroute* to Paris and later in the Americas, including Carnegie Hall and the Hippodrome in New York and huge stadiums in Mexico City. "Shchedryk" became a sensation. The lullaby "Oy khodyt' son" was popular as well. It was likely heard by Ira Gershwin in New York, and some scholars believe that it became an inspiration for "Summertime" in the Gershwins' *Porgy & Bess*.

Alexander Koshetz, the composer and conductor who led the choir in this tour, was not allowed re-entry into Ukraine once the Soviets took firm hold of Ukraine and branded him as an "enemy of the people." Nevertheless, his arrangement of "Boh predvichy" (God eternal) became one of the most iconic carols in the diaspora and now within Ukraine. Yakiv Yatsynevych, author of the carol that *Ukrainians* recognize as their bell carol: "Yerusalynski Dzvony" (The bells of Jerusalem), also met a heartbreaking fate during the Soviet years as did Vasyl Barvinsky. Yatsynevych, who had been a leading composer in Kyiv and Odesa, lived the last years his life isolated in a remote village in Kazakhstan. Barvinsky was sent to Siberia for 10 years from 1948–58 and returned home to find out that all of his manuscripts had been burned. Luckily, "Shcho to za predyvo" and several other works of his had been performed and published before his exile and thus survived.

Although sacred *koliadky* were forbidden during the Soviet years, New Year's *shchedrivky* were allowed. In the 1970s, some 60 years after the premiere of Leontovych's "Shchedryk," Alexander Jacobchuk invented a new carol to almost identical lyrics. His "Shchedrivka" is similar to the Leontovych carol in its propulsive nature,

but unlike his predecessor's ends in a dazzling climax. Also in the 1970s, Lesia Dychko wrote a fantasy on New Year's carols within her extended *a cappella* work *Pory roku* (The Seasons). Her compositional style, inspired by both folk melodies and visual art, features splashes of colorful harmonies. An ethnographer and former director of a folk theater in Kharkiv, Yuriy Alzhnyev flexibly interweaves authentic village melodies in his evocative "Shchedrivka" from 1987.

In the post-Soviet era, sacred texts are once again freely in circulation, and the exploration of folk melodies and *a cappella* texture continues. Volodymyr Yakymets, the leader of a popular *a cappella* men's group (Pikkardiyska Tertsiya), wrote his "Prechystaya Diva" in 2010, and it became an instant hit on the airwaves. Iryna Aleksyichuk, a member of the Kyiv conservatory faculty and now a refugee in Spain, has enjoyed prestigious commissions and performances of choral and orchestral works within Ukraine and internationally in recent years. She wrote "Svitla Mama Mariya" to honor a Ukrainian children's book author Vitaly Blyzniuk, taking the lyrics from one of his poems. This ode received its premiere by a children's choir in Kyiv in January 2022, just a month before Russian missiles first landed there.

Within the arrangement of Goldfaden's lullaby "Rozhinkes mit mandlen" (Raisins and almonds), we quote a lullaby from a work by our luminary San Francisco conductor and composer Michael Tilson Thomas: *From the Diary of Anne Frank*. We include this as an appreciation of their Jewish-Ukrainian roots and the mutual importance of Goldfaden and the Thomas family in the establishment of the Yiddish Theater within Ukraine. May their memory live and breathe in our concert.

We end our concert with a piece by Hanna Havrylets, a great proponent and arranger of village songs. "U Vyfleyemi" (In

Bethlehem) comes from her self-described “oratorio of carols” *Barbivska koliada* (2011). This final movement of her extended work celebrates caroling culture in grand style: scored for adult choir, children’s choir, and percussion, including bells.

As for the poets represented in our concert: the 18th-century philosopher, poet, and composer Hrihorii Skovoroda wrote a cycle of 24 poems *Garden of Divine Songs* that melds sacred and secular themes seamlessly. “Angels come downward” is the fourth of the cycle. It includes an epigraph linking the poem to the chant “Z namy Boh.” Lesia Ukrainka (pseudonym) is one of Ukraine’s most famous and beloved poet–novelist–playwrights. The vignette “Sviaty vechir” is one of her series of poetic *obrazochky* (sketches) for Christmas Eve. Bohdan Lepky was born and raised in western Ukraine and lived most of his adult life in Poland. Like many Ukrainian poets, he wrote nostalgic poems for the homeland he dearly loved. “Na Sviaty vechir” (On Christmas Eve) is one of his series of Christmas reveries.

And so begins our introduction to Ukraine and its unique rituals and music for the holiday season. These songs have survived against all odds and now resound in our concert hall thousands of miles from Ukrainian homes.

Each of the pieces in our concert, in one way or another, reflects a people deeply connected to their religious faith and their land. As expressed in their *koliadky*, Ukrainians feel wonder at the Nativity Story. Their *shchedrivky* express a reverence and gratitude for the earth. In the Ukrainian imagination, angels and birds and bells connect them with a mystical realm. Overall, their winter carols assert their belief in generative, benevolent forces stronger than any tsar, commissar, or war. Our concert celebrates this culture of faith and resilience. It presents Ukraine’s carols not as objects to be admired from afar but as mini-miracles in our midst. We hope some of them might take your breath away and others might fill your spirits with hope and gladness for the holiday season and New Year.

