

DEMOCRACY IN SONG, PART II

# AMERICAN VOICES

October 26, 2025,  
Friends Center, 3:00 p.m.

Rollo Dilworth  
Artistic & Music Director



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## A WELCOME FROM ROLLO



Dear Friends,

Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate *Democracy in Song, Part II: American Voices*, a theme we explored in last season's opening concert. As the nation prepares to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and, given that Singing City was founded in 1948 as an intentionally inclusive vocal movement, it seems appropriate to use our voices in song to amplify stories of the cultures, composers and communities that have contributed to this uniquely American landscape.

From the vocal chants of the indigenous people to the sacred songs of the Shakers and the enslaved, to the idiomatic melodies of immigrant populations, our desire is that every participant will experience a deeper connection to the universally human themes of cultural identity, belonging, mutual respect, perseverance, faith, and hope.

Our program begins with First Nations (Cree-Dene) composer **Sherryl Sewepagaham's** *Mother Earth*, which acknowledges our shared relationship to the planet. This piece is followed by the late **Alice Parker's** *On the Common Ground*, which is both a prayer and a call for unity in a world that is rife with division and discord. We close our opening set with *Colors*, written by **Eric Burton** and recorded by the Black Pumas on their self-titled debut album in 2019. The piece is a celebration of life's beauty, diversity, and simple joys, using "colors" as a metaphor for individuality and shared experiences.

The second segment of today's program focuses on the Shaker tradition. Founded circa 1747 in England and organized in the United States in the 1780s, the Shakers (initially known as the "Shaking Quakers") is a religious community that espouses a simple and communal lifestyle, celibacy, pacifism, equality, and charismatic worship. **Kevin Siegfried's** arrangement of *Vum Vive Vum* mimics the sounds of instruments and rhythms of a dance that Shakers would perform—often working themselves into an entrancing, ecstatic and euphoric state. *A Gift to Be Free* is my own arrangement of the widely known Shaker tune, *Simple Gifts*.

The third set of our program chronicles the contributions of various communities that have made the United States their home—including those of African, Asian, Jewish, and Latin American roots. Taken from a poem penned by **Langston Hughes** (1901–1967), this "We Too Sing America" set

features an African American spiritual (*My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord*) that celebrates faith and triumph over adversity, a Hebrew folk song (*Hine ma tov*) that celebrates togetherness and community, a Venezuelan plea for life (*¡Ayúdame!*) by now Texas-based composer **Carlos Cordero**, a Japanese-Hawaiian folk song (*Hole-Hole Bushi*) that captures the emotional struggles of leaving one's homeland, and a Haitian-American original work by **Sydney Guillame** (*Finding A Home*) that, in his words, "offers a hopeful testament to the immigrant experience."

The closing set of today's program begins with *American Dream*, by Minnesota composer **Jocelyn Hagen**. The text in this piece vividly describes the diversity in nature while encouraging the listener to honor the differences in each other. According to New Mexico composer **Karen Marrolli**, her piece *Hope Waits* alternates in mood from "contemplative and prayerful" to "spirited and rhythmic." Through this song, she wishes to inspire others to "choose hope in the face of adversity and uncertainty."

We will close today's concert with *Hold On (Change is Comin')*, recorded by **Sounds of Blackness**. This piece is a soulful and gospel-style anthem that encourages the listener to persevere when challenging circumstances arise. Throughout this presentation, we will invite you to join us with your voices as we celebrate *Democracy in Song*.

Sincerely,

Rollo Dilworth  
*Artistic & Music Director*



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## A MESSAGE FROM MIKE



Greetings to all and welcome to the opening concert of Singing City's 2025–2026 season!

It is both a joy and a privilege to greet you as I begin my first season as Executive Director of this historic institution. Our members bring not only their voices, but also their creativity, their professions, and their hearts to every aspect of what we do. The energy within this ensemble is contagious, and it radiates outward to everyone who hears us.

I'm humbled to continue the legacy of my predecessor, **Lauren Anderson**, who led Singing City with exceptional grace, vision, and steadiness for sixteen years. Her influence is woven into the fabric of this choir, and I'm grateful she continues to share her gifts as a member of the alto section, where her voice and spirit remain integral to our sound.

