San Francisco Choral Society

HANDEL

HSU

ROBERT GEARY, CONDUCTOR
CALIFORNIA CHAMBER SYMPHONY

APRIL 29 & 30, 2022 | 8PM | UUSF
We are from many walks of life. We are diverse listeners, singers, players, composers, and authors gathered to be part of a musical moment that includes a world première by Chiayu Hsu and one of the great Baroque Masterpieces by Georg Frideric Händel. We are here to celebrate the creation of new music, the treasure of history, the joy and power of music and the resilience of our community. We rise together with you to sing, to listen and broaden our experience. Our time together is precious, something we understand more profoundly than we did before the pandemic. We deeply appreciate you who have chosen to share it with us.

Special thanks to the members of the New Music Committee and to Carlin and Émile Chi whose dedication to the creation of new music is measured in their generous giving of time and treasure to support the commission and world première of *To a Lost Year* by Chiayu Hsu.
ROBERT GEARY, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Robert Geary, Artistic Director of the San Francisco Choral Society since 1995, is also the founding Artistic Director of Volti, the Piedmont East Bay Children’s Choir, and the Golden Gate International Choral Festival. His multi-dimensional commitment to the choral arts over the past 40 years has led him and his choirs to national and international prominence. For the past 22 years he has led the San Francisco Choral Society to a robust position as keeper of the traditional repertoire and an innovative force in the commissioning and performance of new works for chorus and orchestra.

Geary has conducted first performances of almost 200 new compositions. He has conducted in dozens of countries; he has served as a clinician and guest conductor in the U.S., Finland, Denmark, and Singapore; and his choirs have been recognized in the United States with invitations to perform for the national conferences of Chorus America, the American Choral Directors Association, the Organization of American Kodaly Educators, and the College Music Society. His choirs have performed for radio, television, opera, symphony, and music festivals, nationally and internationally. They can be heard on many recording labels, including Other Minds, Harmonia Mundi, Koch International, Swiss International, Ablaze, and Innova. Recipient of awards for Outstanding Conductorial Achievement at the International Children’s and Youth Choir Festival (Giessen, Germany) and Artistic Interpretation at the Międzyzdroje Choral Festival (Poland), Geary has also received the KDFC Music Educator of the Year award and the Lois B. Rawlings Educational Inspiration award. On behalf of his choirs, he has received ASCAP’s national award for Adventurous Programming nine times, more than any conductor in the history of the award. Geary has degrees in Music Theory, Composition, and Political Science, and earned his graduate degree in Choral Conducting as a student of Howard Swan.

BRYAN BAKER, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Pianist and conductor Bryan Baker is in his twentieth season as Assistant Conductor and Accompanist for the San Francisco Choral Society. Baker has played solo concerts, chamber music, and accompanied vocal recitals across the United States, Europe and South America. Locally, he has performed in Davies Symphony Hall, Herbst Theater, at the Stern Grove Festival, and the Old First Concert Series. With many competition awards for contemporary music, he has also performed concertos by Beethoven, Mozart, Shostakovich, and Saint-Saëns.

Having earned bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in music, Baker served on the faculties of the San Francisco State University, Truman University in Missouri, Arizona State, Foothill College and the College of San Mateo. He maintains an active private studio, and his students have won competitions and appeared in concerts and opera productions in the Bay Area and across the country. An accomplished conductor, Baker is Artistic Director of Masterworks Chorale, and Director of Music at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, and founder and director of the chamber choir Serenade. A frequent guest conductor in the Bay Area, he often leads choral clinics, and judges choral competitions. As an actor he has appeared in Driving Miss Daisy (Boolie), You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown (Charlie), and Into the Woods (The Baker).
CHIAYU HSU

To a Lost Year
Commissioned by the San Francisco Choral Society
Dedicated to the loving memory of Barrie Alix Kleinman Chi

