

PENINSULA
WOMEN'S CHORUS

Transcendence Surrounds

World Premiere of
Freida Abtan's
new opera
The sound of grief
for chorus and video



Fri, April 17, 2026 at 7:30 pm
Sat, April 18* & Sun, April 19, 2026 at 4:00 pm

Meets the Eye Studios, San Carlos, CA



*In-person and Livestream

From the Artistic Director

Welcome to this spring's concert, *Transcendence Surrounds*. We are delighted to share this unique and immersive musical experience with you, both in person and through our livestream. This program reflects the Peninsula Women's Chorus's guiding vision: to cultivate a vibrant choral community where singers of diverse backgrounds come together to create transcendent musical experiences.

The idea of transcendence has shaped our work this season, prompting us to explore what it means, what it requires, and how it transforms us. Transcendence is rarely instantaneous; rather, it emerges through a process. It is born of dedication, collaboration, challenge, and perseverance. Whether in performance, in artistic creation, or in life's broader journeys, it is often the culmination of sustained effort that leads us beyond ourselves into moments of deep connection and meaning.

At the heart of this program is the fulfillment of a two-year creative journey: *The sound of grief*, an opera by Freida Abtan. Developed in collaboration with Meets the Eye Studios, this work integrates video and choral performance in a powerful and personal way. The visual elements you will experience are drawn from filmed sessions with members of the Peninsula Women's Chorus, making the work both artistically innovative and deeply rooted in our community.

The second half of the program continues this exploration of transcendence through a rich and varied collection of works. We begin with Sherryl Sewepagaham's "kahkiyaw oskâyak," a powerful call proclaiming, "All the young people on this earth sing together." This piece will also be performed at the Tapestry Festival in Vancouver in collaboration with Elektra during our May tour.

Two selections from Gustav Holst's *Hymns to the Rig Veda* for treble chorus and harp follow: "Hymn to the Dawn" and "Hymn to Waters." The program then features the first live performance of "We Called It" from *MELT: the memory of ice*, a work for video and chorus by Betsey Biggs that reflects on the urgent realities of climate change.

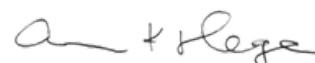
Joan Szymko's evocative setting of Wendell Berry's "The Peace of Wild Things" invites a turn toward contemplation and renewal. We return to Holst with two additional movements from *Hymns to the Rig Veda*, "Hymn of the Travellers" and "Hymn to Vena," and conclude the concert with Eric Tuan's luminous "A Thousand Names," a work that sets Hildegard von Bingen's created language, Lingua Ignota, to explore all that the word "woman" can mean.

Throughout the concert, vocal music is interwoven with visual media, electronics, harp, and percussion, creating a richly layered and immersive choral experience. Each element contributes to a larger artistic vision, one that reflects the power of collaboration and the beauty of shared creative endeavor.

There is something profoundly unifying and magical about working toward a large and meaningful goal. Through this process, we strengthen not only our musical abilities, but also our relationships, trust, and collective vision. It is within this shared commitment that transformation and transcendence become possible.

It is our hope that this music invites you into that same space of reflection and transformation. May you feel a sense of transcendence surrounding you.

Dr. Anne K. Hege
Artistic Director



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Dr. Anne K. Hege, *Artistic Director*
Anne Rainwater, *Collaborative Pianist*

The sound of grief (2025)	Freida Abtan
<i>PWC Commission, World Premiere</i>	
Kate Andrade, <i>Orpheus</i>	
Cathleen Kalcic, <i>Calliope</i>	
Stacey Street, <i>Fate 1</i>	
Emily Jiang, <i>Fate 2</i>	
Sara Asher, <i>Fate 3</i>	
kahkiyaw oskâyak *+ (2018)	Sherryl Sewepagaham
Hymn to the Dawn from <i>Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda</i> * (1910)	Gustav Holst
Jennifer Ellis, <i>Harpist</i>	
Hymn to the Waters from <i>Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda</i> * (1910)	Gustav Holst
We Called It from <i>MELT: the memory of ice</i> * (2025)	Betsey Biggs
The Peace of Wild Things *+ (2004)	Joan Szymko
Allison Rosengard, <i>Soloist</i>	
Hymn to Vena from <i>Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda</i> * (1910)	Gustav Holst
Hymn of the Travellers from <i>Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda</i> * (1910)	Gustav Holst
III. A Thousand Names from <i>A Great Cloud of Witnesses</i> (2018)	Eric Tuan

* *Vivo*

+ *Massed piece for Tapestry International Festival*

Text & Program Notes

The sound of grief, Freida Abtan (PWC Composer-in-Residence)