As we open this season with *Democracy in Song, Part II: American Voices*, I've been reflecting on the roots of Singing City's mission. In 1948, **Dr. Herbert Haslam** of Philadelphia's Fellowship House asked **Elaine Brown** a simple but revolutionary question: "Would you like to try a new experiment—an experiment in democracy?" He imagined a choir that would represent America in all its diversity—different races, religions, and walks of life—coming together to make harmony where there had been division. "Make Philadelphia a singing city," he urged, "singing the song of democracy."

Seventy-seven years later, under Rollo Dilworth's exuberant direction, Singing City continues to sing that song by performing music and embodying the ideals of inclusion, empathy, and hope as envisioned by Dr. Haslam and Elaine Brown. Tonight's program, *American Voices*, celebrates those ideals. It reminds us that democracy isn't just a system; it's a song we sing together, one that grows stronger every time we lift our voices in unity.

Thank you for being part of this community and continuing this proud legacy. Here's to a new season of music, meaning, and shared purpose.

Warmly,

Michael J. Bolton  
*Executive Director*

## GREETINGS FROM BONNIE



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Singing City Board of Directors, I am thrilled to welcome you to our inaugural concert for the 2025-2026 season, *Democracy in Song, Part II: American Voices*. We continue to celebrate our nation's diverse history as we approach the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. Through music, we ask ourselves: what does democracy mean to each of us?

This question feels especially resonant today. We live in a time when division, fear, and hostility often drown out voices of equity, acceptance and hope. But with that challenge lies our greatest opportunity. Singing City has always stood for inclusion, for shared humanity, and for the belief that choral music can be a transformative force. Today's program embodies these values—bringing together voices and stories that reflect the full spectrum of the American experience.

If ever there was a moment for our mission to shine, it is now. Together, we have the capacity not only to inspire through music but to serve as a powerful counterweight to negativity in our communities. Every time we lift our voices in song and spread the message of our mission, we move closer to building the community we wish to see.

I hope you will continue to join us in this vital work of creating connection through song—indeed, a Singing City.

With gratitude,

Bonnie Filtz-Motel

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## Democracy in Song, Part II: American Voices

Sunday, October 26, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

Rollo Dilworth, *Artistic & Music Director*

Alexander Nguyễn, *Associate Conductor*

B. Lauren Thomas-Moyett, *Associate Conductor*

Kim Barroso, *Collaborative Pianist*

### Instrumentalists

Sam Harris, *bass*

Maria Marmarou, *percussion*

### Program Enhancements

James Helisek, *ASL Interpreter*

Jared Williams, *audio/visual engineer*

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## PROGRAM

### Part I: Our American Roots, Our Shared Humanity

*Mother Earth*

Sheryl Sewapagaham

*On the Common Ground*

Alice Parker (1925-2023)

Maddie McDonald and Valerie Rushmere, soloists

*Colors*

Eric Burton (b. 1989)

Alexy Fitzmyer, soloist

### Part II: Celebrating the American Shaker Tradition

*Vum Vive Vum*

arr. Kevin Siegfried (b. 1969)

*The Gift to Be Free*

arr. Rollo Dilworth (b. 1970)

### Part III: We Too Sing America

*My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord*

arr. Moses Hogan (1957-2003)

Seirah Davis and Renard Golden, soloists

*Hine Ma Tov*

arr. Neil Ginsberg (b. 1969)

Rachell Tillman, flute

*¡Ayúdame!*

Carlos Cordero (b. 1992)

Singing City Chamber Singers

*Hole-hole Bushi*

arr. Harry Urata, Allison Arakawa

*Finding A Home*

Sydney Guillame (b. 1982)

### Part IV: Hope and the Pursuit of the American Dream

*American Dream*

Jocelyn Hagen (b. 1980)

*Hope Waits*

Karen Marrolli (b. 1975)

*Hold On (Change is Comin')*

Arnie Roman/Jodie Wilson

Geovanni Diaz, Sterling Randolph, and Wilann Spiccia, soloists Mike More/Tim James

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## PROGRAM NOTES



Welcome to *Democracy in Song*, Singing City's thematic celebration of the commonalities that ground the unique experiment that is the United States. This is our second venture under this title, as we continue offering musical witness to our nation's ongoing struggle to create a just and fruitful governance for all. The pieces have been selected to lift spirit and awareness about the communities from which our democracy grows. It is hoped that this performance will offer greater cultural understanding, respect, and joy in the process.

