



SKYLARK 

SEVEN

*words from
the cross*

program

To preserve the contemplative nature of this evening's program, we ask you to please hold your applause until the conclusion of the program.

Prologue

Were you there?

Traditional African-American spiritual

When Jesus Wept

William Billings (1746-1800)

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do

New Britain ('Amazing Grace')

Traditional hymn

Wondrous Love

Traditional hymn, arranged by Robert Shaw and Alice Parker

Today you will be with me in Paradise

Jordan ('There is a land of pure delight')

Billings

Ich wollt, daß ich daheim wär

Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Behold your son: behold your mother

Karitas Abundat

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Break it Gently to my Mother

Frederick Buckley (1833-1864)

David's Lamentation

Billings

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Vinea mea electa

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Plymton ('In deep distress I oft have cried')

Billings

I thirst

Pann heilaga kross

Anna Thorvaldsdottir (b. 1977)

It is finished

Death may dissolve (fantasia on a hymn by William Billings)

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi (b. 1963)

Into your hands I commend my spirit

Deep River

Traditional African-American spiritual, arranged by Gerre Hancock

In manus tuas

John Sheppard (1515-1558)

Epilogue

Just as I am

Traditional hymn, tune by William Bradbury

skylark artists

SOPRANO

Fiona Gillespie Jackson
Sarah Moyer
Margot Rood
Janet Stone

ALTO

Carrie Cheron
Doug Dodson
Carolyn Guard
Clare McNamara

TENOR

George Case
John Cox
Cory Klose
Alex Nishibun

BASS

Christopher Jackson
Sam Kreidenweis
Peter Walker
Dana Whiteside

program introduction

When Tenebrae launched their Holy Week Festival at St. John's Smith Square in London in 2017, we were incredibly honored to be invited to take part in the inaugural event. Unfortunately, we were unable to organize our schedules and our funding quickly enough to travel to the UK that year. However, we resolved to make it a top priority to join them for the 2018 festival. Sensing a special opportunity to present Skylark's programming on an international stage, I phoned Collin Rae at Sono Luminus. It seemed that we should try to design a unique concert, and that we should once again partner with our friends at Sono Luminus to record the program for release that week.

Thematic programming is my passion. I truly believe in the power of the unaccompanied human voice to communicate at a visceral level. Yet, I do think it is a peculiar challenge to weave together a program that can keep someone riveted (or, let's be honest, even actively listening!) for 60-odd minutes. While there are some true masterworks of the a cappella repertoire that Skylark has joyfully tackled (like the *All-Night Vigil* of Rachmaninoff and Poulenc's *Figure Humaine*), the substantial body of unaccompanied choral literature consists of small gems – pieces that last between two and six minutes. It can be hard to find a home for these pieces. What is the right context that can bring a piece to life? How can we provide the emotional impetus to allow a piece to be truly understood? How can we get our singers and our audience to engage fully in a piece in a language that they do not understand?

The context for this particular program is quite specific. The setting, St. John's Smith Square, is both a concert hall and a church, affording a unique opportunity to create a program that is appropriate for both settings, without the specific expectations of one or the other. When it became clear that we might be able to perform on the evening of Good Friday, I set about to design a program around the scriptural seven last words of Christ from the cross. A diverse set of scriptures expressing a range of quite human (not necessarily God-ly) emotions, I felt that a musical progression based on these ideas could speak to audiences of all faiths.

When we learned that we were likely to be the only international group performing at a festival featuring some of the UK's top choirs, I felt strongly that we should present a program with a uniquely American character. Being a Boston-based ensemble representing America in the UK, prominently featuring the work of Bostonian William Billings seemed to be highly appropriate. Billings is broadly considered the first unique compositional voice in American choral music. His music, which some might characterize as simple and somewhat angular (especially relative to the music being composed in Europe at the time), has an honest rawness about it that I find quite compelling. We intersperse four of his settings throughout the concert, providing somewhat of a stylistic thread, culminating in the debut recording of Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi's *Death may dissolve*, a fantasy on a hymn by Billings that includes the original harmonization.

The heart of the program progresses through the seven scriptural passages (or 'words'), with pieces chosen to illustrate the universal human emotions expressed by the biblical texts. Some of the seven 'words' have a single piece of music, others have several pieces of contrasting styles. Our program begins and ends with simple hymns – I think of them as congregational bookends to the scriptural story that unfolds.