PWC Commission, World Premiere

According to Greek legend, Orpheus was the greatest musician in the world, and his skill with the lyre famously saved the Argonauts by overpowering the seductive songs of the sirens. When his wife Eurydice unexpectedly died, a grief-stricken Orpheus traveled to the Underworld, where mere mortals like himself were forbidden to enter. But Orpheus' song lulled the three-headed Cerebus to sleep and persuaded Charon the boatman to ferry him across the River Styx. Orpheus' music moved the hearts of the King and Queen of the Underworld to grant Orpheus' only wish—that his wife Eurydice may live once more. They told Orpheus that Eurydice would follow her husband back to the land of the living, but if Orpheus were to ever look back before they were both standing in the daylight, his wife would remain in the Underworld forever. Orpheus journeyed back home, and as soon as he saw a slim beam of sunlight ahead, doubt overcame him. He could not wait until he reached the surface. He turned quickly and saw his wife Eurydice disappear back to the Underworld. The second loss of his wife threw Orpheus into a depressive state, since he was banned from re-entering the Underworld. Mourning his loss, Orpheus encountered a group of drunken, frenzied women called the Maenads, who were the source of his death.

— Emily Jiang on Orpheus

The story of Orpheus has been my favorite since I was young: the mythical musician who travels to the underworld to rescue his love, only to lose her at the last second to his own unchecked impulse. If my teenage-self enjoyed the story's romanticism and deep confirmation of art's importance, I now see other facets to the story. Yes, it's about the power of art, as well as the things we do for love (not for those we love), but it's also about acceptance and grief. In many ways the story outlines the boundaries of creation between mortals and the gods. The gods are defined by their absolute power to change reality. As humans we are able to examine and interpret the world around us, to feel and to act, to add to the world and to effect change within it. What we cannot do is overwrite what is or to make it not have been. Orpheus's power bridges that divide. His music inspires inanimate objects to move and rewrites human desire but it accomplishes these acts through empathy, not sorcery. His art translates his emotions so deeply that others have no choice but to inhabit his experience. It is empathy that defines the true nature of music. All art communicates subjectivity, but it's music that offers emotional detail when paired with other mediums. It colors our understanding of events without filling in their nature, shaping our experience rather than defining it.

Many writers have fed my understanding of this story. I took heavy inspiration from Neil Gaiman's depiction of the myth in his Sandman comics, whose focus is on the plight of Orpheus's father when faced with his son's request to visit the underworld. I also took inspiration from Rilke's poem *Orpheus, Euridice, Hermes*, in which Euridice has faded into breath, unable and unwilling to return to her former consciousness or even to perceive the world from before her death. Lastly, some thirty years ago, my old, dear friends Alyssa and Nola Semczynsyn requested that I tell my favorite story. This was the story that spilled out of me when I was asked, and I promised that I would one day write it as an opera. Our friend, Matthew Risk, pointed out to us that there is a story in every culture where someone attempts to defeat death through love. The ending of the story isn't fixed, only the desire. While other cultures might end the story differently, to the ancient Greeks fate was something that could not be defeated. I don't yet know if I agree.

— Freida Abtan, April 2026

1.1 He isn't well

Have you heard?
Have you heard from your son, Calliope?
He is not well.
No, not at all.
Have you heard from your son, Calliope?

The sound of grief is deafening.
The world is hurt.

His famous gifts about to spill into the earth.
That's where her blood is now.
That's where his love is now.
Into the earth. He is not well.

It was on their wedding day,
Before the vows were to take place.
A humble snake bit into flesh,
And brought the end, Eurydice.

This won't end well.

Orpheus plays upon his lyre
And all the world must stop to hear.
His fragile song becomes the thread
Our only goal to draw it near.

1.2 He isn't well Interlude

His fragile song becomes the thread.
Our only goal to cut it dear.

1.3 He isn't well

This won't end well.
He is not well.
The sound of grief is deafening.

1.4 Advise your son

Have you heard?
Eurydice is taken now into proud Hades realm.
Her memories will soon dissolve,
Her precious shade will too.

Go to your son, Calliope.
Advise him well, Calliope.
Suppress your son.

His music's weight upon the world
May be too much to bear.

Each sound he makes destroys their lives.
He breaks their hearts with his laments.

Go to your son, Calliope.
Advise him well, Calliope.

And if you must, Calliope,
Destroy your son.

2.1 Grief

Dead. She is dead. She is dead.
To me the world is dead.
And now the world is dead.
My heart is dead,
To me the world is dead.

2.2 Empty Space

It breaks my heart to see you fall.
Your music starts to end it all. It shapes the world.
A path exists through empty space,
Might take you to the darkest place you've ever been.