### Part 1: American Roots, Shared Humanity

We open with a work that references the land we stand on and the people who first inhabited it. In *Okâwîmâw Askiy* (Mother Earth), Cree-Dene composer Sherryl Sewepagaham offers a huge gift by translating powerful musical elements of her heritage into the SABB format. The composition speaks a worldview that is ancient, Indigenous, and spiritually compelling. One could also say the piece is atmospheric, because it sketches out the vastness of earth itself through lyrics and the casting of our voices. Speaking as a singer, the work offers a more elemental approach than is common within choral repertoire. It requires vocal drops, slides, and lifts that suggest the movement of a bird coursing high air currents while enjoying an expanded view of the landscape. Most of us experience North America's natural majesty only vestigially, but works like this help us "hear" open skies from time to time.

Alice Parker's *On the Common Ground* draws a metaphor from our early civic history. The centralized commons was a feature of early encampments, villages, and cities alike—places where democracy was hammered out. People traded, celebrated, and interacted with one another in an open and secure space. Parker's work makes a prayer for the reopening of such spaces in contemporary life—leveled, centered, and sown through with the understanding that being together is the only way forward. Colors brings us up to date, expressing an upbeat, panoramic sense of what a fully diversified America might "feel like" when one opens the doors to embrace it fully.

### Part 2: Shaker Tradition – A Legacy of Reflection and Promise

*Vum Vive Vum / The Gift to Be Free*

Singing City makes its home with the Society of Friends. During crucial periods in history, Shaker and Quaker faiths embraced a simplicity of purpose and commitment to community that have become increasingly countercultural with the advance of popular culture. However, Quaker religious experience offers a worship environment where simplicity and great acoustics frame inspiration. American Quakerism embraced the belief that

the New World was a place of providence, where life lived simply and in good faith would land one "in a valley of goodness and light."

While these sentiments are well expressed in the hymn *Simple Gifts*, what is less known is that both traditions had a highly dynamic aspect. "Quaking" and "Shaking" were physical expressions of worship, with members so overcome by divine spirit as to tremble throughout. *Vum Vive Vum* exemplifies this feature—it is a lively incantation. The words have no literal meaning, but the ubiquitous repetition of a "vummin' v" sound (atop a playful, dancing rhythm) trembles the lips and begins the journey toward the visceral ecstasy for which their community was named. It is a joyous thing to hear and to sing.

### Part III: We Too Sing America

The "We Too" movement of our concert reflects voices that have taken longer to be heard. Ironically, each piece quietly references migration—times when large groups of people courageously cast their lots upon landscapes that did not birth them.

Moses Hogan's work is drawn from the faith tradition of African Americans who moved northward in the large post-bellum migrations. Our selection (*My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord*) reflects a strategy of resilience, rooted in the premise that no matter what happens, an almighty God is the ground from which one can always draw strength. The piece is musically dynamic because it needed to weather many rough winds. The music remains with us because it endures.

*Hole Hole Bushi* (arr. Harry Urata, Allison Arakawa) arises from the late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Asian Pacific experience of being transposed into America's agricultural economy. This piece marks an elegy of remembrance for those who ventured forth on the promise of work and opportunity. It straddles the question of where home has become. The singer considers whether to acquiesce to the cane fields of Hawaii or return to Japan after an absence that has now spawned grandchildren. Again, we hear unfamiliar meters, chords, and harmonies that reflect wide distances and even wider displacements. While the singer speaks of two islands separated by the earth's largest ocean, they live somewhere in between—perhaps forever separated from any sense of home.

Consideration of Hebrew peoples automatically touches on migration—remarkable for a history that spans far and wide before coming to rest in a land inhabited only in memory for millennia. Neil Ginsberg's arrangement of *Hine Ma Tov* speaks to the deep-seated sensibility that has held true throughout Hebrew faith and identity: namely, that dwelling together with brethren is a profound and divinely joyful thing.

Sydney Guillaume has placed his finger on the pulse of our times with *Finding a Home*, a piece that translates the question of immigration into a quickstep drum chant embracing nostalgia, expectation, and gratitude. Its exultant culmination, “We’ve found a home again,” is a shout that belongs within all of us, no matter how recently or remotely we arrived on these shores.

