



presents

A Skylark Christmas



A Skylark Christmas

We are so pleased to have you with us this evening! To help us create an environment of contemplative meditation, we kindly ask you to silence your cellular phones and offer your applause only at the conclusion of the program.

Prologue

Corde Natus ex Parentis
Solo: Fiona Gillespie Jackson Plainchant

Prophecy

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 1 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) Hugo Distler

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree
Solo: Jessica Petrus Elizabeth Poston

Annunciation

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 2 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) Hugo Distler

Ave Virgo Sanctissima Francisco Guerrero

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 3 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) Hugo Distler

Solo: Clare McNamara

Hymn a la Vierge Pierre Villette

Solo: Sarah Moyer

Birth

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 4 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) Hugo Distler

Nesciens Mater Jean Mouton

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 5 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) Hugo Distler

Away in a Manger arr. Reginald Jacques

Magi

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 6 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) Hugo Distler

Videntes Stellam Francis Poulenc

Rejoice

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 7 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) Hugo Distler

In dulci júbilo a8 Hieronymus Praetorius

Skylark Artists

Soprano: Fiona Gillespie Jackson, Sarah Moyer, Jessica Petrus

Alto: Carolyn Guard, Clare McNamara, Megan Roth

Tenor: John Cox, Alexander Nishibun

Bass: Christopher Jackson, Andrew Padgett

Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

Program Introduction

We are pleased to welcome you this evening to one of this year's performances of *A Skylark Christmas*. The Christmas story has been perhaps the richest source of inspiration for Western choral music since harmony first emerged from chant, and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to celebrate this musical tradition with you.

The heart of this evening's program is a journey through select excerpts of the Christmas story from the King James Bible, enhanced and celebrated through timeless carols. At the beginning of each portion of the program, we feature an excerpt from Hugo Distler's *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*. Composed in 1933, this large-scale choral work is a Christmas cantata for choir and soloists. Throughout the work, Distler intersperses seven variations of the classic Christmas hymn *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen* ("Lo, how a Rose 'ere blooming"). This fantasia of sorts displays Distler's unique style: heavily influenced by the chorales of Bach and the word-painting of Heinrich Schütz, but with a modern sense of rhythmic and harmonic experimentation. Tonight we will share all of these variations, interspersing a diverse tapestry of other carols, from ancient polyphony to works from the 20th century.

As always, I would urge you to follow along with the texts and translations provided – before contemplating the timeless texts, most of these pieces are beautiful; after engaging with the texts, many are thrilling and profound.

Above all, we hope that tonight's music will move you, and that we can help you experience the joy and beauty of the holiday season. Thank you sincerely for coming; we are honored to have the chance to inspire you.

-Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

Program texts and translations

Corde Natus ex Parentis – Plainchant

Corde natus ex parentis Ante mundi exordium A et O cognominatus Ipse fons et clausula Omnium quae sunt, fuerunt Quaeque post futura sunt Saeculorum saeculis.	Of the Father's love begotten, Ere the worlds began to be, He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He, Of the things that are, that have been, And that future years shall see, Evermore and evermore!
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O beatus ortus ille Virgo cum puerpera Edidit nostram salutem Feta Sancto Spiritu Et puer redemptor orbis Os sacratum protulit Saeculorum saeculis.	O ye heights of heaven adore Him; Angel hosts, His praises sing; Powers, dominions, bow before Him, And extol our God and King! Let no tongue on earth be silent, Every voice in concert sing, Evermore and evermore!
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Psallat altitudo caeli Psallite omnes angeli Quidquid est virtutis usquam Psallat in laudem Dei Nulla linguarum silescat Vox et omnis consonet Saeculorum saeculis.	O that birth forever blessed, When the virgin, full of grace, By the Holy Ghost conceiving, Bare the Saviour of our race; And the Babe, the world's Redeemer, First revealed His sacred face, Evermore and evermore!
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Tibi, Christe, sit cum Patre Hagioque Pneumate Hymnus, decus, laus perennis Gratiarum actio Honor, virtus, victoria Regnum aeternaliter Saeculorum saeculis.	Christ, to Thee with God the Father, And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee, Hymn and chant with high thanksgiving, And unwearied praises be: Honor, glory, and dominion, And eternal victory, Evermore and evermore!
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Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 1 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) – Hugo Distler (1908-194

