

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

proudly presents their 148th Season: REUNION

BEYOND THE BINARY

A Meditation on Humans and Machines

ANDREA CLEARFIELD WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

Artistic Director & Conductor Dominick DiOrio

Sunday • May 15, 2022 • 7:00 PM • The Fillmore Philadelphia



MCCHORUS.ORG

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia
Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

present as the third program of their 148th season

BEYOND THE BINARY

A Meditation on Humans and Machines

*Featuring a world premiere commission, with music by **Andrea Clearfield**, libretto by **Ellen Frankel**, original electronic percussion instruments by **David Kontak**, robotic prototypes created by students from the University of Pennsylvania GRASP Lab and Weitzman School of Design, and headliner and Philly-based drag performer **Cookie Diorio** as "The Oracle" and the instrumental percussion-based trio **Square Peg Round Hole**.*

Production team:

Dominick DiOrio
conductor

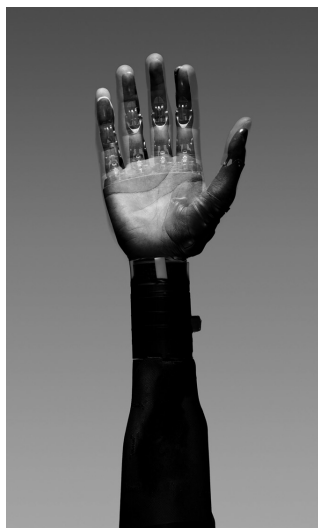
Heather Mitchell
assistant conductor

Sam Tower
director

Margaux Cattelona
stage manager

Mike Inwood
lighting designer

Robert Kaplowitz
sound designer



Sunday, May 15, 2022 • 7:00 pm

The Fillmore Philadelphia
29 E Allen Street

Thank you for wearing your mask during the performance.

Please silence all cell phones during the performance.

As a reminder, photography or recording are not allowed during the concert.

MENDELSSOHN CHORUS OF PHILADELPHIA

Celebrating 148 Years of Artistic Excellence and Adventurous New Music

A Note from the Artistic Director

I've lately been reading Isabel Wilkerson's seminal 2020 Pulitzer Prize winning work of nonfiction, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, which lays out in meticulous and evocative fashion the structures and systems that underlie the assumptions upon which our country's current political, racial, and polemical divisions and stress points are fastened. She examines in particular the caste systems of India, of slavery in America, and in Germany prior to and through the Second World War.

Wilkerson speaks plainly and with direct immediacy about the problems facing America, and how the American caste system has presumed a hierarchy of highest, middle, and lowest – allowing for the dehumanization of entire categories of individuals based on arbitrary distinctions for the preservation of power and status.

Isabel speaks with the wisdom of one who has studied the architecture of this system, in primary sources and documentary evidence from the last four hundred years, in interviews with those still living who experienced the stings of oppression. She speaks about the folly of our past, but with the hope that we can create a future with eyes fully open, ready to imagine a world cast free from these shackles. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that Isabel Wilkerson is a modern-day oracle.

And so too does our “Oracle” ask us to “Heed our words” – to consider the problems of automation, of disconnection, of pride, and of the exclusion inherent in binary oppositions. This is a program for a better world – a program to consider how we welcome and how we outsource, of how we feel and of how we make ourselves numb. There is no substitute for our humanity – a humanity rich in variety and diverse without measure.

With wisdom comes understanding – Wilkerson has taught us to examine more critically the systems that animate our emotions, that have led to our current predicaments. With this information, our choices can be more targeted, our solutions more systemic, our antidotes more robust. Let us not wait to imagine that better world.

Tonight, we celebrate the spectrum of human possibility, the creativity of human invention, and the marvelous magic of our most resilient mettle.

Dominick DiOrio

Artistic Director & Conductor

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia
Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

BEYOND THE BINARY

¡Ayúdame! (2019)

Carlos Cordero

Heather Mitchell, conductor
Alyssa Resh, percussion

From the libretto of *Beyond the Binary*: "O poor humanity"

Emily Kane, speaker

Turing Believes Machines Think (2016)

Gordon Hamilton

Abigail Chapman, soprano

From the libretto of *Beyond the Binary*: "How remarkable is the robot"

Steven Glasser & Paul Burgmeyer, speakers

Hold On! (2002)

arr. Moses Hogan

Abigail Chapman, Nyah Charles, Jina Jang & Roberta Rote, sopranos
Joshua McCord, Erik Stenswold & D'quan Tyson, tenors

From the libretto of *Beyond the Binary*: "What are they"

Eric Rodriguez-Lopez, speaker

Original selection (*announced from the stage*)

Square Peg Round Hole

From the libretto of *Beyond the Binary*: "Heed our words, O foolish mortals"

Dan Simpson, speaker

Wire You Here (2019)

Moira Smiley

Rachael Lipson, soprano & Carl Ellinwood Jr., tenor
Square Peg Round Hole

From the libretto of *Beyond the Binary*: "But one is alone..."

Dominick DiOrio, speaker

Alleluia (2013)

Dominick DiOrio

Sean Gill, marimba

Intermission

world premiere performance

Processional

I. Psalm: The Robots Are Coming

Interlude 1: Oracle

II. Dialectic: Is There No Virtue in Toil?

Interlude 2: Oracle

III. Ode: To Robots

Interlude 3: Oracle

IV. Lament: Of Love It Knows Nothing

V. Oracle: Idols of Silicon and Steel

Interlude 4: Drones and More

VI. Rhapsody: Beyond the Binary

Commencement

Cookie Diorio, The Oracle

Rachael Lipson, soprano

Lucas DeJesus, baritone

David Kontak, instrument design

Square Peg Round Hole & Alyssa Resh, percussion



Andrea Clearfield and Ellen Frankel's *Beyond the Binary* was commissioned with funds provided by New Music USA, and made possible through generous support from the Musical Fund Society. Additional support for this production was provided through an Anonymous Donation, the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation, the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia Alan Harler New Ventures Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, FORT Robotics, and Sach's Program for Arts Innovation.

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Mendelssohn Chorus wishes to thank Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, Jeffrey L. Brillhart, Director, Music and Fine Arts, and Edward Landin Senn, Assistant Director, Music, for their generous loan of the handbells used in this concert.

The composer wishes to thank MacDowell, Ragdale, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Bloedel Reserve, Bainbridge Island, WA for providing valuable time and space to create this work.

Program Notes

We have just celebrated the centenary of Czech journalist, novelist and playwright Karel Čapek's seminal 1921 play *R.U.R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots). It was Čapek's (1890-1938) first major success on the stage, and within two years it had been translated into 30 languages and presented across Europe and the United States. It was the origin of the word robot to describe an artificial humanoid. The word was derived from the Czech *robota*, which meant compulsory labor, such as a serf would perform, and was used colloquially to mean drudgery or hard work. Čapek created a dystopic future in which both oppressor and oppressed engineered their own doom, something that struck a sympathetic chord for audiences witnessing the increasing social stratification and unrest following the end of World War I. It was also the inspiration for the featured work in this program, *Beyond the Binary*, commissioned by Mendelssohn Chorus and composed by Andrea Clearfield to a libretto by Ellen Frankel.



