



Artwork by Lucy Silcox '28

CHORAL UPRISING

SONGS OF PROTEST, RESISTANCE, AND HOPE

SKIDMORE CHORUS

Thursday, April 24, 2025 @ 7 PM

Helene Ladd Concert Hall

FREE ADMISSION

**ARTHUR ZANKEL MUSIC CENTER
SKIDMORE COLLEGE**

“An artist’s duty, as far as I’m concerned, is to reflect the times... I choose to reflect the times and the situations in which I find myself. That to me is my duty. And at this crucial time in our lives, when everything is so desperate, when every day is a matter of survival, I don’t think you can help but be involved... We will shape and mold this country, or it will not be molded or shaped at all anymore.”

— Nina Simone

“Artists are here to disturb the peace.”

— James Baldwin

“Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction. The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars—must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Notes

Tonight's program brings together a tapestry of voices: spiritual, political, personal, and prophetic. It's a concert rooted in protest, resistance, and the unshakable belief that music has always been, and continues to be, a vessel for truth.

Black music has long been a force of survival and defiance. Born out of oppression, the African American spiritual carried encoded messages of escape, freedom, and divine justice. These songs laid the foundation for gospel, jazz, soul, blues, and hip-hop. These are genres that don't just entertain, but tell the truth about lived experience. Music created by Black communities has been the heartbeat of protest movements for centuries, and Black women in particular have been central to this work through composing, arranging, and performing songs that resist silence and speak power into being. In this concert, their legacy is honoured.

We begin with Ysaye Barnwell's *Breaths*, a powerful invocation to listen to the wisdom of our ancestors, whose presence lingers in the air we breathe. Her second contribution to this program, *Let Us Rise in Love*, shifts us from memory into action, calling us to collective transformation. We've included a third offering by Dr. Barnwell, *Wanting Memories*. This choral setting of her own composition was originally written for the vocal group Sweet Honey in the Rock. The piece reflects on loss, longing, and the quiet strength passed down through generations. As the speaker remembers a departed loved one, they begin to find pieces of that person living within themselves. It's a song about inheritance, not just of memory, but of resilience, wisdom, and voice. In the context of this program, it reminds us that grief and protest often walk hand in hand, and that the act of remembering is itself a form of resistance.

Rosephanye Powell's *I Dream a World*, set to the poetry of Langston Hughes, gives voice to the dream of a just society. A dream that continues to be deferred, but never relinquished.

Pepper Choplin's *Give Us Peace*, set to a gospel-style accompaniment, acts as a universal plea, inviting us to imagine a world where justice and peace are not mutually exclusive.

Nathaniel Dett's *Listen to the Lambs*, a choral setting of a spiritual first composed in 1914, remains as urgent as ever. Its quiet mourning and restrained reverence offer space for grief in the midst of struggle.

Uzee Brown Jr.'s *I'm Building Me a Home* speaks to the sacred act of carving out belonging in a world that denies it. It is a spiritual about protection and proclamation of presence.

In *Fix Me, Jesus*, arranged by Jacqueline Hairston, the voice of the individual emerges in its most vulnerable form: a plea for healing and preparation in a world of turmoil. The text can be interpreted either as “fix me” as in repair me, or “fix me” as in keep me close.

Soon Ah Will Be Done, arranged by Diane Loomer, continues the tradition of spirituals that anticipate liberation. Not just in the afterlife, but in the here and now.

Mary Lou Williams’ *Elijah* reflects the brilliance of a Black woman composer who refused to be boxed in by genre or expectation. A visionary jazz pianist and composer, Williams spent her life merging sacred and secular idioms, and *Elijah* channels the fierce conviction of a prophet who spoke truth to power.

B.E. (Brittney) Boykin’s *Holding the Light* offers a gentle and unwavering commitment to hope. It reminds us that in times of darkness, holding the light is itself a radical act.

We end the program with *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, often called the Black National Anthem. It is both a prayer and a call to action, first penned by James Weldon Johnson in 1900 and sung by generations as a declaration of hope and endurance.

This program also includes *America/Desh*, a solo piano work by Reena Esmail. A composer of Indian descent, Esmail blends *America the Beautiful* with Raga Desh, a Hindustani classical melody. The work explores what it means to hold multiple identities and homelands. To long for belonging across national and cultural borders. It is both a celebration and a question, asking us who is allowed to claim “America,” and what it means when that claim is not honoured equitably.

Together, these pieces testify. They remember. They resist. They ask us not to look away. And most of all, they remind us that singing (especially when it is collective, intentional, and unflinching) is never just music or sound.

It’s action.

Texts

Breaths

Ysaye M. Barnwell

Listen more often to things than to beings.
'Tis the ancestors' breath when the fire's voice is heard.
'Tis the ancestors' breath in the voice of the waters.

Those who have died have never, never left.
The dead are not under the earth.
They are in the rustling trees,
They are in the groaning woods,
They are in the crying grass,
They are in the moaning rocks.

Those who have died have never, never left.
The dead have a pact with the living.
They are in the woman's breast,
They are in the wailing child,
They are with us in our homes,
They are with us in the crowd.