GEORGE FRIDERIC HÄNDEL

Dixit Dominus, HWV 232
Psalm 110

Shawnette Sulker, soprano
Shauna Fallihee, mezzo-soprano
Clifton Massey, countertenor
*Mark Bonney, tenor
*Sepp Hammer, bass

with the
California Chamber Symphony

*Debut with SFCS
Meet our Soloists

**SHAWNETTE SULKER – SOPRANO**

Acclaimed for her “heart-breaking poignancy” and “beautifully tuned soprano” by the San Francisco Chronicle and for her “enchanting vocal splendor” by the Leipziger Volkszeitung, soprano Shawnette Sulker is a sought-after artist in the United States and abroad. A consummate performer, her recent operatic roles were as Floralba (Messalina by Pallavicino) with Ars Minerva, Die Königin der Nacht (Die Zauberflöte) with Opera Modesto, and Mary Jane Bowser in an Opera San Jose workshop of Jake Heggie’s new opera Intelligence. Other roles in the soprano’s repertoire include Pip (Heggie’s Moby Dick); Zerbinetta (Ariadne auf Naxos); Cunegonde (Candide); The Visitor (Sankaram’s Formidable); Carolina (Il matrimonio segreto); Musetta (La Bohème); Susanna (Le nozze di Figaro); Lauretta (Gianni Schicchi).

On the concert stage, Ms. Sulker recently sang Villa-Lobos’ Bachianas Brasileiras with the Oakland Symphony, as soprano soloist for Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Santa Rosa Symphony, and as a solo artist for Masters of the Spiritual, which was performed at Lincoln Center. A sampling of her other concert repertoire includes Orff’s Carmina Burana; Bach’s Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen; Mozart’s Exsultate, Jubilate; Bach’s Coffee Cantata; Scarlatti’s Su le sponde del Tebro; Mozart’s Grand Mass in C minor; Fauré’s Requiem. International credits for Ms. Sulker include recording a CD with Orchestra Wellington, a recital performed at Villa Quattro Colonne in Capri, Adele throughout the Netherlands and Belgium in a tour of Die Fledermaus, a recital at Red Door Studios in Amsterdam, and orchestra concerts featuring Porgy and Bess highlights and Mendelssohn’s Psalm 42 in Leipzig’s Gewandhaus and Prague’s Smetana Hall.

The soprano has sung with such companies as the San Francisco Opera, Mark Morris Dance Group, American Bach Soloists, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Opera Memphis, Opera Fairbanks, Union Avenue Opera, Opera Naples, Pacific Opera Project, Eugene Symphony, Santa Rosa Symphony, Garden State Philharmonic, and the Natchez Opera Festival, to name a few. Upcoming engagements include singing Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Berkeley Symphony, performing Cleopatra in West Edge Opera’s production of Giulio Cesare, and being a recitalist for the A. Jess Shenson Recital Series at Stanford University.

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**SHAUNA FALLIHEE – MEZZO-SOPRANO**

Mezzo-Soprano Shauna Fallihee has the pleasure of serving Bay Area singers and audiences as a voice and movement educator and active performer. Shauna has been featured with numerous Bay Area ensembles including San Francisco Choral Society, Masterworks Chorale, San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra, Open Opera, West Bay Opera and the Old St. Mary’s Cathedral Noontime Concert Series. As an ensemble singer, Shauna has performed with American Bach Soloists, AVE (Artists’ Vocal Ensemble), Cantata Collective, and San Francisco Renaissance Voices. Deeply dedicated to the performance of new music, Shauna has performed world premieres and contemporary works with Empyrean Ensemble, Facing West Shadow Theater, NothingSet Ensemble, San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra,… (cont’d.)
Clifton Massey – Countertenor

Brooklyn based countertenor Clifton Massey was raised with a love of country & western, bluegrass, and other close-harmony singing in Dallas, TX. Frequently sought as a soloist and collaborative musician, he has participated in the Ojai Festival, Tanglewood Music Festival, Oregon Bach Festival, and the Early Music Festivals of Berkeley, Boston, Utrecht, and Leipzig. A noted specialist in music of the Baroque period, he has appeared in concert with early music luminaries including the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, Trinity Baroque Orchestra, and the American Classical Orchestra. He is an alumnus of the Grammy-award-winning group Chanticleer with whom he performed hundreds of concerts worldwide. NYC is home to many ensembles with whom he is grateful to make music often, including TENET, Clarion Choir, Voices of Ascension, Musica Sacra, Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity Lutheran, and Trinity Wall Street, a vibrant urban church where he is a core member of the ensemble. He holds a MM degree from the Indiana University Historical Performance Institute, where he studied with Paul Elliott and Paul Hillier. Recent and upcoming performances include Messiah with the New York Philharmonic, St. Matthew Passion with Dana Marsh and the choirs of Trinity Wall Street and St. Thomas Fifth Ave., Theodora at the Caramoor Festival, Anthracite Fields at Carnegie Hall, and Bach Cantatas at the Salle Bourgie in Montreal. Clifton is delighted to sing again with the San Francisco Choral Society.

