PENINSULA WOMEN'S CHORUS

women making waves

Martín Benvenuto, Artistic Director
Margaret Fondbertasse, Pianist
Women Making Waves
Peninsula Women's Chorus

1. Rise Up*  (Jake Runestad b. 1986)
2. Virgo virginum praeclara+ (Fabio Flesi b. 1973)
3. Veni, amica mea+ (Pekka Kostiainen b. 1944)
4. When the Dust Settles**  (Mari Esabel Valverde b. 1987)
5-9. displacement***  (Eric Tuan b. 1990)
         Movement I: From Psalm 137
         Movement II: Overheard in Silicon Valley
         Movement III: Wayfaring Stranger
         Movement IV: Frosty night
         Movement V: San Francisco
10. Moon Goddess*  (Jocelyn Hagen b. 1980)
11. Child of Impossibles**§ (Julia Adolphe b. 1988)
12. Hands upon the Plow**  (Jocelyn Hagen b. 1980)
13. No Time, traditional camp meeting song (arr. Susan Brumfield)

*Commissioned by the Peninsula Women's Chorus through the ACDA Women's Consortium
**Commissioned by the Peninsula Women's Chorus as part of the Trailblazers Project
***Commissioned by the Peninsula Women's Chorus on the occasion of its 50th anniversary
§Performed jointly with Musae and Piedmont Ancora at the 2018 NMFTV Festival
+Performed by Alla Breve
About the Peninsula Women’s Chorus

Since 1966, the Peninsula Women’s Chorus (PWC) has become synonymous with artistic excellence in choral music. Known for its adventurous programming and recognized as one of the leading women’s choruses in the U.S. and beyond, the PWC is dedicated to commissioning new works, discovering rarely performed works, and keeping classical choral masterpieces for treble voices alive. Comprised of a diverse group of auditioned singers who share an enthusiasm for challenging repertoire, the PWC has commissioned 35 new works and released seven CD recordings over the last ten years.

Among PWC honors are: winner of The American Prize in Choral Performance in 2015, and second place winner in 2011; third prize in the 2006 Béla Bartók 22nd International Choir Competition in Debrecen, Hungary; two Chorus America/ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming (2003 and 1999); finalist in the 2000 Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence; and second prize at the 1994 Tallinn International Choral Competition in Estonia. Other noted performances include four appearances (in 2016, 2001, 1993, and 1987) at American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) conferences. In addition to extensive performances throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, the chorus has been heard on National Public Radio, and has appeared on television both nationally and internationally.

With its commitment to exciting outreach programs, PWC adds to its reputation as a dynamic force in music making and community building. Since 2007, the PWC has produced an annual or biennial New Music for Treble Voices (NMFTV) festival, bringing together diverse local and national choruses in the study and performance of innovative, contemporary works. The PWC also offers a Mentorship Program to provide outstanding local high school women singers an opportunity to study and rehearse challenging works, culminating in a performance in the NMFTV festival. The PWC celebrated its 50th anniversary season in 2016-17, and looks forward to another 50 years of enriching its community with vibrant music.

PWC’s Trailblazers Project

For over fifty years, the PWC has inspired and enriched its singers and audiences through the creation and performance of diverse, dynamic and adventurous music. In 2020, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment that gave women in the U.S. the right to vote, we arrive at the culmination of an ambitious, multi-year commissioning project, Trailblazers. Through the Patricia Hennings New Music Fund PWC has premiered three works by female composers highlighting the achievements of three American women pioneers: abolitionist Harriet Tubman, transgender rights activist Miss Major Griffin Gracy, and women’s suffrage leader Alice Paul.
Martín Benvenuto, Artistic Director

Martín Benvenuto is one of the leading choir conductors in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. A native of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he has been Artistic Director of the Peninsula Women’s Chorus (PWC) since 2003. Active as a clinician, panelist, and guest conductor, Benvenuto has served as Artistic Director of WomenSing, the Contra Costa Children’s Chorus, and has been on the faculty of the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir.

