

SKYLARK



JOBY TALBOT'S

PATH OF MIRACLES

OCTOBER 2022

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PATH OF MIRACLES

Libretto by Robert Dickinson

1. Roncesvalles
2. Burgos
3. Leon
4. Santiago

Skylark Vocal Ensemble

Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

Soprano

Sophie Amelkin
Fiona Gillespie
Fotina Naumenko
Savannah Porter
Janet Stone
Elena Williamson

Alto

Carrie Cheron
Doug Dodson
Helen Karloski
Clare McNamara
Megan Roth

Tenor

Paul D'Arcy
Erik Gustafson
Nathan Hodgson
Robbie Jacobs

Bass

Eric Alatorre
Matthew Goinz
Michael Hawes
Christopher Jackson
Enrico Lagasca

program introduction

As long-time Skylark attendees know, my passion is creative programming. I find that too many choral programs are rather staid and boring. Also, there is very little repertoire for unaccompanied choir that neatly fits into the space of a full concert, while also creating fully engaging, exciting, and thrilling narrative. I often times find myself working for months trying to fit puzzle pieces together to form a cohesive concert program.

Gratefully, today's program did not require any of that work from me! *Path of Miracles*, composed in 2006, is one of those rare stand-alone choral works that pushes the boundary of programming on its own. Though we are only two decades in, *Path of Miracles* is increasingly being recognized as one of the choral masterworks of the 21st century (much like the Rachmaninoff *All-Night Vigil* for the 20th century or the Brahms *Requiem* for the 19th).

Joby Talbot, who is better known for his film scores and phenomenal ballets, composed this piece for the UK-based professional choir Tenebrae 16 years ago. Tenebrae and Skylark are kindred spirits - Nigel Short and I share a similar passion for dramatic programs, and our group size and formation is generally similar, often targeting 12-18 professional voices that are virtuosic soloists as well as ensemble singers (today's piece is scored for 17 distinct parts!). Skylark has hosted Tenebrae in the US on previous tours, and Tenebrae is the group that invited Skylark for our UK debut at a festival in London in 2018.

Just before that 2018 trip to London, Adrian Peacock, long-time Tenebrae low bass and veteran audio producer (including for Skylark's albums *Once Upon a Time* and *Winter's Night*), sent me a message that he marked as urgent. Tenebrae was coming to the US on a tour with *Path of Miracles*: "You simply must come and hear this piece," Adrian said, "it is the one piece that never fails to bring me to tears."

I must admit, I was somewhat skeptical, as I had heard about the piece and I had once started to play it on Spotify, and it hadn't captured my imagination. Trusting the recommendation, though, I flew up to New Jersey on a bit of a whim, and attended Tenebrae's concert at Princeton chapel.

When the performance was over, I was stunned. I wandered about the chapel in a bit of a daze for twenty minutes, somehow both emotionally fulfilled and absolutely shattered at the same time. The piece is truly a journey. It stretches the limits of the professional singer (both physically and mentally) in profound ways, but also delivers simple beauty in a way that truly transforms the listener. Today, just reading some of the lines of the excellent libretto by Robert Dickinson are enough to bring me to tears.

I urge you to take time to read through the libretto and the excellent program notes by Gabriel Crouch in advance of listening today. Much like a good map and thorough packing list reward a traveller before a physical pilgrimage, there is a profound depth and beauty to this piece that rewards the listener who has a taken time to orient themselves to the journey in advance.

- Matthew Guard

about the path

The world's most enduring route of Catholic pilgrimage was first formally acknowledged as such by Bishop Diego Gelmirez in the early 12th Century, but it has always belonged to a wider fellowship even than the Catholic church. Long before the body of St James was discovered in Iria Flavia in the early 9th Century, and brought to its final resting place in Santiago; before the Saint even began his life of service, first as an apostle, and later as a preacher in Spain, the 'Camino Frances' was under construction. Part of the route still runs along the sturdy Roman roads which were used to subdue and colonise northern Iberia. To the pre-Christians, this road followed the path of the Milky Way, and took its travellers to the end of the earth. Centuries later, it was used by the Moors to reach Spain's northern outposts, only to be pushed back along it by Charlemagne, and served as an arterial route for the establishment of the Roman Rite and the purging of its Hispanic predecessor. Today it is used by tourists, travellers and explorers, as well as by confirmed Catholics and the spiritually curious.