Your gift of sound, it shapes the world.
You can't stay here.
If music shapes the world, why can't it change the world?

A chance exists for happiness,
Go plead your case so it's not missed before it gets too late,
And all her memories fade.
If music shapes the world,
Why can't it remake the world?
What business then has death
If you can claim the world?
A path exists through empty space
Might take you to the darkest place.
If music shapes the world,
Your music shapes the world,
What business then has death?
If you can remake the world?

2.3 What if?

Her hand was torn from mine,
And her soul brought to that place.
This isn't right.

What if I took that chance?
It isn't yet my time to descend through empty space.
What if he took that chance?
What if I took that chance?

2.4 The silent lands / She is dead.

The silent lands are for the dead,
Where memory fades and thought sinks as lead.
Unless you plan to see this through,
The silent lands are not for you.

This isn't right.
Dead, she is dead.
Really dead, she is dead.

3.1 Careful now

Careful now that each breath disturbs the air.
Careful now that all sound has disappeared.
(Silence blankets the dead.)
Careful now that mem'ry has turned away.
(Mem'ry stays where music lives.)
Careful blackness has now consumed the day.
(Music lives.)

How to navigate these silent lands.
(Bringing music to these silent lands.)
How to find a path that you'd understand.
(Music is the path now.)
How to make sure your memories will stay.
(Mem'ry stays where music lives.)
Without coins the boatman turns away.
(Music lives.)

Play your music
Maybe he will stay.
(Music lives.)

3.2 Orpheus plays [Musical Interlude]

3.3 The waters of Lethe

The waters of Lethe, hidden fingers soothing memory.
Something you can't see whispers soft and makes everything still.
The waters of Lethe rising fast and passing far beneath.
Subterranean seas decomposing anything we've built.

3.4 Careful now (ii)

How to navigate these starless lands.
Bringing music to these silent lands.
How to find a path that you understand.
Music is the path now.

How to get the answer that you will need.
Mem'ry stays where music lives.
Open up your heart and let it bleed.
Music lives.
Music is the thing that shapes the world.

4.1 Before the court [Musical Interlude]

4.2 A road leading home

Somewhere there is a road leading home.
It's out there somewhere.

4.3 The wind

Is it the wind?
Is she there?
Is it the wind behind me?
Is it her breath?
Or is it her voice?
Is it the wind?
Is she there?
Is it a voice or the wind that blows behind me?

The fates do what they will do.
The fates do what they must do.
The fates do what they want to.

The fates play with their food,
and it's mortal lives their banquet,
and it's our short lives their feast.
If the pain and danger won't quit
know it's those ladies the beast.

We are sand lashed in the hourglass
we spill to our demise.
Counting each decision thinking that they impact all our lives.
Are we just doomed to fail?
Are we just doomed to fall?
Are we just doomed too?

Does she call?
Is she there?
Does she love me at all?

4.4 She's behind you

Without looking back,
If you can trust that she's behind you,
you might make it out alive.

Is it the wind?

Without looking back, just going forward never doubting there's
a future you'll survive.

Is it a voice behind me?

Without looking back, your heart beats loud, each sound's
suspicious.
Tell yourself, it's just your mind.

Is it a voice, or the wind?

Without looking back an endless moment,
always watching, always waiting, always searching,
still repeating: she's behind you.

Video Roles

- Orpheus: Deanne Tucker
- The Fates: Stacey Street, Sara Asher, Lisa Collart
- Thalia: Stacey Street
- Melpomene: Kate Andrade
- Urania: Deanne Tucker
- Polyhymnia: Sara Asher
- Calliope: Emily Jiang and Cathleen Kalcic
- Terpsichore: Morgan Ames
- Euterpe: Lisa Collart
- Clio: Kathryn MacLaury
- Erato: Heather Mannion
- Hades and Persephone: Wynn Tauberg and Kate Andrade
- The boatman: Heather Mannion
- Eurydice: Kathryn Sanwick
- The underworld court: Anne Hege, Kathryn Sanwick, Heather Mannion,
Kathryn MacLaury, Emily Jiang
- The underworld denizens: Members of the chorus

The work was supported in part by funding from the Carnegie Mellon University College of Fine Arts Fund for Research and Creativity.

kahkiyaw oskâyak (All the Young People), Sherryl Sewepagaham

Sherryl Sewepagaham is Cree-Dene from the Little Red River Cree Nation in northern Alberta. For nearly two decades, Sherryl dedicated herself to teaching K-6 elementary music with a focus on Indigenous musical traditions. Sherryl was also a 23-year member of the Indigenous women's trio, ASANI, and earned a 2006 Juno nomination and a Canadian Folk Music Award win in 2010. Sherryl is a singer-songwriter and composes songs in Cree for children and choral arrangements for children, youth, and adult choirs. Sherryl is a strong advocate for language revitalization through the arts and the preservation and creation of Cree language songs with the traditional hand drum and rattle.