—Marika Kuzma,
conductor and artistic director

For your further reference:

- Virlana Tkacz, *Still the River Flows: Winter Solstice and Christmas Rituals in a Carpathian Village* (2014). Available through yaraartsgroup.net/books.
- Tina Peresenko, “100 Years of Ukraine’s Cultural Diplomacy: The European Mission of the Ukrainian Republican Capella (1919–21),” *Kyiv Mohyla Humanities Journal* 6 (2019). Available online.
- Marika Kuzma, *Carols of Birds Bells and Sacred Hymns from Ukraine: An Anthology and Sacred Companion* (2024). Available at the UC Berkeley Music and Doe libraries or through Cambridge Scholars Printing.
- Serhii Plokhly, *The Gates of Europe* (2015).
- Ensemble Cherubim, *Carols of Birds, Bells, and Peace from Ukraine*. Recording to be released in 2026. See ensemblecherubim.org for updates.
- There are many excellent charities supporting Ukraine at this time, each with a different emphasis. Among them: Nova Ukraine (California), Razom (New York), Doctors United for Ukraine (New Haven).



Ensemble Cherubim at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, DC, in 2023.

The mission of **Ensemble Cherubim** is to create bridges between Ukrainian culture and global audiences through vibrant, innovative performance. This relatively new choir has been invited to perform in major festivals and venues coast-to-coast. It first assembled to make a recording of Dmitry Bortniansky choral concertos (Naxos, 2013), and it reconvened in 2022 in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In recent years, it has performed at the Berkeley Festival and Exhibition, the New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas, the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, DC, and at the Ukrainian Institute of America in New York City. Ensemble Cherubim's singers come from varied ethnicities and artistic backgrounds. Each singer is featured in a solo moment in this concert. Many of them are coveted members of leading choirs across America, and some are directors of their own choirs. Some have appeared as soloists with esteemed ensembles such as American Bach Soloists and Los Angeles Master Chorale. Many are alumni of the UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus. All have embraced the Ukrainian language and its music—into their voices, hearts, and souls—as their own. Their next con-

cert is at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in Los Angeles (tomorrow afternoon). Their album of Ukrainian carols, recorded in Hertz Hall on the Berkeley campus, will be released by Centaur Records in 2026. ensemblecherubim.org.



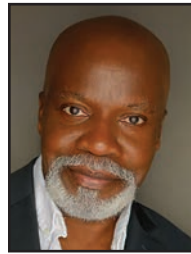
Music director and producer **Marika Kuzma** has enjoyed a multifaceted career as a conductor, music scholar, and actor. She has led choirs and orchestras in repertoire spanning medieval chant to world premieres. She taught University of California, Berkeley, for decades, where she led its University Chorus and Chamber Chorus. Her student choirs appeared in prestigious venues including Weill Recital Hall/Carnegie Hall, St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, and the Mohyla Academy in Kyiv. As a chorus master, she has collaborated with Gustavo Dudamel, Nicholas McGegan, Kent Nagano, and others. At Zellerbach Hall, she often prepared choirs for concerts of the Berkeley Symphony and productions of the Mark

Morris Dance Group. In 2024, she collaborated with Keri-Lynn Wilson in concerts at Zankel Hall with the Kyiv Camerata and the Kennedy Center with the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra. Of Ukrainian descent, she has written articles and given talks on Ukrainian music in esteemed journals and at leading universities. Her critical edition of Bortniansky choral concertos (Carus), recording of the concertos (Naxos), and her recent book *Carols of Birds, Bells, and Sacred Hymns from Ukraine* (Cambridge Scholars Printing) have become key resources for choral musicians internationally. As an actor, she has appeared onstage at Berkeley Rep, Marin Shakespeare, and La MaMa in New York City. Kuzma's final Christmas concert with the UC Berkeley choirs at Hertz Hall in 2015 featured Ukrainian carols. Ten years later, and with deepened appreciation of her native culture, she is honored to return to Berkeley and share this program. marikakuzmamusician.com.



Mezzo-soprano and pre-eminent American artist **Frederica von Stade** has sung in opera houses around the world including the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, and on countless concert stages. Her repertoire has spanned the Baroque era to modern music (including jazz and pop). Particularly acclaimed for French repertoire, she was awarded Chevalier of France's Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Her many firsts have included the US premiere of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, the first recording of Massenet's *Cendrillon*, and world premieres of operas by many composers. Today's concert marks her first occasion to sing in Ukrainian and Yiddish. Featured in over 100 recordings, she was twice the winner of a Grand Prix du

Disque and has been nominated 12 times for a Grammy award. Among her acclaimed work locally was playing Mrs. Patrick de Rocher in the premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* at San Francisco Opera and the premiere of Nathaniel Stookey's *Into the Bright Lights* (based on her own poetry) with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. "Flicka" is beloved in the San Francisco Bay Area also for her community outreach. A practicing Roman Catholic, she has engaged in extensive charitable work in local Catholic schools and with the Young Musicians Choral Orchestra in the East Bay.