The musical traditions of the Pilgrimage can be traced to the mid-12th Century, when a compilation of texts attributed to Pope Calixtus II was created, all devoted to the cult of St James. This so-called 'Codex Calixtinus' was specifically designed to serve the needs of worshippers and pilgrims in Santiago, and consisted of five books. The first volume contains liturgical settings, including those for the two feast days devoted to St James: the Feast of the Passion of St James on the 25th of July, and the Feast of Translation of the Apostles remains on the 30th of December. The second and third volumes describe the 22 miracles of St James and the journey of the Saint's body to Santiago. Book Four recounts Charlemagne's defeat of the Moors in Spain, and the final volume leads the would-be pilgrim through the routes, dangers and customs of the pilgrimage. Of comparable importance to all this is an appendix which contains music composed using a technique which was just beginning to gain a foothold in certain parts of Europe at this time. Notwithstanding the fact that it rarely uses more than two voices, this is a highly significant collection of polyphony. And here, within this final section of the Codex, can be found the most famous of Jacobean chants: the *Dum Pater Familias*. It is this hymn which establishes the universality of the cult of St James, interspersing latin verses in praise of the Saint with a multilingual refrain representing the many languages heard on the road to his shrine:

Herr Santiago, Grot Santiago, [Holy St. James, Great St. James]
Eultreya esuseya, Deus aia nos. [God help us now and evermore]

The 'Camino Frances' is the central axis of a network of pilgrimage routes to Santiago. Its travellers gather in Roncesvalles, a small town at the foot of the Pyrenees which in the spring becomes a veritable Babel as pilgrims from across the world assemble, before setting off in a southwesterly direction. The pilgrims carry a special passport - often this is one of the only possessions not discarded on the journey - and engage in the 850 - year - old tradition of following the yellow arrows and seeking out the images of shells placed over pilgrim - friendly boarding houses. On the way, they stop off at any of a large number of shrines, most important among which are the cathedrals of Burgos and Leon, and at the foot of an iron cross near Astorga they may cast a stone from their homeland. The road takes them across the desert lands between Burgos and Leon and the rainy, hilly terrain of Galicia: and as the landscape transforms, so does the pilgrim. A pilgrim writes:

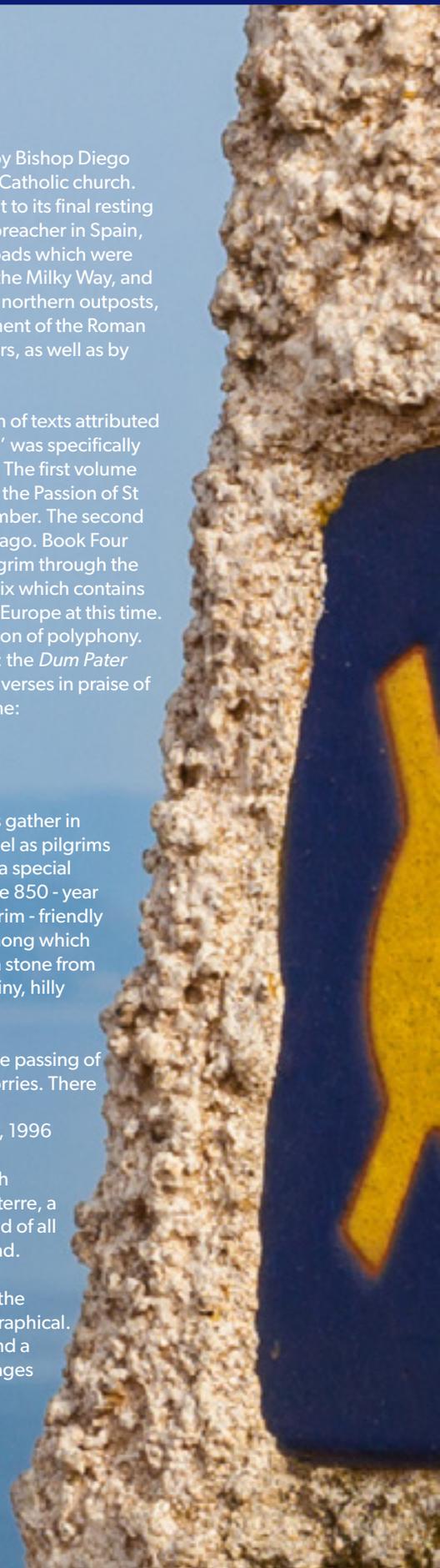
You have left behind the life you lived before... Dates become meaningless; a day is merely the passing of the sun from one hand to the other, from behind you to in front... Then you slough off your worries. There is only one thing to worry about now and that is whether you and your feet will last the day.

- Andrea Kirby, 1996

Somewhere between 50 and 200 thousand people arrive at the gates of Santiago's Cathedral each year, at least eighty percent of them on foot. A good number of these continue on to Capo di Finisterre, a further 85 kilometres to the west, to reach what Europeans pre-Columbus considered to be the end of all westward journeys. An item of clothing is placed on a beach-fire to symbolise the old life left behind.

The four movements of *Path of Miracles* are titled with the names of the four main staging posts of the Camino Frances, though the textual themes within the movements extend beyond the mere geographical. Throughout the work, quotations from various mediaeval texts (principally the *Codex Calixtinus* and a 15th Century work in the Galician language - *Miragres de Santiago*) are woven together with passages from the Roman liturgy, and lines of poetry from Robert Dickinson, the work's librettist.