The SSA voicing of kahkiyaw oskâyak (All the Young People) was commissioned by Ottawa's OrKidstra's social development program for their end-of-year, virtual celebration in 2019. kahkiyaw oskâyak honors the younger generation and blesses and guides our future leaders in their journey as they sing in unity.

kahkiyaw oskâyak otâh askihk mamaw nikamowak

All the young people on this earth, sing together!

Hymn to the Dawn from *Choral Hymns of the Rig Veda*, Gustav Holst

Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* represents a pivotal moment in his career where his fascination with Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy met his evolving musical language. The *Rig Veda* is one of the oldest sacred texts in the world, a collection of hymns dedicated to the forces of nature: fire, wind, water, and light, personified as deities.

By the time Holst wrote this third set, he was moving away from the heavy, dramatic style of 19th-century composers like Wagner. He chose a female choir and a harp to create a sound that is intentionally atmospheric and "thin," where the music feels like it's floating, much like the mists and light described in the poems, and timeless by avoiding typical "grand" orchestral sounds, the music feels as if it could have been written yesterday or 3,000 years ago.

Ushas is the goddess of the dawn, depicted as a young woman who wakes the world each morning. It is a bright, loud sunrise, but as the quiet, sacred moment just before the sun appears. The goddess "brushes away the purple robes of night," preparing the world for a new day.

Hear our hymn O Goddess,
Rich in wealth and wisdom,
Ever young yet ancient,
True to Law Eternal.

Wak'ner of the songbirds,
Ensign of th'Eternal,
Draw thou near O Fair one,
In thy radiant Chariot.

Bring to her your offering,
Humbly bow before her,
Raise your songs of welcome,
As she comes in splendour.

Hymn to the Waters, from *Choral Hymns of the Rig Veda*, Gustav Holst

This movement is dedicated to **Varuna**, the celestial waters that bring life and purification. It is Holst's most rhythmically interesting early works, famously written in 7/4 time. This irregular meter creates a "rippling" effect, mimicking the unpredictable, fluid motion of water. The voices often move in parallel motion or gentle imitation, creating a cool, transparent atmosphere that feels both ancient and modern.

Flowing from the firmament
Forth to the ocean,
Healing all in earth and air, never halting.
Indra, Lord of Heav'n formed their courses,
Indra's mighty laws can never be broken.
Cleansing waters flow ye on, Hasten and help us.

Lo, in the waters, dwelleth One,
Knower of all on earth and sea,
Whose dread command no man may shun,
Varuna, sovran Lord is He.

Onward ye waters onward hie.
(Cleansing waters, flow ye on,
Hasten and help us.)

Dance in the bright beams of the sun,
Obey the ruler of the sky
Who dug the path for you to run.

We Called It from *MELT: the memory of ice*, Betsey Biggs

I am delighted to be premiering an arrangement of my song, "We Called It," from my film *MELT: the memory of ice*, for the Peninsula Women's Chorus. It is the first live performance of the piece, but I hope not the last. Dedicated to future generations who may never know snow or ice, *MELT: the memory of ice* is a feature-length cinematic song cycle, a powerful and contemplative invitation to sit bedside in communion with our earth's body melting and spilling through climate change. Created during a summer I spent in Greenland with my mother and 5-year-old daughter, the film slowly explores a spectacular river of icebergs, increasingly interrupted by flashes of memory. An immersive soundtrack rich with glimmers of sound—calving ice, reindeer bells, sled dogs—surrounds spellbinding vocals and a solo child reciting an unfathomable list of winter's loss—flurries, ice skates, snow angels. The ice melts on. As I struggle to give my child the same intimacy with the wild I've enjoyed, I have found myself wondering about melting ice: will there be winter in the world when she is my age? There are so many documentaries that invite you to think about the facts and figures of climate change; I wanted to offer audiences something different: a glimpse at the experience I had in Greenland, a chance to slow down and feel, and be with the earth's ice as it melts and spills its way through climate change, to witness their own feelings as music washes over them. I hope it resonates for you. — Betsey Biggs

We called them ice floes
We called it calving
We called it sledding
We called them snowy owls
We called them flurries
We called it slush
We called it an igloo
We called them glaciers
We called it sugar snow
We called them snow forts
We called them snow leopards
We called it a freeze

We called them reindeer
We called it a snow cave
We called them icicles
We called them ice crystals
We called it a snowstorm
We called them snowballs
We called them orca
We called them ice skates