Mark Bonney – Tenor

Based in London, tenor Mark Bonney enjoys a diverse career performing oratorio, opera, and choral ensemble repertoire. Recent appearances include the Evangelist in Johann Theile’s St. Matthew Passion (American Bach Soloists), Jonathan in Handel’s Saul (Dartington International Festival), the Evangelist in Bach’s St. John Passion (Westerkerk, Amsterdam), Lukas in Haydn’s The Seasons (Interlaken, Switzerland), Jephtha in Handel’s Jephtha (Iford Arts), Tamino in Mozart’s The Magic Flute (Berlin Opernfest), Parpignol in Puccini’s La bohème (Grange Park Opera), and Count Barigoule in Pauline Viardot’s Cendrillon (Wexford Opera Festival, Ireland). . . . (cont’d) . . .
Sepp Hammer – baritone

Critics have described Sepp Hammer’s voice as “powerful” (BostonEdge) and as showing “warm baritone gravity” (The Boston Globe). An experienced concert artist, Sepp has appeared in the role of Jesus in St. Matthew Passion with the California Bach Society, singing with “smoothness, private and sepulchral, with enough low grit to embody the inner strife and luminance of a prophet” (Berkeley Times). His other concert engagements in recent seasons have included the role of Eupolemus in Handel’s Judas Maccabaeus with Philharmonia Baroque, Bach’s Schwingt freudig euch empor with Cantata Collective, Zelenka’s Gloria with Chora Nova, Vaughan Williams’ Five Mystical Songs with Contra Costa Chorale, and, with various ensembles, Schütz’s Symphoniae.

Sacrae, Bach’s Magnificat, Bach’s B Minor Mass, Haydn’s Lord Nelson Mass, Schubert’s Mass in G Major, Brahms’ Requiem, Fauré’s Requiem, and Duruflé’s Requiem. Sepp holds a master’s degree in vocal performance from New England Conservatory and a bachelor’s degree in physics from the University of California, Berkeley. This May he will appear as soloist in a program of Bach cantatas with Santa Cruz Chorale.
The Choir

**SOPRANOS**
Rhea Arajs
Minke Binnerts
Devi Brown
Carlin Chi ✫
Nicole Conkling
Kellie Cox
April Grant
Catherine Heagerty
Jessica House Steward
Judith Jennings
Naomi Jing
Amy Kelly
Elizabeth Kunz
Pamela Ling
Jody Loeffler
Lise McCarthy
Carol McMackin
Jessica Meyers
Kit Murphy
Gitanjali Murthy ✫
Courtney Ross
Jennifer Schwartz
Stephanie Sia
Morgen Warner
Nancy Weston
Alice Zhang
Sophie Zimmermann

**ALTOS**
Alice Aronow
Theresa Bell
Cara Cantwell
Sue Fleming
Jane Goldsmith
Stacey Helley
Lisa Henderson
Wendy Heumann ✫
Elaine Katzenberger
Cindi King
Suzy Maska
Kathy McMahon
Betsy Morris
Megan O’Connor
Vicki Post ✫
Naveeno Rehm
Lily Robillard
Janet Scott
Betty K. Smith
Amy Stewart
Katie Wadley
Samia Zaidi

**TENORS**
Carlin Black
William Chiles
Roger Fong
Rich Gross ✫
Kent MacMaster
Dieter Meyerhoff
Kelly Neal
Billy Ruan
Bill Sinn ✫
Lee Steward
Gordon Thrupp

**BASSES**
Kevin Arlin
John Blankenship
Jim Blodgett
Russell Carrington
Jonathan Cohen ✫
Jerry Godes ✫
Sepp Hammer
David Hathwell
Sulpicio Mariano
Kevin McCarthy
Matthew Nieder
Paul Nocero
Mark Perry
Benedikt Strebel

✫ Section leaders
As part of San Francisco Choral Society’s expanded program offering since the pandemic began, we now host rehearsals via Zoom and invite singers to join us remotely. This has created connection with singers who do not live in the Bay Area and/or with those singers who, for various other reasons, may not be able to join us in person. The following individuals have sung with us virtually over the course of this concert’s rehearsal period and many will be singing with us during this afternoon’s performance from places as far away as Maui!