For such a significant performance, it was important for the music we offer to have a strong connection to Skylark's identity both as a group and as individuals. At the group level, we have chosen many pieces that are closely connected to our shared musical experiences as Skylarks over the past six years. At the individual level, the concert features an unprecedented (for us) nine of our eighteen singers in significant solo roles. Many of these were chosen because of a specific love by the individuals of a particular style, composer, or piece. To put it plainly, I feel that every piece of this program is a part of us. I invite you to read the notes included throughout the booklet to learn more about the pieces and how they connect to our story.

–Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

PROLOGUE

While I am sensitive to the potential dangers of cultural appropriation, it felt very important to me for Skylark to represent America in the UK by including contributions from one of the greatest musical heritages in our nation, the traditional African-American spiritual.

Our opening hymn comes from that tradition, having emerged on plantations in the American south. *Were you there?* was included in the Episcopal Church hymnal in 1940; a meaningful gesture during segregation, this was the first time that a hymn from the African-American tradition was included in the national hymnal of a large American church. We follow this hymn with *When Jesus Wept*, one of the most famous and evocative of William Billings' 'fuguing tunes.' A simple four-line fugue written for the spare acoustical environment of colonial churches, Billings encouraged singers to use fugal entrances as "musical warfare" to create an "ocean of harmony."

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM,

FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO

Music for the first scriptural passage draws from the tradition of 'shape note' singing, popularized in the 19th century in books including *The Sacred Harp*. To illustrate the idea of forgiveness and love, *Amazing Grace* is presented in its joyfully simple original harmonization for three voices, first printed in William Walker's 1847 edition of *Southern Harmony*.

We follow this piece with another 'shape note' hymn, first printed in 1811. The lyrics for *Wondrous Love* may have been written by Alexander Means, a Methodist pastor from Oxford, Georgia, a few miles from Atlanta. I grew up in Atlanta during the later years of Robert Shaw's tenure as music director emeritus of the Atlanta Symphony, and have always been particularly moved by the choral arrangements that Shaw created with Alice Parker in the middle of the 20th century. The text of *Wondrous Love* was a favorite of Shaw's, and appears in several of his speeches and letters. It was a great joy (and it felt like a rather weighty responsibility) to record this arrangement, first published in 1960.

texts and translations

WERE YOU THERE?

Traditional African-American spiritual

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

WHEN JESUS WEPT

William Billings (1746-1800)

When Jesus wept, the falling tear
in mercy flowed beyond all bound.
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear
seized all the guilty world around.

NEW BRITAIN ('Amazing Grace')

Traditional hymn; Text by John Newton

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

WONDROUS LOVE

Traditional hymn, Arranged by Robert Shaw and Alice Parker

What wondrous love is this, O my soul?
What wondrous love is this
That caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul?
When I was sinking down, O my soul!
When I was sinking down
Beneath God's righteous frown
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul!
To God and to the Lamb I will sing!
To God and to the Lamb
Who is the great I AM
While millions join the theme, I will sing!
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on!
And when from death I'm free
I'll sing and joyful be
And through eternity I'll sing on!

JORDAN

from *The Suffolk Harmony* (1786), William Billings (1746-1800); Text by Isaac Watts

There is a land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign;
infinite day excludes the night, and pleasures banish pain.
Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood stand dressed in living green;
so to the Jews old Canaan stood, while Jordan rolled between.
O could we make our doubts remove, those gloomy doubts that rise,
and see the Canaan that we love with un-beclouded eyes.
Could we but climb where Moses stood, and view the landscape o'er,
not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood, should fright us from the shore!

ICH WOLLT, DAB ICH DAHEIME WÄR

from *Geistliche Chormusik, op. 12*, Hugo Distler (1908-1942); Text by Heinrich von Laufenberg (1430)

Ich wollt, daß ich daheime wär
und aller Welte Trost entbeh.
Ich mein, daheim im Himmelreich
da ich Gott schaue ewiglich.
Wohlauf, mein Seel, und richt dich dar,
dort wartet dein der Engel Schar.
Denn alle Welt ist dir zu klein,
du kommest denn erst wieder heim.
Daheim ist Leben ohne Tod
und ganze Freude ohne Not.
Da sind doch tausend Jahr wie heut
und nichts, was dich verdrießt noch reut.
Wohlauf, mein Herz und all mein Mut
und such das Gut ob allem Gut!
Du hast doch hie kein Bleiben nicht,
obs morgen oder heut geschicht.
Da es denn anders nicht mag sein,
so fleuch der Welt viel falschen Schein.
Ade, Welt, Gott gesegne dich!
Gen Himmelreich nun fahre ich