We called them icebergs
We called them narwhal
We called them snowpants
We called them mittens
We called it powder
We called them muskox
We called it a dusting
We called them snowshoes

We called them snowboots
We called them icebreakers
We called them penguins
We called it the ice cap
We called it snowbound
We called it a kamikura
We called them snow suits
We called them snow banks
We called it a sleigh
We called them arctic foxes
We called it ice blue
We called her a snow queen

We called them belugas
We called them blizzards
We called it midwinter
We called it sea ice
We called it a snowplow.
We called them snow days.
We called it black ice
We called it rime
We called it hoarfrost
We called them snow angels
We called them avalanches
We called it a snow drift
We called it diamond dust

We called it frost
We called it pack ice
We called them ring seals
We called them earmuffs
We called it a moraine
We called them polar bears
We called them sled dogs
We called it snowfall

We called them snowmen
We called it
We called it wind chill
We called it ice
We called it snow
We called it winter
We called it

The Peace of Wild Things, Joan Szymko, poem by Wendell Berry

In this contemplative choral setting, Joan Szymko gives voice to Wendell Berry's evocative poem that speaks to the modern "despair for the world" and the solace found in nature's quiet presence. Szymko's music mirrors the poem's arc—from anxious tension through restorative stillness. The piano accompaniment, here taken by the harp, draws us into the water's hush, the wood drake's reflection, and the day-blind stars waiting with their light. Harmonies unfold gently, giving the poet's lyrics space to breathe and drawing out the message and moment of release.

This piece offers both performers and listeners a moment of deep reflection and peace — an invitation to set aside worry, to enter into the natural world unfettered by thought, and to find freedom in simple presence. It is at once a meditation and a celebration: a reminder that even amid life's turbulence, the earth holds a sanctuary for our spirits.

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and [my] children's lives may be,
I go [and] lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

— Wendell Berry from *Collected Poems*

Hymn to Vena, from *Choral Hymns of the Rig Veda*, Gustav Holst

Vena is a mystical figure, often described as a "Sun-bird" or a messenger of light rising through the morning mist. This is the most expansive and "warm" part of the cycle. It represents the sun finally breaking through the clouds. It's a moment of spiritual clarity where the "child of light" is born from the mingling of water and sky.

Vena comes born of light,
He drives the many-colour'd clouds onward.
Here, where the sunlight and the waters mingle
Our songs float up and caress the newborn infant.
Vena comes!

The child of cloud and mist appeareth on the ridge of the sky,
He shines on the summit of creation.
The hosts proclaim the glory of our Common Father.
Vena comes.

He hath come to the bosom of his beloved.
Smiling on him,
She beareth him to highest heav'n.
With yearning heart
On thee we gaze,
O gold-wing'd messenger of mighty Gods.

Wise men see him in their libations
As the sacrifice mounts to the eternal heights,
Mingling with our solemn chant.
He stands erect in highest heav'n,
Clad in noble raiment,
Arm'd with shining weapons,
Hurling light to the farthest region,
Rejoicing in his radiant splendour.

Hymn of the Travellers, from *Choral Hymns of the Rig Veda*, Gustav Holst

Pushan is the protector of the road, a guide who ensures that travelers don't lose their way and are protected from robbers or wild animals. This hymn is a prayer for a safe journey. In a broader sense, it's about being guided through the journey of life itself. Unlike the first three hymns, which are very ethereal and "heavenly," this one is grounded and rhythmic. Holst uses dynamic markings to suggest the approach and retreat of a passing caravan.

Go thou on before us,
Guide us on our way,
Mighty One.
Make our journey pleasant,
Never let us stray.
Wonder-worker, hearken,
Come in thy splendour, come in thy mighty pow'r.

Trample on the wicked,
All who would oppose,
Mighty One.
Drive away the robber,
Drive away our foes.
Wonder-worker, hearken.
Come in thy splendour, come in thy mighty pow'r.

As we journey onward,
Songs to thee we raise,
Mighty One.
Thou didst aid our fathers.
Guard us all our days.
Wonder-worker, hearken.
Come in thy splendour, come in thy mighty pow'r.


Feed us and inspire us,
Keep us in thy care,
Mighty One.
Lead us past pursuers
Unto meadows fair.
Wonder-worker, hearken.
Come in thy splendour, come in thy mighty pow'r.