- Gabriel Crouch



Talbot introduces his work with a vocal effect based on the Bunun aboriginal 'Pasiputput' from Taiwan, in which low voices rise in volume and pitch over an extended period, creating random overtones as the voices move into different pitches at fluctuating rates. After a dramatic exclamation of the pilgrim's hymn from *Dum Pater Familias*, the beheading of St James by the sword of King Herod is briefly described in Greek, Latin, Spanish, Basque, French, English and German, initially sung by a lone countertenor rising above the choir's sustained chord clusters. An account of the discovery of the Saint's body in Compostella follows, some eight hundred years after his death in Jerusalem and the subsequent translation of his body on a rudderless boat made of stone.

1. Roncesvalles

Herr Santiago	<i>Holy St James</i>
Grot Sanctiagu	<i>Great St James</i>
Eultreya esuseya	<i>God help us,</i>
Deius aia nos.	<i>now and evermore.</i>

Eodem autore tempore misit	<i>Now about that time Herod the</i>
Herodes rex manus ut	<i>king stretched forth his hands</i>
adfligeret quosdam de ecclesia	<i>to vex certain of the church. And</i>
occidit autem Iacobum	<i>he killed James, the brother of</i>
fratrem Iohannis gladio.	<i>John with the sword.</i>

En aquel mismo tiempo el rey Herodes echó mano a algunos de la iglesia para maltratarles. Y mató a espada a Jacobo, hermano de Juan. *[same text]*

Aldi hartan, Herodes erregea eliz elkarteko batzuei gogor erasotzen hasi zen. Santiago, Joanen anaia, ezpataz hilarazi zuen. *[same text]*

Ver ce temps-là, le roi Hérode se mit à persécuter quelques-un de membres de l'Église. Il fit mourir par l'épée Jacques, frère de Jean. *[same text]*

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John with the sword.

Um dieselbige Zeit legte der König Herodes die Hände an, etliche von der Gemeinde, sie zu peinigen. Er tötete aber Jakobus, den Bruder des Johannes, mit dem Schwert. *[same text]*

Before this death the Apostle journeyed,
preaching the word to unbelievers.
Returning, unheeded,
to die in Jerusalem –
a truth beyond Gospel.

Jacobus, filius Zebedaei, frate Iohannis, *James, son of Zebedee, brother of John, at*
Hic Spaniae et occidentalia loca praedicat, *that time preached in Spain and the western*
foy el o primeiro que preegou en Galizia. *places, He was the first to preach in Galicia.*

Herod rots on a borrowed throne,
while the saint is translated
to Heaven and Spain,
the body taken at night from the tomb,
the stone of the tomb becoming the boat
that carries him back ad extremis terrarum,
back to the land that denied him in life.

Huius beatissimi apostoli *The sacred bones of the blessed*
sacra ossa ad Hispanias translata; *apostle taken to Spain*

Et despois que o rrey Erodes mādou *After King Herod killed him in*
matar en Iherusalem, trouxerō o corpo *Jerusalem, his disciples took the*
del os diçipolos por mar a Galiza *body by sea to Galicia.*



From Jerusalem to Finisterre,
from the heart of the world
to the end of the land in a boat made of stone,
without rudder or sail.
Guided by grace to the Galician shore.

abandonnant à la Providence *Abandoning to Providence*
la soin de la sepulture, (5) *the care of the tomb.*

O ajutor omnium seculorum, *O judge of all the world,*
O decus apostolorum, *O glory of the apostles,*
O lus clara galicianorum, *O clear light of Galicia,*
O avocate peregrinorum, *O defender of pilgrims,*
Jacobe, suplantatur viciorum *James, destroyer of sins,*
Solve nostrum *deliver us*
Cathenes deli`torum *from evil and lead us*
E duc a salutum portum. *to safe harbour.*

At night on Lebredon
by Iria Flavia
the hermit Pelayo
at prayer and alone
saw in the heavens
a ring of bright stars
shining like beacons
over the plain
and as in Bethlehem
the Magi were guided
the hermit was led
by this holy sign
for this was the time
given to Spain
for St. James to be found
after eight hundred years
in Compostella, by the field of stars.

Herr Santiagu *Holy St James*
Grot Sanctiagu *Great St James*
Eultreya esuseya *God help us,*
Deius aia nos. *now and evermore.*

The insistent discords of the second movement reflect both the hardships of the road, keenly felt by this time after some initial euphoria in Roncesvalles, and the composer's own sense of discomfort on visiting Burgos. The music trudges uneasily through this most awkward part of the journey, stopping regularly to recover breath and ease feet. There are stern warnings of human mischief and inhuman devilry, interspersed with musings on the mystical nature of the Saint's translation. Robbery, lynching and illness are the least of a pilgrim's problems; for just as the Saint can take the form of a pilgrim, so can the devil himself take the form of a Saint. As the laments and the warnings subside, the movement concludes with a line from Psalm 61, delivered in desolate, motionless tones from the lower voices: 'A finibus terrae ad te clamavi' - From the end of the earth I cry to you.