*I want to be there,
all of the world is without comfort.
I am at home in the Kingdom of Heaven,
where I see God forever.
Rejoice, my soul, and show thyself,
there wait the angels!
For all the world is too small for you,
You're only going home again.
Home is life without death,
and complete joy without need.
There a thousand years like today,
with nothing to grieve or repent.
Rejoice, my heart, and all my courage,
And seek the good of all good.
You do not have a stay here,
whether it's tomorrow or today's story.
It must be no other way,
as the flesh of the world has a false light.
Adieu, world! God bless you.
To heaven I now go.*

KARITAS ABUNDAT

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Caritas abundat in omnia,
de imis excellentissima
super sidera,
atque amantissima in omnia,
quia summo regi
osculum pacis dedit.

*Charity abounds toward all,
most exalted from the depths
above the stars,
and most loving toward all,
for she has given the High King
the kiss of peace.*

BREAK IT GENTLY TO MY MOTHER

Frederick Buckley (1833-1864); Text by M. A. Geuville

See! E'er the sun sinks behind those hills; E'er darkness the earth doth cover;
You will lay me low, in the cold, damp ground; Break it gently to my mother!
I see her sweet sad face on me now, And a smile doth o'er it hover;
Oh God! I would spare the tears that will flow;
Break it gently to my mother.

Goodbye, my mother ever dear; sister, you loved your brother;
Comrades, I take a last farewell; Break it gently to my mother.

Oh, say that in battle I've nobly died, For Right and our Country's honor;
Like the reaper's grain fell the leaden rain, Yet God saved our starry banner!
My sister, playmate of boyhood's years, Will lament her fallen brother;
She must try to soothe our parent's woe;
Break it gently to my mother.

TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE

In the opening remarks to his published collections (including his aptly-named *The Singing Master's Assistant*), William Billings often provided long-winded and very specific instructions about how to perform his music. Some of these instructions are quite colorful, including the exhortation "not to force the Sound thro' your Nose; but warble the Notes in your Throat." Billings also offered specific guidance about potential embellishments and grace notes that might be added to enhance a performance. In our rendition of *Jordan*, a rousing congregational hymn in A-major, we have done our best to follow the *Singing Master's* guidance.

Skylark has been particularly moved by Hugo Distler's music for years, even structuring our Christmas concerts and our album *Winter's Night* around his variations of *Es ist ein Ros Entsprungen*. Distler's *Ich wollt, daß ich daheime wär* shares the same opening melodic gesture as *Jordan*, but is set in an achingly beautiful and restrained E-minor. It was debuted in October 1935, the day after Nazi Germany banned jazz from the radio. This ethereal motet progresses through ten variations of a simple chant melody. It was composed during a tumultuous time of Distler's life, the year after he suffered a nervous breakdown, and around the same time that he discovered the body of his organ student who had jumped to her death from a church bell tower. Given that Distler tragically took his own life in 1942, one could imagine that the text of this motet might have reflected his own feelings about life and mortality.

BEHOLD YOUR SON: BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER

The most ancient of the pieces we share is the 11th century chant *Karitas Abundat*, by Hildegard von Bingen. Skylark mezzo-soprano Clare McNamara has made a meaningful portion of her career from the study and performance of Hildegard's works, even creating custom editions to help singers understand Hildegard's unique musical notation. While we considered having this chant sung by all of the Skylark sopranos and altos, to me it seemed most evocative to have this mysterious and beautiful line sung by a single voice.

The historic sheet music of our next piece, composed in Boston in 1863, bears the following inscription: "This ballad was suggested by the following incident. On the battlefield of Gettysburg, among many wounded soldiers was a young man, the only son of an aged mother. Hearing the surgeon tell his companions that he could not survive the ensuing night, he placed his hand upon his forehead, talking continually of his mother and sister, and said to his comrades assembled around him, 'Break it gently to my mother.'"

In addition to specific instructions about balance and ornamentation, William Billings also gave very clear guidance about tempo. For Billings, time signature and tempo were inextricably linked. Composing before the days of the modern metronome, he even went so far as to specify the length of string required to create a perfect pendulum for each tempo. His setting of *David's Lamentation* was noted in 2/4 time, which he intended to have a speed of 120 beats per minute. I had heard the piece before at slower pace, and I was aghast when we first rehearsed his piece at this tempo. However, in reflecting on the text as a new father, it strikes me as a powerful illustration of frenetically new and abject grief.

MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

Vinea mea electa opens with seven sharps in the key signature, potentially symbolic of the seven words from the cross. Benjamin Ivry noted: "In these liturgical works for Holy Week, Poulenc set the tragedy that France and the rest of Europe were experiencing in a historical, religious context. The air of sadness and defeat in these works...approaches the gloom of some African-American spirituals, and the impression created is of the depressed, frozen horror of Frenchmen who had experienced World War I and who now saw a second war coming."

Plymton is a plaintive psalm harmonization published in the 1770 volume *The New England Psalm Singer*. The engraved cover of the printed edition was designed by none other than Paul Revere, five years before his storied ride. Although Billings did not specify a text for the tune, Karl Kroeger's choice of a 1698 paraphrase of Psalm 120 fits perfectly.

I THIRST

Although primarily known for her orchestral works (for which the New York Philharmonic awarded her with their Kravis Emerging Composer Award), contemporary Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir also has a true gift for writing for voices. One of the great thrills of recording our album *Crossing Over* in 2016 was the opportunity to work closely with Anna, who flew to Boston from Reykjavík for our recording session of her piece *Heyr þú oss himnum á*.

Like *Heyr þú oss himnum á*, *Pann heilaga kross* is based on an ancient Icelandic psalm. In this case, the tune and text were first published in 1589, attributed to Martin Hegelund. Anna's setting creates a wonderful balance between the ancient and modern. An opening sequence of drone sounds that undulate between dissonance and consonance create a sustained period of discomfort that for me evokes the thirst of the scriptural text. The three largely homophonic verses employ open fifths and spare harmonies that preserve the timelessness of the tune, before an extended and ultimately unresolved *Amen* returns the listener to a feeling of dull pain and unease.

DAVID'S LAMENTATION

from *The Singing Master's Assistant* (1781), William Billings (1746-1800)

David the king was grieved and moved
He went to his chamber, and wept.
And as he went he wept, and said,
"Oh my son! Would to God I had died
For thee, Oh Absalom, my son."

VINEA MEA ELECTA

from *Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence*, Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Vinea mea electa, ego te plantavi:
quomodo conversa es in amaritudinem,
ut me crucifigeres et Barrabam dimitteres.
Sepivi te, et lapides elegi ex te,
et aedificavi turrim

*O vineyard, my chosen one. I planted thee.
How is thy sweetness turned into bitterness,
to crucify me and take Barabbas in my place?
I protected thee; I took the hard stones away from thy
path, and built a tower in thy defense.*

PLYMTON

from *The New England Psalm Singer* (1770), Billings; Text by Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady (1698)

In deep distress I oft have cried
To GOD, who never yet denied,
To rescue me, oppressed with wrongs;
Once more, O LORD, deliverance send,
From lying lips my soul defend,
And from the rage of slandering tongues.
What little profit can accrue,
And yet, what heavy wrath is due,
O thou perfidious tongue, to thee?
Thy sting upon thyself shall turn;
Of lasting flames, that fiercely burn,
The constant fuel thou shalt be.
My hapless dwelling is with those,
Who peace and amity oppose,
And pleasure take in others' harms:
Sweet peace is all I court and seek;
But when to them of peace I speak,
They straight cry out, to arms, to arms.

ÞANN HEILAGA KROSS

Anna Thorvaldsdottir (b. 1977)

Þann heilaga kross vor herra bar,
á holdi hans voru dauðleg sár.
Fyrir oss alla hann fullnað gjörði,
vér urðum ei keyptir með öðru verði.
Því hlýðið, kærur kristnir menn,
hvað kennir oss öllum skriftin senn.
Þeir sem vist á himnum hljóta,
herrans þínu þeir verða að njóta.
Einasta Guði sé æra og dýrð,
er sinn son sendi hingað á jörð.
Hann stýri og stjórni oss öllum saman,
svo vér hann óttumst og elskum. Amen.

*On the holy cross our Lord,
on his flesh were mortal wounds,
for all of us he accomplished this,
we were not redeemed for a lesser price.
Therefore dear Christians,
this we all teach of his scripture.
Those who receive heavenly glory,
the love of the Lord they must enjoy.
One God is glory everlasting,
his song is sent here on earth.
He leads and guides us together,
we serve him with reverence and love. Amen.*

DEATH MAY DISSOLVE (fantasia on a hymn by William Billings)

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi (b. 1963); Text by Isaac Watts

Death may dissolve my body now,
 And bear my spirit home;
 Why do my minutes move so slow,
 Nor my salvation come?