III. A Thousand Names from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*, Eric Tuan

This movement explores the fascinating *Lingua Ignota* ("Unknown Language") of the medieval mystic, composer, and philosopher Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). One of the most extraordinary figures of the 12th century, Hildegard's work spans the fields of theology, music, philosophy, botany, medicine, and linguistics. Her *Lingua Ignota* is a lexicon of over one thousand words in an invented language, what the scholar Sarah L. Higley calls "Hildegard's glossary of beautiful, unknown words for praise of Church and for expression of the things of her world." It covers everything from plants (*Fenisgronz*, "house leek") to body parts (*Stranguliz*, "navel") to liturgical books (*Izimziolibiz*, "gospel book"). The sonorous delights of this constructed lexicon, crafted by one of the most powerful women of the medieval period, seem to call for a musical setting. This movement seeks to honor some of the myriad names of women, using Hildegard's remarkable words. It begins with roles often understood as feminine in Hildegard's time: nun, anchoress, widow, martyr, and prophet. The middle section explores the roles assigned by family structures: mother, sister, aunt, and wife. The final section names women into roles that would have surprised some medieval women, but which Hildegard, perhaps, would have celebrated: master teacher, high priest, bishop, and even God. (This would not have come as a surprise to Julian of Norwich, who described God as "our true mother" a few centuries after Hildegard.) — Eric Tuan

The translations here are drawn from Sarah L. Higley's monograph Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language: An Edition, Translation, and Discussion (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; used by permission of the author).

Vanix	woman
Korzinthio	prophet
Falschin	seer
Iugiza	widow
Phalischer	anchoress
Imschiol	martyr
Reimonz	nun
Maiz	mother
Nilzmaiz	stepmother
Pleniza	paternal aunt
Maizfia	maternal aunt
Miskila	sister
Liaziz	daughter-in-law
Kaueia	wife
Kulphazur	ancestor
Agizinix	master, teacher
Scalzido	high priest
Enpholanz	bishop
Aiegonz	angel
Aigonz	God



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About the PWC

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 46 new works and released seven CD recordings over the last ten years. Among the PWC honors are: third place winner of The American Prize in 2023 in Virtual Performance, first place winner 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 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 and an appearance at the closing ceremony of the Chorus America Conference in 2023. In addition to extensive performances throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, the chorus has been heard on National Public Radio, has appeared on television both nationally and internationally, and has participated in international choral festivals in Spain in 2023 and Argentina in 2015.

With its commitment to exciting outreach programs PWC adds to its reputation as a dynamic force in music making and community building. In 2008, PWC was among the founding choirs of the New Music for Treble Voices (NMFTV) festival, which brings together diverse local and national choruses in the study and performance of innovative contemporary works. Assuming production of the festival in 2013, PWC has participated in all ten iterations of the event. The PWC also offers a Mentorship Program to provide outstanding local high school treble singers an opportunity to study and rehearse challenging works, culminating in a performance opportunity with the PWC. The ViVo program, for singers who live outside the Bay Area or are otherwise unable to commit to the full ensemble, provides flexibility for singers and gives the PWC an even fuller sound for the ViVo portions of its repertoire. After celebrating its 50th anniversary season in 2016-17, the PWC dove right into another 50 years of enriching its community with vibrant music.

PWC Chorus Roster

SOPRANO 1	Chloe Chiang † Margaret Daul * Jennifer Davidson Kim * Lydia Goodson † Yvonne Ho * Katharina Huang Emily Jiang § Kate Lincoln Emily Macway * Bridget O’Keeffe Allison Rosengard Stacey Street Helen Yu *	SOPRANO 2	Sara Asher § Ella Bacon Indumathi Das Petra Dierkes * Camille Dunning Marjie Hempstead Gwen Johnson Vanessa Lemahieu * Andra Marynowski * Kathryn Sanwick Allie Sanzi * Wynn Tauberg Sydney Yang	ALTO 1	Helen Bailey * Vicki Brown * Ivy Burg Raquel Coelho Natalie Dang † Zoë Friedman † Cathleen Kalcic Jane Lien Kathryn MacLaury Heather Mannion Debbie Romani Peggy Spool Deanne Tucker § Tenaya Zoeller	ALTO 2	Morgan Ames Kate Andrade Tricia Baldwin * Jen Cao * Paula Chacon Lisa Collart § Madeleine Collart Susie Driscoll * Nadia Echeandia * Corty Fengler Sonia Gaid-Krishnan Lynne Haynes-Tucker Martha Morgan Jenni Murrill Maggie Oren *
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* **ViVo:** The Virtual Voices Program offers a way to participate in the PWC with a reduced commitment. ViVo members perform a select portion of our repertoire in concerts.

† **Mentorship:** High school students participating in the PWC Mentorship Program.