Actor **L. Peter Callender** is well-known and highly regarded among theater audiences in the Bay Area and beyond. He was the artistic director of the African-American Shakespeare Com-

pany in San Francisco for 15 years and was an associate artist at the California Shakespeare Theater for more than 20 years. Born in Trinidad, raised in England and New York, and trained at the Julliard School, he has appeared in leading roles around the world including on Broadway and at San Francisco's ACT and Berkeley Rep. In 2022, he played Prospero at the Elm Shakespeare Co. in New Haven, CT, and in 2023, he played all three roles, including Louis Armstrong, in the play *Satchmo at the Waldorf* at San Jose Stage Company. In 2022, he also took part in Ensemble Cherubim's concert "Echoes from Ukraine." He has directed many plays and has taught at Emory University, San Francisco School of the Arts, and Stanford University. lpetercallender.com.

The internationally acclaimed **Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir** (PEBCC) offers 350 children ages 5-18 throughout San Fran-

cisco's East Bay an outstanding program of music training and choral performance. Launched in 1982 by founding Executive Director Susan Rahl with Artistic Director Robert Geary, the choir has performed with Joyce DiDonato, the Mark Morris Dance Group, Oakland Symphony, San Francisco Opera, and Volti, and at conventions of the American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, and the Organization of American Kodály Educators. In addition to vigorous programming of innovative new music commissions and premieres, the choir is a leading force in international choral activities, with far-reaching collaborations, high marks in competitions world-wide, and the establishment of the Golden Gate International Children's and Youth Choral Festival in 1991. In 2024, the choir earned the coveted "Young Choir of the World" title at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales.



PEBCC's Artistic Director **Eric Tuan**, currently in his seventh season, received his BA in music with honors from Stanford University, and completed his master's degree in choral studies (with distinction) at the University of Cambridge. He currently serves as the director of the Stanford Early Music Singers, and served for 12 years as founding Artistic Director of the chamber chorus Convivium and Director of Music at Christ Episcopal Church, Los Altos. Respected for his lyrical, innovative, and accessible choral works, Tuan has been widely commissioned by ensembles throughout the United States and Europe. His music is published by E.C. Schirmer, Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and National Music Publishers.



Karen Bentley Pollick is one of America's leading contemporary musicians, performing a wide range of solo repertoire and styles on violin, viola, piano and Norwegian *hardingfele*.

Within the Bay Area, she has performed extensively with the Drescher Ensemble and recently played the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with the Redwood Symphony. Internationally, she has performed in countries including Australia, England, Lithuania, and Mexico. In 2018, she made a recording with the National Orchestra of Ukraine and in 2022, she performed a concert "Homage to Ukraine" featuring music by Ukrainian composers Virko Baley and Ludmila Yurina at Stanford University's CCRMA. Her most recent album with the Lithuanian National Symphony, *Concertos from the Caucasus*, received gold medals in the 2025 Global Music Awards.



A member of the UC Berkeley faculty of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies, **Patrick Russell** is a professional actor and director whose work has been seen in theaters across the Bay Area. Most recent acting credits include *Noises Off* and *The Play that Goes Wrong* at San Francisco Playhouse. Russell has appeared onstage at ACT, TheatreWorks, California Shakespeare Theater, Aurora Theater Company, Magic Theater, Marin Theatre Company, Marin Shakespeare Company, CenterREP, Shotgun Players, and other theaters. Directing credits include *She Kills Monsters* (San Francisco State University) and *The Arsonists* (UC Berkeley). His work

been recognized by the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle, and he has taught workshops throughout the US. In 2022, he took part in Ensemble Cherubim's concert "Echoes from Ukraine." russell-coaching.com.



Cookie Segelstein is a founding member of Varetski Pass, a trio based in the Bay Area that specializes in 19th to 20th century Jewish music from the Carpathian Mountains as part of the "klezmer revival" movement. Trained in Classical-Romantic repertoire during her

studies at Yale, she was principal violist in Orchestra New England, with whom she recorded the music of Charles Ives and performed solo works from Bach to Holst to premieres. She was also principal violist of the New Haven Symphony for many years. Among her career credits, Segelstein recorded the violin music for the Jewish wedding episode of HBO's *Sex and the City* as well as many CDs as an expert on Jewish violin style, and has written various books of historical transcriptions. Varetski Pass will soon begin an exploration of music from Crimea.

A Note on the Bell-Ringing Finale

The pre-recorded sounds of bells you hear at the end of our concert replicate the tintinnabulation of church bells you might hear in Kyiv at the Monastery of the Caves or St. Sophia Cathedral and near churches and cathedrals across Ukraine. They were recorded here in the Bay Area by percussionist **Victor Avdienko**, who has an expertise in this bell-ringing technique. In the first year of the Russo-Ukrainian war, he offered several bell concerts in the San Francisco area. Victor collaborates with many orchestras, opera companies, and chamber groups throughout the Bay Area—regularly with the San Francisco Symphony and Opera and with stage artists ranging from Rosemary Clooney to Joni Mitchell to Winton Marsalis. He was also music director, composer, and percussionist for the California Shakespeare Festival for many years. Our bell recording was engineered by Lolly Lewis who produces recordings with myriad artists for prestigious labels such as Centaur, Naxos, and Nonesuch. Victor and Lolly each have some family ties to Ukraine. This recording was made possible thanks to the great generosity of Fr. Peter Fermeglia and St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church in Concord in allowing the use of their church bells.