Recognized for his exacting technique and a passion for drawing the finest choral tone, Benvenuto's repertoire is extensive. His choirs are dedicated to commissioning new works from upcoming and established composers from the U.S. and abroad, and have been selected to perform at Chorus America and American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) conferences.

His choirs have also earned honors and high marks in international competitions in Argentina, South Africa, Canada, Hungary, and Spain. Of particular note are PWC’s American Prize in Choral Performance (winner in 2015, second place in 2011), the 2010 Chorus America/ASCAP Alice Parker award, which recognized WomenSing for programming recently composed music that expanded the mission of the chorus, and the Third Prize awarded to the PWC at the 2006 Béla Bartók International Choir Competition, one of the most prestigious on the European circuit.

Benvenuto highly values artistic partnerships: his choirs have collaborated with Veljo Tormis, Joseph Jennings, Karmina Silec and Camina Slovenica, Charles Bruffy, Quinteto Latino, California Shakespeare Theater, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and the Golden Gate Men's Chorus, among others. Benvenuto has prepared choirs for organizations such as the San Francisco Opera, the Oakland East Bay Symphony, the Redwood Symphony, and the Kronos Quartet. He has also appeared as tenor soloist with leading Bay Area ensembles.

Benvenuto holds a D.M.A. in choral conducting from Boston University, where he studied with Ann Howard Jones and the late Robert Shaw. He earned his master’s degree from Westminster Choir College, where he studied with Joseph Flummerfelt, majoring both in Choral Conducting and in Voice Performance and Pedagogy. His undergraduate degrees in choral conducting and composition are from the Universidad Católica Argentina.

Margaret Fondbertasse, Pianist

Margaret Fondbertasse has devoted her adult years to finessing the arts of accompanying, chamber music and teaching. A former student of John McCarthy, Anne Crowden and Janet Guggenheim, she earned a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Chamber Music from the University of California, Berkeley, where she was the recipient of the Eisner Prize for piano performance. This was followed by an auspicious grant, the Hertz Fellowship, which enabled her to pursue postgraduate studies with John Wilson at the Royal College of Music in Manchester, United Kingdom.

Margaret made her solo orchestral debut playing Beethoven's Choral Fantasy with the Coastside Community Orchestra. In addition to the PWC, she accompanies the Skyline College Concert Choir under the direction of Jude Navari. A former staff accompanist at San Francisco Conservatory of Music, she currently serves as Faculty Accompanist at Skyline College, collaborates with mezzo-soprano Meghan Dibble as Katzenduo, and is the proud mother of her science nerd son, Zachary.

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Peninsula Women's Chorus Singers

First soprano: Amelia Archer, Anna Chase, Charlotte Daly, Jennifer Davidson-Kim, Susan Hogben, Ciara Karski*, Jennifer Katz*, Sarah Kidd*, Danni Redding Lapuz, Mercidita Navarro, Kathryn Sanwick, Kyle Sofman, Michelle Staley, Judy Sweet, Jane Walker


First alto: Karianne Burns, Ann Crichton, Sarah Etheredge, Cathleen Kalcic, Diane Kim, Betsy Landergren, Holly Liberatore, Jennifer Mace, Kathy MacLaury, Roselena Martinez, Tiffany Ou, Kathy Plock, Debbie Romani, Kate Roseman, Jan Schonhaut, Jennifer Song, Lu Tesarowski*, Hoai-Thu Truong, Deanne Tucker*


*Alla Breve singers

Kyle Cavallaro Photography
Collaborating Choirs on "Child of Impossibles"

Ancora

The four Performing Department choirs—Concert Choir, Ensemble, Ecco, and Ancora—represent the pinnacle of children's choral training and performance. The singers in these groups have studied music for several years, and are admitted into the groups by audition. Ancora, under the direction of Artistic Director Emeritus Robert Geary, is a stunning treble chamber group made up of high school age treble singers who pass a rigorous vocal audition. Being a part of Ancora is the realization of many years of hard work and dedicated choral excellence in the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir. In Performing Choirs, promising young singers reach new heights of personal expression; their relationship with music deepens and gains new subtlety. Singers begin to form their own musical personalities and identities, and they make deep, lifelong bonds with like-minded friends. They become proud ambassadors of the Choir through local performances, professional collaborations, and on tour at international competitions and festivals. (www.piedmontchoirs.org)

