

O U R *Boundless* H U M A N I T Y

MENDELSSOHN CHORUS OF PHILADELPHIA'S 152ND SEASON

Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

Heather Mitchell, Associate Artistic Director



Photography by Sharon Torello

Joyful Abundance

June 6, 2026 / 4pm

Rodeph Shalom
601 N. Broad Street

MCCHORUS.ORG

From the Artistic Director

Welcome!

My name is Dominick DiOrio, and I am honored to lead Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, one of the longest continually active musical organizations in America. Thank you for being here today to witness a truly momentous event.

As the final concert of Our Boundless Humanity, Mendelssohn Chorus' 152nd Season, our **Joyful Abundance** program is an interrogation of where we have come from and a celebration of where we are going. It's also a culmination of over four years of work and planning, from conception to actualization.

We are honored to be part of ArtPhilly's **WHAT NOW 2026 Festival**, a celebration of 250 years of art-making in Philadelphia that examines that very important question: what now? How do artists respond to our world when considering how far we've come?



Today, **you will hear five new world premieres by emerging artist poets and composers**, who have worked together in teamed pairs for over a year with established mentors to create these ground-breaking new artworks. You will hear them speak directly to you from the stage and then hear their creations in public for the very first time.

We've paired these premieres with Randall Thompson and Thomas Jefferson's *The Testament of Freedom*, a work which explicitly reminds us of America's ideals, in all of their highest aspirations, unfulfilled promises, and occasional hypocrisies. The words of our new artists respond directly to some of these inconsistencies, as we always work to more fully realize the vision of equality laid out 250 years ago.

The arc of history does bend toward justice, and art-making is the front line... **it is artists who remind us of where we are going and what we still have yet to do.**

Thank you for joining us on this journey today, as we are all reminded of how – through our art, music, dance, poetry, theater, and more – we can make our world and our nation a better place for all.

With my warmest regards,

Dominick DiOrio

14th Artistic Director & Conductor
Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia



Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

Ting Ting Wong, Collaborative Pianist, Senior Artist-in-Residence,
& Cover Conductor

Brady Ketelsen, Conducting Apprentice

in partnership with **ArtPhilly's What Now: 2026 festival**

present

Joyful Abundance

The Testament of Freedom

Randall Thompson

1. The God who gave us life
2. We have counted the cost
3. We fight not for glory
4. I shall not die without a hope

Ting Ting Wong, piano
Dominick DiOrio, conductor

*The following five works are commissioned world premieres
created through the Joyful Abundance Emerging Artist Commissioning Program
made possible by funding from ArtPhilly with lead support from
The William Penn Foundation; The Musical Fund Society;
and the Alan Harler New Ventures Fund.*

What Now

music by Leigha Amick
text by Amy Beth Sisson

Katy Avery, soprano
Jen Rafferty, alto
Ian Martin, tenor
Lucas DeJesus, bass
Dominick DiOrio, conductor

Welcome Home

music by Adelina DiGiacomo
text by Haley Storm Evans

Ren Martin-Doike, viola
Ting Ting Wong, piano
Brady Ketelsen, conductor

we are made foreign

music by Baldwin Giang
text by Evan Wang

Chelsea Meynig, bass flute
Ting Ting Wong, Mandarin speaker
Sophia Santiago, soprano
Dominick DiOrio, conductor

A Fern Uprising

music by Barbara Lewandowski
text by Naila Francis

Dominick DiOrio, conductor

Electric Bloom

music by Ted Babcock
text by Octavia McBride-Ahebee

Ted Babcock, marimba
Rachael Lipson, soprano
Dominick DiOrio, conductor

Saturday, June 6, 2026
Congregation Rodeph Shalom
610 N. Broad Street
4:00 pm

Mendelssohn Chorus would like to thank the supporters of our 2025-2026 season including: the donors to the Alan Harler New Ventures Fund, Archie W. and Grace Berry Foundation, ArtPhilly, The Musical Fund Society, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pew Center of Arts & Heritage, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, The Presser Foundation, and the Roberta Rote & Martin Levitas Professional Musicians Fund.



Please use this QR code to access the full e-program, which also includes staff and donor lists. It is designed specifically for ease of use with your mobile device.

Program Notes

The Testament of Freedom (1943)

Music; Randall Thompson (1899–1984)

Text: Thomas Jefferson

There is probably not a choral singer in the country who has not performed something by Randall Thompson. While the composer and educator wrote music in a wide variety of genres, it is his choral music which is firmly enshrined in the canon. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Harvard and also studied privately with Ernest Bloch. In 1922 he received one of the first American Rome Prizes, which allowed him to study at the American Academy in Rome, and he also received two Guggenheim Fellowships. He held academic posts at Wellesley College, UC Berkeley, and Princeton, chaired the music departments at the University of Virginia and Harvard, and served as director of the Curtis Institute of Music. He wrote an influential (and controversial) proposal to reform music curricula which included increased liberal arts classes and no grading for music performance classes.

The Testament of Freedom was composed in 1943 while Thompson was at the University of Virginia for the Founder's Day commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson not only founded the university, but also helped acquire the land on which it was built, designed and laid out the original buildings, created a novel curriculum which was both diverse and secular, and served as its first rector. Thompson compiled a libretto from the voluminous writings of Jefferson and completed the four-movement work in two months. It was set for men's chorus (there were no women at the Charlottesville campus at the time) with a piano accompaniment that Thompson played himself at the premiere. While Thompson had considered the *Testament* an occasional piece, i.e. one written for a particular event, the text he had chosen describing a nation forced into war by the attacks of a foe and fighting only to preserve its freedom, could easily be applied to the ongoing World War II. CBS had learned of the project and thought the patriotic piece might serve as a morale booster during those dark days of the war. They recorded the premiere performance, rebroadcast it nationwide, and provided it to the Office of War Information for shortwave rebroadcast to the armed forces overseas. Thompson provided an orchestration, a version for mixed chorus, and a truncated version containing just the first and last movements, and the work was performed a number of times during the war years. Mendelssohn Chorus performed the *Testament* twice with the Philadelphia Orchestra and once in the original men's chorus version at the Union League during the Bicentennial year 1976.