Visual Images

The photographs and artwork projected during this concert are all by Ukrainian and Ukrainian-American artists. The opening image of Part I—the Hutsul church in the Carpathian mountains—is by Tania D'Avignon, a Boston-based photographer. The photographs by Alexander Khantaev of Hutsul carolers in Part II are shared courtesy of Viriana

Tkacz and Yara Arts Group. The glass art image that opens Part II is by Nataliia Yusyphchuk of Kosiv, in western Ukraine. The fanciful art projected in Part II is in a style called Petrykivka, a hallmark of eastern Ukraine. Please send queries on individual images projected in our concert and their artists to ensemblecherubim.org/contact. The *dzvinochky* (little bells) rung by the children's choir and the *kraiky* (sashes) worn by the Ensemble Cherubim singers were made in and sent directly from Kyiv and Kherson in Ukraine.

Sincerest Thanks

A warm "thank you" to all the dedicated artists who make this concert possible. The generosity of many guardian angels in the Bay Area has enabled Ensemble Cherubim to gather and sing for you this afternoon—particularly Nataliia Anon, David and Monika Eisenbud, Nataliia and Volodymyr Goshylyk, Frank and Virginia Lew, George Scharffenberger, Annie and Jean Walrand, and Penelope Washbourn as well as the staff and crew at Cal Performances. This concert is also supported by the *shedrist* of librarians, composers, and choral directors in Ukraine who shared music scores with open Google files and open hearts. Andriy and Marta Shegera graciously provided the *zvizda* (star) and *kiptari* (Hutsul-region jackets) for the children's chorus. The expert eyes of Moki Kokoris and Charles Moulton guided us in visual elements along the way. Thanks also to the many *shedri* organizations in the Bay Area Ukrainian community who helped to publicize this concert.

Usim serdechno dyakuyemo!

ENSEMBLE CHERUBIM

Marika Kuzma, *Artistic Director*

Sopranos	Altos	Tenors	Basses
Felicia Chen	Miriam Anderson	Mickey Butts	Simon Barrad
Teryn Kuzma	Rita Barakat	Alex Guerrero	Andrew Chung
Andrea Mich	Katherine Growdon	Nicholas Kotar	David Hess
Emma Reed	Emily Ryan Kusnadi	Kyle Picha	Glenn Miller
Phoebe Rosquist	Montana Smith	JC Smith	Tim Roth
Katherine Howell Sadler	Yumi Tomsha	Brian Thorsett	Axel van Chee
Angelique Zuluaga	Agnes Vojtko		

Extra Angels

Ariel Anderson
 Edward Betts
 Jerry Freiwirth
 Debra Golata
 Serge Liberovsky
 David Martinez
 Kenric Taylor
 Celeste Winant
 Vanessa Yang

Ensemble Cherubim Board of Directors

Phil Bodrock
 Andrew Chung
 Natalie Pollock
 Penelope Washbourn

PIEDMONT EAST BAY CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Ainsley Mullane	Georgia Orcharton	Mirella Piccolboni
Alexandria Wilson	Imogen Wade	Molly Wolferson
Alexis Byrnes	Isaac Ets-Hokin	Murielle Vance
Andrea Morales	Jay Cazier	Naomi Walker
Anjali Falbo-Nicosia	Josie Renaud	Nicolas Adams
Audrey Levin	Joshua Daniel	Nora Bell
Ava Tarapore	Juniper Ruyle	Olivia Gamper
Aviram Vartanian	Karena Che	Phoebe An
Ayla Montanez	Keanna Koehler	Roya Agarwal
Beatrix Vartanian	Keira Lee	Rylee Bellesbach
Caroline Wolferson	Laura Caceres Spears	Sarah Khan-Akselrod
Carys Pligavko	Lisa Treichler	Scarlett Lang
Cooper Heyman	Loki Olsen	Sophi Ouyang
Daniel Hinton	Maeve McMullen	Veda Pao-Ziegler
Eleanor (Nora) Pfister	Maia von Loewenfeldt	Violet Irie
Elodie Plauché	Matilda Trenkle	Zoe Grundy
Ember McCall	Mei Takeuchi	Zofia Wang
Emiko Critchlow	Michael Sidbury	Zuri Zkiah Nia Williams
Felix Sudat	Mignon Williams	

Sunday, December 14, 2025, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Soweto Gospel Choir

Peace

THE CHOIR

Bongani Ncube, Fanizile Nzuzo, Jabulile Mola,
Jeanette Mazibuko, Kenosi Moshe, Lungisani Mhlongo,
Malehlohonolo Taolana, Mary Mulovhedzi, Phello Jiyane,
Sabelo Mtshali, Semangele Mongatane, Sibongile Makgathe, Sibongiseni Mbele,
Sipho Ngcamu, Thabiso Molefe, Velile Msimango, Victoria Sithole, Vincent Jiyane,
Vusimuzi Shabalala, Xolile Mphata, Zanele Ngwenya, Zinhle Mpofu

Choir Master
Vincent Jiyane

Music Director
Sabelo Mtshali

Choir Management
Mary Mulovhedzi, Vincent Jiyane, Bongani Ncube

Senior Producer
Toni Rudov

Production Manager/Stage Manager
Allan Maguire

Touring Lighting Designers
Paul Frydrychowski
Jackson Gray

Audio Engineer
Chet Nordskog

Producer
Andrew Kay

Set Design
Zachary Ciaburri

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one that honors our venues as places of respite, openness, and respect.
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Soweto Gospel Choir.
Photos by Stefan Meekers.