Robert Geary, Founding Artistic Director & Sue Bohlin, Associate Conductor
Ancora Singers: Madeline Ashburn, Mia Atkinson, Erin Bartholomew, Roxanne Bostian, Lucy Dunn, Alexandra Fiske, Elizabeth Fiske, Sydney Gong, Kimiye Hendee, Gina Ledor, Emma Leibowitz, Michaela Lim, Milla Munn, Zia Pao-Ziegler, Anni Robinson, Abigail Sanchez, Phoebe Schmidt, Emily Schweizer, Talia Young Skeen

Musae

Musae is a women's vocal ensemble based in San Francisco. The group takes its name from the original "ladies of song," the classic nine Muses of Greek mythology. Since its founding in 2004, Musae has performed diverse and accessible music throughout the Bay Area, and continues to stretch the boundaries of traditional repertoire for women's voices.

Musae functions as a musical collective in which each singer identifies as a leader and soloist contributing actively to the artistic process. The group's singers are trained in the choral tradition, but not bound by it. Each singer may sing a range of voice parts based on the aesthetic demands of the music, and the group performs largely without conductor.

In 2016, Laney McClain Armstrong became Musae's artistic director. She is a singer and conductor who has made choral music and choral music education her life's work. As a conductor and educator, Dr. Armstrong strives to cultivate a love of music in each singer through quality programing, building skills and musicianship, and devotion to the music and texts. (www.musae.org)

Laney McClain Armstrong, Artistic Director
Musae Singers: Allison Lynk, Anjali Jameson, Barrie McClune, Becca Friedman, Colleen O'Hara, Katie Innes, KaTrina Clay, Kim McClain, Kirstin Cummings, Madeleine Blumgart, Michela Macfarlane, Rachel Herbert, Rayanne Truesdell, Robin Flecha, Sabrina Adler, Sara Chalk
Rise Up, Jake Runestad

The text of "Rise Up" was adapted from speeches and writings by U.S. suffrage leader Susan B. Anthony. The energetic drive of the music sets Anthony's rhetoric imploring women to "deepen your sympathy then convert it to action."

Rise up!

There shall never be another season of silence.
Deepen your sympathy then convert it to action.

Pray every single second of your life, not on your knees but with your work.

Think your best thoughts,
speak your best words,
do your best work.

There is so much yet to be done.
Rise up!

Virgo virginum praecellara, Fabio Fresi

Fabio Fresi composed "Virgo virginum praecellara" in 2006 for the women of the Cantori della Resurrezione, a mixed chorus based in Sardinia. Its lilting 3/8 motion evokes the Virgin Mary as the star of the sea. Commenting on the playful rhythms, which feature a feeling of three often interrupted by duplets, Fresi says, "...obviously this won't be disorienting for an Argentinean conductor used to tangos and milongas."

Virgo Virginum praeclara, praeter omnes Deo cara, dominator coelitum.
Fac nos pie te cantare, praedicare et amare; audi vota supplicum.
Esto nobis maris stella,
ne nos fluctuum procella, navigantes abruat.

Virgin of virgins, resplendent, beloved of God, the ruler of heaven.
Make us sing piously to you, preach and love; hear the prayers of supplicants.
Be for us the star of the sea,
that the raging storm not sink us as we sail.

Veni, amica mea, Pekka Kostiainen

It is not surprising that Pekka Kostiainen is best known as a composer of choral music, for he has made a successful career as a choral conductor. Commissioned by Kunitachi College of Music in Tokyo, "Veni, amica mea" was premiered in 2009 by the Ladies' Choir Angelica under the direction of Ko Matsushita. It is an intensely expressive setting of this Song of Songs dialogue between King Solomon and a Shulammite woman. At this point in the poem, the woman is overcome with emotion as she recalls the words uttered by Solomon during a springtime visit.