Setting Jefferson's prose, which often included long, dense, complex sentences, was challenging, and Thompson allowed the cadence of the text to mold the musical lines. Much of the music is homophonic, a musical texture in which the rhythms and text all align across the voice parts, making the text easily heard and understood. Even when the musical lines overlap, Thompson takes great care that text can still be heard clearly. The first three movements take their text from two seminal documents, the 1774 *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, and the 1775 *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of*

Taking Up Arms, which informed thinking that was included in the Declaration of Independence. The final movement is a sort of post-script, taking its text from a letter to John Adams. Jefferson had hoped that the French Revolution would spark democracy across Europe, but instead it had devolved into the violent Reign of Terror, followed by the empire-building wars of the Napoleonic era, and then a back-lash of repressive governments and suppression of dissent that was currently sweeping Europe.

The first movement opens with a short fanfare which rhythmically taps out the name "Thomas Jefferson." This movement contains the shortest text, which Thompson sets as a beautiful, stirring anthem. It is repeated three times, each separated by bugle fanfares which also serve as modulatory devices and which will appear throughout the work. The second movement opens in a somber, almost elegiac mood to the text "we have counted the cost of this contest." Unspoken is the understanding that that cost will be paid in human lives, and the slow march beaten out in the bass line in the piano suddenly takes on the character of a funeral procession. This ostinato continues even as the music swells and the text becomes more affirmative and resolute until it is finally swept away as the chorus proclaims "we... solemnly declare, being with one mind resolved to die freemen rather than to live slaves."

The third movement contains some of the most densely packed text. Thompson deals with this using staccato rhythms, breaking lines into shorter phrases by inserting rests, and lengthening key phrases, all while the music is gathering speed. The bugle fanfares return, but with the uneasiness of an unsettling contrast in key. The final movement opens with a piano introduction marked serene and tranquil, and the chorus enters with the anthem melody from the first movement. The music is mostly quiet and thoughtful in mood, although Jefferson does get worked up over the political situation in Europe. After an extended passage of bugle fanfares, a reprise of music from the first movement brings the *Testament* to its stirring conclusion.

As we listen to the words of Jefferson extolling those core values of freedom, tolerance and liberty which we so cherish and have fought to retain, we cannot help being reminded of those who have been excluded from enjoying those same rights. Jefferson believed that slavery was evil and worked tirelessly if not always successfully to prevent its spread in America, but he himself was also a slaveholder all his life, and of the 600 enslaved persons he employed, he only freed 10 during his lifetime or in his will. As his Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Jon Meacham noted, "Jefferson's capacity to live with contradiction was nothing less than epic." It is perhaps a trait that many of us share with him. We can look back on 250 years of American history with deserved pride, but we can also see where we as a nation have fallen short and failed to live up to our core values. This is the backdrop for the new compositions we will hear in this concert. Knowing our past, what do we envision for our future?

—Michael Moore

What Now

Music: Leigha Amick

Poetry: Amy Beth Sisson

Mentors: Erin Busch (music) & Steven Kleinman (poetry)

Composer **Leigha Amick** writes music to spark intellectual curiosity and express human experience. She aims to use musical intuition and logical patterns to convey emotions and events in her own life, in the hope that her work can touch others' lives, too.



Her compositions have been performed by ensembles including the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, the Boulder Philharmonic, the Denver Young Artists Orchestra, the Orlando Philharmonic, the Indiana University New Music Ensemble, the Playground Ensemble, St. Martin's Voices, St. Martin's Chamber Choir, NOTUS Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, and Ars Nova Singers. In 2024, the New Jersey Symphony performed her piece *Cascade* as one of the scores selected for the Edward T. Cone Composition Institute. In 2023, she was a composition fellow at the Aspen Music Festival. In 2022, New Voices Opera premiered *Rhiannon's Condemnation*, a one-act chamber opera based on a medieval Welsh legend from *The Mabinogion* for which Leigha wrote both the libretto and the music.

Amick earned her Master of Music degree in composition from the Curtis Institute of Music where she held the Jimmy Brent Fellowship and studied with Amy Beth Kirsten, Jonathan Bailey Holland, Nick DiBerardino, Richard Danielpour, and Steve Mackey. She received her Bachelor of Music in composition with highest distinction from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, completing minors in mathematics and electronic music and singing in NOTUS Contemporary Vocal Ensemble. At IU, she studied composition with David Dzubay, Aaron Travers, Claude Baker, Sven-David Sandström, and Don Freund. Before college, she studied with Daniel Kellogg and John Drumheller of the University of Colorado Boulder. She currently teaches counterpoint, keyboard harmony, and solfège for the Young Artists Initiative at the Curtis Institute of Music.

Poet **Amy Beth Sisson** (she/her) received her MFA in poetry from Rutgers University Camden in 2023 and was a 2024 Fellow with the Kenyon Review Writing Workshops. She is an Associate Artist with the Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice and an Editorial Assistant for Fence Publishers.



Emily Boden Photos

About herself, she says, "Listening to George Crumb's *The Ancient Voices of Children* in high school astonished me and gave me an awareness of the power of the interaction between music and words. In the beginning *El niño busca su voz*, the words are obscured in a resonant vocalese. This and the merging of instrument and voice by singing into the body of the piano made me aware of words as a sonic unit as well as units of meaning. The music intensifies the mystery in Lorca's poems. I noticed how

different this was from Orff's *O Fortuna*, which I sang in chorus. The pageantry of the opening chords parallels the direct address to fate. The pulsing rhythm sounds like a wheel. At one moment the sopranos join singing the words "Fate is against me." The consonance between music simplifies the power of the poem. While I enjoy the Orff, over the years I have come to appreciate the nuance and complexity as exemplified by Crumb's work more and more.

"I am an old early career poet who has not published a book. I returned to poetry seriously in 2016 after the election. I am drawn to an art form that pays close attention to language in a time of propaganda. Now emerging late in my life, I've had the good fortune to study with Aireia D. Matthews, Pat Rosal, Greg Pardlo, Dan Beachy Quick, and many other inspiring poets."

Leigha Amick has provided the following program notes:

"We hold values.

We hold each other.

We hold space for each other.

Or not.

"I wrote this program note and this work with extremely cautious optimism. Not because I think the current state of the United States offers me causes to be optimistic, but because the only way that I can imagine a better version of the US is by beginning with a vision of what that version could look like.

"Two hundred and fifty years ago, the writers of the Declaration of Independence outlined such a vision: government must secure unalienable human rights. They had appealed to "ties of common kindred" with the British in hopes of obtaining representation and just treatment under British law, but to no avail. What ties Americans together today is not "common kindred" in a literal sense, but rather the participation in a democracy created with the vision of protecting rights and freedoms. Our application of this vision has been far from perfect, and often we don't even agree on how to interpret this ideal.