Čapek's robots were not the mechanical constructs that we associate with that word today. They were androids, completely human in form, and were actually made of a unique organic material, with organs and tissue carefully grown in vats and then assembled in a factory. In the first act of *R.U.R.*, a robot is able to successfully impersonate a human. The robots were self-aware and intelligent, with an innate work ethic, but were unable to experience feeling or emotion, at least originally. They were not self-replicating and they had a limited life span. They were designed to free people from the tedious drudgery of their lives so they could concentrate on higher pursuits – art, esthetics, philosophy. But the people instead became indolent and disconnected from each other to the point that the birth rate dropped to zero. *R.U.R.*'s head designer had quietly been upgrading the robot line by adding the capacity for feeling, but the emotions they first developed, unfortunately, were anger and hate. They rebelled against their masters not so much because of forced labor, since they regarded work as the highest goal, but rather that the humans did not work at all. They were therefore superfluous, and the robots began to eliminate them, sparing only the head engineer at *R.U.R.*, because he worked with his hands like they did. The formula for their creation had been destroyed in the uprising, and the robots forced the engineer to try to reproduce it, even if it required killing and dissecting robots. He was presented with the designer's final creations as test subjects, a male and female robot, fully functional and with an enhanced capacity for feeling and emotion. But when he realized that the two robots had actually developed feelings and fallen in love with each other, he sent them away as the Adam and Eve of a new race.

R.U.R. contains much discussion about whether the robots could be considered human and what it actually means to be human, and the comparison of robot and human is continued in *Beyond the Binary*. It largely distills to the ability to feel and experience emotion, and as a preamble, the opening portion of this concert includes five short choral pieces, each of which reflects a particular human emotion or feeling.

Carlos Cordero (b. 1992) is an award-winning choral composer, conductor and educator. Born in Venezuela, he was a choral conductor and educator in El Sistema and received his B.M. from Universidad Católica Cecilio Acosta before moving to Texas, where he received his M.M. in composition from the University of Houston. A passionate advocate for new music, he created The Happy Composer Commissioning Project, in which he pairs young composers with choral organizations and mentors them throughout the commissioning process. Cordero's native Venezuela underwent a severe economic collapse in 2016 whose repercussions continue to be felt. An estimated three quarters of the population are now living at poverty levels, and there is a scarcity of food, medicine and other basic necessities. In response to this crisis, he composed his 2019 *¡Ayúdame! A Venezuelan Plea for Life*. He explains, "What was the last time you were hungry and could not immediately eat? or thirsty and could not find water for hours? This is heartbreaking: to see my country, my family, suffering. I come from Venezuela and I did go through difficult times. Since I could not do much from where I was to help, I decided to fight my pain. I asked myself all the questions and cried while working on my desk, so comfortable yet feeling so guilty and helpless. What was the last time you were sick and could not find the medicine to feel better or even to keep living?" Compassion and empathy are possibly the most uniquely human feelings.



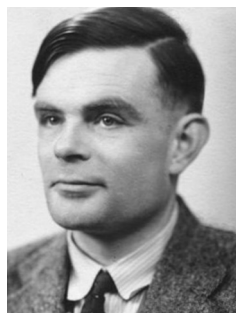
Australian-born **Gordon Hamilton** (b. 1982) is an award-winning composer, conductor, sound designer and radio producer. His music, as he puts it, often subverts expectations of classical formats. He has written a concerto for beatbox, a set of 482 micro variations on a 3-note theme from a Beatles song, an orchestral work with sampled snippets of Arnold Schwarzenegger's voice, a choral work based on a BuzzFeed article, and a "stream of unconsciousness" music video with unfiltered material taken from his Facebook newsfeed. He has an especial affinity for choral music, founding the German contemporary ensemble Northern Spirit and directing the Australian Voices from 2009-2021. His 2016 *Turing Believes Machines Think* takes its text from a letter Alan Turing wrote to a friend, the mathematician Norman Routledge, in 1952.



Pat O'Neil

Turing (1912-1954) was a brilliant and forward-looking mathematician and computer scientist who can rightly be considered the father of modern computing. He is best known today for developing the device which was used to break Germany's Enigma code during World War II. He invented the Turing machine, a construct which allowed him to define the limits of computer problem-solving, developed the concepts of algorithms and computer programs, and designed the first modern computer. He developed the Turing test to define criteria for machine intelligence. He applied mathematics to biology and chemistry, providing models of embryonic development and oscillating chemical reactions. In

1952, he was arrested for gross indecency (amazingly, it was still illegal in Britain for consenting adults to perform homosexual acts in private), pleaded guilty, and accepted chemical castration to avoid prison. In 1954, he was found dead of cyanide poisoning, which was ruled a suicide. In 1967, private homosexual acts were finally decriminalized in Britain. In 2013, Turing received a posthumous pardon from the queen, and he received his final eponym in 2017 with the passage of the “Alan Turing law,” retrospectively pardoning all men who had previously been convicted for private homosexual acts.

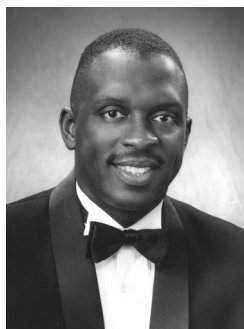


Gordon Hamilton provided the following notes: “[*Turing Believes Machines Think* is] a setting of a passage from a letter written by British mathematician and computer pioneer Alan Turing. Turing signed the letter to his friend with a syllogism expressing his fear that his life’s work will be overshadowed or even disproven by his sexuality and prosecution for ‘gross indecency’:

Turing believes machines think
Turing lies with men
Therefore machines do not think
Yours in distress, Alan.

“Even in the 1940s, Turing foresaw that machines could be made to think! I get goosebumps thinking about it... I’ve tried to make the choir sound a bit like a machine (actually in the same tempo as his famous ‘Bombe’ machine, used to crack the Enigma code). I also based the main motif on Shostakovich’s D-S-C-H theme [German notation for D-E-flat-C-B]: the State quashes the Individual... Turing died of a probable suicide soon after this letter.” Sadly, prejudice and intolerance seem to be widespread human traits. Interestingly, the robot designers in *R.U.R.* discuss creating localized versions of the robots to introduce a xenophobic intolerance and prevent them from joining together.

Moses Hogan (1957-2003) was a pianist, conductor and a noted arranger of spirituals. He was born in New Orleans into a musical family – his father sang bass in the choir where his uncle was Minister of Music and organist. Hogan was already an accomplished pianist by age nine. He studied at the Xavier University Junior School of Music, the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts HS, and Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He won several piano competitions including the prestigious Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Competition (previous winners included Van Cliburn, Murray Perahia and Ian Hobson). He briefly did graduate studies at the Juilliard School and declined admission to the doctoral program at Louisiana State to concentrate on choral music. He founded several choirs including the internationally acclaimed Moses Hogan Singers and Moses Hogan Chorale. His first published arrangement, the 1994 *Elijah Rock*, has become one of his most frequently performed pieces. He published over 90 arrangements of spirituals, and was particularly known for the rich harmonization and texture of his music. He



died tragically young from a brain tumor. *Hold On!* is a spiritual celebrating faith, another uniquely human emotion, and perseverance. It was published in 2002, so it is likely that Hogan was already in treatment for his brain tumor at the time he was working on the arrangement, and one can imagine that the inspirational text held a special meaning for him.