I Dream a World

Rosephenye Powell and Langston Hughes

I dream a world where [one]
No other will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn.

I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.

A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every [one] is free.

Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of [hu]mankind—
Of such I dream, [our] world!

Give Us Peace
Pepper Choplin

Give us peace that will reach across the river that is raging wild.
Give us peace that as brothers and sisters we'll be reconciled.
Give us peace.
Give us love that will melt away the anger in a troubled land.
Give us love 'til we change the fist of hatred to a gentle hand.
Give us love.

Let us sing together, join the rhythm of our soul
So that peace and hope and love will take control.
Give us peace and love.
Let us raise our voices to sing a peaceful song
Until hate and fear, distrust and pain are gone.
Give us joy as we celebrate the goodness in everyone.
If we learn to sing together we have just begun.

Give us joy.
Give us hope.
Give us love to rise above all hatred, fear, and pride
As we reach out to the other side.
And we'll find peace, sweet peace.

Listen to the Lambs
Robert Nathaniel Dett

Listen to the lambs, all a-crying.
He shall feed His flock like a shepherd,
And carry the young lambs in His bosom.
Amen.

I'm Buildin' Me a Home
Traditional Spiritual, arr. Uzee Brown Jr

I'm buildin' me a home.
This earthly house is gonna soon decay,
An' my soul gotta have somewhere to stay.

When you hear me prayin'
I'm building me a home.

Through many dangers, toils, an' snares
I have already come.
'Tis grace that brought me safe this far,
An' I know it will lead me home.

When you hear me moanin'
I'm buildin' me a home.

When you hear me shoutin'
I'm buildin' me a home.

Part 1 - Vocal Chamber Ensemble

- Alleluia Randall Thompson (1899-1984)
- Earth Song Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)
- Kaval Sviri Traditional Bulgarian
arr. Peter Lyondev (1936-2018)
- Bone to Bone Ruthie Prillaman
Nathan Prillaman
- Somewhere (from *West Side Story*) Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990),
Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021), arr. William Jonson
- Song of Miriam Elaine Hagenberg (b.1979)
Rabbi Ruth Sohn

Part 2 - Skidmore Chorus and Friends

- America/Desh Reena Esmail (b. 1983)
Michael Lowry '27, pianist
- Breaths Ysaye M. Barnwell (b. 1946)
Birago Diop (1906-1989)
- I Dream a World Rosephanye Dunn Powell (b. 1962)
Langston Hughes (1902-1967)
- Give Us Peace Pepper Choplin (b. 1957)
- Listen to the Lambs R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943)
Naomi Wagner '26, soprano

I'm Buildin' Me a Home ... Spiritual, arr. Uzee Brown Jr. (b. 1950)
Arielle Lam '25, contralto | Xavier Reyes, tenor

Fix Me, Jesus Spiritual, arr. Jacqueline B. Hairston (b. 1932)
Karen Kolterman, soprano

Soon ah will be done wi' de troubles of dis worl'
Spiritual, arr. Diane Loomer (b.1940)
Xavier Reyes, tenor
Naomi Wagner, soprano
Natalie Goeks '27, soprano

Let Us Rise in Love Ysaye Barnwell
Karen Kolterman, soprano

Elijah Mary Lou Williams (1910-1981)
Poem by Raymond M. Carr
Xavier Reyes, tenor
Naomi Wagner, soprano
Arielle Lam, alto
Lalita Stromayer '28, alto

Holding the Light B.E. Boykin (b. 1989)
Stuart Kestenbaum (b.1952)

Wanting Memories Ysaye Barnwell

please stand as you're able

Lift Every Voice and Sing James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)
J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954)
Xavier Reyes, tenor
Lalita Stromayer, alto

Fix Me, Jesus

Traditional Spiritual, arr. Jacqueline B. Hairston

Oh, fix me.

Fix me, Jesus, fix me.

Fix me for my long white robe.

Fix me for my starry crown.

Fix me for my journey home.

Fix me for my dying bed.

Soon ah will be done wi' de troubles of dis worl'

Traditional Spiritual, arr. Diane Loomer

Soon ah will be done

With the troubles of this world,

Goin' home to God.

I want to meet my brother.

I want to meet my sister.

I want to meet my mother.

No mo' weepin' an' wailin'

Goin' home to God.

Let Us Rise In Love

Ysaye Barnwell

Let us rise in love.
Dear one, I never thought that you witness such a time.
I hear you cry.
And dear one, there is a reason for these things
But where's the rhyme?
I hear your whys.

I don't have the answer to your questions.
I don't have the answer to your prayers.
But I know this is a moment of transcendence
If only we will take the time to care.

When the universe is polarized by hatred
And we ourselves have been baptized by fear
And when some of us are polarized in principles
And there's anger in the falling of each tear
Let us rise in love.

Dear one, the world has changed in just a twinkling of an eye.
I hear you cry.
And dear one, a part of each and every one of us has died.
I hear your whys?