Surge, propera, amica mea;
iam enim hiems transit et veni.

Arise, make haste, my love,
and come, for now the winter is past.
When the Dust Settles, Mari Esabel Valverde, poem by Amir Rabiya
Recorded live May 2019

Rising transgender composer Mari Esabel Valverde sets a commissioned poem by transgender poet Amir Rabiya about firebrand transgender rights leader Miss Major Griffin Gracy.

Says Valverde: "A former grass roots organizer and lifelong transgender and intersex rights activist from coast to coast, Miss Major is a 'veteran' of the Stonewall Riots. Her fight to liberate her trans and queer descendants continues: at age 78, she opened the House of GG, the Griffin-Gracy Educational Retreat and Historical Center for the transgender and gender non-conforming community, in Little Rock, Arkansas. 'When the Dust Settles' is a culmination of trans stories brought to life through singing written in homage to Miss Major. Amir Rabiya's original poem synthesizes themes of intersectional identity, survival, and humanity."

You opened your arms for the forgotten ones
the discarded & misunderstood
you showed them a mother's love
enveloped them in a delicate
and powerful embrace, beautiful star
when the dust settles, we'll always remember
how you showed us how to fight
even while the jagged blade of sorrow
pressed on us, to fight
ceaselessly, to tend to one another
You said, when the dust settles
I hope my girls will be okay
You cried out from the cells of Attica
and outside Stonewall's battered streets
Do you hear me? Are you listening?
How many more have to die?
your heart bigger than any cage
even in the midst of so much loss
you remind us to dream
to hold tomorrow between our lips
we deserve to kiss without fear
to grow old
to sway our hips
to wear what we wish
to relish in the pleasure of our bodies
the seeds you planted continue to grow
into blooming song
when the dust settles, we will raise our voices
just as you have always done, in glorious proclamation
we will let everyone know—
We are still here!
We are still here!
displacement, Eric Tuan

displacement is a five-movement choral meditation on exile for SSAA a cappella chorus. The second and fifth movements explore the tech industry and its impact on the ongoing process of displacement in the San Francisco Bay Area. The second sets buzzwords and catchphrases from Silicon Valley that encapsulate the tech industry’s energy and creativity. In contrast, the fifth draws upon the searing poetry of housing activist Tony Robles. His lament for San Francisco captures the sense of loss for historic communities forced out of the city by gentrification and soaring rents.

The first, third, and fourth movements tie this current experience of exile to three historical antecedents, all of which continue to resonate in the American psyche. While the first sets the lament of the Jewish people during the Babylonian captivity—"How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?"—the third explores spiritual exile in the traditional spiritual, "I am a poor wayfaring stranger." The fourth draws upon a haunting haiku by Senbinshi Takaoka, one of the 110,000 Japanese-Americans rounded up and forced into internment camps during the Second World War. — Eric Tuan

Movement I

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

— From Psalm 137

Holly Liberatoro, soloist

Movement II

Alpha, beta
Innovate
Unicorn
Don’t be evil
I deserve to live here
I just have a good job
Disrupt
Creative destruction

— overheard in Silicon Valley
Movement III

I am a poor wayfaring stranger,
a-wandering through this world of woe,
And there's no sickness, toil nor danger,
In that bright land, to which I go.

I'm going there to see my father,
I'm going there, no more to roam,
I'm only going over Jordan,
I'm only going over home.

I know dark clouds will gather round me,
I know my way is rough and steep,
And beautiful fields lie just before me,
Where God's redeemed their vigils keep.

I'm going there to see my mother,
She said she'd meet me when I come,
I'm only going over Jordan,
I'm only going over home.

I'll soon be free from every trial
My body sleep in the churchyard,
I'll drop the cross of self-denial
And enter on my great reward.

I'm going there to see my Savior
To sing His praise forevermore,
I'm only going over Jordan,
I'm only going over home.