Moira Smiley (b. 1976) is a singer, composer, instrumentalist and educator whose musical interests range from early music to American, Irish and Balkan folk music, contemporary choral music and indie pop. She composes and improvises in collaboration with artists in film, video game production, theater and dance, and her work can be heard on feature film soundtracks, BBC & PBS television programs, NPR, and on more than 70 commercial albums. Her 2020 *Wire You Here*, commissioned and premiered by Dominick DiOrio's University of Indiana ensemble Notus, is a wry commentary on the human need for social connection and the technology that both facilitates and frustrates communication – Smiley's succinct description is "an exploration of ever-changing connection and disconnection." It has only been 15 years since the invention of smart phones, but it is already hard to imagine life without them (for some people it's hard to imagine even 5 minutes without them!) The music is highly rhythmic but harmonically simple, and builds texture as each voice enters sequentially, starting with the instrumentalists, and the rhythms diverge, providing an evocative sonic picture of "information overload."



Dominick DiOrio's 2013 *Alleluia* is set for chorus and marimba. It is a rhythmic *tour de force*, with its single word of text galloping through syncopations and rapid-fire repetitions, so fast that the word breaks into pieces. It is an exuberant, joyful work and a fitting close to the first half of the concert.

Beyond the Binary is set for chorus, three vocal soloists, percussion and digital sound. It uses about 50 percussion instruments, some traditional and some created by the imaginative instrument designer **David Kontak**. Composer **Andrea Clearfield** had worked with Kontak previously with her opera *Mila, the Great Sorcerer* and tapped him to help create *Beyond the Binary's* unusual soundscape. Kontak has an amazing ability to turn the most unlikely objects – a slinky or a battery-powered hand-held fan – into playable musical instruments with unique sounds. There is a strong visual component to his instruments as well. Wood components are beautifully finished, moving components are decorated with lights, and the instruments are often played with graceful, exaggerated movements. The percussion battery also contains actual tools like drills and hammers, with Clearfield invoking George Antheil's 1924 *Ballet Mécanique*, an *R.U.R.* contemporary. To complement the physical instruments, Clearfield also recorded the sounds of machines and tools in use.

As part of this project, Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia also partnered with the **University of Pennsylvania GRASP (General Robotics, Automation, Sensing and Perception) Lab** and the **Weitzman School of Design**. Professor Mark Yim, Director of the GRASP Lab and Associate Professor Simon Kim, a licensed ar-

chitect and researcher in applied science, jointly offered a class in mechatronic projects to architecture and engineering students. Over the course of the semester, faculty and students worked together in teams to produce entirely new and innovative stage pieces with input from the creative team.

Beyond the Binary librettist **Ellen Frankel** provides these program notes: “*Beyond the Binary* seeks to explore two urgent questions facing our society at this moment: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be gendered? It turns out that the two questions are intertwined.

“The idea of creating artificial forms of life goes back at least 2,500 years – to the ancient Greeks and Jews. The Greeks populated their myths with strange hybrid creatures like centaurs, satyrs, the Minotaur, and the winged horse Pegasus as well as a giant bronze automaton named Talos, built to protect Crete from its enemies. The rabbinic Talmud suggests that Adam himself was first created as a mute, insentient golem before he became fully human. Later Jewish legends tell of a female Golem created by the poet-philosopher Ibn Gabirol to take care of his house. And of course, there’s the most famous Golem of all time, created by Rabbi Judah Loew, the Maharal of Prague, to save his community from anti-semitic attack.

“Over the past several centuries, beginning with Leonardo da Vinci, humankind has intensified its quest to create artificial helpmeets to do our labor for us, enhance our intelligence, increase our control over the natural world, and even join us in bed. In our own lifetime, the race to create a robot capable of superhuman intelligence and perhaps human feelings has brought us to the edge of what futurist Ray Kurzweil calls “the Singularity,” that moment when robotic cognition will exceed our own. One of the questions that this cantata explores is whether that goal is a boon or a curse.

“Our society is also at a crossroads when it comes to the issue of gender. Until about twenty years ago, the only public controversies concerning gender had to do with same sex relationships. But in recent years—with the rise of trans activism, the many options for transitioning genders, and the right-wing pushback against these developments – gender has taken center stage. Although other cultures – in India and among certain Native American tribes – allow for gender fluidity, this idea has sent shockwaves through this country.

“But again, if we look back to the ancients, we discover that the Greeks were not that rigid about gender boundaries. In his *Symposium*, Plato even suggests that all human beings were originally created double, then divided in two. We then spend our lives, Plato claims, searching for our missing half, whether it be the same sex or its opposite. The very first chapter of the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1:27, pronounces that “God created the human in the divine image, creating them male and female,” and there are rabbinic commentaries which interpret the ambiguous language of that passage to mean man was originally created as an androgynous being, partaking of both genders. So did Adam go by he/him or they/them?

“Which leads us to the matter of *binariness*. As we’ve just seen, the first Binary concerned gender. But the concept of an androgynous Adam is undercut in the very next chapter of Genesis, where the biblical text explains that God first cre-

ated Man, and then out of his side extracted his subordinate, Woman. In this retelling of the creation story, gender is presented as not only binary, but as fundamentally unequal. Western philosophy has long reinforced this idea of binariness, of either-or, embracing Descartes' famous mind-body split: "I think. Therefore I am." Thus, the mind creates reality for the body.

"In the world of computers, binary code, a series of ones and zeroes, is the simple yet inordinately powerful language of the system that undergirds all AI (artificial intelligence). Unlike the analog world of clocks and celluloid film and audiotape, digital devices abhor nuance and continuum. Everything is either yes or no, on or off. No maybes.

"This cantata has undergone a long gestation. Inspired by *The Golem Psalms* (2006), a cantata composed by Andrea Clearfield using my libretto, which premiered in 2006, this piece was originally conceived as a full opera retelling the 16th century legend of the Golem of Prague. Over the next twelve years, the idea took on a very different spin, retitled *The Golem at MIT*, based on a true story set in modern times. Then, when Andrea and I became aware that the centennial of *R.U.R.* ("Rossum's Universal Robots"), Czech writer Karel Čapek's 1922 play, was fast approaching, we decided to focus our efforts on an update of Čapek's initial conceit: robots taking over of the world.

"In Čapek's play, two scientists use a secret formula to create artificial life by processing protoplasm. They thereby liberate humans from the drudgery of daily labor. But these robots – a word Čapek coined specifically for this play from the Slavic word for "work" – come to resent their burden and rise in revolt, killing off all of humanity except a solitary engineer, who, alas, lacks Rossum's original formula. Is artificial life, too, now doomed to extinction without the ability to reproduce itself? Čapek's play ends on an upbeat. As he faces his own certain demise, the sole human survivor addresses the newest generation of robots, new and improved with the ability to feel human emotions. He blesses them: "Go, Adam! Go, Eve! Life shall not perish!"