### Sopranos
- Ann Aversa
- Jeanine Bray
- Lisa Dipko
- Carol Ghinger
- Sharon Keeton
- Beverly Schmidt
- Robyn Thaw

### Altos
- Sabina Alistar
- Penny Barron
- Sue Barton
- Deborah Gitin
- Amy Hansen
- Deborah Hurst Senter
- Clarice Liu

### Tenors
- Linda Holbrook
- Jane Lovell
- Catherine Pantsios
- Emily Phillips

### Basses
- Todd Lane
- John Martin
- Matthew Hobbs

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ABOUT US

Established in 1989, the San Francisco Choral Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the performance of beautiful, inspiring choral music. To date, we have shared our joy and enthusiasm for choral music with more than 60,000 concertgoers. Our year-round program offers singers the opportunity to perform major choral works with professional orchestras and soloists in front of live audiences. We provide low-cost music instruction to our singers in the form of classes and workshops. We have a student internship program, inviting outstanding local high school and college students to participate with us in the rehearsal and performance experience, at no cost to them. Our auditioned chorus has earned a reputation as one of the most accomplished choruses in the Bay Area.

SF Choral has presented great choral classics to packed audiences at venues throughout San Francisco, including regular performances at Davies Symphony Hall. We have performed the Brahms, Mozart, Duruflé, and Verdi Requiems and Britten's War Requiem, the Bach B-minor, Mozart C-minor, Haydn Lord Nelson, Bruckner, and Stravinsky Masses, Handel's Messiah and Israel in Egypt, Mendelssohn's Elijah, Monteverdi's and Rachmaninoff's Vespers, Bernstein's Chichester Psalms, and Orff's Carmina Burana. We have sung pieces by living composers, including Morten Lauridsen, Arvo Pärt, Kirke Mechem, and then-living composer Moses Hogan. And we have commissioned and premiered new works by composers David Lang, Mark Winges, Donald McCullough, Stacy Garrop, Felicia Sandler, Kirstina Rasmussen, and Emma Lou Diemer. We take great joy — and pride — in bringing these great choral works to our Bay Area community.

SF Choral's educational programs, rehearsals, and performances are financed through registration fees, volunteer efforts, individual contributions, employer matching-fund programs, concert ticket sales, program advertising, and contributions from the community at large.

We are deeply grateful for the generous support of these fine organizations:
Handel was born in 1685 in Halle, Saxony, of middle-class parents. He exhibited an early aptitude for music, which his father—a barber-surgeon, who had hoped that his son would grow up to be a lawyer—reportedly attempted to discourage.

According to an early biographer, when Handel was a child, his father banned musical instruments from the house, so that the boy was forced to practice secretly on a clavichord hidden in the attic. When Handel was nine, however, his father was persuaded to give him a musical education by the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels, who had been impressed by the child’s organ playing. Handel went on to study both law and music at Halle University, but soon determined that his skill and passion lay with the latter subject.

Handel advanced swiftly in his chosen career. In 1702, he was appointed to the post of organist of the Domkirche in Halle. In 1703, he moved to Hamburg, where he became second violinist in the grand Hamburg opera house, the largest operatic venue in northern Europe at that time. Soon, he began composing his own operas to be performed at the theater.

Then, in the autumn of 1706, Handel set off for Italy, probably arriving first in Florence and then traveling from one city to another for three years, continuing to compose operas and other pieces for a variety of patrons. While it is unclear what prompted his trip, there was hardly a better place for a young composer to visit in the early eighteenth century. While in Italy, he met talented contemporary masters, including Arcangelo Corelli, and Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, from whom he quickly absorbed the prevailing Italian musical forms and styles.

In 1710, Handel left Italy and traveled north to Hanover, where he was appointed Kapellmeister to the Elector Georg of Hanover. It was in this capacity that he first visited London, with the goal of creating new Italian operas for an English audience. At some point after this first visit, Handel decided to settle in England, although he continued periodically throughout his life to travel on the continent. In 1725, he took a lease on a house in London, in which he lived for the rest of his life. In 1727, he became a naturalized English citizen.