SET LIST

Melodies

Narration

Nonkonyane ka Ndaba

Modimo

Dichaba

Not Yet Uhuru

Litshonile li Langa

Sechaba

E ke Dumetse

Mbai Mbai

Freedom Medley

INTERMISSION

Opening Dance and Chant

Amen

Heaven Help Us All

Pass Me Not, Gentle Savior

A Change is Gonna Come

Man in the Mirror

Oh, Holy Night

Silent Night

Joy to the World

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

You'll Never Walk Alone

Hallelujah

PROGRAM NOTES

“God has wrought many things out of oppression. He has endowed his creatures with the capacity to create—and from this capacity has flowed the sweet songs of sorrow and joy that have allowed man to cope with his environment and many different situations.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.
(1964 Berlin Jazz Festival)

“...the political use of music in South Africa changed from being a ‘mirror’ in the 1940s and 1950s to becoming a ‘hammer’ with

which to shape reality in the 1980s. In South Africa, music went from reflecting common experiences and concerns in the early years of apartheid, to eventually function as a force to confront the State and as a means to actively construct an alternative political and social reality.”

—Anne Schumann
*The Beat that Beat Apartheid:
The Role of Music in the Resistance
Against Apartheid in South Africa.*
(2008 Vienna Journal of African Studies)

PROGRAM NOTES

This concert by the three-time Grammy-winning Soweto Gospel Choir celebrates songs and anthems of Nelson Mandela's Freedom Movement in South Africa and the Civil Rights Movement of Dr. Martin Luther King's America. Opening with a rousing program of South African freedom songs, the repertoire moves down through time to the United States, with beautiful renditions of the protest music of the Civil Rights Movement and more contemporary classics,

including works by legendary artists like Elvis Presley, Sam Cooke, Cynthia Erivo, Stevie Wonder, and the one-and-only Aretha Franklin. Formed to celebrate the unique and inspirational power of African Gospel music, the Soweto Gospel Choir is dedicated to sharing the joy of faith through music with audiences around the world and has received critical acclaim and audience adoration for its powerful renditions of African American spirituals, gospel, and folk music.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Hailing from Soweto (South West Township), a township outside of Johannesburg and the home of Nelson Mandela and South Africa's democratic movement, the **Soweto Gospel Choir** continues to inspire audiences around the world with its powerful blend of African gospel, freedom songs, and international classics.

Comprising a line-up of some of South Africa's best vocalists, these uplifting and gifted performers have shared the stage and collaborated with some of the biggest names in contemporary music, including Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Beyonce, U2, Diana Ross, Peter Gabriel, Chris Martin, John Legend, Pharrell Williams, Jimmy Cliff, Ben Harper, Angélique Kidjo, Robert Plant, Celine Dion, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Hugh Masekela, and Josh Groban.

The Soweto Gospel Choir was formed in 2003 at the end of the apartheid era and during South Africa's inspiring return to democracy. Taking part in some of the major historical events in the new democratic country, the choir is proud to have performed on many occasions for the "father" of its nation, former President Nelson Mandela, and sadly at his state funeral in South

Africa and at the subsequent commemorative service at Westminster Abbey in London. The choir was also invited to perform at the funeral service for the late president's first wife, Winnie Mandela. The Soweto Gospel Choir acts as ambassadors for the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

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Tour Marketing and PR

Touring

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and Artist Management*
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dshultz@imgartists.com

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General Enquiries

Andrew Kay and Associates
Toni Rudov, *Senior Producer*
toni@akaaustralia.com.au

Saturday, December 22, 2025, 2pm and 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus

Holiday Spectacular 2025

Chris Verdugo, *Chief Executive Officer*
Jacob Stensberg, *Artistic Director and Conductor*

FEATURED SOLOISTS

ACT 1

“Todo es posible en Navidad”

2pm – Diego Smith

8pm – Xander Gonzalez

“What Christmas Means to Me”

2pm – Ron Carranza

8pm – Quinton Ramirez

“All That Holiday Stuff”

2pm – Theo Young

8pm – Stephen Aguirre

ACT 2

“Holding Out For A Hero”

2pm – Pete Rodway

8pm – Sean Fenton

“Glowin”

2pm – Jonathan Jones, Lucas Poliak, and Brandon Jenkins

Vocal Percussionist: Richman Neumann

8pm – Jonathan Jones, Lucas Poliak, and Brandon Jenkins

Vocal Percussionist: Richman Neumann

“Sleigh-hem: Lady Gaga Holiday Medley”