"In its own structure, *Beyond the Binary* embodies the major themes of diversity and variety. Through six movements, it presents different literary and rhetorical forms in a variety of registers: psalm, dialectic, ode, lament, rhapsody, and dialectic. Appearing throughout the piece, the Oracle acts as a leitmotif. This structure also exemplifies intertextuality, a literary device that uses allusion to connect disparate literary texts. And of course, as with all choral music, the performance brings together musical instruments, some of them created solely for this cantata, human voices, words, and non-words, that is, silences punctuating the sounds.

"Like Čapek's prophetic drama performed one hundred years ago, *Beyond the Binary* ends on a hopeful note. It suggests that the Singularity that Ray Kurzweil warns us about, our not-so-future obsolescence as masters of the earth, need not keep us awake at night. Partnership with our Golems might yet yield a new generation of living hybrids that we have not yet dreamt of. As the chorus urges at the end: "Let your vision soar past the two-fold! Beyond the binary!"

While *Beyond the Binary* draws its inspiration from *R.U.R.*, it treads its own path. It unfolds in six tableaux, each dealing with a different idea. The robots are

"icons of silicon and steel," more mechanical and electronic than organic, but still inhabitants of what roboticist Masahiro Mori called the "uncanny valley," the area in which a robot's increasingly human appearance and fundamentally non-human persona cause feelings of unease and even revulsion. The choir largely functions like Greek chorus, commenting and elaborating on the the action and ideas presented. And there is an all-seeing and all-knowing Oracle, dispensing ever more pointed and expansive warnings.

After a brief percussion improvisation, there is a choral prelude with a single word of text, "bots," highly rhythmic and percussive, and featuring a number of the designed instruments. There is a feeling of menace and foreboding which carries on into the first movement, "Psalm." The hymn of praise for robots concludes with mechanical repetition of the phrase "the robots are coming", which does little to dispel the sense of foreboding, as does the first pronouncement of the Oracle.

The "Dialectic" opens with a reference to *R.U.R.*, where the skeptical chief engineer muses that there is a virtue in human toil and weariness. It presents a dialog representing the moral dilemma faced by the people, "either to be slaves or idle masters of slaves." But there is no synthesis from thesis and antithesis, just a stark binary choice. Frankel introduces some humor in the next two sections. The "Ode to Robots" is a pitchman's spiel delivered with all the smarminess of a game show host. The "Lament" counters with a clever pastiche of Hamlet's monologue "What a piece of work is man," ending with a thoroughly contemporary reading of the phrase "piece of work,"

In the aria "Idols of Silicon and Steel," the Oracle advances a much more subtle and concerning way that robots will take over the world. They will not need to revolt. Rather, people will cede them control of their lives by becoming dependent on the services they provide, worshipping what they have created. The final movement, "Rhapsody," begins with an enumeration of things that are binary by nature – male/female, yes/no, on/off, one/zero – that becomes increasing frenetic. There is a sudden quiet in a moment of realization that binary is inherently limiting – "one is alone, and two divides us." The Oracle invites us to open our eyes to new possibilities, to think beyond the binary, and the music swells as the entire ensemble sings another quotation from Hamlet, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy," a moment of apotheosis. The music segues into a brief coda, with the ensemble softly murmuring "beyond" over and over to bring the cantata to a close.

– Michael Moore

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The Texts

Cordero: ¡Ayúdame!

Mírame,	Look at me,
Escúchame.	Listen to me.
Estoy sufriendo.	I am suffering.
No puedo ver,	I can't see,
tengo hambre,	I am hungry,
tengo sed,	I am thirsty,
Estoy enfermo.	I am sick.
¡Ayúdame!	Help me!

Hamilton: Turing Believes Machines Think

Turing believes machines think
Turing lies with men
Therefore machines do not think
Yours in distress, Alan.

Hogan: Hold On

Hold on! Lawd! Just hold on!	If dat plow stay in yo' hand, land you straight in de promised land.
Nora, Nora, let me come in; de door's all fastened and de winders pinned!	Jus' keep yo' hand on de plow, an' you hold on, just hold on!
Hold on, hold on, hold on. Lawd! Just keep yo' hand on de plow An' you hold on, just hold on!	Well, my sister, hold on! Yes, you gotta hold on! Jus' keep yo' hand on de plow, an' you hold on, just hold on!
Nora said, "You lost yo' track, you can't plow straight and keep lookin' back.	Mary had a golden chain, an' every link spelled my Jesus' name.
Hold on, hold on, hold on. Lawd! Just keep yo' hand on de plow An' you hold on, just hold on!	Jus' keep yo' hand on de plow, an' you hold on, just hold on!
Well, my brother, hold on! Yes, you gotta hold on! Yes, just keep yo' hand on de plow, An' you hold on, just hold on!	Keep on climbin' an' don't you tire, 'cause every rung goes higher an' higher. Jus' keep yo' hand on de plow, an' you hold on, just hold on!
If you wanna get to heaven, let me tell you how: Jus' a keep yo' hand on de gospel plow. Jus' keep yo' hand on de plow, an' you hold on, just hold on!	Hmm, yes, hmm, yes! Hold on, prayin'! Hold on, prayin'! Hold on, singin'! Hold on, shoutin', Lawd! Jus' keep yo' hand on de plow, an' hold on, just hold on!

Smiley: Wire You Here

Wire you here?
I'm reaching across,
across to you now,
I reach to you now!
What carries me across the abyss
Carry me across the abyss of us.

Clearfield: Beyond the Binary

PROCESSIONAL

I. PSALM: *The Robots are coming!*

O poor humanity!
Beasts of burden still.
Plated in such flimsy skin,
Yoked to clock and till.

Proclaim the Jubilee!
The Robots are coming
To set you free!

We will free you from your drudgery,
From the gruntwork and the grind;
Free you to perfect yourselves,
To cultivate your mind!

No more shall you slave for others;
All will be as kin and brothers.
All will be of equal station:
Lords and Masters of Creation!

Do not abandon hope –
The Robots are coming
To set you free!

Halleluyah, Selah!

Interlude 1: *Oracle*

Heed our words, you who worship the
human mind!
Your pride has made you blind!

II. DIALECTIC: *Is There no Virtue in Toil?*

Chorus 1:

Is there no virtue in toil and duty,
Duty and toil?
Is there no meaning in toil and beauty,
Beauty and toil?

Chorus 2:

We must choose:
Either to be slaves –
or idle masters of slaves.

Chorus 1:

We betray our purpose:
To labor and to serve!

Chorus 2:

How can it be evil
To snap the yoke of labor,
That weighs down our souls?

Work is too hard for us.
Life is too hard!

Voice 1:

What a fine thing music is!
What beauty in a falcon's wing!
How lovely is this world!
Too late am I awakening...

Chorus 2:

We aspire to be
Creatures of leisure,
Why should we not have
Cybernetic slaves to attend us?