#### **Part 4: Pursuit of the Dream**

The phrase “American Dream” usually brings “work ethic” references to mind—expectations of material reward, status, security, a house and car, financially secure career choices. Jocelyn Hagen breaks us free of that with a gentle meditation on what matters. Her *American Dream* renders loving acquaintance with nature as central to our true selves. She notes the modern loss of “place” through an evocative listing of heirloom species—names easily recognized by earlier generations, which now mean only “a plant” or “a bird” to many of us. She offers an equally gentle understanding of our country as historically “young,” a nation that has not existed long enough to root in things that last, but that still has time to make the right choice.

#### *Hope Waits* – Karen Marolli

The dream has its dark moments, doesn’t it? *Hope Waits* is a lullaby for those dark-night times. A soothing harmonic assures sleepers that awakening carries us forward and away from the most frightening nightmare—the darkest, most immobilizing sleep—and that new possibilities await each of us with every dawn, no matter what.

#### *Hold On (A Change Is Comin’)* – Arnie Roman / Jodie Wilson / Mike More / Tim James

We like to leave our friends with gifts. If you attend enough Singing City concerts, you’ll find that our performances often feature participation. Audiences are sometimes taught a part that becomes theirs to sing during the performance.

One may ask why.

Well, that comes from our founding understanding of why we sing. Singing City embraces positive social consciousness through the artistry of choral music. As such, we offer audiences an opportunity to participate in songs that show a way forward—especially when the path crosses into adversity. When we teach songs, it is our hope that some part of them will be tucked into memory and emerge when your heart or circumstances require a song. Again, a gift for the journey.

~ **S. Chestnut, Interlocuteur**





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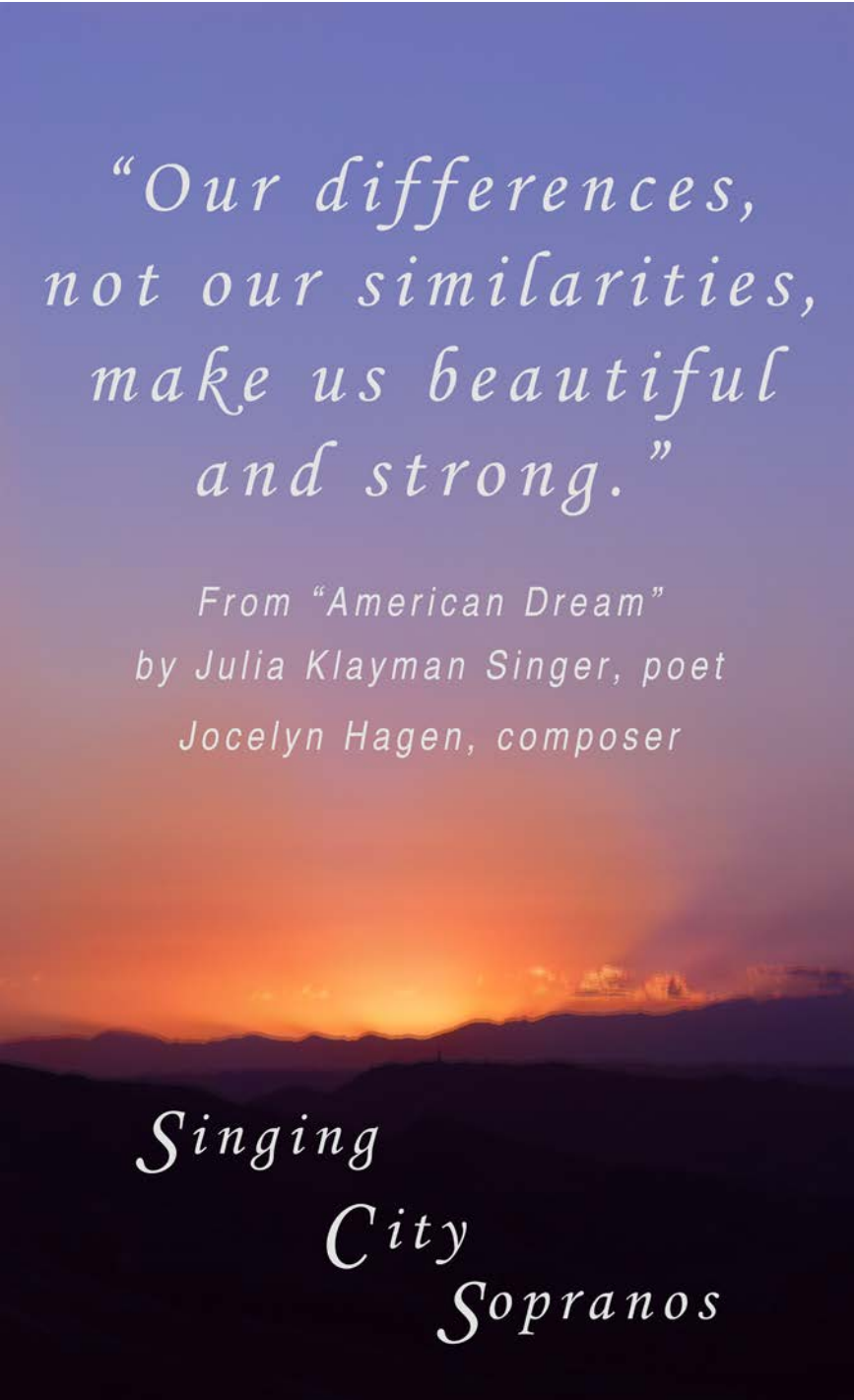
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and strong.”*