§ **Section leader**



About the PWC Team & Artists



Dr. Anne K. Hege, Artistic Director

Dr. Anne K. Hege creates musical worlds that invite awareness of and attention to the body and our present moment. In her work as a conductor, composer, vocalist, instrument builder, and scholar, she explores the roots of musicality in the intersection of ensemble interaction, technology, embodiment, and expression. Working as a choral conductor since 1999, Hege founded and directed new music and technology-focused ensembles Folk3000 (1999-2001), Cuatro Vientos (2004-2006), and Celestial Mechanics (2007-2010). She developed her style as a conductor supporting community empowerment through choral practices as founder and director of the Albany Community Chorus (2000-2004), Holy Names University Chorus (2013-2016), Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble (2013-2017), and Level IV of the SF Girls Chorus (2015-2022). As the artistic director of the Peninsula Women's Chorus (2020-present), Anne works to expand the role of the community chorus in commissioning and performing adventurous and transcendent works for treble voices. During her tenure as artistic director, PWC was awarded third place for the American Prize for *Singing a Path to Dawn: A Radio Play*; premiered five new works as a guest ensemble for Stanford University graduate composers; created a two year composer-in-residence program; founded a beginning/intermediate conducting program; created the Virtual Voices program; and expanded the bi-annual New Music for Treble Voices festival to include full day clinicians centering Deep Listening and improvisatory practices.

Hege's compositions have been performed and commissioned by ensembles worldwide, including So Percussion, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Princeton Laptop Orchestra, Stanford Laptop Orchestra, Google Mobile Devices Ensemble, loadbang, Ensemble Klang, Clerestory, NOW Ensemble, and Volti SF. Since 2008, Hege has composed musical scores for Carrie Ahern Dance with over 50 performances of these works in New York, Baltimore, LA, SF, and Seattle. Hege has received numerous awards and grants, including a New Music USA Project and Organizational Grant, Mark Nelson Fellowship (Princeton University), Composer-in-Residence (Resound Ensemble), Visiting Artist (CCRMA, Stanford University and Cal Poly), Research Affiliate (CACPS, Princeton University), Elizabeth Mills Crothers Prize (Mills College), Gwen Livingston Pokora Prize in Music Composition (Wesleyan University), and Associate Artist Residency (Atlantic Center for the Arts). In 2022, Hege created and premiered her first laptop opera, *The Furies*, an opera for live voices and laptop orchestra, at Stanford's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics. In 2025, Hege founded Laptera Productions to produce operas for laptop orchestra and live voices, including the upcoming premiere of her second laptop opera, *The Glimpse*, May 29-31, 2026, at ODC in San Francisco. Laptera Productions has received grants from New Music USA, Intermusic SF, and 836M. Hege regularly tours and performs on her analog-live looping instrument, the tape machine, along with the laptop orchestra ensemble, Sideband. You can learn more about her work at www.annehege.com.



Anne Rainwater, Collaborative Pianist

Concert pianist Anne Rainwater is a dexterous musician known for her vibrant interpretations of works from J.S. Bach to John Zorn. Recognized for her "boldly assertive rhetoric" (San Francisco Examiner) and "sensitivity to performance and interpretation" (TEMPO Magazine), she appears as a soloist, chamber musician and lecture artist around the country. Anne has performed in venues and festivals throughout the US and Europe, including the Kennedy Center, the Donau Festival in Austria, Kamnagel in Germany, Severance Hall, Cal Performances, Princeton University, Roulette, the San Francisco MoMA, Stanford University, and Le Poisson Rouge. Diverse appearances include radio interviews on KWMM, KZYX, KALW, and KALX, chamber music performances at Mass MOCA, Bargemusic, and Music@Noon at the University of Santa Clara, and concerto performances at UC San Diego and Mendocino College.

Anne curates a monthly musical gathering called the Vernon Salon Series, which she founded in 2016. She has released 3 solo albums – J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (2018), *Anywhere But Here* (2020), featuring electronic keyboard works by Jude Traxler, and *Ave Maria: Variations on a Theme by Giacinto Scelsi* (2023), a vocal and piano work by Ian Power out on Carrier Records. That album won two awards for packaging from Graphic Design USA and was reviewed by composer Alex Huddleston, who wrote that it was "without a doubt the best music I've yet reviewed for TEMPO Magazine." She has also recorded for Original Abstractions, Bourbon Thomas Records, Pinna Records, New Focus Records, Subliminal Sounds, and Oberlin Conservatory's *Aural Capacity* series. Alongside trombonist William Lang, she performs as the Lang/Rainwater Project, a duo dedicated to championing traditionally underrepresented composers in the lower brass world, in addition to performing canonical trombone and piano works and transcriptions of classics. In one of their most recent projects, they premiered 4 new works by composers from the Iranian Female Composers Initiative.