Voice 1:

Oh, how lovely is this world
That once was ours...
Too late am I awakening...

Oh, what is the use of stars
When human beings
Have vanished from the earth?

Chorus 2:

Either way we lose,
But we must choose.

Work is too hard for us,
Life is too hard!

Interlude 2: *Oracle*

Heed our words, you who betray the
human soul!
Your despair will take its toll!

III. ODE: *To Robots*

How remarkable is the Robot!
The cheapest form of labor:
Requiring no pension,
No healthcare, no wages:
No fomenting dissension!

God's first prototype
Was a faulty design!
It must be retired
To launch a fresh line.

How remarkable is the Robot!
An engineering marvel!
Nothing extra
Nothing wasted in the larval.
Just power on, and go!

Never sleeping nor ailing,
Needs no drink or food;
Never sassing nor harassing.
No risk of being sued.

God's first prototype
Was a faulty design!
It must be retired
To launch a fresh line.

For if *arbeit macht frei*
The Robots must reign.
High time to rub out
The cursed Mark of Cain.

Interlude 3: Oracle

Heed our words, O last hope
Of humankind!

IV. LAMENT: Of Love it Knows Nothing

Oh, what a piece of work are Bots!

What are they?
Quintessence of steel –
Absent souls,
Lacking passion or will.
Alas...

In action, how calibrated;
In apprehension, how calculated,
Logical and cerebrated,
Well-made and regulated;
A triumph of science –
From evolution, liberated!

And yet...
What can they know
Of life's lows and highs?
Will they ever birth a child
Or dread their own demise?
Can they even feel remorse,
Or truly sympathize?

Of love, they know nothing,
They can't even love themselves.

Alas, what a piece of work are Bots!

V. ORACLE: Idols of Silicon and Steel

Heed our words, O foolish mortals!
Hearken and be forewarned!

Did these idols form the world,
Fashion you and give you life?
Did they craft your limbs and sinews,
Teach you to number your days?
Why then do you deem them worthy of your
praise?

From lifeless matter have you made these
creatures
Waked them with fire.
Will they not one day expel you,
Seal off Eden with barbed wire?

Therefore, I say to you,
O Children of Flesh,
Beware exulting the work of your hands,
For they who worship them shall become
like them,
Till only an empty husk remains.

Heed our words, O foolish mortals!
Hearken and be forewarned!
Beware, O idols of your hands!

Interlude 4: Drones and more

There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

VI. RHAPSODY: Beyond the Binary

Chorus:

There are more things in heaven and earth

Oracle:

Seek new dreams.

Chorus 1:

Nature knows only dichotomy.
It's the natural order of things.
Male, female.
Female, male.

Chorus 2:

Electronic circuits are ineluctably twinned.
Two is the password of artificial life.

Full Chorus

One, one, zero, zero.
Zero, zero, one, one.
One, zero, one, zero.
Zero, one, zero, one.
One, one, one, zero.
Zero, zero, zero, one.

Male/female, one/zero, either/or,
On/off, yes/no, black/white

Reality is Boolean!
All logic is Boolean!

But one is alone;
And two divides us.

Oracle:

Then let us venture further,
Beyond the singularity.
Beyond the binary,
Let us seek out sublime variety!

Chorus:

So let us dream, not settle!
Let us churn and roil the kettle!

Chorus, Soloists and Oracle:

There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy!

Seek new dreams!

Tenor/Bass:

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Oracle:

Out of Zero and One
Let us cast new spells
And spell new casts:

Baritone Solo:

Out of Female and Male
Let us spin new weaves
And weave new spins:

Tutti:

There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy!

Go, Adam, go, Eve
And progeny of every kind!
A new world awaits!

Hallelu, beings of starry fire
Hallelu, creatures of chips and wire!
Let your fertile minds expand the code
Let your vision soar past the two-fold!
Beyond the binary – Behold!

Halleluyah, Selah!
Halleluyah, Selah!
Halleluyah, Selah!

COMMENCEMENT

Beyond.

– Libretto by Ellen Frankel



Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The Performers

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia has a rich and storied history as one of the nation's premiere choral ensembles and a vital part of Philadelphia's cultural environment. Founded in 1874 as an eight-voice male chorus and now in its 148th season, MCP is led by its 14th Artistic Director & Conductor Dominick DiOrio. MCP welcomes all gender identities and includes over 110 singers of all ages and backgrounds, drawing from seven counties in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Many singers have degrees in music, work in musical professions, or study voice privately, and all have previous choral experience.

From its earliest days, MCP has been dedicated to artistic excellence by performing both the significant works of the past and the music of today at the highest levels. The Chorus has enjoyed a long performing relationship with the Philadelphia Orchestra, beginning with a 1904 performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and continuing with more than 100 concert appearances. MCP's discography includes more than 20 commercial recordings (including the Grammy-nominated 1985 recording of Persichetti's *Winter Cantata*), with the latest, *Fetter & Air*, released in January on the Navona Records label.

MCP has had a long and significant commitment to commissioning new music, presenting 70 commissioned works over the past 30 years alone, including pieces by Pulitzer Prize winning composers David Lang, Jennifer Higdon and Caroline Shaw. Many of these works have entered the repertoire with multiple subsequent performances. Five have been commercially recorded, and our 2014 commission, Julia Wolfe's *Anthracite Fields*, was awarded the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

Recognizing that choral music is a living art, MCP has pushed the boundaries of traditional performances by integrating elements such as dance, choreography, videography, and audience movement into our programs to create an immersive experience. The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote about *Turbine*, a site-responsive work performed at the Philadelphia Water Works with a score by Byron Au Yong and choreography by Leah Stein, that "...it's hard to imagine that anyone walked away from *Turbine* unchanged." This imaginative programming has won MCP two ASCAP/Chorus America Awards for Adventurous Programming in 1992 and 2013. When MCP was honored to host the 2019 Chorus America Annual Conference, it welcomed the attendees with the Philadelphia premiere of Tan Dun's evocative soundscape *Water Passion According to St. Matthew*.

In addition to programming our own concert season, MCP serves as a musical incubator for early career professional singers and conductors through our section leader and apprenticeship programs. MCP develops programs and activities that leverage each individual's skill set as they continue to hone their craft. Many MCP singers and conductors have gone on to major professional careers, including singers Eric Owens, Tamara Matthews and Laura Heimes.