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen Aus einer Wurzel zart, Als uns die Alten sungen, Von Jesse kam die Art Und hat ein Blümlein bracht Mitten im kalten Winter Wohl zu der halben Nacht.	Lo, how an ever-blooming rose Has sprung from a tender root, As the ancestors, those from Jesse's lineage, predicted, And has brought forth a blossom In the middle of the cold winter, Likely in the middle of the night.
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Jesus Christ the Apple Tree – Elizabeth Poston (1905-1987)

The tree of life my soul hath seen
Laden with fruit and always green
The trees of nature fruitless be
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought
And pleasure dearly I have bought
I missed of all but now I see
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel
By faith I know but ne'er can tell
The glory which I now can see
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

I'm weary with my former toil
Here I will sit and rest a while
Under the shadow I will be
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive
It keeps my dying faith alive
Which makes my soul in haste to be
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 2 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) – Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Das Röslein, das ich meine,
Davon Jesaias sagt,
Ist Maria, die reine,
Die uns das Blümlein bracht.
Aus Gottes ew'gem Rat
Hat sie ein Kind geboren
Und blieb ein' reine Magd.

The little rose to which I am referring,
Of which Isaiah foretold,
Is Mary, the Virgin,
Who brought the blossom to us.
With God's eternal blessing
She has born a child
And remains a pure maiden.

Ave Virgo Sanctissima – Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599)

Ave virgo sanctissima
Dei mater piissima
Maris stella clarissima
Salve semper gloriosa
Margarita pretiosa
Sicut liliū formosa
Nitens olens velut rosa.

Hail, Holy Virgin,
Most blessed Mother of God,
Bright star of the sea.
Hail, ever glorious,
Precious pearl,
Lovely as the lily,
Beautiful and perfumed as the rose.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 3 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) – Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Solo Meine Seele erhebt Gott, den Herren,
Und mein Geist freut sich Gottes,
Meines Heilandes, denn er hat
Die Niedrigkeit seiner Magd angesehen.
Siehe, von nun an
Werden mich preisen alle Kindeskind,
Denn er hat große Dinge ab nun getan,
Der da mächtig ist und des Name heilig ist.
Seine Barmherzigkeit währet immer für ind für,
Bei denen, die ihn fürchten.

Choir Wir bitten dich von Herzen,
Du edle Königin,
Durch deines Sohnes Schmerzen,
Wann wir fahren dahin
Aus diesem Jammertal.
Du wollest uns geleiten
Bis in der Engel Saal.

I lift up my soul to God, the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
For He saw the commonness
In the face of His maiden.
Henceforth all generations
Shall give me praise,
For He who is mighty lavished
Great things on me, and His name is holy.
His mercy will last for ever and ever
For those who fear Him.

We entreat you from our hearts,
O noble Queen,
Through your Son's sufferings,
As we move along
Out of this vale of tears.
May you accompany us
All the way to the Angel's realm.

Hymn a la Vierge – Pierre Villette (1926-1998)

O toute belle, Vierge Marie,
Votre âme trouve en Dieu le parfait amour;
Il vous revêt du manteau de la Grâce
Comme une fiancée parée de ses bijoux.
Alleluia.

Je vais chanter ta louange, Seigneur,
Car tu as pris soin de moi,
Car to m'as enveloppée du voile de l'innocence.

Vous êtes née avant les collines,
O sagesse de Dieu,
Porte du Salut,
Heureux celui qui marche dans vos traces
Qui apprête son coeur
A la voix de vos conseils. Alleluia.

Je vais chanter ta louange, Seigneur,
Car tu m'as faite, avant le jour,
Car tu m'as fait précéder
Le jaillissement des sources.

Avant les astres vous étiez présente,
Mère du Créateur,
Au profond du ciel;
Quand Dieu fixait les limites du monde
Vous partagiez son coeur
Etant à l'oeuvre avec lui. Alleluia.

O toute belle Vierge Marie.

O fairest Virgin Mary,
Your soul finds in the Lord perfect love;
He clothes you in robes of grace
Like a bride attired with jewels.
Alleluia.

I will sing thy praise, O Lord,
For thou has looked after me,
And covered me with the veil of innocence.