*From “American Dream”  
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## ABOUT SINGING CITY

*An artistically driven, socially conscious, and civically engaged  
vocal movement since 1948.*

Philadelphia’s Singing City was founded in 1948 by Dr. Elaine Brown as an integrated choir. The Choir was born out of the Fellowship House movement and is deeply committed to social justice, equity, and using music as an instrument for social change. For over half a century, Singing City has been Philadelphia’s premier avocational chorus, committed to bringing people of diverse races, creeds, and backgrounds together under the common purpose of music making.

In addition to its deep commitment to inclusion and community building, Singing City has consistently achieved the highest levels of performance practice and artistry. The chorus has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Leningrad Philharmonic, and Israel Philharmonic, and has to its credit a number of critically acclaimed national and international concert tours and festival appearances. The 100-member-strong chorus is led by Artistic & Music Director Rollo Dilworth, following Jeffrey Brillhart, who retired in June 2023 after 25 years. The choir continues to fulfill its original mission, which today encompasses an educational program for youth, T-VOCE (Teen Voices of the City Ensemble), and programs for under-served populations.

## MISSION

Singing City is a socially conscious vocal movement that educates, motivates, and empowers communities by bringing people together to lift the human spirit through the artistry of choral music.

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267-519-5321, [www.singingcity.org](http://www.singingcity.org)

## ROLLO DILWORTH



Rollo Dilworth joined Singing City as Artistic and Music Director in 2023. He has taught at Temple University's Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts since 2009, where he serves as the Elaine Brown Choral Chair, and Professor of Choral Music Education. Earlier, he spent 13 years as Director of Choral Activities at Chicago's North Park University and began his career teaching middle school music in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri.

In addition to his academic duties at Temple, Dilworth serves as Artistic Director and Conductor for the Singing Owls Campus/Community Chorus and as Conductor for the School District of Philadelphia's High School All-City Chorus. A frequent guest conductor and clinician, he has led all-state, honors, festival, community, and professional choirs across the country and abroad.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Case Western Reserve University, a Master of Education in Secondary Education (Music) from the University of Missouri–St. Louis, and a Doctor of Music in Conducting Performance from Northwestern University.

Over 200 of Dilworth's compositions and arrangements have been published, many within the Henry Leck *Creating Artistry Choral Series* with Hal Leonard. In 2015 he launched his own Hal Leonard series, highlighting diverse composers and arrangers for secondary and collegiate choirs. He is a contributor to *Essential Elements for Choir* and the *Experiencing Choral Music* textbook series, and author of *Choir Builders* (2006, 2009, 2014) and *Music of Our Roots* (2016).

His research and presentations explore African American choral music, composing and arranging for choirs, social justice, cultural inclusion, and community engagement. Much of his work centers on music as a force for social change. His compositions *Freedom's Plow* and *Credo* elevate the words of Langston Hughes and W.E.B. DuBois. Most recently, a consortium of 20 institutions commissioned him to set Claudia Rankine's poem *Weather* for chorus, narrator, and wind ensemble—a work recently performed by Singing City for the fifth anniversary of George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis.

Dilworth serves on the national boards of Chorus America and the National Collegiate Choral Organization and is a life member of the American Choral Directors Association, as well as a member of NAfME, NANM, and ASCAP.