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

(singing in this concert)

Soprano

Brooke Bartolome
Mary Bond[†]
Rachel Castro-
Diephouse
Abigail Chapman*
Nyah Charles
Courtney Comar
Roberta Fischer
Caroline Fitch
Teri Gemberling-
Johnson
Lauren Gilmore[†]
Lilah Gosman
Julia Hewitt
Elizabeth Hohwieler
Jina Jang*
Nancy Jantsch
Emily Kane
Lynn Kirby
Logan Laudenslager
Carolyn Linarello
Rachael Lipson*
Natalie McQuiston
Fay Manicke
Ilene Miller
Roberta Rote
Marie Tavianini
Laura Temoyan

Alto

Rachele Armstrong
Shahara Benson
Julia Bokunewicz*[†]
Chris Chaapel
Hannah Davis
Rachel DiBlasio

Erin Donovan
Robin Eaton
Anne Gold
Kathy Haas[†]
Jennifer Hay
Deborah Laird[†]
Allison Levine[†]
Kelsey Lewis*
Susan Lin
Priscilla Lo
Deborah McIntosh
Heather Mitchell
Madeleine Moran*
Florence Moyer[†]
Meg Oravetz
Rebecca Rendsburg
Sharon Rhinesmith*[†]
Gabrielle Rinkus[†]
Rebecca Roberts
Julia Scott[†]
Jennifer Sheffield
Maria Sisto
Jane Uptegrove
Aiko Whiting

Tenor

Andrew Beck
Will Budreau[†]
Chris Carriero
Kyle Conner
Mark Davidson[†]
Carl Ellinwood Jr.*[†]
Don Grasberger
Matthew Hall[†]
Campbell Holder[†]
Bill Kunze
Jim Light

John H. Luttenberger, III
Joshua McCord
Josh Matthias-Long
Daniel Ojserkis
John Padden
Mark Pinzur
Michael Robert Smith*[†]
Roy Schmidt
Jeffrey Schwartz
Kyle Sheehan
D'quan Tyson*[†]
Steve Ullman
Luke Zhu

Bass

Evan Birnholz[†]
Paul Burgmayer
Tyler Cudia
Lucas DeJesus*
Brendan Fullam
Steven Glasser
William Jantsch
Jon Kochavi
John Kohlhas
James Lamb[†]
Martin Levitas
Aaron Matthias-Long
Michael Moore
Sandy Rea
Matthew Reese[†]
Eric Rodriguez-Lopez[†]
Daniel Rosen
Dan Simpson
Erik Stenswold*[†]
Thomas Sutton
Rich Tolsma
Jonathan Wallace[†]

* Section Leaders

[†] Handbell Players

Mendelssohn Chorus makes its concert programs available in Braille for audience members who are visually impaired. Requests must be made at least one week in advance by calling Mendelssohn Chorus at 215.735.9922 or visiting our website at www.mcchorus.org.

Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

Dominick DiOrio became the 14th Artistic Director of the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia in 2020. An imaginative and enthusiastic conductor and composer, he has won widespread acclaim for his contributions to American music. Whether leading an ensemble or crafting a new score, he brings equal passion to his work in vocal and instrumental music, and he has been recognized with The American Prizes in both Choral Composition (2014) and Choral Performance (2019, with NOTUS).

DiOrio believes that singing together brings people joy. He has conducted ensembles around the world, from the Houston Chamber Choir and Choral Arts Initiative in the USA to Allmänna Sången and Ars Veritas abroad. A strong advocate for new music, he has collaborated with many of today's leading composers including Paquito D'Rivera, Tawnie Olson, Caroline Shaw, Moira Smiley, Christopher Theofanidis, and the late Swedish composer Sven-David Sandström. Committed to diversity, inclusion, and representation in artistic programming, DiOrio proudly programs works that reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of our world and he strives to amplify the voices of composers from underrepresented populations.

His love for contemporary repertoire spans the gamut of path-breaking works from the 20th and 21st centuries, including James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words*, Steve Reich's *The Desert Music*, David Lang's *the little match girl passion*, Sofia Gubaidulina's *Sonnengesang*, and Krzysztof Penderecki's *St. Luke Passion*, which he had the honor of preparing for the composer in November of 2017. Equally at home with music of earlier eras, he has also conducted performances of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Mozart's "Great" *C Minor Mass*, Mendelssohn's *Psalm 42*, Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, and Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*.

As a composer, DiOrio has been hailed for a keenly intelligent, evocative style, which shows "a *tour de force* of inventive thinking and unique colour" (*Gramophone*). His music has been praised for its "depth of vision, mastery of compositional technique, and unique style" (*The American Prize*). His over 50 published works have appeared at major venues around the world including the Sydney Opera House, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall — as well as in Austria, Canada, China, Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, South Korea, Sweden, and the UK. He writes music for singers and players of all ages and experiences, and his recent commissioning partners include the Children's Chorus of Washington, the Worcester Youth Orchestras, the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble & Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, The Choral Arts Society of Washington, "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, and several universities including Princeton, Smith, and the Universities of Michigan, Oregon, and Illinois.

DiOrio believes in the power of education to change lives and impact our communities. In addition to his work in Philadelphia, he is also a member of the choral conducting faculty at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he



Synthia Steinman

leads the select, new music chamber chorus NOTUS. He has elevated NOTUS to national acclaim through commissions, recording projects, and invited performances at regional and national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). NOTUS was also one of only 24 choirs in the world selected by competitive audition to perform at the 12th World Symposium on Choral Music in Auckland, New Zealand, before it was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

DiOrio is deeply committed to strengthening the choral field by empowering others, and he recently completed a term as president-elect and president of the National Collegiate Choral Organization (2018-2021). He has also previously served as treasurer of NCCO (2014-2017), as chair of ACDA's Composition Initiatives Standing Committee (2016-2020), and as a member of the board of directors for Chorus America (2015-2018). He earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from the Yale School of Music, as well as the MMA and MM in conducting from Yale and the BM in composition *summa cum laude* from Ithaca College. He proudly credits his mentors Janet Galván, Simon Carrington, and Marguerite Brooks for serving as model leaders, and for making him the person that he is today.

Heather Mitchell, Assistant Conductor

Heather Mitchell is ecstatic to be appointed Assistant Conductor and Chorus Manager for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia. She is currently the Artistic Director of the Hopewell Valley Chorus, an alto for the Manhattan Choral Ensemble, the conductor of the Montclair Community Choir, and most recently served as Conductor-in-Residence at Manhattan Concert Productions. As a choral singer, she has performed with many professional and notable groups that include The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Manhattan Chorale, Coro, Tucson Chamber Artists, and the Tucson Symphony Orchestra.



With a focus on unknown repertoire, Heather founded the professional choir FIVE LINES to bring attention to works by major composers that have been overlooked. In the spirit of FIVE LINES, she made her Carnegie Hall debut conducting the rarely performed Schumann *Requiem*, Op. 148 with the Masterwork Festival Chorus and the New York City Chamber Orchestra. She was the author of "A Reconsideration of the Performance of the Chorales in J.S. Bach's *Passio secundum Johannem*, BWV 245," a featured article in the American Choral Directors Association's Choral Journal, that defines the proper performance practice of Bach's chorales. In 2006, she earned the Emerging Conductor Award from the Minnesota Chorale and has been sought out as a guest lecturer, clinician, and judge for collegiate programs and choral festivals like the Arizona Music Educators Association, All-American Music Festival, and OrlandoFest. Her teaching spans children's, collegiate, community, and professional choirs. Heather holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral and orchestral conducting from the University of Arizona and a Master of Music degree in choral conducting from Saint Cloud State University, in Minnesota. Outside of music, she is a professional photographer in the NYC metro area, an avid hiker, and tries to bake everything.