You were born before the hills,
O wisdom of the Lord,
Gate of Redemption,
Blessed is he who walks in your steps,
Who tunes his heart
To the counsels of your voice. Alleluia.

I will sing thy praise, O Lord,
For thou has made me, before dawn,
For thou has made me precede
The gushing forth of springs

Before the stars you were there,
Mother of the Creator,
In the highest heaven;
When God was setting the limits of the world
You shared his love
As you labored with him. Alleluia.

O fairest Virgin Mary.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 4 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) – Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Das Blümelein so kleine,
Das duftet uns so süß;
Mit seinem hellen Scheine
Vertreibt's die Finsternis.
Wahr Mensch und wahrer Gott,
Hilft uns aus allem Leide,
Rettet von Sünd und Tod.

The blossom so small,
So fragrant, and so sweet;
With its bright light
Banishes the darkness.
True man and true God,
Lead us out of our sorrows,
Rescue us from sin and death.

Nesciens Mater – Jean Mouton (1459-1522)

Nesciens mater virgo virum	Knowing no man, the Virgin mother
Peperit sine dolore	Bore, without pain,
Salvatorem saeculorum	The Savior of the world.
Ipsum regem angelorum	Him, the king of angels,
Sola virgo lactabat	Only the Virgin suckled,
Ubere de caelo pleno.	Breasts filled by heaven.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 5 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) – Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Die Hirten zu der Stunden,	The shepherds, at that hour,
Machten sich auf die Fahrt.	Started out on their journey
Das Kindlein sie bald funden	They soon found the little Child
Mit seiner Muter zart	With His frail young Mother.
Die engel sangen schon;	The angels sang sweetly,
Sie lobten Gott den Herren	They praised God, the Lord,
In seinem höchsten Thron.	On His highest throne.

Away in a Manger – arr. Reginald Jacques (1894-1969)

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me for ever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there.

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 6 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) – Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

Lob, Ehr sei Gott dem Vater,	Praise, honor to God, the Father,
Dem Sohn und heiligen Geist.	To the Son and the Holy Ghost.
Maria, Gottes Mutter,	Mary, Mother of God,
Dein Hilf an uns beweis.	Manifest your willingness to help us,
Und bitt Dein liebes Kind,	And entreat Your beloved Child,
Daß es uns woll behüten,	That he watch over us,
Verzeihen unser Sünd.	And forgive us of our sin.

Videntes Stellam – Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Videntes stellam Magi
Gavisi sunt gaudio magno
Et intrantes domum
Obtulerunt Domino
Aurum, thus, et myrrham.

Seeing the star, the wise men
Were overwhelmed with great joy:
And entering the dwelling,
They offered to the Lord
Gold, frankincense, and myrrh

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen, var. 7 (from *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte*) – Hugo Distler (1908-1942)

So singen wir all Amen,
Das heißt: nun wird es wahr
Was wir begehren allsammen.
O Jesu, hilf uns dar
In deines Vaters Reich,
Drin wollen wir dich loben.
O Gott, uns das verleih!

So sing we all Amen,
Which means: that what we all long for
Will now come true.
O Jesus, help us enter into
Your Father's Kingdom,
Where we want to praise You.
O God, grant us our wish.

In dulci jubilo a8 – Hieronymus Praetorius (1560-1629)

In dulci jubilo,
Nun singet und seid froh!
Unsers Herzens Wonne liegt
In praeseptio;
Und leuchtet als die Sonne
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!

In sweet joy,
Now sing with hearts aglow!
Our Delight and Pleasure lies
In a manger;
Like Sunshine is our treasure
In the mother's lap.
Thou art Alpha and Omega!

O Jesu parvule
Nach dir ist mir so weh!
Tröst' mir mein Gemüte,
O puer optime
Durch alle deine Güte,
O princeps gloriae
Trabe me post te!

O tiny Jesus
For thee I long always!
Comfort my heart's blindness,
O best of boys
With all Thy loving kindness,
O prince of glory
Draw me after Thee!

O Patris caritas!
O Nati lenitas!
Wir wären all verloren (verdorben)
Per nostra crimina
So hat er uns erworben
Coelorum gaudia
Eia, wären wir da!

O love of the Father!
O gentleness of the Son!
Deeply were we stained
Through our sins
But Thou for us hast gained
The joy of heaven
O that we were there!