Despite today's division, violence, incendiary rhetoric, and controversial government actions, I firmly believe that there are still core beliefs of that ideal that many of us share. We are tied together in this American experiment. What we do with those ties is up to us."

Amy Beth Sisson provided this note on the poetry:

I chose the name for this festival, "what now?" as the title of my piece because it is an excellent question. It's also what I asked myself when I learned that my composer, Leigh Amick, hoped to write a piece that engaged with the Declaration of Independence. I wasn't sure if I had the fortitude to foreground that document during this time in our country's history, but I'm so glad she gave me a gentle nudge. Before starting to draft, I looked at what other poets had done with the text. There's the wonderful Tracy K Smith erasure poem *Declaration* which begins "He has / sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people." Rosmarie Waldrop in her poem *Shorter American Memory of the Declaration of Independence* replaces each noun in the Declaration with the seventh one that follows in the dictionary. It begins, "We holler these trysts to be self-exiled..." Because we have the echo of the original text in mind, both poems help us to reconsider this foundational document.

After talking with my mentor, Steven Kleinman, I decided to look for words I loved in the Declaration. Words I hoped could resonate as we answer the question, “what now?” I used words from the Declaration in the order in which they appear with a single exception. In one spot, I changed “course of human” to “of course human.” In this time when our government and institutions are dehumanizing so many of us, I want to leave you with the words “of course human” set to Amick’s thoughtful music and premiered by the venerable Mendelssohn chorus.

Welcome Home

Music: Adelina DiGiacomo

Poetry: Haley Storm Evans

Mentors: Andrea Clearfield (music) & Raena Shirali (poetry)

Adelina DiGiacomo is an emerging composer living and working in North Wilmington, Delaware. From 2016–2018, she took private composition lessons, during which time she wrote and directed two musicals for elementary-aged students and won MTNA composition contests at the statewide level in Delaware and Texas. While earning her Bachelor of Music in Composition, Adelina explored the intersection of jazz and classical music through her chamber and choral works, as well as through songwriting. Adelina has experience collaborating with other musicians and artists in recording and performance settings and has recently been commissioned to write six choral introits for a church in the greater Philadelphia area. Adelina is currently pursuing a Masters of Music in Theory and Composition at West Chester University and works as a piano teacher and accompanist.



As a composer, Adelina strives to foster a deeper understanding, enjoyment, and love for that which is beautiful through a creative process marked by attentive listening, generative dialogue, and hospitable invitation. Through attentive listening, she assesses the inherent musical qualities of a given piece, nurturing these distinctives in such a way that the piece becomes most fully itself in its diversity of internal relationships and unity of its overarching coherence. She believes that generative dialogue should characterize artistic collaboration with other composers, poets, and creatives as they offer the gift of their eyes, ears, and intuitions to one another. Subsequently, these artists are enabled to share their work with a broader audience as a gesture of hospitable invitation – welcoming others into a deeper understanding, enjoyment, and love for that which is beautiful.

Haley Storm Evans (they/them/she/her) is an emerging writer and poet currently based in Philadelphia, PA. Writing primarily in free verse, their work explores the intimate nuances of grief and mourning, the delicate relationship between human and non-human landscapes, and questions of place in a now globalized locale. They draw inspiration through the monotony of everyday life, the beauty in the mundane, and the small in-between moments. You can find their work in *Bristle Magazine* or on Substack. When they're not writing you can find them overly caffeinated, admiring pigeons, and playing with their dog.



They have provided the following notes about the poetry:

"*Welcome Home* is, at its core, an ode to the dead. For as long as I can remember, I have had a fascination with mortality, the idea of a human soul, and what an afterlife might look like. Working with Adelina, Raena, and Andrea helped me question how those ideas shape my writing, and my every day. In visualizing a life through the lens of a grave, I invite the audience to confront their own discomfort surrounding their own life and legacy.

"This poem is also dedicated to the late James Lamb, my brilliant partner and former Mendelssohn member. Without his unwavering support, my poetry would still be confined to moleskin journals strewn about our apartment. I hope you will hear his call."

we are made foreign

Music: Baldwin Giang

Poetry: 王潇 Evan Wang

Mentors: Dominick DiOrio (music) & Kayleb Candrilli (poetry)

Baldwin Giang (b. 1992, Philadelphia) is a composer, pianist, and multimedia creator. He was the winner of the Samuel Barber Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome for 2023-2024 and is currently composer-in-residence for the Louisville Orchestra. His work aims to empower communities of audiences and performers by creating concert experiences that are opportunities for collective wonder and judgment. Described as "taut and cohesive...challenging and rewarding" (Cacophony), Baldwin's music has been performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Symphony Center in Chicago, and the Smithsonian Museum (DC). He has received commissions from the National Sawdust Ensemble, Metropolis Ensemble, New York Youth Symphony, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Grossman Ensemble, Playground Ensemble, Loadbang, Fondation Maurice Ravel, Extended Music Collective, and Music from Copland House. Additional collaborators have included the New Jersey Symphony, Albany Symphony, Ensemble Intercontemporain, International Contemporary Ensemble, Riot Ensemble, New European Ensemble, Ensemble Garage, orkest de ereprijs, Arditti Quartet, Longleash, Ekmeles, Sandbox Percussion, and Black-box Ensemble.



The international and domestic festivals that have presented his work include: IRCAM's Manifeste (France), Ecole d'arts Americains de Fontainebleau (France), Concours International de Piano d'Orléans (France), Gaudeamus Muziekweek (Netherlands), 24th Annual Young Composers' Meeting (Netherlands), Spoleto Festival dei Due Mondi (Italy), Festival Contrasti (Italy), Ostrava Days (Czech Republic), Klexos (Spain), Aspen Music Festival, Princeton's Edward T. Cone Institute, and Yale in Norfolk's New Music Workshop. Baldwin has been awarded ASCAP's Morton Gould Young Composer and Leo Kaplan Awards, Fondation Maurice Ravel's Prix Ravel, Musica Prospettiva Competition's First Prize, Gaudeamus Award nomination, and Fulbright Arts Fellowship (Taiwan).

Baldwin is a graduate of Yale University, earning a B.A. with Honors in both Music and Political Science, and the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, earning a M.A. as a Regents Fellow. He is currently a PhD candidate and Division of Humanities Fellow at the University of Chicago.