Handel went on to become a vital part of London’s burgeoning 18th century music scene. He had a natural aptitude for theater and was involved in the management of a number of opera companies. Between 1719 and 1752, he composed and produced numerous operas and oratorios in London for a number of different patrons and theaters. Indeed, he is still recognized today as the progenitor of the English oratorio form—his Messiah remains his best-known work. By the 1750’s, however, his eyesight had begun to deteriorate. Composition became more difficult as his vision faded, but he managed to continue to supervise the production of his oratorios and to perform public concerts on the organ. He died in 1759 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, with full state honors. More than 3,000 people attended his funeral.
We know little of Handel’s personal life, as he left few letters or other writings. He appears to have been a very private man, dedicated to his art above all else, though his friendships were strong and enduring. There were some rumors of a brief affair or two with female opera singers while he was in Italy, but he never married. His contemporaries portrayed him as hard-working, practical, and independent. Charles Burney, who played violin in Handel’s concerts in the 1740s, describes an unpretentious man with a deep capacity for humor:

He was impetuous, rough and peremptory in his manners and conversation, but totally devoid of ill-nature or malevolence . . . Handel’s general look was somewhat heavy and sour; but when he did smile, it was his sire the sun, bursting out of a black cloud. There was a sudden flash of intelligence, wit and good humour, beaming in his countenance, which I hardly ever saw in any other.\(^1\)

**Dixit Dominus**

“Handel understands effect better than any of us—when he chooses, he strikes like a thunderbolt.” —Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

“Go to [Handel] to learn how to achieve great effects, by such simple means.”

—Ludwig Van Beethoven

*Dixit Dominus* is a setting of the Latin text of Psalm 110 and is part of the Catholic Sunday Vespers service. Handel composed his setting in 1707 during his tour of Italy. Early that year, he had arrived in Rome, where he was an immediate sensation. “[T]he diarist Francesco Valesio noted that ‘there has arrived in this city a Saxon, a most excellent player on the harpsichord and composer, who today gave a flourish of his skill by playing the organ in the church of S. Giovanni to the amazement of everyone present.’”\(^1\)

Although during his time in Italy, Handel premiered operas in both Florence and Venice to great acclaim, the performance of opera had been banned in the Papal States. So, in Rome, Handel performed primarily sacred music and secular cantatas. *Dixit Dominus*, which he composed at the age of 22, most likely at the behest of one of the City’s powerful cardinals, was such a piece. There is, unfortunately, no record of its premiere, so scholars can only speculate as to the occasion for the work. The brilliant and virtuosic setting, however, has remained a favorite, and in it, we can hear many examples of the great dramatic “effects” which both Mozart and Beethoven so admired.\(^2\)

*Dixit Dominus* is divided into nine movements, scored for a five-part chorus and five soloists. Handel conveys the power of the assured, martial text through contrasts between movements as well as within each movement. The piece also contains numerous examples of word painting, where the sound of the music imitates the imagery of the text.

The first movement begins energetically with vigorous cascading arpeggios in the strings, soon punctuated by the chorus’ assertive and triumphant repetitions of dixit (“[The Lord] said”). The subsequent lines of the psalm are trumpeted out in great banners of sound moving from voice to voice, and elaborated upon in rhythmic reiterations that rise higher and higher until they end in the forceful restatement of the opening word of the psalm: “Dixit.” No. II, *Virgam virtutis*, provides immediate contrast in a serene alto solo. In No. III, *Tecum principium*, the simple melody in triple rhythm established by the opening strings, and then echoed and extended by the soprano soloist, conveys a reverent and secure faith in the Lord’s protection.