## KIM BARROSO



Kim Rojo Celestino Barroso is a highly-sought-after collaborative pianist in the Delaware Valley. Originally from the Philippines, where he is a graduate of the prestigious Philippine High School for the Arts, he finished his undergraduate studies at Winthrop University in South Carolina and his Masters at Temple University majoring in Piano Performance and Chamber Music Accompanying. Studying with Eugene Barban, Harvey Wedeen and Lambert Orkis, he would go on to become the music director at St. Augustine Church in Old City, Philadelphia as well as an Artist-in-Residence at Temple University.

Most notable among Kim's engagements include working at the Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia International Music Festival, Astral Artists and most recently, the Philadelphia Orchestra. His fondness for taking on challenges brought him to Washington, DC where he performed for local and international dignitaries at the residence of the Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. for years.

Kim is no stranger to some of the biggest stages in the region including Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Marian Anderson Hall at the Kimmel Center and Field Concert Hall at the Curtis Institute of Music among others. Furthermore, he has collaborated with local ensembles including the International Opera Theater, the Delaware Valley Opera Company, Greater South Jersey Chorus, PhilHarmonia and Philadelphia Youth Orchestra. Kim collaborated with Rollo Dilworth for 16 years.

## B. LAUREN THOMAS-MOYETT



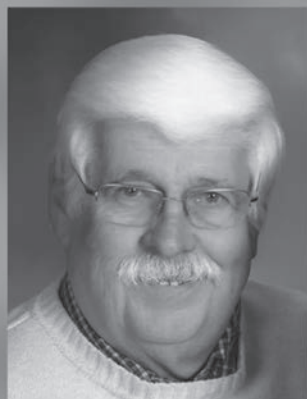
Singing City Associate Conductor Lauren Thomas-Moyett has been a music educator since 2009. Having graduated from the Mason Gross School of the Arts conservatory at Rutgers University, she began her career teaching music in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey, and in 2017 was honored to accept the position as head of the vocal department at The Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA). During her tenure at CAPA, she and her students have performed for General Colin Powell and President Joe Biden, while sharing stages with artists such as Barry Manilow, and our own Philadelphia Orchestra. She is currently one of the leaders of the music ministry at Salem Baptist Church of Abington, and continues to actively arrange, accompany, and perform solo and group repertoire.

## ALEXANDER NGUYỄN



Alexander Nguyễn is an arts administrator, choral conductor, and singer based in Philadelphia, PA. He currently serves as an Associate Conductor of the Singing City Choir of Philadelphia and the Assistant Conductor of Elevate Vocal Arts. From the podium, Nguyễn is committed to ensuring equal representation in the rehearsal room. He has dedicated his time to researching music from non-western traditions including Vietnamese folk traditions such as ca dao, nhạc tết, and quan họ as well as the music of Trịnh Công Sơn, Vietnam's most prominent songwriter. Nguyễn also takes pride in spotlighting the influences of displacement in diasporic communities on music and storytelling.

Nguyễn received his master's degree in Choral Conducting from Temple University under the mentorship of Dr. Paul Rardin, Dr. Rollo Dilworth, and Dr. Mitos Andaya Hart. As a Southern California native, Nguyễn was raised in El Monte, CA and studied his bachelor's degree in Choral Music Education at the California State University of Los Angeles with Robert MacNeil, Donald Brinegar, and Dr. Christopher Gravis.



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who loved singing in the choir.

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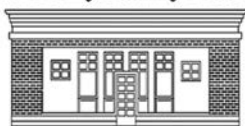


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flight to the imagination  
and life to everything."*

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## SINGING CITY STAFF

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 Michael J. Bolton, *Executive Director*  
 Liv Forney, *Programs and Operations Manager*  
 B. Lauren Thomas-Moyett, *Associate Conductor*  
 Alexander Nguyễn, *Associate Conductor*  
 Kim Barroso, *Collaborative Pianist*

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### Post-Concert Survey

Thank you for attending our concert! We hope you enjoyed the performance and are interested in your feedback. We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey.



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## ANNUAL FRIENDS DRIVE

For over 77 years, Singing City has been committed to engaging our community and working toward a more equitable world. At a time when our nation feels more divided than ever, your support is essential in helping us raise our voices and bring people together through music. We continue to foster choral performances that not only celebrate but serve the rich diversity of Philadelphia's communities.