王潇/**Evan Wang** is the author of *Slow Burn* (Northwestern University Press, 2026), winner of the Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize and finalist for the Vinyl 45 Chapbook Prize, and the 9th Northeast Regional Youth Poet Laureate of the United States. A first-generation American and celebrated community arts advocate, his work has appeared in POETRY Magazine, The Kenyon Review, Waxwing, The Harvard Advocate, RHINO, and elsewhere, and has been twice nominated for Best of the Net. He has been recognized by and featured at The White House, Button Poetry, NPR, TEDx, and more, and has earned invitations to perform at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the U.S. Department of Education, and The Smithsonian Institution. Evan is the recipient of two National YoungArts Awards, a Scholastic National Gold Medal, and is a commended Foyle Young Poet of the Year, placing him among the top 100 young poets in the world. He was a featured artist at the Wawa Welcome America Festival, where he appeared on a firework soundtrack that played during a fireworks show under the Ben Franklin Bridge in Philadelphia, and was named the #1 youth slam poet in Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Discovering his love for poetry through a poem titled "The Blood We Inherit, The Blood We Spill," written after experiencing a micro-aggression in 2021, Evan is passionate about the preservation of local arts, public health, and the expansion of literacy through introducing poetry to popular media.



Baldwin Giang has provided the following program notes: "In setting Wang's text to music, I wanted to mirror its richness and linguistic diversity by exploring multiple modes of soundmaking layered on top of each other: we hear sung text and spoken text in both Mandarin and English, and the wordless yet breathy sonority of the bass flute all co-existing in sometimes clean and sometimes messy ways. The intimate, and yet global-facing, tone of the poem takes on new perspective when set for a large choir. Distance, both literal and metaphorical in the text, traces throughways of tension and meaning in the work through the spatialized disposition of the choir and bass flutist."

Evan Wang has provided the following notes about the poetry: “Loving You From a Foreign Country” merges culture, history, and physical distances to answer the question America has made of queer bodies. Whether they deserve significance, love, or breath. Investigating queer romance from a foreigner’s perspective, I wanted to realize in this piece that, despite our most concerted efforts to understand queerness, there will always exist a tenderness the public imagination can never capture. Having been a tenor in my high school chorus, I was deeply inspired by Z. Randall Stroope’s “I Am Not Yours,” a confessional song that originated from Sara Teasdale’s poem of the same name. Each line of “Loving You From a Foreign Country” is seven syllables, and every Mandarin character is carefully considered to reflect an unexplored world.

I wrote sections of this piece in various bookstores and cafes across Montgomery County, in the late hours of the night, and surrounded by scented candles and iced lattes. I read news articles about the history of Philadelphia’s Chinatown and local gay communities. I remember the stories my grandparents would tell me in Fuzhounese, the scent of firewood in our village, and the movies like *Your Name Engraved Herein*, which shaped my coming-of-age. The intersection of Mandarin and English has always informed my work, so this piece occurred to me naturally, but with newfound urgency. To acknowledge the distance that has shaped the queer immigrant experience, I wanted to replicate it through language and concept. Here is a story you think you can understand. Here is a story that cannot be entered, only felt.

A Fern Uprising

Music: Barbara Lewandowski

Poetry: Naila Francis

Mentors: Melissa Dunphy (music) & Elizabeth Scanlon (poetry)

Barbara Lewandowski is a composer, vocalist, writer, orchestrator, and lyricist based in Philadelphia. She has studied under musical theatre composer Spicer Carr, a protégé of Tony-winning composer Maury Yeston. Her compositions embrace a wide variety of influences from jazz, classical, and pop music, frequently drawing inspiration from the works of older and more contemporary musical theatre composers alike. A sophomore at Temple University, she has had the opportunity to arrange and student direct for the Swinging Voices Jazz Choir under Ruth Naomi Floyd. She has also had two pieces performed by Temple’s New Music Ensemble and conducted an original work for ConTemplum’s SoundPrints III in 2024. She has worked with countless vocalists and chamber musicians to develop her understanding of music performance. She has also written four musicals, with several others in development, and hopes to see them on the stage one day. She has received classical voice training through conductor and vocalist Elizabeth Beavers and musical theatre voice training through Professor Jesse Hampsch, along with a variety of coaching sessions with Broadway actors, including Kate Rockwell and Judy Kuhn. Being a theatre enthusiast, she has performed in a variety of theatre shows, the



most recent being part of a Philadelphia Young Playwrights festival. She aims to create art that puts a spotlight on marginalized people and their experiences and art that can help people as much as possible. This, to her, means telling stories revolving around Disabled, Queer, and POC experiences, informed by the perspectives of people within these communities. Every story she writes, and by extension every song within them, strives toward this end goal. By making art that represents as many people as possible, she seeks to make it accessible and relatable to whoever may need it in their life.

Naila Francis is a poet-writer, as well as a certified grief coach and death midwife. She is also a founding member of Salt Trails, a Philadelphia collective working to normalize grief through community rituals. In 2023, the collective won a Leeway Foundation Art + Change Grant, which allowed her to bring a dream project to life in partnership with Philadelphia's Threshold Collective: creating a three-day immersive art and ritual experience built around psychotherapist and author Francis Weller's "Five Gates of Grief" framework, where six artists working across multiple mediums, from clowning and musical composition to visual art, were invited to interpret each gate. The Five Gates remains one of the more powerful collaborative experiences she's been part of — affirming the value of ritual and art to not only bring people together but create communal spaces that honor the full range of what it is to be human. Naila has always been drawn to the arts. She worked for many years as a features reporter for a suburban Philadelphia newspaper, interviewing artists of all disciplines about their creative journey. She frequently covered performances and plays by Opera Philadelphia and regional theaters and profiled artists including James Earl Jones, Audra McDonald, Bobby McFerrin, Joshua Bell and Anna Deavere Smith. Additionally, she has served as a Barrymore nominator. Last year, Naila released the poetry album, "Wonder Unsung," with guitarist-producer Paulito Muse setting her original poems to music. She enjoys sharing poetry as invocation and blessing in art, culture and transformational spaces, such as when she was asked by the Philadelphia Movement Chaplain Network to write a poem for Philly organizers and when Ursula Rucker invited her to open Mural Arts' Wall Ball event in 2020. Last year, her poetry was featured in the film "Good Grief," a collaboration with Rucker and SIFTMedia 215.