2. Burgos

Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal,
The devil waits at the side of the road.
We trust in words and remnants, prayers and bones.

We know that the world is a lesson
As the carved apostles in the Puerta Alta
Dividing the damned and the saved are a lesson.
We beat our hands against the walls of heaven.

St. Julian of Cuenca,
Santa Casilda, pray for us.

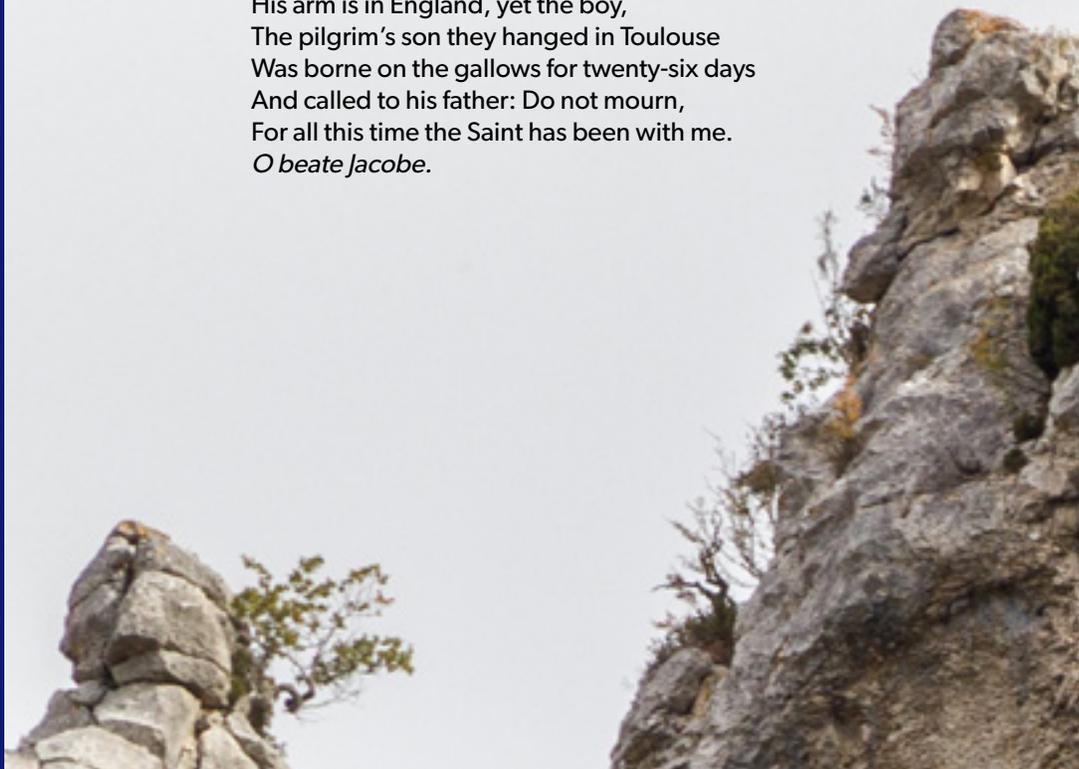
Remember the pilgrim robbed in Pamplona,
Cheated of silver the night his wife died;
Remember the son of the German pilgrim
Hanged as a thief at the gates of the town,
Hanged at the word of an innkeeper's daughter.

Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal,
The devil waits at the side of the road.
We trust in words and remnants, prayers and bones.

Santiago Peregrino: [Santiago Pilgrim]

His arm is in England, his jaw in Italy
And yet he works wonders.
The widower, the boy on the gallows –
He did not fail them.
One given a horse on the road by a stranger,
One kept alive for twenty-six days,
Unhurt on a gallows for twenty-six days.

His jaw is in Italy, yet he speaks.
The widower robbed in Pamplona:
Told by the Saint how the thief
Fell from the roof of a house to his death.
His arm is in England, yet the boy,
The pilgrim's son they hanged in Toulouse
Was borne on the gallows for twenty-six days
And called to his father: Do not mourn,
For all this time the Saint has been with me.
O beate Jacobe.



Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal.
We are sick of body, worthy of hell.

The apostles in the Puerta Alta
Have seen a thousand wonders;
The stone floor is worn with tears,
With ecstasies and lamentations.
We beat our hands against the walls of heaven.

Santiago Peregrino: [Santiago Pilgrim]

The devil waits in a turn in the wind
In a closing door in an empty room.
A voice at night, a waking dream.

Traveller, be wary of strangers,
Sometimes the Saint takes the form of a pilgrim,
Sometimes the devil the form of a saint.

Pray to the Saints and the Virgen del Camino,
To save you as she saved the man from Lyon
Who was tricked on the road by the deceiver,
Tricked by the devil in the form of St. James
And who killed himself from fear of hell;

The devil cried out and claimed his soul.
Weeping, his companions prayed.
Saint and Virgin heard the prayer
And turned his wound into a scar,
From mercy they gave the dead man life.

Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal,
We are sick of body, worthy of hell.