With heav'nly weapons I have fought
 The battles of the Lord;
 Finished my course, and kept the faith,
 And wait the sure reward.

God has laid up in heav'n for me
 A crown which cannot fade;
 The righteous Judge at that great day
 Shall place it on my head.

Jesus the Lord shall guard me safe
 From every ill design;
 And to his heav'nly kingdom keep
 This feeble soul of mine.

God is my everlasting aid,
 And hell shall rage in vain;
 To him be highest glory paid
 And endless praise. Amen.

DEEP RIVER

Traditional African-American spiritual, Arranged by Gerre Hancock

Deep river,
 My home is over Jordan.
 Deep river, Lord.
 I want to cross over into campground.
 Oh, don't you want to go,
 To the Gospel feast;
 That Promised Land,
 Where all is peace?

IN MANUS TUAS

John Sheppard (1515-1558)

In manus tuas, Domine,
 commendo spiritum meum.
 Redemisti me Domine,
 Deus veritatis.

*Into your hands, O Lord,
 I commend my spirit.
 You have redeemed me, O Lord,
 God of truth.*

JUST AS I AM

Traditional hymn, Tune by William Bradbury; Lyrics by Charlotte Elliott

Just as I am, without one plea,
 But that Thy blood was shed for me,
 And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
 Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
 Because Thy promise I believe,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

IT IS FINISHED

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi is a prolific and unique voice in modern Finnish choral composition. Skylark has performed his works in each of the last three seasons, and I have always been struck by the originality of his compositional style. When I discovered that in 2002 he had composed an as-of-yet unrecorded fantasy on a William Billings hymn, it seemed like a perfect addition to this program. The piece unfolds in five verses of a text written by Isaac Watts. The first verse is sung by a solo tenor, and the second verse preserves the original harmonization by Billings. The subsequent verses unfold into more and more diverse and wonderfully wild variations on the theme. After a harmonically unsettling final verse that cadences into both D-minor and D-major at the same time, the opening theme returns with a sense of true finality.

INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT

Deep River is one of the most enduring of African-American spiritual hymns, perhaps because of its comforting and optimistic message of 'crossing over' the river Jordan into a heavenly kingdom. It was first mentioned in print in 1876 and first recorded by Marian Anderson in 1938, one year before her historic performance of the piece at the Lincoln Memorial (a concert that was broadcast to millions on radio, likely introducing *Deep River* to many Americans). We perform a lush and emotionally rich 1985 arrangement by Gerre Hancock, long-time organist and choirmaster at St. Thomas Church in New York.

We close the seven words with the first setting of *In manus tuas* by British composer John Sheppard for three reasons: It is a direct setting of the final Biblical text, it is an homage to our English setting for our concert, and I think it is one of the most elegant pieces ever composed for the human voice.

EPILOGUE

Our final musical offering is one of the most popular of Christian hymns. The text is by British poet Charlotte Elliott, who struggled with illness and disability throughout her life. *Just as I am* was reportedly the hymn that played before Billy Graham converted to Christianity in 1934. It later became a Gospel hit in the US in the middle of the twentieth century. When I approached Skylark baritone Dana Whiteside about finding a piece that was meaningful to him personally that we might consider including in this program, this piece was at the top of his list. To me, the strong message of love and acceptance of all people, despite their flaws, is the greatest message of the Christian faith.

skylark organization

Matthew Guard | *Artistic Director*

Carolyn Guard | *Executive Director*

Sarah Moyer | *Ensemble Manager*

Christopher Jackson | *Educational Outreach*

Cory Klose | *Marketing & Design*

Jessica Petrus | *Skylark Spotlight Series*

artistic advisory board

Simon Carrington | *Professor Emeritus, Yale University; Co-Founder, The King's Singers*