2pm – Alex Bien, Greg Kastelman, Jonathan Jones, Don Howerton, Case Nafziger

8pm – Michael Lepage, Drew Haven, J. Max Rosen, Butch Merideth, Jesse Cortez

FEATURED MUSICIANS

SFGMC BAND

Danny Sullivan, *piano*

Kenji Harada, *synthesizer*

Aaron Shaul, *bass*

Matt Wrobel, *guitar*

Juan Carreon, *drums*

James Garcia, *clarinet*

Joshua Jerge, Marvin McFadden, *trumpets*

Jamie Dubberly, *trombone*

VOCAL & SPECIALTY ENSEMBLES

HomoPhonics

Mitch Galli, *Founder and Music Director*

Drew Haven, *Assistant Music Director*

Jeff Becker
Sean Fenton
Kyle Fowler
Christopher Grant
Alex Halbritter

Mattee G. Hastings
Brandon Jenkins
Jonathan Jones
Vinney Lê
Mark Mezak

Justin Nool
Lucas Poliak
Thomas Reeder
Juan Pablo Rico
Ernesto Tovar

The Lollipop Guild

Paul Saccone, *Music Director*

Danny Sullivan, *Accompanist*

Nick Harper, *Administrative Assistant*

Benjamin C. Brown
Mark Brown
Rick Betita
Doug Curran
David A. Díaz
Gilberto J. Esqueda
Ray Fletcher
Josh Frazier

Michael Friedman
Xander Gonzalez
Drew Hardy
Aki Ishikawa
Rob Jaques
Phoenix Knight
James Lange
Michael Lepage
Eric Mata

Anthony Ruth
Sean Shelton
Luke Siegle
Joseph Sigman
Jeff Sinclair
Nicholas Slater
Chris Stevenson
Sup Suh

ASL INTERPRETER

Dane K. Lentz

SPECIALTY DANCERS

Tyler Armer
Jesse Cortez
Justin Duhe
Roy Eikleberry
Sean Fenton
Jason Foster
Raymond Mark Gonzales
Christopher Grant

Drew Hardy
Brandon Jenkins
Eric Mata
Anthony Mayor
Alon Mazor
Mark Mezak
Justin Nool

Emerito A. Pacleb Jr.
Ethan Roberts
Joshua Robinson
Pete Rodway
Greg Sabo
Thomas Scott
Diego Smith
Jack Stehn

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PROGRAM

“Pink Christmas”

Music and Lyrics by IRVING BERLIN
Parody Lyrics by GERARD ALESSANDRINI
Arranged by CHAD WEIRICK

“Step Into Christmas”

Music and Lyrics by ELTON JOHN and BERNIE TAUPIN
Arranged by SHARON UDOH

“Lux Aurumque”

Poem by EDWARD ESCH
Latin Translation by CHARLES ANTHONY SILVERSTRI
Music by ERIC WHITACRE

“Todo es posible en Navidad”

Music and Lyrics by DAVID BISBAL
Arranged by NICOLAS PEREZ

“White Winter Hymnal”

Performed by HomoPhonics
Music and Lyrics by ROBIN PECKNOLD
Originally performed by Fleet Foxes
Arranged for TTBB by MITCH GALLI

“Wake Me Up Before You Ho-Ho”
Performed by The Lollipop Guild
Music by GEORGE MICHAEL
Concept & Parody Lyrics by WALKER WEATHERLY
Additional Lyrics by BEN BROWN
Arranged by CHAD WEIRICK

“One Light”
Music based on “Tuea Bethlem Dref”
Traditional Welsh Carol
Words and Arrangement by EVAN RAMOS

“What Christmas Means to Me”
Music and Lyrics by ALLEN STORY, ANNA GORDY GAYE, and GEORGE GORDY
Arranged by NICOLAS PEREZ

“All That Holiday Stuff”
Words and Music by ANDY BECK

INTERMISSION

“Holding Out For A Hero”
Music and Lyrics by JIM STEINMAN and DEAN PITCHFORD
Concept, Adaptation, and Additional Lyrics by SHAWN CULLEN
Arranged by DAVID MADDUX

“When Darkness Falls”
Winner of SFGMC’s Annual Composition Competition
Music and Text by ASH

“Carol of the Bells”
Performed by The Lollipop Guild
Music by M. LEONTOVICH
Words by PETER J. WILHOUSKY
Arranged by DAVID LEVINSON

“Glowin”
Performed by HomoPhontr/x
Music and Lyrics by EJAE and MARK SONNENBLICK, 24, EDO, and TEDD
Parody Lyrics by SEAN FENTON, MITCH GALLI, DREW HAVEN, and LUCAS POLIAK
Arranged by DREW HAVEN and MITCH GALLI
Intro Arranged by DEKE SHARON

“(Twinkle, Twinkle) Lucky Star”
Arranged by ASH

“Lucky Star”
Lyrics and Music by MADONNA CICCONE

“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”
French traditional melody and lyrics by JANE TAYLOR

“Silent Night”
Text by JOSEPH MOHR
Music by FRANZ XAVER GRUBER
Arranged by DANNY SULLIVAN

“DJ Play A Christmas Song”
Words and Music by SARAH HUDSON, JESSE ST. JOHN GELLER,
STEVEN MARK SCHICK, BRETT MCLAUGHLIN, and JAMES JOHN ABRAHART JR.
Arranged by CHAD WEIRICK