Ubi sunt gaudia
Nirgend mehr denn da?
Da die Engel singen
Nova cantica,
Und die Schellen klingen
In regis curia.
Eia, wären wir da!

Where are joys
In any place but there?
There are angels singing
New songs,
And there the bells are ringing
In the king's court.
O that we were there!

Artist Biographies

Soprano **FIONA GILLESPIE JACKSON**, described as "brilliant" by San Francisco Classical Voice, sings as a soloist and professional chorister with ensembles across the country. Recently, she has appeared as a soloist with The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, The Lehigh University Philharmonic, The Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, The Denton Bach Society, and the Orchestra of New Spain. In addition to Skylark Vocal Ensemble, Fiona sings with Kinnara Ensemble, The South Dakota Chorale, Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati, and The Crossing. Fiona is a founding member and soprano with the Earthshine Consort based in Pennsylvania and New York, and a co-founder of the Lycoming Baroque Choir and Orchestra. She teaches voice at Lycoming College in Pennsylvania.

Soprano **SARAH MOYER** has been deemed "the kind of church singer who will rock your sacred-music world" (Boston Globe Magazine). As a soloist, she has performed Foss' *The Prairie* with Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Mozart's *Requiem*; she also "beautifully executed" (Miami Herald) the world-premier of *The Hope of Loving* by Jake Runestad with Seraphic Fire in 2015. As a chamber artist, she appears with Skylark Vocal Ensemble, Seraphic Fire, Vox Humana TX, Illumine Trio, True Concord, Berwick Chorus of Oregon Bach Festival, and will debut with Santa Fe Desert Chorale in 2016.

With a "velvety suaveness" (*New York Times*) and her "brilliant, agile soprano" (*San Diego Story*), **JESSICA PETRUS** delivers intimate performances of early and new chamber music. In 2015, Jessica made her Spoleto USA debut in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with a "crystal clear soprano" (*Post And Courier*). The *Boston Globe* cited her recent performance with Cantata Profana as "exacting and sensitive." Her 2015-16 season includes appearances with Three Notch'd Road, Scrag Mountain Music, Handel and Haydn Society, Clarion Music Society, True Concord, Lorelei Ensemble, Cantata Profana, Yale Choral Artists, and Staunton Music Festival.

Mezzo-soprano **CAROLYN GUARD** is a life-long Episcopal church musician, having begun her studies with the Royal School of Church Music at age 6. After attending the Eton Choral courses in the UK, Carolyn was a founding member of the Choral Fellow program in the Memorial Church at Harvard University. Carolyn has performed with many luminary choral conductors, including Stephen Cleobury and Sir Christopher Hogwood. Carolyn performed as a special guest artist with the Boston Camerata, and as a soloist at Durham Cathedral and St. Paul's Cathedral, London. Carolyn's decidedly non-musical degrees are from Harvard University and Emory's Goizueta Business School.

MEGAN ROTH, mezzo-soprano, recently appeared as the alto soloist in Bach's *B Minor Mass* with the Bach Chorale Singers of Lafayette, Indiana, soloist in de Falla's *El amor brujo* with the New Hampshire Music Festival, and alto soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra. Megan performs with several renowned national ensembles including Seraphic Fire, Vox Humana, Yale Choral Artists, and Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble. Upcoming performances include Meg in Adamo's *Little Women* with MetroWest Opera in Boston, and appearances with Calliope's Call, a professional art song performance group, in Bloomington and Cincinnati.

Praised for her “lushly evocative mezzo” and “attentive and precise” musicianship, **CLARE MCNAMARA** is a Boston-based soloist and chamber musician specializing in early and new music. Ensemble affiliations include Lorelei Ensemble, Handel and Haydn Society, Cut Circle, Apollo Master Chorale, and Vox Humana. Clare holds a B.A. Music from Princeton University and an M.M. in Early Music Performance, Longy School of Music of Bard College.

Conductor, musicologist, and vocalist **JOHN COX** recently completed his DMA in Conducting from the University of Illinois. While completing his MM at the University of Oregon, he was apprentice conductor of the Eugene Symphony. He is currently Director of Performance and Lecturer in Music at Union College in Schenectady, New York.