Pamela Elrod | *Director of Choral Activities, Southern Methodist University*

Vance George | *Conductor Emeritus, San Francisco Symphony Chorus*

Jameson Marvin | *Director of Choral Activities, Harvard University (retired)*

Geoffrey Silver | *Co-Founder, New York Polyphony*

about skylark

Skylark Vocal Ensemble is a premier vocal ensemble of leading American vocal soloists, chamber musicians, and music educators. Skylark's music has been described as "sublimely beautiful" (Opera Obsession), "engrossing...reaches in through the ribs and grips the vitals" (Q2/WQXR NY), and enough to "leave a hardened critic near tears" (Boston Music Intelligencer). With "some of Boston's best singers" (Boston Globe), the voices of Skylark "can sway you softly into calm and then all but throw you across the room with sheer harmonic force" (Thought Catalog). Skylark's 2017 Christmas recording, *Winter's Night*, made the top 10 of Billboard's Traditional Classical chart. The album was praised for its "pristine beauty" (Bay Area Reporter) and for singing "of the highest standard for any area or any repertoire" (Classics Today).

Skylark strives to set the standard for innovative, engaging, well-researched, and dramatically presented programs that re-define the choral experience for audiences and singers alike. Since its founding in 2011 in Atlanta and Boston, Skylark has branched out to perform its masterful programs in museums, concert halls, and churches across the United States. Skylark artists are among the most talented vocal artists and music educators in the United States, and perform with other internationally renowned groups including Blue Heron, The Crossing, Handel + Haydn Society, Lorelei, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Seraphic Fire, Trinity Wall Street, and the Yale Choral Artists. A not-for-profit entity, Skylark performs educational outreach programs with high school and college students across the United States during its concert tours.

artist biographies



Skylark Artistic Director **MATTHEW GUARD** is quickly earning a reputation as one of the most innovative and thoughtful programmers in American choral music. Praised for his "catalyzing leadership" (Q2/WQXR) and "musically creative and intellectually rich" programming (Opera Obsession), Matthew is passionate about communicating something unique in each concert and recording. He scours the world of available repertoire for each program, exhaustively researches each piece, and crafts concerts and printed programs that captivate audiences with their hidden connections and seamless artistry. In addition to his day-to-day leadership of Skylark and role as a conductor in concerts, Matthew is also an active arranger and editor of scores, as he rarely finds programming ideas that will truly sing without at least one piece specifically arranged or composed for the program.

Tenor **GEORGE CASE** is the Director of Choral Activities at The Boston Conservatory where he directs the choral ensembles and the graduate choral conducting program. He is also the music director for the Newburyport Choral Society. George is an award-winning educator of young musicians who frequently leads clinics and workshops for high school and college singers, as well as professional development sessions for teachers around the country. As a soloist and professional chorister, George has performed with major ensembles across North America and Europe, including the Santa Fe Desert Chorale and Spire Chamber Ensemble. George is an avid tennis player.

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

JOHN K. COX is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Reed College in Portland, Oregon where he leads the Chorus and Collegium Musicum, as well as teaching courses in theory, performance practice, and pre-modern music history. Dr. Cox holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory, University of Oregon, and a doctorate from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. A specialist in 16th and 17th century music, Dr. Cox’s recent work focuses on forgotten repertoires of Italian sacred music dating from the late seventeenth century. Outside of rehearsal or the library, he can be found hiking, biking, or in a canoe.

Hailed as a “vivid countertenor” (Wall Street Journal) with a voice that is “unusually sparkling” (Kansas City Star), **DOUG DODSON** is making his mark on opera and concert stages throughout the country. Notable recent engagements include: alto soloist in the American premieres of Melani’s *Lauda anima mea* and Perti’s *Magnificat* at Union College; Ignis in the world premiere of Per Bololand’s opera *Pedr Solis* with Guerilla Opera; and Ottone in *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, as part of the prestigious Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme. Mr. Dodson has a degree in Anthropology as well as Music and is a native of South Dakota.

Mezzo-soprano **CAROLYN GUARD** is a life-long Episcopal Church musician, having begun her choral work at age 6 in her local church choir. After attending choral courses in the UK, Carolyn was a founding member of the Choral Fellow program in the Memorial Church at Harvard University, and also performed as a special guest artist with The Boston Camerata. Carolyn’s decidedly non-musical degrees are from Harvard University and Emory’s Goizueta Business School, which she hopes are used to Skylark’s benefit in her role as Skylark’s executive director. She lives in Atlanta with her husband, son, and golden retriever, and as a displaced Mainer, attempts to survive Atlanta’s summers.

FIONA GILLESPIE JACKSON, soprano, sings regularly with groups around the nation as both a soloist and professional ensemble member. She particularly enjoys creating musical collaborations with friends and her ensemble, Bricolage Project, that focus on education and outreach. She served on the voice faculty at Lycoming College for the past four years, where she also taught Baroque music history and directed opera. Fiona grew up playing traditional Celtic music, which she still performs with her family, and makes canvas and furniture collages in her spare time. She calls the Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania home.