We have been voyeurs of foreign pathos
The tide has changed and now we grieve at home
Though we're victimized by terror, we're not innocent.
Where's the courage to change what we've condoned?
Let us rise in love.

Elijah

Mary Lou Williams, text by Ray M. Carr

Elijah sat under the juniper tree ready to cry.
With a thirst in his throat and dust in his eye.
Elijah sat under the juniper tree ready to die.

The Church built a wall of gentility
With a fence enclosing the juniper tree,
But the Church forgot you and me.

The warlords who entered the sacred gates
Sold their shells at exorbitant rates,
But they gave large gifts to charity
To appease their conscience and set it free.

The Church kept sitting around the tree
With its sanctification of sacred rites
To preserve the holy sacred sites
To foster respectability.

But the world was headed for dire damnation
And atom bombs from every nation
Were launched without any justification.

The Church had failed in its ministry
For the life went out of the juniper tree.
The Church said, "Strange that this should be."

The world was a torrent of blood and smoke,
The devil laughed at the shameful joke
Of a Church that could save a world to be
By fencing itself around a Juniper tree.

[The world] got tired of havoc and mess,
It was high time for the Church to confess.
It broadened its scope and [let love in]
So the juniper tree came to life again.

It spread its branches the whole world wide,
For there was no fence to keep it inside.

Holding the Light

B.E. Boykin and Stuart Kestenbaum

Gather up whatever is glittering in the gutter,
Whatever has tumbled in the waves
Or fallen in flames out of the sky,
Holding the light.

For it's not only our hearts that are broken,
But the heart of the world as well.
Stitch it back together.
Make a place where the day speaks to the night
And the earth speaks to the sky.

Whether we created God or God created us.
It all comes down to this:
In our imperfect world we are meant to repair
And stitch together what beauty there is.

Stitch it with compassion and wire
See how everything we have made
Gathers the light inside itself and overflows?
A blessing.

Wanting Memories

Ysaye Barnwell

I am sitting here wanting memories to teach me
To see the beauty in the world through my own eyes.
You used to rock me in the cradle of your arms.
You said you'd hold me till the pains of life were gone.
You said you'd comfort me in times like these and now I need you.
And now I need you...
And you are gone.

Since you've gone and left me,
There's been so little beauty,
But I know I saw it clearly through your eyes.
Now the world outside is such a cold and bitter place,
Here inside I have few things that will console,
And when I try to hear your voice above the storms of life
Then I remember all the things I was told.

I think on the things that made me feel so wonderful when I was young.
I think on the things that made me laugh, made me dance, made me sing.
I think on the things that made me grow into a being full of pride;
Think on these things, for they are truth.

I thought that you were gone, but now I know you're with me;
You are the voice that whispers all I need to hear.
I know a "please", a "thank you", and a smile will take me far,
I know that I am you and you are me and we are one.
I know that who I am is number in each grain of sand,
I know that I've been blessed again and over again

Lift Every Voice and Sing**

James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson

Lift every voice and sing,
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

**Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.**

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

Amen.

****Please stand as you're able**

Thanks To

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Teresa Rockwell

Zhenelle LeBel

And to all the Zankel Student Helpers

And a special thank you to all those who
continue to show up and stand up for the rights of others.

Vocal Chamber Ensemble, Spring '25

Floydd Ricketts, *conductor*

Patte Hadfield, *collaborative pianist*

Dylan Dreizen, alto

Arielle Lam, alto

Sarah Neel, alto

Anna Staltari, soprano

Lalita Stromayer, alto

Mary Timmons, soprano

Naomi Wagner, soprano

Skidmore College Chorus, Spring '25

Floydd Ricketts, *conductor*

Patte Hadfield, *collaborative pianist*

Sopranos

Jamie Becker

Alysha Bigelow

Catherine Brienza

Lucia Cicerchia

Gwendolyn Clark

Kathryn Cohen

Sue Crua

Natalie Goeks

Ellen Green

Karen Kolterman

Bella Lagatta

Christine

McDonald

Irina Petrik

Jilian Reilly

Jane W. Rose

Amara Rozario

Kiley Stoops

Stefanie Sudduth

Anne Sutherland

Mere Vazzana

Naomi Wagner

Altos

Ann Marie Adamick

Katie Capelli

Martha (Mao) Chen

Sarah Christy

Kathy Cleary

Susan Cohen

Grace Collins

Emmanuelle Donaldson

Karin Drosdick

Emma Fenton

Katie Hooper

Milly Koh

Ash Kopperl

Jesse O'Connell

Rosemary Pagliano

Pamela Quin

Lex Roach

Teresa Rockwell

Lucy Silcox

Mia Snorek-Yates

Carol Schupp Star

Lalita Stromayer

Mary Ellen Toomey

Sara Torrey

Yvette Walla

Tenors

Mitch Cohen

Arielle Lam

Theo Perkins

Xavier Reyes

Derek Stannard

Nathan Vardi

Basses

William Brearley

Rit Carroll

Luke Charlston-Camp

Liam McCarty

John Poremba

Nick Swanson

Matthew Vitti