Barbara Lewandowski has provided the following program notes:

This has been an enormous year of firsts for me. Between my first music job, my first album, and my first choral work to ever be performed, I am astounded by how far I have come. Within this first choral performance, I find within it another first: My first collaboration with a writer. Naila Francis' text gave me the inspiration I needed to push my choral writing into something that I could not have inspired out of myself. This non-repeating poetry challenged me to prioritize motifs over repeated formal sections. The unmetered scansion also pushed me to create sections which play with mixed meter and rate of speech. Naila's use of windy consonants in the text creates a forest environment, which gave me the

opportunity to play with unpitched vocal sound in the sopranos – also an excuse to give the altos the melody. Above all, it was a joy to sit down with another writer and find the musical expression together at the piano. The beauty of this text stressed the need to handle the words and pacing with great care. I care deeply for what I have created.

Naila Francis has provided the following notes on the poetry:

I often walk in Wissahickon Valley Park, in woods I call my favorite cathedral. The land and my experiences there often serve as inspiration for my poems – though I like to think the land gifts me poems in exchange for the reverence and praise I bring to her. “A Fern Uprising” comes from that particular kinship with place and the more-than-human world. It is inspired by my own practice of slowing down and listening when I’m in the Wissahickon, of letting beauty have its way with me, softening the grief and outrage of living through these chaotic and heartbreaking times. I know everything feels dire and urgent and yet here among the stones, the trees, the creek, the creatures that inhabit this place, I think of what we can learn from the natural world, of what our plant and animal kin have to teach us if we can decenter the human. How might we create better eco-systems of care to nourish and protect each other? How might our enchantment with the natural world bring us into a more reciprocal relationship with the Earth?

These are some of the queries this poem holds, along with the embodied invitation to slow down, to open the senses and let a quiet marvel in – which Barbara’s choral score so evocatively captures.

Electric Bloom

Music: Ted Babcock

Poetry: Octavia McBride-Ahebee

Mentors: Rollo Dilworth (music) & Kirwyn Sutherland (poetry)

Ted Babcock is a composer and percussionist based in the Philadelphia region. Originally from Boston, he moved to Philadelphia to study percussion performance at the Curtis Institute of Music. In his final two years of undergraduate study, he discovered a passion for composition that has since become the central focus of his career. His works are primarily instrumental chamber pieces with an emphasis on percussion, and many address themes of social justice.



Babcock has had the good fortune to see his music serve as a vehicle for community engagement throughout the Philadelphia region, with collaborative partners including Jefferson Hospital, Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission, and the University of Pennsylvania Memory Center. He also taught for three years as a teaching artist with Play On, Philly, an after-school program providing classical music education to underserved students.

His recent commissions and honors include recognition from the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, and the Sandbox Percussion Creative Mentorship. As a performer, Babcock is a Grammy-nominated

percussionist with The Crossing Choir. His work, in any context, is rooted in the values of collaboration, respect, and curiosity. More information and scores are available at tedbabcock.com.

Octavia McBride-Ahebee is a poet and educator whose creative practice is animated by an abiding commitment to centering the migration experiences of Africans and the African diaspora — both historic and contemporary. Her poetry seeks to reclaim and distill the humanity of those in transit, a humanity too often erased by news coverage and historical record. While her work situates these journeys within the context of global inequality, her ultimate aim is to tell stories of desire, aspiration, and faith in an unknown future.



A decade spent in Côte d'Ivoire, along with extensive travel throughout neighboring West African countries, gave Octavia an immersive foundation in the region's cultures and positioned her to explore themes of identity, migration, and belonging from the inside. The relationships she has built with immigrant communities in Philadelphia have further enriched this perspective, bridging her experiences abroad with the diverse narratives of her adopted home city.

Octavia has been an educator for 31 years, both abroad and within the School District of Philadelphia. Her diverse school communities have been a constant source of political awakening, social activism, and creative energy. Her practice has always been community-focused and community-driven, unconcerned with academic accolade and committed instead to the lives of the people whose stories she tells.

Ted Babcock has provided the following program notes:

In 2025 I was the inaugural winner of the Joyful Abundance Commissioning Artists Award, a program run by the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia that pairs emerging composers with poets. Joyful Abundance was originally commissioned by ArtPhilly as part of the What Now: 2026 Festival with lead support provided by the William Penn Foundation.

I was paired with Octavia McBride-Ahebee, who felt strongly that this work should be a political response to her experiences in Philadelphia during the creation of this work. I've included Octavia's preface to her poem, as I think it's highly pertinent to how I decided to set it to music. My choice of including the marimba was informed by its own complicated history spanning from Africa, to Central America, and eventually to the United States. I hoped to reflect this complexity in the harmonic language and textures both of the choir and marimba part. Through the piece is a sense of existential angst which I reflected through moves to multiple keys. The piece finally concludes back where it started, transformed and yet oddly familiar.

Octavia McBride-Ahebee has provided this preface to her poem:

This poem, which is still a work in progress and open to incorporating your thoughtful feedback, marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It honors the foundational ideals we often regard as central to our

national identity: liberty, justice, equality and so on. But it also insists that we confront the violence, exclusion, and plunder that were woven into the founding of this country.

While the Declaration spoke of freedom and rights, it deliberately excluded entire groups – indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, women, poor whites, etc. – denying them access to the very ideals it claimed to uphold. This poem does not look away from that truth.

At the same time, it is also a celebration of how those left out of the founding vision have used the language of the Declaration of Independence and later the Constitution, to stake their rightful claim in American life. That struggle is ongoing.

In this present moment when immigrant communities are again under attack, and the generosity and pluralism at the heart of our national character are being questioned, this poem uses excerpts from the Declaration of Independence to remind us of the radical power of its ideals, and to ask us who we are still becoming.

So, this poem is both a reckoning and a reaffirmation honoring those who were excluded, lifting up those who resisted, and reclaiming the founding language as a living document still demanding justice.

The Texts

Thompson: The Testament of Freedom

1. The God who gave us life

The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy but cannot disjoin them.

— Thomas Jefferson

A Summary View of the Rights of British America (1774)

2. We have counted the cost

We have counted the cost of this contest, and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery. Honor, justice, and humanity forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors, and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them.

Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great .. We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the Divine favor towards us, that His Providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operation, and possessed of the means of defending ourselves. With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties; being with one mind resolved to die freemen rather than to live slaves.

— Thomas Jefferson

Declaration of Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms (1775)

3. We fight not for glory

We fight not for glory or for conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any imputation or even suspicion of offense. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffer no milder conditions than servitude or death.