### **Your financial support is vital in sustaining this important work.**

We are incredibly proud of our growing youth chorus, Teen Voices of the City Ensemble (T-VOCE). In collaboration with Temple Music Prep and ArtSmart, this free choral music program offers weekly rehearsals and performance opportunities to Philadelphia-area teens. This includes voice lessons and monthly workshops with guest clinicians. It is inspiring to see these young voices grow, both musically and personally.

As we honor our rich history, Singing City remains committed to today's values of equity and justice. Our performances and community engagement programming strive to be socially relevant and often challenge the status quo, as we continue to sing out against the challenges to justice.

### **But we can't do this without you.**

Together, we are responsible for making Singing City financially, geographically, and physically accessible to everyone. Please consider giving generously to help us continue our work of lifting voices, fostering connection, and inspiring change.

**Thank you for your support!**



## ANNUAL SUPPORTERS

*We are deeply grateful to these generous supporters who believe in Singing City's mission to bring people together, uplift the human spirit, and strengthen our communities through choral music.*

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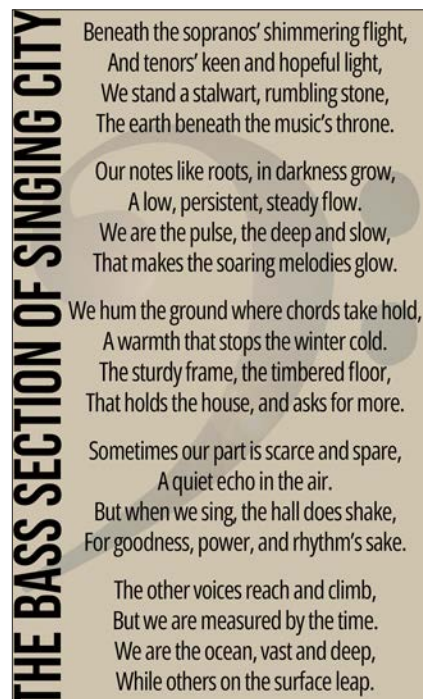
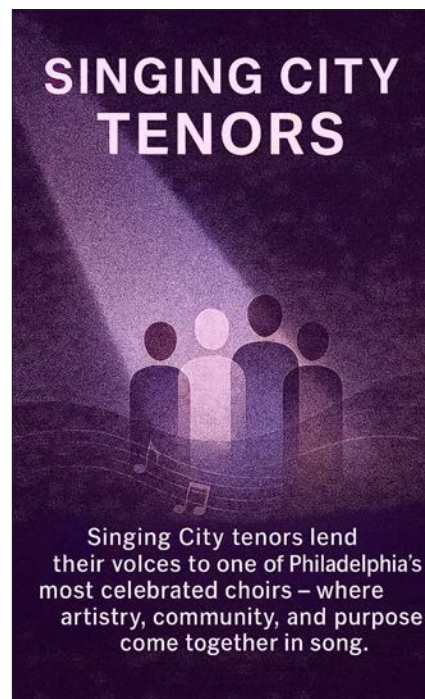
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 Anonymous (3)  
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 Elaine Broudy  
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*Every effort has been made to assure the accuracy of this list. Please contact us with any omissions or errors. Thank you. List as of October 16, 2025.*

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## Members of the Singing City Choir honor the memory of:

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| Maulton Baker   | Ed Hagopian      | Kim Murphy    |
| Martha deHeyman | Kirk Hall        | Judy Neilson  |
| Doug Faulkner   | Elaine Kligerman | Elaine Shater |
| Sonya Garfinkle | Robert Mann      | Bobbi Willig  |
| Helen Gilmore   | Claire McKinley  | John H. Wood  |
|                 | Mardia Melroy    |               |

Their voices remain part of our song.

## A LEGACY OF SONG AND SOCIAL IMPACT



### THE **ELAINE BROWN** LEGACY SOCIETY

Inspired by our founder, Elaine Brown, you can help ensure that Singing City continues to unite and inspire future generations. A simple bequest or deferred gift supports our artists, youth programs, and community outreach. The arts help communities thrive. Join those who have already included Singing City in their wills—your gift will be cherished and make a lasting impact.

- Take pride in supporting Singing City's mission, history, and future.
- Inspire others to share in your commitment to the arts.
- Be acknowledged in Singing City publications, including our Annual Report and concert programs.

### We recognize the following supporters who have included Singing City in their wills or trusts.

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Here is some helpful information brought to you by an enthusiastic Soprano 2.



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