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON serves as the Director of Choral Activities and Head of Voice at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA. He is in frequent demand as a guest conductor for Honor Choirs and festivals, and sings professionally with ensembles across the nation. Christopher has directed and co-founded numerous community and semi-professional groups, most recently Bricolage Project. A native of Stillwater, OK, Christopher enjoys cooking and philosophizing with his cats.

Tenor **CORY KLOSE** is gaining recognition as a sought-after performer of both choral and solo repertoire. Cory appears on the rosters of many professional ensembles including Boston’s Handel + Haydn Society, GRAMMY® Award-nominated True Concord Voices and Orchestra, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Bach Collegium San Diego, Kinnara Ensemble, The Crossing, Spire Chamber Ensemble, and The Thirteen. Recent solo performance highlights include Bach’s *Magnificat* with Music in the Mountains in Colorado and Handel’s *Messiah* with The Orchestra of the Hills in Washington, DC. Cory is also a professional graphic designer and is based in Atlanta. www.coryklose.com





SAMUEL KREIDENWEIS is an active soloist and ensemble singer throughout the US and abroad. In 2015 he recorded the Rachmaninoff *All-Night Vigil* with the Phoenix Chorale and Kansas City Chorale under Charles Bruffy, which won the GRAMMY® Award for Best Choral Performance in 2016. Internationally Sam has toured with the Dublin, Ireland based group Anúna with whom he has toured Ireland, the U.K., Belgium, the Netherlands, China, and Japan. Recently Sam joined Conspirare for the world-premiere performance and recording of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, which was written and conducted by Craig Hella Johnson. Sam enjoys baking with his sourdough starter named Precious.



Praised for her “otherworldly” singing, **CLARE MCNAMARA** brings her sensitive interpretation to a wide variety of repertoire throughout the United States and abroad. Ensemble affiliations include Lorelei Ensemble, Cut Circle, Handel + Haydn Society, and The Boston Camerata. International festival credits include Laus Polyphoniae (Belgium), Tage Alter Musik Regensburg (Germany), and Utrecht Early Music (Netherlands). As a soloist, Clare will make her Symphony Hall debut in the Handel + Haydn Society’s 2018 performance of Bach’s *Mass in B minor*. Clare dreams of having a dog-friendly back yard. A.B. Princeton University; M.M. Longy School of Music of Bard College. www.claremcnamara.com



Soprano **SARAH MOYER**’s recent solo repertoire includes the American premieres of Nørgård’s *Nova Genitura* and *Seadrift* with Lost Dog New Music Ensemble and a collection of Melani’s works with Reed College Collegium, the world premieres of Theofanidis’ *Four Levertov Settings*, Kallembach’s *Easter Oratorio*, and Runestad’s *The Hope of Loving* with Seraphic Fire, and Foss’ *The Prairie* with Boston Modern Orchestra Project. As a choral artist, Sarah appears nationally with Skylark, Seraphic Fire, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, True Concord, The Thirteen, and Ensemble Origo. She’s a sci-fi nerd and enjoys spending time outdoors. www.sopranosarahmoyer.com.



ALEXANDER NISHIBUN is gaining recognition for his “smooth-toned voice [of] spring-water clarity” (Boston Classical Review), musical versatility, and engaging presence. A frequent oratorio soloist, Nishibun’s recent performances include Buxtehude’s *Membra Jesu Nostri*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Bach’s *Mass in B minor* and *Magnificat*, Mozart’s *Requiem* and *Davidde Penitente*, and Haydn’s *The Creation*. In conjunction with his solo work, Nishibun performs across the U.S. with Kinnara Ensemble, the GRAMMY® Award-winning Handel + Haydn Society, the Blue Heron Renaissance Choir, Ensemble Origo, and the Boston Cecilia. Outside of his career, he is a proud uncle, a grill enthusiast, and learning to play the mandolin.