“Sleigh-hem: Lady Gaga Holiday Medley”
Music by STEFANI GERMANOTTA and Various Artists
Parody Lyrics by MITCH GALLI and REV. SAMUAL LUNDQUIST
Arranged by MITCH GALLI

“Bad Romance”
Words and Music by NADIR KHAYAT and STEFANI GERMANOTTA

“Applause”
Words and Music by PAUL BLAIR, MARTIN BRESSO,
STEFANI GERMANOTTA, NICK MONSON, and DINO ZISIS

“Just Dance”
Words and Music by STEFANI GERMANOTTA, REDONE, and ALIAUNE THIAM

“Rain On Me”
Words and Music by STEFANI GERMANOTTA, ARIANA GRANDE,
MARTIN BRESSON, MIKE TUCKER, MATTHEW BURNS, ALEXANDER RIDHA,
NIJA CHARLES, RAMI YACOB, BETTY WRIGHT, JEREMIAH BURDEN,
and VERNETTA LYNN WILLIAMS

“Abracadabra”
Words and Music by STEFANI GERMANOTTA, ANDREW WATT,
SUSAN JANET BALLION, HENRY WALTER, JOHN MCGEOCH,
PETER CLARKE, and STEVEN SEVERIN

“Shallow”
Words and Music by STEFANI GERMANOTTA, MARK RONSON,
ANTHONY ROSSOMANDO, and ANDREW WYATT

“Born This Way”
Words and Music by STEFANI GERMANOTTA and JEPPE LAURSEN

The performance will last approximately two hours, including a 20-minute intermission.

Hello, and Happy Holidays! Thank you for making the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus part of your holiday tradition. As the days grow shorter, we gather this December to make our own light. Whether it be through laughter, harmony, or a sense of community, we persist in discovering our own way to shine! And if this is your first time with us or your forty-seventh, welcome home.

The year's *Holiday Spectacular* is a celebration of love, joy, and togetherness. In a world that feels dim, we lift our voices in song to remind us that music can capture and heal our pain, that laughter and joy are

a form of resistance, and that belonging is a light that already shines within each of us.

I must commend the unstoppable efforts of our singers, staff, and volunteers. They have poured so much heart into the moments you'll experience here. We hope this music fills you with warmth: for your friends, your family, and most importantly, for yourself.

However you celebrate, may this season remind you of your own light—and may you share it widely.

With love and light,

—Jacob Stensberg,
Artistic Director

San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus

Mission:

To lead by creating extraordinary music and experiences that build community, inspire activism, and foster compassion at home and around the world.

Vision:

We envision a world inspired and unified by the music we create.

Values:

We believe in the transformative power of music to heal, to enlighten, and to foster unity. We embrace the life affirming changes we create within and beyond our chorus community. We evolve society's views toward LGBTQ people through our commitment to excellence. We honor all who came before us and whose sacrifices made it possible for us to raise our voices.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Chris Verdugo **Chief Executive** **Officer**

Christopher Verdugo is a nonprofit arts leader with over 25 years of experience advancing culture, equity, and social change. Since 2016, he has served as CEO of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, where he has overseen a fivefold budget increase, led a transformative capital cam-

paign, and opened the groundbreaking Chan National Queer Arts Center—the first facility of its kind dedicated to LGBTQ+ arts in the country. Under his leadership, SFGMC has expanded its national presence with activities such as the historic Lavender Pen Tour through the Deep South, using music to promote dialogue and inclusion.

Prior to SFGMC, Chris served as Executive Director of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, where he doubled the organization's budget and launched education programs in LA public schools. He sits on the

Board of Directors for Chorus America and is frequently invited to speak on behalf of queer arts and cultural leadership. Chris' work has included collaborations with the Human Rights Campaign, Equality California, GLAAD, Bienestar, and the Queer Lounge at the Sundance Film Festival.



Jacob Stensberg
Artistic Director
and Conductor

Under Jake's leadership, SFGMC has launched new community initiatives and expanded programming, including national collaborations and innovative performances that center queer artistry, storytelling, and connection. Recent highlights include the chorus' *Love Tour* through the Midwest, headlining *Outside Lands* with Big Freedia, and local collaborations with SFBATCO, CheerSE, the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, Another Planet Entertainment, the Midway, and the San Francisco Symphony. This season's theme, "Shine," reflects Jake's commitment to using music to uplift, illuminate, and unite communities across the Bay Area and beyond.



Mitch Galli
Associate Director
of Music Education
and Outreach

Mitch Galli (he/him) is a conductor, arranger, lyricist, educator, singer, and pianist. Originally from

Williamstown, MA, he holds a bachelor's degree in music from St. Lawrence University and a master's degree in urban education, administration, and policy from Loyola Marymount University. Mitch moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in

2012 as a corps member with Teach for America. He taught high school mathematics and music for four years in Oakland and middle school music in San Francisco for one year. Mitch joined SFGMC in 2015. He founded HomoPhonics, the chorus' *a cappella* ensemble in August 2015, which he still directs. He is also director of the chorus' educational outreach program, RHYTHM: Reaching Youth Through Music, which was established in February 2018. Mitch has conducted SFGMC in performances across the country, including at Park City, UT; at the Outfest Film Festival in Los Angeles; and at Charleston and Greenville, South Carolina. @mitchgalli.