No. IV, *Juravit Dominus*, employs brilliant dramatic contrasts between the majestic opening phrase and the subsequent vigorous assertions “non, non!” In the following movement, No. V, *Tu es sacerdos*, the descending phrase “according to the order of Melchisedech” tumbles from one voice to another in a seamless cascade echoing the eternal nature of the holy priesthood.\(^3\)
In No. VI, *Dominus a dextris tuis*, the sharp accents on “confregit” (“shall shatter”) embody the violence of the word. And the staccato, percussive “conquasabits” of No. VII, *Judicabit in nationibus*, suggest the inexorable march of destruction that the Lord will unleash on the leaders of the nations being judged. Handel gives us a brief respite from these martial effects in the beautiful and mysterious No. VIII, *De torrente in via bibet*, its fluid female solo voices shimmering above the males’ unison chanting. The dramatic energy returns in the jubilant No. IX, *Gloria Patri et Filio*, with its intricate fugues, unflagging energy and leaping soprano octaves propelling the voices to their final triumphant “Amen”.

— Carol Talbeck

2 Ibid. p. 22.
3 Indeed, Handel reused some of the melodies and effects from the Dixit Dominus in his later works; most notably, *Israel in Egypt* (1739). Audience members familiar with that oratorio may recognize the seeds of He Led Them Through the Deep in Dixit Dominus’s “Tu Es Sacerdos”.

CHIAYU HSU

Born in Banqiao, Taiwan, Chiayu is an associate professor of composition at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She was the winner of Lakond prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, San Francisco Choral Society commission contest, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble composition contest, grand prize from Symphony Number One, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Composer’s Awards, Zodiac Composition competition, Kaleidoscopes and Elevate ensemble’s call for scores, 2019, 2016 and 2013 IAWM Search for New Music, Copland House Award, Lynn University international call for scores, the 2010 Sorel Organization recording grant, music+culture 2009 International Competition for Composers, the Sorel Organization’s 2nd International Composition Competition, the 7th USA International Harp Composition Competition, ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer’s Awards, the Maxfield Parrish Composition Contest, the Renée B. Fisher Foundation Composer Awards among others. Her work has been performed by the London Sinfonietta, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the Nashville Symphony, the Toledo Symphony, the American Composers Orchestra, the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, the Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra, the Lynn Philharmonia Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra in Taiwan, Aspen Music Festival Contemporary Ensemble, Eighth Blackbird, Ciompi Quartet, and Prism Quartet. She has received her Ph.D. at Duke University, Master of Music at Yale University School of Music, and Bachelor of Music at the Curtis Institute of Music.

Commissioned by the San Francisco Choral Society, *To A Lost Year*, is inspired by the COVID pandemic and events around this time. The first movement depicts chaotic scenes and expresses unsettling emotions of people at the beginning of the outbreak. The middle movement is dedicated to those people who lost their lives during this uncertain time, especially those who immigrated to the States. The last movement echoes some of the expressions from the first two movements while leading listeners toward a brighter future. More information: www.chiayuhsu.com
B.J. Hollars is the author of several books, most recently *Go West Young Man: A Father and Son Rediscover America on the Oregon Trail*, *Midwestern Strange: Hunting Monsters, Martians and the Weird in Flyover Country*, *The Road South: Personal Stories of the Freedom Riders*, *Flock Together: A Love Affair With Extinct Birds*, *From the Mouths of Dogs: What Our Pets Teach Us About Life, Death, and Being Human*, as well as a collection of essays, *This Is Only A Test*. Additionally, he has also written *Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence and the Last Lynching in America*, *Opening the Doors: The Desegregation of the University of Alabama and the Fight for Civil Rights in Tuscaloosa*, *Dispatches from the Drownings*, and *Sightings*. Hollars is the recipient of the Truman Capote Prize for Literary Nonfiction, the Anne B. and James B. McMillan Prize, the Council of Wisconsin Writers' Blei-Derleth Award, and the Society of Midland Authors Award. He is the founder and executive director of the Chippewa Valley Writers Guild and the Midwest Artist Academy, as well as an associate professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and a columnist for The Leader-Telegram. He lives a simple existence with his family.

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Perpetua Society

“The exhilarating experiences I have had over the years with the San Francisco Choral Society come to a head each semester when pure hard work and the artistic talents of the chorus come to a crescendo with performances. I have been inspired by the joy of singing and hearing the San Francisco Choral Society deliver outstanding performances of choral masterpieces and new commissioned works. Considering the immeasurable enjoyment I have received, how could I not want to give something back in return?”

—John Chapman

John Chapman passed away in the summer of 2014, within days of having performed with the San Francisco Choral Society his favorite piece — Brahms’ A German Requiem. He, and his passion for choral music, will be sorely missed.