We beat our hands against the walls of heaven
And are not heard.

We pray for miracles and are given stories;
Bread, and are given stones.

We write our sins on parchment
To cast upon his shrine
In hope they will burn.

We pray to St. Julian of Cuenca,
To St. Amaro the Pilgrim,
To Santa Casilda,
To San Millan and the Virgin of the Road.
We pray to Santiago.

We know that the world is a lesson
As the carved apostles in the Puerta Alta
Dividing the damned and the saved are a lesson.
We pray the watching saints will help us learn.

*Ora pro nobis, Jacobe,
A finibus terrae ad te clamavi.*

*[Pray for us, St James,
From the end of the earth I cry to you.]*



Joby Talbot describes the third movement as a 'Lux Aeterna'; and like the interior of the magnificent Cathedral of Leon, it is bathed in light. The journey is more than half complete, the pain barrier has been crossed and the pilgrim's worries have indeed been sloughed off. A mediaeval French refrain, an ode to the sun in the key of C minor, punctuates simple observations of land traversed and hardships overcome. As with the previous movement, there is a steady, almost hypnotic walking pulse, but the steps have lost their heaviness. By the end of the movement the verses have arrived in the relative major, fused with the refrain which retains its original key. Mystical events are again spoken of, but this time with no sense of danger. Even the relentless sun, though it may dazzle, does not burn.



3. Leon

Li soleus qui en moi luist est mes deduis,
Et Dieus est mon conduis.

[The sun that shines within me is my joy, and God is my guide.]

We have walked
In Jakobsland:
Over river and sheep track,
By hospice and hermit's cave.
We sleep on the earth and dream of the road,
We wake to the road and we walk.
Wind from the hills
Dry as the road,
Sun overhead,
Too bright for the eye.

Rumours of grace on the road,
Of wonders:
The miracles of Villasirga,
The Virgin in the apple tree.
The Apostle on horseback –
A journey of days in one night.
God knows we have walked
In Jakobsland:

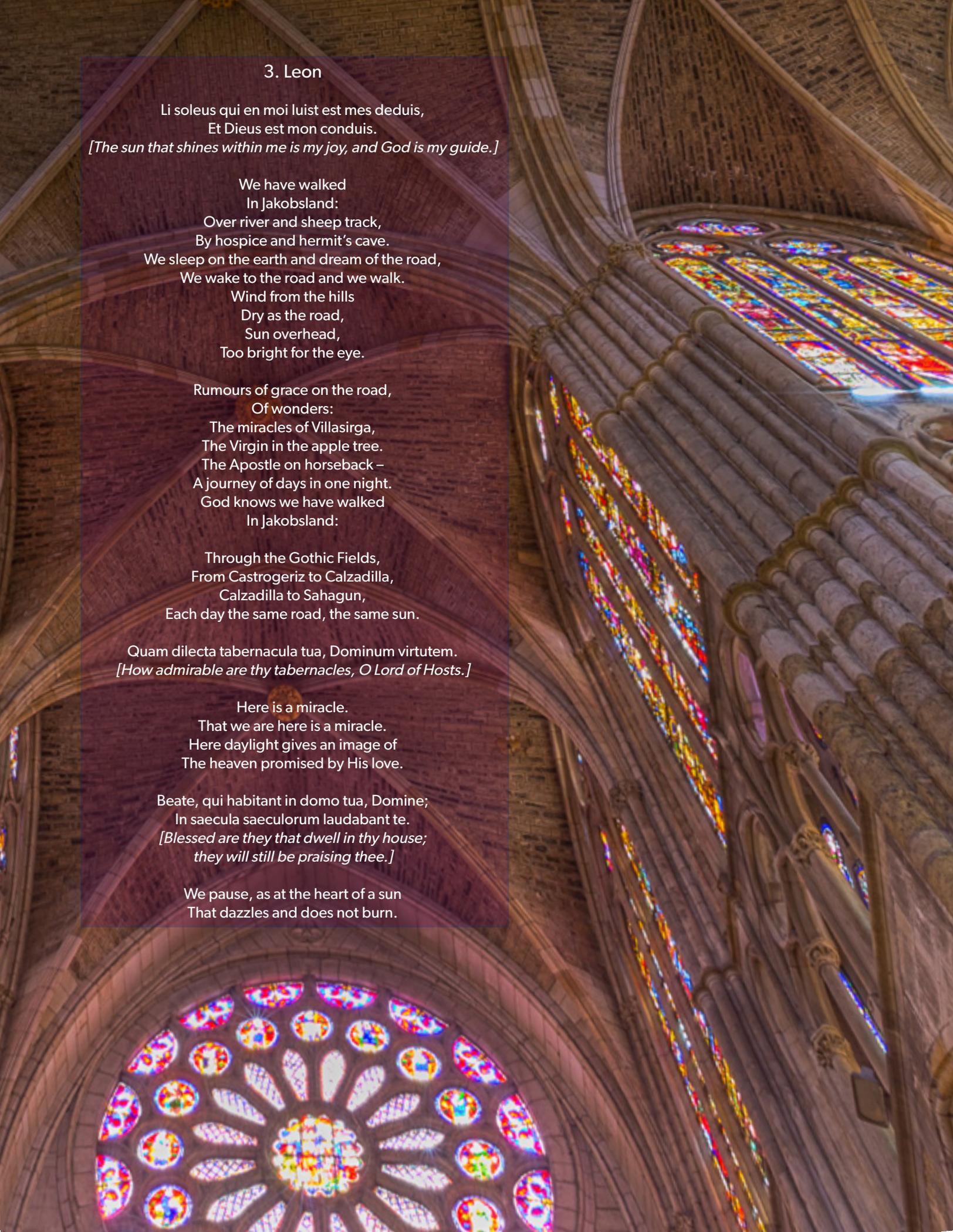
Through the Gothic Fields,
From Castrogeriz to Calzadilla,
Calzadilla to Sahagun,
Each day the same road, the same sun.