In our native land, in defense of the freedom that is our birthright and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it; for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves; against violence actually offered; we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.

— Thomas Jefferson

Declaration of Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms (1775)

4. I shall not die without a hope

I shall not die without a hope that light and liberty are on steady advance... And even should the cloud of barbarism and despotism again obscure the science and liberties of Europe, this country remains to preserve and restore light and liberty to them... The flames kindled on the 4th of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them.

— Thomas Jefferson
Letter to John Adams (September 12, 1821)

The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy but cannot disjoin them.

Amick: What Now

What now	Nature's god becomes	
We hold	It becomes	
We hold	It becomes necessary	
We hold these	Becomes	
We hold these to be		Necessary
These to be		
To be	Necessary we hold	
We hold these to be	We hold	
We hold	We hold these	
These	We hold these to be	
To be	These to be	
	To be	
We hold when	We hold these to be	
When in the course	We hold	
When	These	
When in the course	To be	
The course of human	We hold	
The course of human	These to be the ties	
	The ties	
Of course human	The ties	
When in the course of human		— Amy Beth Sisson
Of human		
Of human nature		
Of nature		
Of nature's god		

DiGiacomo: Welcome Home

Wherever you go, there you are
Walk over the graves and pretend
You understand.
Hear my plea, make sense
Of nothing.
Turn panic, turn fear, turn woe
to truth, fury.
Filled and forgotten,
Filled and honored,
A puddle is forming.
We wake in dread
Moving in dissonance among false
ideas,
Abandoned prophecies.
Will you trust your mind?
Rain drops drowning birdsong
Tall grass, cracking cobblestone
Giving way,
Slowly.

Wandering souls turned statue
Forgotten into remembrance
Gentle hums remain.

Walk over the graves
Pick a flower, leave a note,
Ask a loved one, ask yourself.
What makes a body?

What makes a grave?
What makes us history?

Walk over the graves.
Did you listen to their plea?
Have you understood the call?
Tell me now,
What
Will we do?

— Haley Storm Evans

Giang: we are made foreign

Loving you from a foreign country

同志¹, I am your village.
Smoking between mountains, I
softly exhale our 烟火².
This is our only language.

同志¹, I sing our quiet
story through 柴米油盐³.
In new countries, strange cities.
For the past. For 人情味⁴.

你还记得我吗⁵?
同志, 我身在异国爱着你⁶.

We are made foreign by love.
We are made foreign.

— 王潇 Evan Wang

1. 同志 Comrade – a contemporary Chinese term used to address someone of the queer community.
2. 烟火 Smoke and fire – a Chinese term that refers to the human condition.
3. 柴米油盐 Firewood, rice, oil, salt – a Chinese idiom that refers to daily essentials/living.
4. 人情味 Smell of human feelings – a Chinese term that refers to a human touch.
5. 你还记得我吗 Do you still remember me?
6. 同志, 我身在异国爱着你 Comrade, I am in a foreign country loving you.

Lewandowski: A Fern Uprising

Go slow here.
Let small steps carry you,
even if you think it changes nothing
to be hum in a strident world.

Listen for kindred sounds,
murmured strings of insect wings,
stones that loosen stories,
marble worlds beneath your feet.

You can be a colony,
a fern uprising, moss-spun dream
that swims the forest floor.

Go slow here.
Let small steps carry you.

Trust that you, too, can become
unbound
unlearned
unmasked
a lush unhurried love.

Make this your offering,
slow, small steps,
the Earth within your veins.

— Naila Francis

Babcock: Electric Bloom

*Here we are,
here we are
and who are we?*

we are an odd pair
of one body
indigenous and transplanted
indivisible from your plunder

we are swathed in earth's
unending memory
seeing now as co-conspirators
through the magnifying glass of time
what truths you have always held

*Here we are,
here we are
and who are we?*

our spinning Janus head
carved from oak and baobab
in constant survey
of your destruction
because in remembering
we are not disposed to suffering

we are with you,
your hands, buffed and glossed
by unfree Black hands,
kissed by the well-wishes of wives and
serfs,
you holding that indigenous feather
of spring,
We are ALL there with you, in all
guises –ink and all–
to make this declaration

*Here we are
Here we are
... and who are we?*

we are these ideals you planted
so magnanimously
in the earth
our minds and muscle had already
primed and so
this harvest belongs to us all
this harvest belongs to us all
this harvest belongs to us all
Its electric bloom is OUR lighthouse!

— Octavia McBride-Ahebee

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

(appearing in this concert)

Soprano

Maryl Apadula
Katy Avery*
Rachelle Brisson
Sophie Choate
Krystiane Cooper
Shiloh Cooper
Amanda Leah Davis
Mia Castro-Diephouse
Rachel Castro-
Diephouse
Caroline Fitch
Erica Furguele
Teri Gemberling-
Johnson
Miriam Goldberg
Lindsey Graham
Elizabeth Hohwieler
Lynn Kirby
Rachael Lipson*
Fay Manicke
Juliana Melara
Ilene Miller
Andrea Nestman
Kate Philips-Kaiser
Carmen Ramirez
Roberta Rote
Sophia Santiago*
Leila Schwartz
Mary Kate Suhy
Marie Tavianini
Jessica Vega
Deanda Wilson
Lisa Wooldridge

Alto

Rachele Armstrong
Christine Chaapel
Hannah Davis
Shannon Foley
Laura Fontanills
Anne Gold
Katherine Haas
Jennifer Hay
Monica Isomura*
Sharon Kempin
Allison Leviner
Gina Polite
Jennifer Rafferty*
Rebecca Rendsburg
Sharon Rhinesmith*
Julia Scott
Jennifer Sheffield

Tenor

Jeremy Bannett
Jonah Bannett
Andrew Beck
Will Budreau
Christopher Carriero
Kyle Conner
Mark Davidson
Rich Galassini
Campbell Holder
Eiki Isomura
Frank Kanther
Brady Ketelsen

J. Matthew Lista
Ian Martin*
Daniel Ojserkis
Joel Rust
Jeffrey Schwartz
D'quan Tyson*

Bass

Patrick Beck
Evan Birnholz
Paul Burgmayer
Michael Carson
Mark Cordova
Lucas DeJesus**
Byron De Leon
Brendan Fullam
Steven Glasser
Lowell Hoyt
Samuel Kampa
Steven Knauss
John Kohlhas
George Leone
Martin Levitas
Sean Martin
William Mendoza
Michael Moore
Erik Potteiger*
Daniel Rosen
Thomas Sutton
Richard Tolsma
Jonathan J. Wallace

** Senior Vocal Artist & Section Leader

* Section Leader

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, now in its 152nd season under Artistic Director & Conductor Dominick DiOrio, stands as one of America's most enduring and distinguished musical institutions. Founded in 1874 as an eight-part male chorus by William Wallace Gilchrist, a major figure in 19th-century Philadelphia music, the chorus has evolved into a world-class ensemble of over 150 voices representing diverse ages, backgrounds, genders, and professions. Since its inception, the chorus has beautifully balanced tradition with innovation, presenting beloved classics while fearlessly championing new works and cross-generational collaborations.