Danny Sullivan
Principal
Accompanist and
Music Supervisor

Originally from Bellingham, WA, Danny graduated from Berkeley College of Music, concentrating in piano performance and pedagogy. Prior to joining SFGMC as Principal Accompanist and Music Supervisor in 2023, he was a staff pianist and music faculty member at San Francisco Ballet School, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet, and the Boston Conservatory. Danny has performed on stage with SFDanceWorks, Smuin Ballet, and the San Francisco Ballet School, where he taught music classes for 10 years and continues to accompany. He has directed music and/or performed in dozens of musical theater, opera, and cabaret productions, ranging from national tours to local productions in Boston, Seattle, and San Francisco. Favorites include *An American in Paris*, *Shrek*, *The Color Purple*, *Into the Woods*, *Chicago*, and *Hello, Dolly!* His solo concerts and San Francisco Ballet *Dance-Along Extravaganza* are featured annually during the San Francisco Botanical Garden's *Flower Piano* music fes-

tival each September. Hear his arrangements and orchestrations at a SFGMC concert near you!



Wil Wright
Director of
Operations
and Production

Wil Wright (he/him) is Director of Operations and Production for the San Francisco Gay Men's

Chorus and Chan National Queer Arts Center. His career began with SFGMC in 2012 as a volunteer stage manager and he has continued to grow with the organization. Prior to SFGMC, Wil worked for Feinstein's at the Nikko and BroadwaySE. He originally fell in love with technical theater and theater arts administration in Atlanta, working as both a stage manager for Dad's Garage Theatre and as the box office manager for the Center for Puppetry Arts. He lives in San Francisco with his partner and their French bulldog. They spend much of their time attending live performances locally, on Broadway, and abroad.



Steve Valdez
Choreographer

Steve Valdez has been the resident choreographer for SFGMC for the past 30 years. In addition to working with the wonderful singers and artistic directors over the years, he has had the pleasure of choreographing and staging works by Broadway icons Andrew Lippa and Stephen Schwartz. Steve received his dance training at San Jose State University and at the Marie Stinnett Dance Academy in Campbell, CA. He credits much of his musical education to working in the live

shows at the Great America Theme Park in productions staged by the late and exceptionally talented choreographer, Jim Bates, who taught Steve how to get the most out of people with various dance ability levels and how to build a production number to its greatest climax. Steve is now retired and living in Palm Springs, but happily still gets to choreograph and stage for SFGMC.

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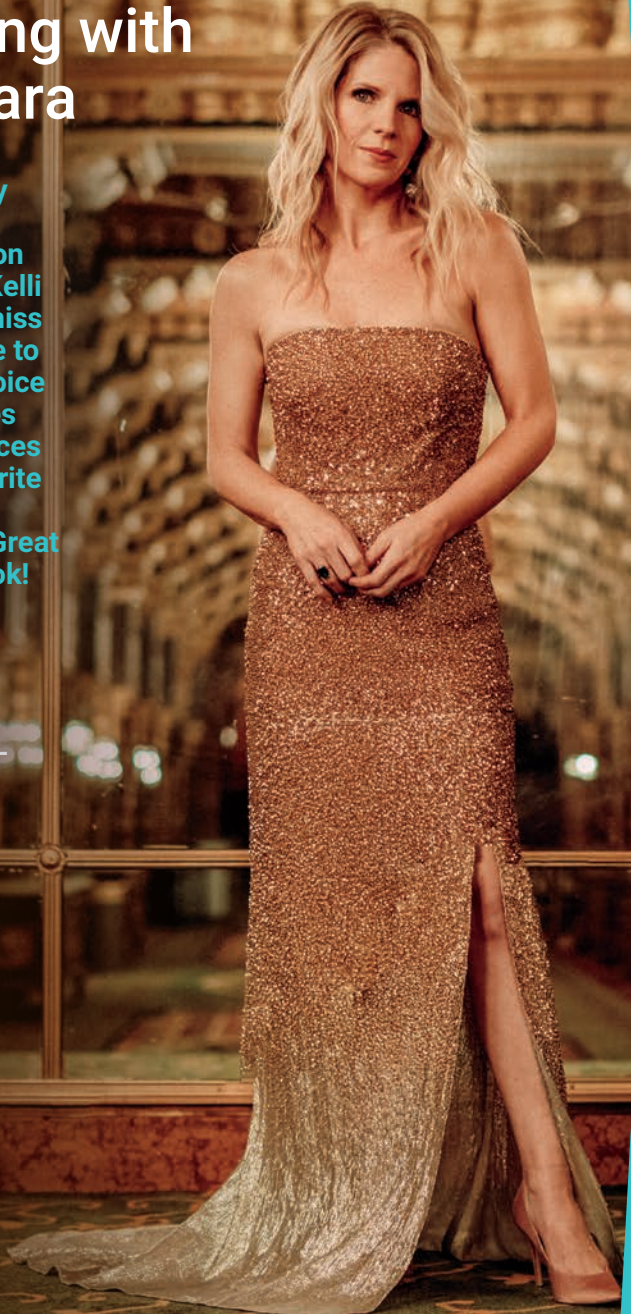
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