Quam dilecta tabernacula tua, Dominum virtutem.
[How admirable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts.]

Here is a miracle.
That we are here is a miracle.
Here daylight gives an image of
The heaven promised by His love.

Beate, qui habitant in domo tua, Domine;
In saecula saeculorum laudabant te.
*[Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;
they will still be praising thee.]*

We pause, as at the heart of a sun
That dazzles and does not burn.



Meanwhile in Galicia the temperature cools, the altitude rises and the rain falls. Towns pass by like shadows as the road seems to climb and climb, though Leon's contented mood lingers. There seems no doubt that the journey will end, and at the first sight of Santiago, miles down from the summit of Monte de Gozo, the music initially draws inward, before bursting out in an explosion of joy. The pilgrim's hymn is heard again, performed with the reverence and reflection of one who has finished such a long journey, and is quickly transformed into a spring revel from the *Carmina Burana*.

Path of Miracles, like so many pilgrimages, does not finish in Santiago. The journey to Finisterre, to where the walls of heaven are 'thin as a curtain', has a reflective, epilogic tone, a benign hangover from the party in Santiago. Here the pilgrim's hymn is heard for a final time, now in English, endlessly repeating and disappearing over the horizon.

4. Santiago

The road climbs through changing land.
Northern rains fall
On the deepening green of the slopes of the valley,
Storms break the summer's heat;
At Foncebadon a pass can be lost,
In one night, to the snow.

The road climbs for days through the highlands of Bierzo,
to the grassland and rocks
of the Valcarce valley.
White broom and scrub-oak,
Laburnum and gorse
Mark the bare hills
Beside the road.

At O Cebreiro, mountains.
The road follows the ridgetop
By meadows of fern, by fields of rye.

By Fonfria del Camino, by Triacastela.
Towns are shadows
The road leaves behind.
It moves over the slate hills
Palas do Rei. Potomarin.
The names are shadows.

Then, from the stream at Lavacolla
To the foot of Monte de Gozo,
A morning;
From the foot of Monte de Gozo
To the summit of Monte de Gozo
The road climbs,
Before the longed-for final descent
To Santiago.

Herr Santiagu
Grot Sanctiagu
Eultreya esuseya
Deius aia nos.

*[Holy St James,
Great St James,
God help us,
now and evermore]*



Ver redit optatum *Longed-for spring*
Cum gaudio, *returns, with joy,*
Flore decoratum *adorned with*
Purpureo; *shining flowers.*
Aves edunt cantus *The birds sing so sweetly,*
Quam dulciter, *the woods burst into leaf,*
Cantus est amoenus *there is pleasant song*
Totaliter. *on every side.*

Jacobo dat parium *The whole world freely gives*
Omnis mundus gratis *thanks to James;*
Ob cuius remedium *through his sacrifice,*
Miles pietatis *he, the warrior of godliness, is a*
Cunctorum presidium *great defense*
Est ad vota satis. *to all through their prayers.*

O beate Jacobe *O blessed James,*
Virtus nostra vere *truly our strength,*
Nobis hostes remove *take our enemies from us and*
Tuos ac tuere *protect your people, and cause*
Ac devotos adibe *us, your faithful servants, to*
Nos tibi placere. *please you.*

Jacobo propicio *James, let us hope*
Veniam speramus *for pardon through*
Et quas ex obsequio *your favor, and*
Merito debemus *let us give the worthy praise,*
Patri tam eximio *which we rightfully owe*
Dignes laudes demus. *to so excellent a father.*

At the Western edge of the world
We pray for our sins to fall from us
As chains from the limbs of penitents.

We have walked out of the lives we had
And will return to nothing, if we live,
Changed by the journey, face and soul alike.

We have walked out of our lives
To come to where the walls of heaven
Are thin as a curtain, transparent as glass,

Where the Apostle spoke the holy words,
Where in death he returned, where God is close,
Where saints and martyrs mark the road.