Helen Ishida Abramson
Stanley R. Abramson*
Anonymous
Linda K. Brewer
John Chapman*
Caroline Damsky

Peggy Hinrichs
R. Mackenzie Gordon*
Paul Nocero
Cheryl Thompson*
Ortha Zebroski*
Julia Young

*Sorced

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SPECIAL APPEAL IN LIGHT OF COVID-19
As with most small performing arts organizations, the financial implications for postponing just one concert program, are significant. We would be grateful for your contribution, no matter how big or how small. All donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

SF CHORAL IS A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION.
OUR FEDERAL TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
(TAXPAYER ID) IS #94-3107344.
Dixit Dominus – Psalm 110

Chorus
*Dixit Dominus Domino meo:*  
*Sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.*  
The Lord said unto my Lord:  
Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your foot-stool.

Aria – alto
*Virgam virtutis tuae emittet Dominus ex Sion: dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.*  
The scepter of your power the Lord shall send forth from Zion: rule thou, in the midst of your enemies.

Aria – soprano
*Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae splendoribus sanctorum. Ex utero ante luciferum genui te:*  
The power to rule is with you on the day of your strength, in the splendor of thy holy ones:

Chorus
*Juravit Dominus et non paenitebit eum:*  
The Lord swore an oath, and will not repent:

Chorus
*Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech.*  
You a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedech.

Soloists & Chorus
*Dominus a dextris tuis, confregit in die irae suae reges*  
The Lord at your right hand destroys kings on the day of his wrath.

Chorus
*Judicabit in nationibus, Implebit ruinas, conquassabit capita in terra multorum.*  
He shall judge among the heathen; he shall pile up ruins, and scatter the skulls on many lands.

Soprano duet & chorus
*De torrente in via bibet, propterea exaltabit caput.*  
He shall drink of the torrent in his way, therefore he shall lift up his head.

Chorus
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now; and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
To A Lost Year by B.J. Hollars

I. To An Uncertain Battle

Every day is its own devastation. The hospitals filled Remember to sing
The Contagion The scientists grilled And the glimmers appear
And Evasion The truth, silenced Remember to sing
The Abrasion Reality, killed And the fear disappears
Revelation

The destruction Our hands burned clean Remember to see
And corruption Our struggles unseen And the heroes emerge
An eruption The vaccine still Remember to see
Our disruption Such a distant dream And you’ll see the courage

The infection We rise and we fall The world is so frayed
No direction We start and we stall And we are afraid
No protection We wave goodbye The world is afraid And we
No connection To the shopping mall are so frayed.

The silence, so loud We cling to the screens Where do we go from here?
The cost of the crowd The comfort they bring
The worry, so great Forget to mute
The funeral shroud But remember to sing

II. To Those from Other Lands

Holding hands without hands we hold on For the land that we share needs us all
Sharing air with much care we breathe on See her torch, see her crown, heed her call
Wave goodbye as we die we brave on Hold the earth, plant the seed, watch it grow
Stay strong Don’t go.

What will rise from the dirt we can’t say Holding hands in the air wave hello
But we lose when we turn friends away Sharing air all the places we go
How to cure all the pain that we’ve made Open doors, open hearts, open minds,
Hang on Love grows
III. To Hope

But the hope that we feel may not last,
As we live and we die in our masks,
Not apart, but with heart, let’s restart,
Please hold fast

Though the pain will not soon go away,
And our fear not so quickly allayed,
There’s a path, just ahead, march along,
Please stay strong

Please hold fast
Please stay strong
Lives are short
Death is long

Look away
No you don’t
Close your eyes
But you won’t

Tilt your ear
To the sky
Hear the silence
Alight

Every moment
Is a moment
We accept
With elation

Every breath
Now a gift
Every death
More bereft

Please hold fast
Please stay strong
Death is short
Life is long

Death is short
Life is long
So we must
Carry on.

As the world’s breath begins anew
We search for patterns to help see us through
In our gardens,
Our seasons,
Our skies,
For the rest of our lives.

The hope we now feel may just last
If we’re willing to give it a chance
Break the bread
Pass the cup
It’s enough
You’re enough.