The chorus's longstanding partnership with The Philadelphia Orchestra, dating back to the orchestra's founding in 1900, underscores its integral role in Philadelphia's rich musical landscape. This relationship has produced numerous historic performances, including the 1903 performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, the 1927 world premiere of Rachmaninoff's *Three Russian Songs*, and American premieres of Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* "Symphony of a Thousand" (1916) and Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* (1932). Throughout its history, the chorus has collaborated with legendary conductors, including Leopold Stokowski, Eugene Ormandy, Claudio Abbado, Zubin Mehta, Mstislav Rostropovich, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Riccardo Muti, and most recently Fabio Luisi.

Mendelssohn Chorus has been at the forefront of introducing groundbreaking works to American audiences, from the Philadelphia premiere of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* (1910), to the North American premiere of Mendelssohn's version of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* (2015). The chorus has commissioned over 100 works from contemporary composers including Rollo Dilworth, Jennifer Higdon, David Lang, Caroline Shaw, and Melissa Dunphy, demonstrating its commitment to expanding the choral repertoire.

The chorus's unwavering commitment to excellence has earned prestigious accolades, including multiple ASCAP/Chorus America Awards for Adventurous Programming (1992, 2013) and a GRAMMY nomination for the 1985 recording of Vincent Persichetti's *Winter Cantata*. Most notably, the chorus's commission of Julia Wolfe's *Anthrax Fields* received the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music — a groundbreaking work that exemplifies their dedication to commissioning transformative contemporary music.

Beyond performances, the Mendelssohn Chorus serves as an incubator for emerging talent through its section leader and apprenticeship programs. The recently launched Joyful Abundance commissioning program specifically supports emerging composers and poets, furthering the chorus's mission to foster artistry, beauty, and belonging within Philadelphia's cultural landscape. The chorus proudly hosted the Chorus America conference in 2019, and continues to present the Philadelphia premieres of notable works including Tan Dun's *Water Passion after St. Matthew*, Reena Esmail's *This Love Between Us*, and Sarah Kirkland Snider's *Mass for the Endangered*.

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia remains dedicated to enriching the city's cultural fabric by illuminating our shared human experiences through the trans-

formative power of choral music. The chorus continues to serve as a model for how artistic institutions can honor their heritage while embracing innovation, creating meaningful connections between past and present through the universal language of music.



Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

Dominick DiOrio serves as the fourteenth artistic director and conductor of the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, one of the most historic choral organizations in the United States. As part of those duties, he regularly prepares the chorus to sing with The Philadelphia Orchestra, including a “near ideal” (The Philadelphia Inquirer) performance of *Carmina Burana* in March 2024 with conductor Fabio Luisi. His artistic vision for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia has been regularly supported with multiple grants from the William Penn Foundation, the Presser Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Recognized with The American Prizes in both Choral Composition (2014) and Choral Performance (2019, with NOTUS), Dominick DiOrio is an imaginative, enthusiastic, and energetic conductor and composer who has won widespread acclaim for his contributions to American music. He is professor of music and chair of the department in choral conducting at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he joined the faculty in 2012, and where he serves as director of NOTUS, Indiana University’s storied contemporary vocal ensemble.

NOTUS has been invited to perform across the globe, including at the National Collegiate Choral Organization’s biennial national conference (2023, Atlanta), at national and regional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (2014, 2015, 2016, 2022), and at the International Federation for Choral Music’s 12th World Symposium (2020, Auckland). With NOTUS, he has also released three commercial albums to critical acclaim: *Of Radiance and Refraction* (2018, Innova), *What Is Ours: Music for an America in Progress* (2022, Navona), and *Weaving Eternity: Music of Wild Imagination* (2025, Navona).

DiOrio’s combined role as a composer-conductor has led to many unique opportunities and collaborations with some of the most important artists and icons of our time, including novelist Richard Powers, the Right Reverend Bishop

Gene Robinson, and William Shatner. DiOrio's guest conducting appearances regularly feature his original compositions, including with civic and professional ensembles such as the Choral Arts Society of Washington (*SOLARIS*), Houston Chamber Choir (*I Am*), Choral Arts Initiative (*All Is*), and the Young Naperville Singers (*Young Today*).

DiOrio's original music has been hailed for its keenly intelligent, evocative style, which shows "a tour de force of inventive thinking and unique colour" (Gramophone). His over 70 published works have appeared at major venues around the world including the Sydney Opera House, Washington National Cathedral, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall—as well as internationally in Austria, Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, The Netherlands, and the U.K.

He composes for musicians of all ages and experiences and maintains an active writing schedule — completing over 70 commissions in the last decade. Some of his recent commissioning partners include the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus and the San Francisco Symphony, the Children's Chorus of Washington, the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble & Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, The Choral Arts Society of Washington, "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, and many academic institutions, including Macalester, Oberlin, Princeton, Smith, and the Universities of Michigan, Oregon, and Illinois.

DiOrio's love for contemporary music is reflected in his conducted repertoire, including such path-breaking works from the 20th and 21st centuries as James MacMillan *Seven Last Words*, Steve Reich *The Desert Music*, Alfred Schnittke *Requiem*, Sarah Kirkland Snider *Mass for the Endangered*, Joel Thompson *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, and Krzysztof Penderecki *St. Luke Passion*, which he prepared for the composer in November 2017. Equally at home with music of earlier eras, he has also conducted choral-orchestral performances of Bach *Magnificat*, Haydn *Mass in Time of War*, Mozart "Great" C Minor Mass, Vaughan Williams *Five Mystical Songs*, and Leonard Bernstein *Chichester Psalms*, among others.