Santiago, primus ex apostolis,
Defender of pilgrims, warrior for truth,
Take from our backs the burdens of this life,

What we have done, who we have been;
Take them as fire takes the cloth
They cast into the sea at Finisterre.

Holy St James, great St. James,
God help us now and evermore.

Robert Dickinson



Sophie Amelkin is an NYC based artist who's career includes classical, choral, musical theater and rock. In the spring of 2021, Sophie was a semi-finalist in the American Traditions Vocal Competition. When not singing with Skylark, Sophie is performing on tour in the US and Europe. Recent theatrical roles include Vi Petty (The Buddy Holly Story) for which Sophie also played keys, and her New York City theatrical debut playing the title role in the new musical My Princess Diana as a benefit for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. Other recent stage appearances include a recital of Ladino and Yiddish art song (Minneapolis), and appearances with Skål Chamber Collective. Sophie has been seen on the regional operatic stage as Despina (Cosi fan tutte), St. Teresa of Avila (Four Saints in Three Acts), Bianca (La Rondine), and The Witch (Hansel und Gretel).



Soprano Fiona Gillespie sings with professional chamber and choral ensembles, tours with her Celtic folk band, The Chivalrous Crickets, and produces recordings and events with her early music/folk crossover ensemble, Makaris. Commercial releases: Wisps in the Dell (2019), Tam Lin (2021), The Galant David Rizzio (2022) and A Chivalrous Cricketmas (Nov 2022). Upcoming featured appearances include Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra, The Baroque Orchestra of Colorado, and Choral Arts Philadelphia. Fiona became a mother in May 2022, and is lately re-familiarizing herself with world capitals, which she commits to memory about every 5 years, and forgets half of in the interim.



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



Soprano Savannah Porter's recent appearances include the title role in Handel's Theodora, Pamina in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte, Adele in J. Strauss' Die Fledermaus, and Zémire in André Grétry's Zémire et Azor with Brigham Young University's Opera Theatre. Savannah was the Utah District winner of the 2019 Metropolitan Opera National Council Award Competition, among many other competitions. She has also sung two seasons with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, under the direction of Joshua Habermann, and performed with the National Chorus of Korea's American Soloist Ensemble directed by EJ Yoon. Savannah loves traveling, reading fantasy books, and participating in escape rooms.



Soprano Janet Stone's first musical exploration was at age four, when she would sing "Row, row, row your boat" repetitively, at increasingly higher keys, to her parents' chagrin. Located in Boston, Janet sings with multiple professional ensembles, including Skylark Ensemble, Ensemble Altera, and The Bach Project. She enjoys working with composers, and has premiered works by Patricia Van Ness, Elena Ruehr, and others. She served as section leader and featured soloist at Trinity Church, Boston for seven years. In her free time, Janet is training to be a professional cat lady. You can follow her feline friend on Instagram @obiewancatnobi.



Elena Williamson knew she wanted to be a professional musician by the age of 10. She has very supportive musician parents who helped guide her through music schools, career choices and endless papers! Elena has done it all, playing cello for a President, conducting and prepping choruses alongside Esa Pekka Salonen and Lorin Maazel, singing backup for Bjork, being a singing chicken with the NY Phil's production of the Cunning Little Vixen. Logan and Catalina, her 2 children have seen their mom in countless productions and shows but enjoy attending rock concerts with her most. Favorites: Foo Fighters, Muse, U2 and Coldplay.



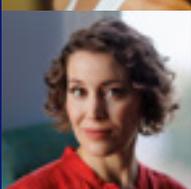
Praised for having "the voice of an angel," mezzo-soprano and contemporary vocalist Carrie Cheron defies the definition of genre. She has performed as a soloist with and as an ensemble member of such groups as the Boston Baroque, the Handel + Haydn Society, the American Classical Orchestra, Arcadia Players, 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



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



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



Hailed as "astonishing" (Gramophone) and "as good as they come" (MusicWeb International), mezzo-soprano Clare McNamara brings her versatility to a wide variety of early and new repertoire throughout the United States and abroad. One of Skylark's longest-standing members, she has maintained affiliations as a soloist and ensemble member with groups such as Handel+Haydn Society, Cut Circle, Lorelei Ensemble, The Boston Camerata, the Staunton Music Festival, and the Washington Bach Consort. Clare's pandemic time has included getting married over Zoom, learning to appreciate weeding, and teaching herself how to nap.

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



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



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



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



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



Eric Alatorre is the Bass best associated with *Chanticleer*, where he was a member for nearly 30 years, and is well known for his deep and rich voice. During his tenure with *Chanticleer* he saw the ensemble grow from a group known best in the United States to an internationally acclaimed ensemble. He has performed in many of the world's major concert venues on 6 continents, and made nearly 60 recordings which have garnered 3 Grammy awards. Since then he continues to be engaged with many exceptional groups such as *Seraphic Fire*, *Skylark*, and *Conspirare*.