— Wayfaring Stranger

Cathleen Kalcic, soloist

Movement IV, text by Senbinshi Takaoka

Frosty night
listening to rumbling train
we have come a long way

Movement V, text by Tony Robles

San Francisco, your eyes are empty, your houses are empty, your canvas is bare
of poems. Your mirrors and windows are missing reflection. Your flowers are drained of color.

Your eyes hold no murals, your skin is scrubbed raw. Your canvas contains no art. Your poems are eviction notices. Your skin is a thin postcard that reads non-deliverable. Your tongue is a torn bus transfer out of town.

I don't know you anymore.
Moon Goddess, Jocelyn Hagen

For "Moon Goddess," Hagen adapted a poem by Enheduanna (born ca. 2300 B.C.), a moon priestess daughter of King Sargon of Agade, whose reign signaled the dawn of recorded history. Enheduanna herself is the first writer, male or female, whose name and work have been preserved. In this powerful, vibrant poem, she addresses Inanna, the Sumerian goddess of love and war. This setting, for SSA chorus, 4-hand piano, and percussion, evokes a confluence of power and calm sensuality.

O my lady, on hearing your sound,
hills and flatlands bow.

O my lady, guardian of all the great essences,
you have picked them up and hung them
on your hand.

You are lofty like Heaven. Let the world know!
You are wide like the earth. Let the world know!

You strike everything down in battle.
O my lady, on your wings
you hack away the land and charge disguised
as a charging storm,
roar as a roaring storm,
thunder and keep thundering, and snort
with evil winds.

O primary one,
moon goddess Inanna of heaven and earth!

On your harp of sighs
I hear your dirge.

O my lady, this song has made you great
and exalted you.
O my lady, wife of An, I have told your fury!

Margaret Fondbertasse and Elizabeth Ingber, four-hand piano
Don Baker and Deanne Tucker, percussion
In honor of abolitionist and civil rights leader Harriet Tubman, the first commission of the Trailblazers Project sets a new poem by Jamaican-born Safiya Sinclair. The music swirls through the array of evocative colors depicted in Sinclair's poem: the warm heat of Maryland, the transformation of a deep wound, and the arrival to a harmonious vision of sanctuary that does not yet exist; a home where all are welcomed.

Caught in a dark sleep I shelter the weight of this long night inside me, great unfurling knife of heaven on my back. How the hurt circles like a famished bird. Don't look back, she tells me, Don't look back. Child of impossibles, you are here, dazzling. Still blooming wonder from the wound.
Don't you hear them? All my mothers in the chokecherry tree—she a Green June beetle, she the last fruit gifted to the weary. Feet in the fire, I am chasing what I cannot see; future of our own lost dreaming, her thousand warm hands washed in gold, home renaming me. And she always beckoning
Welcome
Welcome
Welcome.

Hands upon the Plow, Jocelyn Hagen, poem by Barbara Saxton
Virtual Choir World Premiere

Although I have tremendous respect for all three of our Trailblazers women honorees, I feel the greatest gratitude and personal empathy toward suffragist and women's rights champion Alice Paul. She knew exactly how difficult it was to wield that heavy plow through the muddy fields of prejudice, distrust and ignorance women faced as they tried to obtain even the most basic rights in a democracy.

Some of the lines of my poem are quotes from Alice herself — e.g., "the movement as mosaic" and "no new worlds without female power." Other original lines were inspired by her incredible bravery and persistence, ending (as any poem or song about Alice and her fellow suffragists must) with an exhortation to lift our voices and VOTE! — Barbara Saxton

for Alice Paul (1885-1977)

She likened our Movement
to mosaic tiles—more vibrant and stronger when linked by the mortar of women, our undaunted will.