Soprano **MARGOT ROOD** performs a wide range of repertoire. Recent and upcoming appearances include those with Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony, Seraphic Fire, A Far Cry, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Blue Heron, Skylark, Lorelei Ensemble, Cape Symphony, Bach Collegium San Diego, Grand Harmonie, as well as onstage with Boston Early Music Festival, Monadnock Music, and St. Petersburg Opera. Ms. Rood is the recipient of awards including the St. Botolph Emerging Artist Award, the Lorraine Hunt Lieberson Fellowship at Emmanuel Music, and The American Prize. www.margotrood.com



Boston-based soprano **JANET STONE** was recently soloist in Bach’s *Mass in B Minor*, Handel’s *Messiah*, and Britten’s *The Company of Heaven*. She is a singer on staff and frequent soloist at Trinity Church, Copley Square and also sings with Handel + Haydn Society and Cappella Clausura, with whom she recently recorded *Exultet Terra: Choral Music of Hilary Tann*. Upcoming solo engagements include Fauré’s *Requiem* and Bach’s *Cantata 140: Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*. In her spare time, Janet continues her quest to be a professional cat-lady. You can follow her feline friend on Instagram @obiewancatnobi.



Described as a “rich-voiced” and “vivid” singer by a recent New York Times review, **PETER WALKER** performs with the Handel + Haydn Society, Three Notch’d Road, Skylark Ensemble, Texas Early Music Project, Clarion Society Choir, Staunton Music Festival, Early Music New York, Gotham Early Music, Apollo’s Fire, Hudson Valley Philharmonic, Stamford Symphony, and Western Wind. Peter is a member of the choir of St. Luke in the Fields, and is a founding member of the medieval ensemble Marginalia. He holds degrees from Vassar College and McGill University, where he studied with Drew Minter and Sanford Sylvan.



DANA WHITESIDE’s solo appearances include concert, opera and recital. A product of Longy School of Music, New England Conservatory and Tanglewood Music Center, he has received critical acclaim for his voice of “noble clarity throughout powerful and resonant” (The Washington Post). Recent highlights include *The Magic Flute* with Boston Baroque; the role of Count Carl Magnus in Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music*; *Carmina Burana* at Mechanics Hall; Verdi’s *Requiem*; and *Sea Symphony* at the Kennedy 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.

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- Provide career opportunities for the most talented ensemble singers in the U.S.
- Offer educational workshops and opportunities for young singers
- Expand the reach of Skylark's inspiring and engaging programming to audiences across the U.S. and the world

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FRIDAY, MAY 25 | 7:30pm

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church | Chatham, MA

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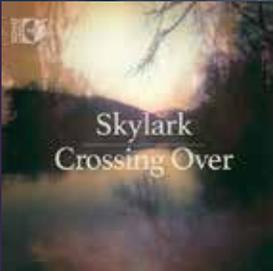
"...gorgeous, evocative, and other-worldly..."
-Maggie Stapleton, *Second Inversion*



JUST RELEASED! Skylark's newest album, *Seven Words from the Cross*, was released on March 23rd, in conjunction with its Seven Last Words concert series. This program was conceived for Skylark's international debut at St. John's Smith Square in London on the evening of Good Friday 2018, and progresses through the scriptural seven last words of Christ on the cross.



Skylark's first Christmas album, *Winter's Night*, released in December 2017 to international acclaim, with singing "of the highest standard for any area or any repertoire" (Classics Today). *Winter's Night* was chosen as one of the top new classical Christmas albums by WFMT Chicago, and charted at #7 on the Billboard Traditional Classical Chart, closely behind Yo-Yo Ma and Placido Domingo. Praised by the BBC for its program, the recording features all seven of Distler's variations on the timeless Christmas hymn *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*, interwoven with works that share a historical or compositional connection to Distler's, including music by Herbert Howells, Elizabeth Poston, John Tavener, and Peter Warlock, as well as three world premiere recordings.



Skylark's second commercial album, *Crossing Over*, was released in March 2016. Produced in collaboration with the GRAMMY® Award-winning team from Sono Luminus, *Crossing Over* debuted at #4 on the Billboard Traditional Classical Chart, reached #5 on the iTunes Classical Chart, and was the #1 New Release on Amazon Classical. In *Crossing Over*, Skylark shares texts and compositions that depict the dream state at the end of life. Featuring unique voices in choral composition from around the world, and including several world premiere recordings, *Crossing Over* takes audiences on a musical and emotional journey that taps deeply into the human spirit.



Skylark's debut album, *Forgotten Dreams* features inspiring, but seldom-heard, Romantic part-songs by Brahms, Debussy, Saint-Saëns, and Holst. Released in the spring of 2014, it introduced Skylark to the world of recorded music at its romantic best, performing music the group truly loves.



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