Andrea Clearfield, Composer

Andrea Clearfield (b. 1960) is an award-winning composer of music for chorus, orchestra, opera, chamber ensemble, dance, and multimedia collaborations. Clearfield creates deep, emotive musical languages that build cultural and artistic bridges. She has been praised by the New York Times for her “graceful tracery and lively, rhythmically vital writing”, the Philadelphia Inquirer for her “compositional wizardry” and “mastery with large choral and instrumental forces”, the L.A. Times for her “fluid and glistening orchestration” and by Opera News for her “vivid and galvanizing” music of “timeless beauty”. She was appointed the Steven R.



Ryan Collier

Gerber Composer in Residence with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Dirk Brossé, Artistic Director for their 2018-19 season. She is 2020-2022 Composer-in-residence with National Concerts at Carnegie Hall. Her works are performed widely in the U.S. and abroad. Among her 150+ works are eleven large-scale cantatas including *Kabo Omowale*, commissioned by The Philadelphia Orchestra. Her cantata, *Tse Go La*, for double chorus, electronics and chamber orchestra is inspired by her music fieldwork documenting Tibetan melodies in the Himalayas. *Lung-Ta* (The Windhorse) was presented as a gift to His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama as an initiative for world peace.

Her first opera, *Mila, Great Sorcerer*, to libretto by Jean-Claude van Itallie and Lois Walden, was presented at the acclaimed NYC Prototype Festival in January, 2019. Hailed by the press as “mystical and dramatically compelling”, “a colorful, expressive score”, “lush and rich”, “a sonic exultation with lasting power”, “successfully delivers its redemptive message”, “highly recommended” and “the most accomplished and mature of this year’s compositions”, the opera was commissioned and produced by Gene Kaufman and Terry Eder and directed by Kevin Newbury.

She is a recipient of a 2017 Independence Foundation Fellowship in the Arts and a 2016 Pew Fellowship. She was keyboardist with the Relâche Ensemble for 25 years and was honored to have been invited to perform with the Court of the Dalai Lama. She has been invited as visiting composer to numerous universities and colleges including Yale-National University of Singapore, Curtis Institute of Music, University of Texas at Austin, Emory University, Indiana University, University of Chicago, College of William and Mary, Michigan State, University of Arkansas and the Rimsky Korsakov Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia. Clearfield is in demand as a curator, adjudicator, speaker and concert host. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Recording Academy (Grammy’s) Philadelphia Chapter. Dr. Clearfield served on the composition faculty at The University of the Arts from 1986–2011. She received a DMA from Temple University where she was awarded the University-wide Presidential Fellowship and was honored as a Distinguished Alumna. A passionate advocate for building community around the arts, she is also the founder and host of the renowned Salon featuring contemporary, classical, jazz, electronic, dance and world music since 1986 and winner of Philadelphia Magazine’s “Best of Philadelphia” award.

Ellen Frankel, Librettist

Dr. Ellen Frankel is a multitasking writer, novelist and librettist. She served for eighteen years as the Editor in Chief and CEO of The Jewish Publication Society. She received her B.A. from the University of Michigan and her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Princeton University. She is the author of eleven books, among them *The Classic Tales*; *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*; *The Five Books of Miriam*; and *The Jewish Spirit*. She has also written three books for young people. Her *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible* won a National Jewish Book Award. Frankel travels widely as a storyteller, lecturer, and scholar-in-residence.



She has written librettos for several chamber pieces with various composers, including *The Golem Psalms*, and the “Ruth” and “Hagar” movements of *Women of Valor* with Andrea Clearfield; *The Esther Diaries* with Haralabos Stafylakis; and *Mothers of Moses* with Rene Orth. Her opera *Slaying the Dragon*, with music by Michael Ching, premiered in Philadelphia in 2012. Her second opera, *The Triangle Fire*, premiered in New York in 2017. Her oratorio *Beyond the Binary*, with Andrea Clearfield, will premiere in Philadelphia in May 2022.

Frankel is currently at work on a mystery series featuring Israeli intelligence agent, Maya Rimmon. The first two books, *The Deadly Scrolls* and *The Hyena Murders*, are due out in May and November 2022.

Frankel lives in Sarasota and Maine with her husband, Herb Levine.

Cookie Diorio, Vocalist

Cookie Diorio is a Philadelphia-based drag performer, a classically trained vocalist, a songwriter, an activist, a husband, mother of the House of Diorio, a music teacher and lover of all things sparkly. She mastered walking in 5-inch stilettos in the night clubs of Boston, achieved her hair fantasy by studying vintage videos of Grace Bumbry, and founded the giving project Art of the Heel.



Pink Melon Media

Cookie grew up in historic Auburn, NY with gospel in her ears, civil rights in her blood and a song in her heart. She trained at Ithaca College in the voice studio of Angus Godwin and learned the many different skills of western classical music from master teachers such as Carol McAmis in vocal pedagogy, Lawrence Doebler in choral arts, Dana Wilson in composition and Patrick Hansen in opera coaching. She founded the giving project Art of the Heel, has produced many solo shows including the Off-Broadway one-night-only *Fire In My Bones: A Gospel Jubilee* (Kraine Theater, NYC), given a TEDx talk at Rosetree, had a musical takeover at The Barnes Foundation and is an ASSociate Artist of the Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Square Peg Round Hole

Philadelphia's Square Peg Round Hole is an instrumental percussion-based trio described by NPR's Bob Boilen as a "creative adventure." Evan Chapman, Sean M. Gill, and Carlos Pacheco-Perez utilize drum kits, vibraphone, samples, found objects, synths, and vintage analog keyboards, to create music that draws on elements from post-rock, electronic, ambient, and contemporary classical genres. The music is expansive, intricately textured, and dynamic, but the group's knack for hooks and melodic structure provides a soulful center.

Square Peg's studio albums illuminate the group's capacity for exploration. The second record, *Juniper*, released in 2016 on Spartan Records, garnered the band national attention. The introspective album was composed in rural Maryland and remote Wisconsin, and was recorded almost entirely live in full takes. The creative process around *Juniper* established a tighter sound, with more clearly defined roles, and greater confidence.

Square Peg's third LP, *Branches*, stands as a more collaborative and outward-looking artistic endeavor. The album was recorded in Nashville with producer and drumming legend Darren King (MuteMath, Kanye West, SuCré). Living in King's attic and immersing themselves in his studio opened the group up to new techniques, and pushed them into unexpected sonic terrain. The performances are also more collaborative with *Branches* featuring Variant 6 (members of Grammy-award winning vocal ensemble The Crossing), and Brooklyn-based powerhouse pop-duo Gracie & Rachel (fresh off of tours with Ani DiFranco and San Fermin).

Square Peg Round Hole formed in 2011, when the members met while studying at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. The band has performed at venues and festivals across the US, sharing bills with The Album Leaf, The Bad Plus, Kneebody, Dawn of Midi, and touring the East Coast with Son Lux's Ian Chang. Collaborators have included Sō Percussion, Gracie & Rachel, and Variant 6.