Holding hands without hands
We hold on
Lift our voice, listen hard, sing our song
Wave hello,
Wave goodbye,
Rise and fall
And carry on.
The San Francisco Choral Society announces its inaugural Summer Festival Chorus program, with the addition of a new opportunity designed for singers who live outside of the Bay Area!

Visiting Summer Festival Guest Artists will come to San Francisco for 6 days of rehearsals and a concert, with ample time to make new friends, or take in the many popular sights of the city and enjoy the beautiful, mild summer weather that Northern California typically offers.

THREE WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

1) SF CHORAL SOCIETY RESIDENT CHORUS (LOCAL, IN-PERSON SINGERS)
   Audition required*, vaccination and attendance requirements.

2) NEW! FESTIVAL GUEST ARTIST (HYBRID PARTICIPANT – ONLINE AND IN PERSON)
   Rehearse online May 17 – August 12, then join the Resident Chorus for a final week of rehearsals in SF, and the concert performance.
   Audition required, vaccination and attendance requirements.

3) VIRTUAL SINGER (REMOTE PARTICIPANT)
   (no audition required, no attendance requirements)
   NB: there will be no live streaming of the concert in Davies on August 19

AUDITIONS

All new singers (Resident Chorus and Guest Artists) must complete an audition before registering.

SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR ALL THE DETAILS, DATES, AUDITION SIGN UPS, MORE...
The Gift of New Music

One of the pillars of SF Choral's mission is to contribute to the choral music repertoire by investing in new compositions by leading contemporary composers.

Once upon a time, the important responsibility of commissioning new music was held by clerics and princes, kings, and queens, wealthy benefactors and powerful patrons. These days, ordinary music lovers can be a part of creating the music which helps us come to terms with the world in which we live. We can pool our resources, no matter how modest, and ensure that the composers of our time are supported and encouraged to compose the works of today that will speak to future generations about the issues of import to us.

San Francisco Choral Society has a long history of investment in new music:

- teach your children by Pulitzer Prize winning composer David Lang, 2019
- Terra Nostra, a full-length oratorio by Stacy Garrop, 2015
- Seven Songs for Planet Earth by Olli Kortegangas, West Coast premiers in 2011, co-commissioned by the Choral Arts Society of Washington and Finland’s Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, in partnership with the San Francisco Choral Society, the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, and the Children's Chorus of Washington
- Contraries: The Human Condition by Donald McCullough, 2009
- pax penetralis by Mark Winges, 2007
- Time Does Not Bring Relief by Felicia Sandler, 2006
- Songs from the Earth by Emma Lou Diemer, 2005

New Music Fund

These donors made generous gifts to our New Music Fund, which enables us to commission and present new compositions. Together, we’re helping build the world choral repertoire. Many thanks to all!

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Our Donors

Listed here are generous donors who gave to the SF Choral Society General Fund between April 15, 2021 and April 15, 2022

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Thank you to all!
This promises to be an exciting time of transition, and to guide us through it, we want to add several members to our Board of Directors. We seek talented and enthusiastic individuals from inside or outside our organization who understand the Choral Society’s mission and can help ensure its continued impact and success.

No prior board experience is necessary. Visit our website for details and how to apply.

Advertise with Us

Reach a discerning audience at very low cost!

Your ad will be seen by our in-person and virtual audiences, as well as members of the chorus, soloists and orchestra.

Ad space is available for the Summer Festival Program in Davies Hall.

A three-concert package is available for the 2022-23 season. Rates are a considerable savings over the per-concert price. Whichever you choose - this investment will pay for itself!

Interested in purchasing an ad? Please reach out to Stacey Helley at stacey@sfchoral.org to discuss your artwork specs prior to payment.
New from acclaimed poet (and baritone) David Hathwell.

In his shining collection, David Hathwell gathers his previously published poems, enhancing the luster of the whole with illuminating commentaries.

Richard Wilbur, twice a Pulitzer Prize winner, praised Hathwell’s work as "concretely evocative, with a clear flow of argument, and a seriousness that allows itself to be locally playful."

California poet laureate Dana Gioia commended Hathwell for "writing with quiet intensity about significant things."

The poems are taut, measured, and shapely, like svelte dancers. —James Fowler

Hathwell’s incremental modulations create subtle states of perception and mood with a musical precision. —Rebecca Starks

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