Kentuckian tenor **ALEXANDER NISHIBUN** is praised for his vibrant instrument and sensitive stage presence, having been characterized as “a delight...” and “capable of stealing the show with a gesture” (Portland Press Herald). He performs with many Boston-based ensembles including Music at Marsh Chapel, the Copley Singers, Trinity Church, and Cappella Clausura. He holds his M.M. from the New England Conservatory of Music.

Dr. **CHRISTOPHER JACKSON**, bass, serves as the Director of Choral Activities at Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and the Lycoming Baroque Choir and Orchestra. In addition to conducting, Christopher sings both as a soloist and as a chorister with professional ensembles across the country. He received his degrees in conducting from The University of North Texas and Westminster Choir College, and in vocal performance from Oklahoma State University.

Praised by the Boston Music Intelligencer for his “powerful baritone and impressive vocal range”, bass-baritone and hurdy-gurdyist **ANDREW PADGETT** is an accomplished interpreter of both baroque and medieval vocal and instrumental music. He has collaborated with early music luminaries including Masaaki Suzuki, Jeffrey Thomas, Nicholas McGegan, Benjamin Bagby, and Susan Hellauer, and has been featured as a soloist in concert venues worldwide such as Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, and the Esplanade Concert Hall in his hometown, Singapore. Andrew holds an M.M. in voice from UC Santa Barbara and an M.M. in Early Music, Oratorio, and Chamber Ensemble from Yale University’s Institute of Sacred Music.

A native Atlantan, Artistic Director **MATTHEW GUARD** was raised in the heyday of Robert Shaw’s reign as the “Dean of American Choral conductors” and first studied choral music under the tutelage of Shaw protégé Dr. Pamela Elrod. During his undergraduate years at Harvard University, he studied choral conducting with Dr. Jameson Marvin, while also serving as the Music Director of the Krokodiloes, Harvard’s oldest *a cappella* singing group, performing over 300 concerts on 6 continents. In 2011, after receiving his MBA from Emory University, and spending five years working as a business strategy consultant in Atlanta and Melbourne, Australia, Matthew decided to re-focus on his passion for music and founded the Skylark Vocal Ensemble. Since founding Skylark, Matthew has studied conducting with former King’s Singer and Yale Professor Emeritus Simon Carrington and Orchestral Conductor Stuart Malina. Matthew holds the firm belief that choral music sorely needs entrepreneurs who have a passion for the arts but who also understand how to make business enterprises successful.

About Skylark

The **Skylark Vocal Ensemble** is a chamber choir of professional soloists and music educators from across the United States. Formed in 2011 under the direction of Matthew Guard, Skylark has been described as “a gem... soloists who come together to create a dynamic and inspiring whole.” Skylark performs innovative programs that help reinforce the intent of the composers to communicate truths about the human condition. A not-for-profit entity, Skylark also performs educational outreach programs with students across the United States during their concert tours. Skylark’s debut album *Forgotten Dreams* is available for purchase on iTunes and CD Baby or at www.skylarkensemble.org. Skylark’s second album, *Crossing Over*, will be released in collaboration with the GRAMMY-Award winning team from the Sono Luminus label in Spring 2016.

Skylark’s mission is threefold:

- Be a unifying and enriching force by delighting audiences with profound *a cappella* choral music performed at the highest level.
- Provide a forum for world-class musicians to practice their art in an ensemble setting.
- Ensure the future of choral music in society through educational outreach, offering free admission to students and teachers of music, supporting the work of charities that further music education, and inspiring the next generation of professional choral artists.

Support our flight

Skylark is a not-for-profit organization that relies on the generosity and financial support of our community to keep our important mission alive. Skylark recently received its 501(3)(c) designation from the IRS and we would be most honored to have your support. Visit www.skylarkensemble.org, or come see us after the concert, to support Skylark today!

Skylark Organization

Matthew Guard
Artistic Director

Christopher Jackson
Educational Outreach

Sarah Moyer
Ensemble Manager

Margot Rood
Social Media

Artistic Advisory Board

Simon Carrington
Professor Emeritus, Yale University
Co-Founder, The King’s Singers

Vance George
Conductor Emeritus, San Francisco Symphony Chorus

Pamela Elrod
Director of Choral Activities, Southern Methodist University

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

Geoffrey Silver
Chorusmaster, The Washington Chorus