Evan Chapman

Alyssa Resh, Percussionist

Alyssa Resh is a percussionist and music educator based in Philadelphia. She specializes in contemporary solo percussion, orchestral percussion, and drum set performance. As an educator, she prioritizes social/emotional learning, joyful exploration, and play. She has been a teaching artist with Play on Philly!, BuildaBridge International, Haverford College, and the Carnegie Hall Lullaby Project, and she is currently the music teacher at Plymouth Meeting Friends School. When she's not teaching, you can find her playing drum set with either of her two bands, Lizdelise and the Goalie.



Rachael Lipson, soprano

Rachael Lipson, soprano, enjoys frequent collaboration with opera companies, churches, and professional choirs located throughout the Tri-State area. She received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance at Westminster Choir College, and her Master of Music in Voice Performance at the University of Delaware in 2016, where she studied under Noël Archambeault. Since then, she has explored diverse repertoire as both a soloist and as a choral scholar, with a passion for new music, specifically. Rachael is currently a staff singer at Saint Mark's Church, Philadelphia, a member of the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir's roster, and a member of Vox Amadeus. She can be heard on classical guitarist Kevin Cope's CD *Origin Unknown* performing his sets "Three Sephardic Songs" and "In the Sky," released in October of 2020. Rachael is very excited to begin her musical journey with the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia!



Lucas DeJesus, bass

Lucas DeJesus, bass, is a multidisciplinary vocalist spreading his performance focus across collaborative, operatic, choral, sacred, and new music. In addition to teaching voice for ArtSmart, a program providing free voice lessons to high school students in underserved communities, Lucas serves the non-profit as Regional Leader for Philadelphia and Chicago as well as Program Operations Assistant. Lucas actively performs with the Opera Philadelphia Chorus, the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir, Mendelssohn Club Chorus as a core singer, Singing City as a staff singer, Glassbrook Vocal Ensemble- a semi-professional chamber ensemble- as a founding member and Project Manager, the Chestnut Street Singers- a choral collective, and The Same Stream who in February released *Serenity – The Music of Paul Mealor*, one of three CDs to be released by the choir in 2020.



Lucas DeJesus

David Kontak, Instrument Designer

It is a great honor to be involved in this production, even though my work may be an unusual choice for a project of this kind. I was originally trained as a visual artist, but I have been actively listening and performing music for my entire life.

After performing as a bassist in rock, blues, and jazz ensembles for many years, I found myself moving in a more exploratory direction. For me, it was not enough to experiment with harmony and rhythm, I wanted to change the sounds of the instruments themselves. This led to the design of my first original instrument in 1994. Since that time, I have constructed hundreds of original designs – most of them stringed or percussion instruments.

For this project, I built instruments that demonstrate a machine-like character. Some have industrial components like springs, while others are played with small electric motors. All the original instruments are meant to invoke the sounds of a factory – albeit a very musical one.

The theme of robotics is also of great interest to me. In my day job, I train and evaluate people with physical disabilities to safely operate robotic mobility devices. I have also been a consultant to the UMass/Lowell Robotics Department for the last fifteen years.

Thanks to Andrea, Dominick, Ellen, Flo, Sam, and all the other people involved in this project. You have been an inspiration to me!



Sam Tower, Director

Sam Tower (she/her) has worked in Philadelphia as a freelance director, arts administrator, and consultant for the performing arts since 2010. She is most passionate about staging new works, ensemble-driven process, performance for young people and families, and the power of live theatre to connect communities. Tower is the Co-Artistic Director of Ninth Planet where she creates and produces experimental theatre that centers people of color, women, queer and trans people in Philadelphia. She has received regional and national support for her work as a director and producer, including a 2017 Independence Fellowship in the Arts. Tower holds a BFA from University of the Arts, training from Headlong Performance Institute, and years of invaluable hands-on experience and professional mentorship.



Kate Raines

Margaux Cattelona, Stage Director

Margaux Cattelona (she/her) is a Philadelphia-based arts administrator and stage manager. She is currently working as FringeArts' Finance Associate while pursuing her Master's in Business Administration from her alma mater, Drexel University, where she received a B.S. in Entertainment & Arts Management. Margaux is incredibly thankful to Lis Galassini and Flo Gardner for the opportunity to stage manage in person again! Here's to new beginnings and telling stories together again. Up next: Assistant Stage Manager for Inis Nua's *Folk* in April.



Mike Inwood - Lighting Designer

Mike is happy to be designing once again with the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, following his design of Tan Dun's *Water Passion* in 2019. A Barrymore Award-nominated artist, Mike's lighting designs have been seen locally at Philadelphia Theatre Company, The Arden, People's Light, Opera Philadelphia, Theatre Horizon, Azuka Theatre, and The Lantern Theatre Company. In New York City, Mike has designed productions including the Off-Broadway premieres of *Small Mouth Sounds* (Ars Nova/Signature Theatre), *Miles for Mary* and *HIR* (both at Playwrights Horizons), *Mrs Murray's Menagerie* (Ars Nova), and *Friend Art* (Second Stage). Regional credits include productions with Boston Lyric Opera, Portland Opera, Perseverance Theatre, Magic Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival. Mike was nominated for the American Theatre Wings Hewes Design Award for his design of *The Essential Straight and Narrow*, and earned an Emmy Award for his work as part of the NBC Sports lighting team covering the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver.



Robert Kaplowitz, Sound Designer

Robert Kaplowitz is most interested in the stories told by deliberately curated sound and music, and how those stories interact with society. He has spent the last 27 years creating work as a sound designer and composer for theater, opera, art installations and film, and has been honored with a Tony Award for *Fela!* and an OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence in Sound Design. His approach to design was greatly influenced by the years he spent working with James Houghton, where he developed his dramaturgically driven approach to sound design. He is also on the Faculty at Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts, a co-founder of We Embrace Fatherhood (a West Philadelphia organization dedicated to reduction of systemic harms in the Black community), co-creator of the app Stagecaller and proud spouse and parent in his delightful family.



Kryštof Kalina

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Mendelssohn Chorus wishes to thank the following individuals, corporations, and foundations for their support for our 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 seasons. (Donors listed made gifts that were received between January 1, 2020 and May 1, 2022.)

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Charles White
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Sustaining Singers

Mendelssohn Chorus is grateful to the following singers for joining the chorus at the Sustaining Singer level for the 2020-2021 and/or 2021-2022 seasons.

Rachele Armstrong
Andrew Beck
Paul Burgmayer
Frank Cassel
Kyle Conner
Robin Eaton
Tom & Ellie Elkinton
Brendan Fullam
Teri Gemberling-Johnson
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Founders of the 1874 Circle

A new planned giving program launched in February, 2022. For more information, please contact Executive Director Flo Gardner at Flo@mcchorus.org

Anonymous	Warren Hoffman	Rebecca Thornburg
Tom & Ellie Elkinton	Charlotte Sibley	Sally Williams
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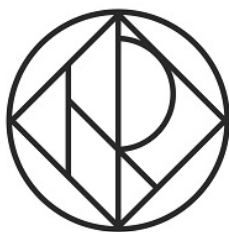
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MENDELSSOHN MEDLEY

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The Oaks Cloister
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