Anne is a 2019 recipient of an InterMusic SF Grant. Inspired by an early interest in the writings of Fritjof Capra, she is working on a series of long-form essays that explore the intersection of nature, cognition, and music, and particularly, the parallels between thriving ecosystems and optimal ways of understanding and performing music. Anne has been honored with residencies at the Avaloch Farm Music Institute, Blue Mountain Chamber Retreat, Biophilium, Arteles Creative Center in Finland, and Hypatia-in-the-Woods, a unique residency program in Washington State that supports women from all artistic fields. When not at the piano or writing, she is reading, running or obsessively watching baseball. Anne is a member of Beyond Artists, an organization whose members pledge to donate portions of their performance fees to organizations they support and care about.



Freida Abtan, PWC Composer-in-Residence 2024-2026

Freida Abtan is a Canadian audiovisual composer and multi-disciplinary artist with a keen interest in immersive media. She works between fixed and real-time computational technologies in sound and video for concert diffusion, installation, and large-scale multimedia performance situations. Her music ranges from acousmatic composition to more industrial and pop-influenced experimental performance. Both as a solo artist, and as a floating member of the renowned experimental music group Nurse with Wound, she has toured her music and visuals internationally. Her compositions, performances, and installations have been featured at ICMC, the Spark Festival of Electronic Music, Mutek, The Elektra Festival, and Cap Sembrat amongst many others. Until recently, she spear-headed the Electronic Music, Computing, and Technology Bmus/Bsc programme at Goldsmiths, University of London. She now teaches Electronic Music Composition at Carnegie Mellon University.



Jennifer Ellis, Harpist

Committed to shifting the boundaries of harp performance, Jennifer R. Ellis (D.M.A. University of Michigan, M.M. Cleveland Institute of Music, B.M. Oberlin) enjoys taking the harp off its pedestal to use the instrument in new and unexpected ways. She embraces firsts, premiering over 100 works and serving as the first harpist to be a U.S. State Department One Beat Fellow, the first harpist to teach at Nief Norf, the first musician to be named a University of Michigan Engaged Pedagogy Fellow, and the first harpist to attend Bang on a Can, Fresh Inc., and Splice summer festivals. A LABA Fellow and Alice Chalifoux Prize awardee, she has been a featured performer at the International

Harp Festival, Festival of New American Music, Omaha Under the Radar, Sound of Late, Spitting Image Collective, Spark Festival, Piccolo Spoleto Festival, and Kerrytown Edgefest. An in-demand clinician, she has given master classes and workshops at dozens of institutions and serves as faculty with the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music, where she is teaching a year-long harp composition fellowship program. She is Professor of Harp and Professional Development at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she co-runs the Conservatory Connect community engagement program and directs the SFCM Summer Harp Immersive. www.harpellis.com



Kathryn Sanwick, Director of Operations

Kathryn discovered a love of choral music in college when she joined the choir as a timid freshman. It was such a positive experience that she quickly made the decision to change her major to music, building on her formative years as a student of the piano. By the time she graduated, she had interned with the American Composers Forum of Los Angeles and knew her preferred career path was in arts administration. She had a few detours along the way, including earning her Master’s degree in Music Systems from San Jose State University, before serving as a private lesson coordinator and later registrar at the Community School of Music and Arts in Mountain View. She joined the Peninsula Women’s Chorus in 2007, and in 2021, she became PWC’s first General Manager.



Jungmee Kim, Dir. of Marketing & Graphic Designer

After serving as PWC’s collaborative pianist from 2010 to 2015, Jungmee returned to the PWC in 2018 as the Director of Marketing. Leveraging her creativity, drive, and extensive background as a performer and arts administrator, Jungmee has been fostering PWC’s evolution, adaptability, and growth. She holds degrees from New England Conservatory, Harvard University, and Northeastern University. Jungmee is an opera coach and currently serves as a staff pianist at the Conservatorio di Milano “Giuseppe Verdi” in Milano, Italy.



Kayvon Abbaszadeh, Concert Manager

Kayvon Abbaszadeh is an audio tech and music composer born and raised on the Peninsula. Right now, he handles the live audio and video for various groups in the peninsula. Starting his music journey in his teens, Kayvon picked up the bass guitar, then eventually migrated over to digital music and composition. During his journey through digital music, he got his AA in electronic music at College of San Mateo, where he learned all aspects of digital audio recording and equipment. After that, he decided to further his music knowledge and obtained his Bachelor of Music in composition at San Francisco State University. Away from work, Kayvon works as a concert operations manager and audio tech for various other organizations, and he also creates his own digital pop, video game, and classical music.

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