Margaret Fondbertasse, piano
Charles Keagle, alto saxophone
No Time, traditional camp meeting songs, arr. Susan Brumfield

Arranger Susan Brumfield draws from the American frontier tradition of the early 19th century, and combines two camp meeting songs, "Rise, oh fathers, rise oh mothers" and "No time to tarry here." At a camp meeting, itinerant preachers would gather in remote locations, and worshippers would listen to fiery sermons. A congregant would take lines from a preacher's text as a point of departure for a simple melody that could be woven into an ecstatic full song. That spontaneity and joy are present in this uplifting arrangement.

Martha Morgan and Eithne Pardini, soloists
Publisher Information

- **Rise Up**, Jake Runestad, Jake Runestad Music LLC
- **Virgo virginum praeclera**, Fabio Fresi, cpdl.org
- **Veni, amica mea**, Pekka Kostiainen, Sulasol
- **When the Dust Settles**, Mari Esabel Valverde, unpublished
- **displacement**, Eric Tuan, unpublished
- **Moon Goddess** and **Hands upon the Plow**, Jocelyn Hagen, Graphite Publishing
- **Child of Impossibles**, Julia Adolphe, unpublished
- **No Time**, arr. Susan Brumfield, Colla Voce
More Peninsula Women’s Chorus
Available on Compact Disc

Alleluia Psallat
Best-loved Christmas music of Hildegard von Bingen, Benjamin Britten, and Kirke Mechem. (LDR-1001)

Songs of the Spirit
Inspirational music ranging from the vocal orchestra arrangements of the documentary film Song of Survival to contemporary works by Ron Jeffers and Lou Harrison. (LDR-1002)

Carols and Lullabies
A Christmas album with a Latin beat featuring Conrad Susa's Carols and Lullabies: Christmas in the Southwest and pieces by Randall Thompson, David Conte, and Tomas Luis de Victoria. (LDR-1003)

EarthTones
A tribute to our late conductor Patricia Hennings and her love of music and nature. From the sublime "O viridissima virga" by Hildegard von Bingen to Libby Larsen's soaring "Psalm 121" to Lojze Lebic's spine-tingling "Urok," the CD showcases a wide array of pieces that spans seven centuries, but collectively celebrates nature and the Earth's beauty. (LDR-1005)

Winter Patterns
This holiday-themed CD takes its name from the evocative choral landscape of Estonian composer Veljo Tormis's Talvemustrid (Winter Patterns). Other highlights include Daniel Pinkham's lively and popular Christmas Cantata, Hildegard von Bingen's meditative "O Vivens Fons," remarkable settings by Joan Szymko and Rebecca Clarke of the Ave Maria text, the post-minimalist "Agnus Dei" by Charles Griffin, and Francis Poulenc’s stunning "Litanies à la Vierge Noire."
Also featured is the fiery and intense "Suite" de Lorca by modern Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara. Selections from William Mathias's joyous Salvator Mundi, A Carol Sequence and a multilingual arrangement of the immortal "Silent Night" close the CD on the perfect seasonal note. (LDR-1006)

Nature Pictures
PWC celebrates a close relationship with prominent Estonian composer Veljo Tormis. Influenced by his deep conviction that ancient song traditions reflect a close connection to nature, the prolific Tormis gives us the four seasons in 36 miniatures of intense choral imagery in his evocative song cycle, Looduspildid (Nature Pictures). We are proud to present the first American recording of this cycle! This eclectic recording continues the theme with Karl Korte's "Spring," Chen Yi's "Looking at the Sea" and Samuel Barber's "To be Sung on the Water." Also included are Edward Elgar's "The Snow" and Kenneth Leslie's lovely "Cape Breton Lullaby," a PWC favorite. (LDR-1007)

Mostly Made in America
This CD is an homage to the musical heritage of America, giving voice to celebration, uncertainty, and the spirit of struggle, as well as to the tranquility and familiarity of the sounds of home. Featured on the CD are some of the PWC’s signature and most intimate performances, including the heart-wrenching "Let Evening Come," the battling interludes of "Thou Famished Grave," the intricate and exuberant "Venite Exultemus Domino" and the well-loved Songs of Night, commissioned to celebrate Artistic Director Martín Benvenuto's 10th anniversary with the PWC in 2013. (APG-1008)