DiOrio is deeply committed to strengthening the profession by empowering others, and he served as president and president-elect of the National Collegiate Choral Organization from 2018-22. For his leadership during the pandemic, he was honored with NCCO's inaugural Distinguished Service Award. DiOrio also previously served as Treasurer of NCCO, 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 also previously served as Assistant Conductor and Tenor with the GRAMMY Award-winning Houston Chamber Choir and as Director of Choral Activities at Lone Star College - Montgomery (both from 2009-2012).

He earned the Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting from the Yale School of Music, as well as an M.M.A. and an M.M. in Conducting from Yale and a B.M. 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 he is today.

Ting Ting Wong, Collaborative Pianist, Senior Artist-in-Residence & Cover Conductor

Ting Ting Wong is a highly regarded vocal coach and collaborative pianist in the Philadelphia area. Her performances are noted for their clarity, precision, and emotional resonance, earning her a reputation as a dynamic and versatile artist. *Musical America* has said that her “nuanced pedaling and voicings painted some of the richest backdrops” in her recent performances. Currently, she is on the faculty at The Curtis Institute of Music, staff accompanist for The Academy of Vocal Arts. She regularly collaborates with singers at Haverford College and Bryn Mawr College, and maintains a busy schedule with her private coaching studio. She has served as chorus pianist with Opera Philadelphia, assistant conductor with ConcertOPERA Philadelphia, and pianist for the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and Castleton festivals.



Ms. Wong made her debut as a collaborative pianist at the Kennedy Center in 2016 and performed with IlluminArts in Miami in 2019. Recently, she was part of Princeton Festival 2022, and served as faculty at The Mediterranean Opera Studio Festival in Italy, and worked as associate pianist (*Otello*) for 2022 with Opera Philadelphia. Ms. Wong finished a national tour with Curtis on Tour in 2022, performing with talented students and renowned bass-baritone Eric Owens. Ms. Wong just returned from Ravinia Steans Music institute in Highland Park, IL, where she was the resident collaborative pianist for the third season.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Ms. Wong holds a master's degree in piano performance from Carnegie Mellon University, where she also earned a piano pedagogy certificate. She continued her studies, receiving a master's degree in piano accompanying and coaching from Temple University, where she studied with Lambert Orkis and Charles Abramovic.

Brady Ketelsen, Conducting Apprentice

Brady Ketelsen is currently the music director and pianist for St. Michael's Lutheran and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement. He also currently teaches voice lessons for members of the Philadelphia Boys and Girls Choirs as well as a few private students. An alumnus of Temple University, Brady earned his Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting, during which he was privileged to conduct almost every major singing ensemble, including his graduate recital with the Graduate Conductors Chorus. Prior to moving to Philadelphia, Brady earned his bachelor's degree in Music Education at the University of South Dakota, after which he directed seven ensembles at Central High School in Rapid City, South Dakota along with the church choir at Trinity Lutheran, the musical ensembles of several musical theater productions, and several festival choirs. In addition to choral music, Brady enjoys cooking, traveling, and engaging with musical theater in the audience, in the orchestra pit, or (infrequently) on stage.



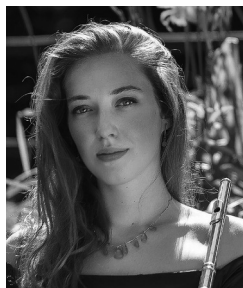
Ren Martin-Doike, viola

Violist Ren Martin-Doike is a versatile performer on a mission to share music with diverse audiences around the world. Ms. Martin-Doike has performed throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas as a soloist and member of a diverse range of ensembles including The Philadelphia Orchestra, Duo RenJi, and the Rietveld Jazz Quintet. Ms. Martin-Doike has also served as principal viola of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, New York String Orchestra, and Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra (Japan). Former Harriet Hale Woolley Scholar and Artist in Residence at the Fondation des États-Unis (Paris), Ms. Martin-Doike is also the recipient of the Fontys prize from the Rubinstein International Viola Competition (Germany). A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, Ms. Martin-Doike earned her master's degree from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, receiving a unanimous first prize from the jury.



Chelsea Meynig, bass flute

Chelsea is recognized for her rich and versatile tone, as well as captivating narrative power in her playing. She is principal flute of Revolution Winds and ENAensemble, as well as a member of Network for New Music. Chelsea frequently works with composers premiering and recording new music. She has appeared on several composer's albums as a soloist and chamber musician. Chelsea frequently performs with The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, The No Name Pops, The Capital Philharmonic, The Ocean City Pops as well as many other regional orchestras. Most Recently Chelsea



played the world premiere of *Hope is the thing with feathers* for solo flute and narrator written by Heidi Jacob. In addition Chelsea has toured internationally and domestically, performing as a soloist, orchestra member and chamber musician. Her performances have ranged from as close to home as the Kimmel Center and Carnegie Hall to as far as Sydney and Perth Australia.

Chelsea graduated from Temple University with her Masters Degree in 2016 where she studied with Mr. David Cramer. Since then Chelsea has had the opportunity to study in international Masterclasses with Lorna McGhee, William Bennett, and Denis Bouriaikov. In 2014 Chelsea graduated from Shenandoah Conservatory in flute performance where she studied with Mr. Jonathan Snowden, one of Britain's premiere flute players, as well as Dr. Frances Lapp Averitt. Her previous primary teacher was Margaret Newcomb.



OUR *Boundless* HUMANITY



Photography by Jennifer Sheffield, Kelsey DeJesus, Heather Mitchell, and Sharon Torello.

MENDELSSOHN CHORUS OF PHILADELPHIA'S 152ND SEASON

Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor / Heather Mitchell, Associate Artistic Director

Vigil for Love

Saturday, October 18, 2025 / 4pm

The Church of the Holy Trinity
1904 Walnut Street, Philadelphia PA 19103

A Feast of Carols

Saturday, December 13, 2025
2pm & 5pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
22 E. Chestnut Hill Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19118

The Space We Keep

Saturday, March 14, 2026 / 4pm

First Presbyterian Church
201 South 21st Street, Philadelphia, PA 191033

SPECIAL EVENT

A Celebration of Life for Alan Harler

Honoring the life and legacy of our beloved former
Artistic Director and Conductor Laureate Alan Harler.

Sunday, April 12, 2026 / 4pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
22 E. Chestnut Hill Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19118

Joyful Abundance

Part of *ArtPhilly: What Now?* Festival

Saturday, June 6, 2026 / 4pm

Rodeph Shalom
615 N. Broad St. Philadelphia, PA 19123

Ticket Prices: \$30-\$50 • For tickets or more information go to www.mcchorus.org

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WHAT NOW

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