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



Michael Hawes is a Bass-Baritone Singer and Trumpet Player living in Chicago. He has sung recently with *Clarion Choir*, *Crossing Choir*, *Seraphic Fire*, *Artefact Ensemble*, the *American Soloists Ensemble* along with *Skylark* and others. A Grammy nominated soloist, you can hear this recording of *Benedict Sheehan's* *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* on all streaming platforms. As a trumpet player, Michael has performed with the *Detroit Symphony*, *Grand Rapids Symphony*, *National Symphony of Taiwan*, and others. In his spare time, you can find Michael in *Lake Michigan*, catching frisbees thrown by his wife *Nini*, with their son, *Felix*. - michaelhawesmusic.com.



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



Dr. Christopher Jackson is the Artistic Director and Conductor of *The Bach Choir of Bethlehem* - America's oldest Bach choir, founded in 1898. He has worked for 15 years as a conductor, educator, and scholar, and remains an active professional choral singer and soloist. He also serves as *Skylark's* Director of Education. In that position, he helped design free materials for music educators across the country to use for virtual music-making. He has performed with GRAMMY Award-Winning ensemble, *Roomful of Teeth*, the *Santa Fe Desert Chorale*, *Artefact Ensemble*, *Les Canards Chantants*, and *Bach Vespers* at *Holy Trinity Lutheran*, in New York City. He believes his homemade chicken noodle soup is better than yours.





about skylark

Three-time GRAMMY®-nominee Skylark, “the cream of the American crop” (BBC Radio 3), is a premier vocal ensemble of leading American vocal soloists, chamber musicians, and music educators. Skylark’s dramatic performances have been described as “gripping” (The Times of London), “exquisite...thrilling” (Gramophone Magazine), and “awe-inspiring” (Boston Music Intelligencer).

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

Since its founding in 2011 in Atlanta and Boston, Skylark has branched out to perform its dynamic programs in museums, concert halls, and churches across the United States. Skylark made its international debut in March 2018 at St. John’s Smith Square, London, as part of the UK choir Tenebrae’s Holy Week Festival. The Times of London declared that Skylark was “the highlight” of the festival that included some of the UK’s leading choirs, including The Tallis Scholars, Polyphony, Tenebrae, and the Gabrieli Consort.

A not-for-profit entity with a passion for music education, Skylark performs educational outreach programs with high school and college students across the United States during its concert tours.

about our artistic director



Three-time GRAMMY®-nominee MATTHEW GUARD is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and thoughtful programmers in American choral music. Praised for his “catalyzing leadership” (Q2/WQXR) and “musically creative and intellectually rich” programming (Opera Obsession), Matthew is passionate about communicating something unique in each concert and recording. He scours the world of available repertoire for each program, exhaustively researches each piece, and crafts concerts and printed programs that captivate audiences with their hidden connections and seamless artistry. Matthew is also an active arranger and editor of scores, and has just completed work on a new edition of Rachmaninoff’s *All-Night Vigil*, which he premiered with Skylark in June 2022.

support our mission

Even the best musical groups in America can only count on ticket sales to cover 50% of operating costs. We rely on your generous donations to help us with the balance of our operating budget. As a supporter, you ensure that we continue to:

- * 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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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Skylark's spellbinding version of the Charles Dickens Classic
DECEMBER 14-17

In Skylark's signature Christmas concert, Skylark again partners with master storyteller Sarah Walker to share our musical interpretation of *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens. Working from the original text abridged by Artistic Director Matthew Guard, Composer Benedict Sheehan has created a new concert-length story score that weaves familiar Christmas carols into the fabric of the Dickens story. Bringing timeless carols of the season together with the beloved characters of Charles Dickens creates an unforgettable new version of a Christmas classic.



LA VIE EN ROSE

A visit to Paris for Valentine's weekend
FEBRUARY 17-19

Few cities inspire the romantic imagination like the City of Lights. Join a chamber group of Skylarks to celebrate romantic music inspired by the French capital. In our first collaboration with GRAMMY®-nominated pianist Joy Schreier, *La Vie en Rose* will allow our Skylark artists to showcase their remarkable versatility as vocal soloists. From beautiful chansons by Debussy and Fauré, to jazz classics from American songwriter Cole Porter, to French singers Edith Piaf and Charles Trenet, and perhaps even a touch of Broadway, *La Vie en Rose* promises to be a charming musical bon bon for Valentine's Day weekend.



SAUNTERING SONGS

A love letter to wanderlust
APRIL 20-22

A love letter to wanderlust, this World Premiere commission weaves together art songs, choral music, and literature into an expansive cantata on the theme of walking. Influences from rock, folk, and musical theater shine in a lyrical and evocative score by composer/librettist Nell Shaw Cohen (*It's a Long Way, Transform the World with Beauty*), marrying Skylark's voices with an instrumental quartet. From Walt Whitman to the present day, *Sauntering Songs* celebrates diverse characters who search for freedom and fulfillment through subversive journeys on foot.



CLEAR VOICES IN THE DARK

Featuring Francis Poulenc's *Figure Humaine*
MAY 29-JUNE 4

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