A vertical poster for a choral society performance. The background is a photograph of a snowy city street at night. Warm streetlights illuminate the scene, and snow is falling heavily, creating a soft, hazy atmosphere. In the foreground, two people are walking away from the camera on the left. Several cars are parked or moving in the distance. The overall color palette is dominated by warm oranges, yellows, and browns from the lights, contrasted with the cool blues and whites of the snow.

Alexandria
CHORAL
SOCIETY

SNOW ON SNOW

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2022 | 7PM
GEORGE WASHINGTON MASONIC MEMORIAL

SNOW ON SNOW

BRIAN FONTAINE-ISAAC

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

THOMAS PANDOLFI

PIANIST

PEACE ON EARTH

ERROLLYN WALLEN

(b. 1958)

And snow falls down on me. Peace on earth.
The night is dark and soft. Peace on earth.
The lights that sparkle in the square,
The smoke that lingers in the air. Peace on earth.

And grace falls down on me. Peace on earth.
The dark will turn aside. Peace on earth.
The fires that burn in ev'ry hearth
Do sing our praise of Christmas past. Peace on earth.
Hear them singing. Peace on earth.

Wallen

RING OUT!

JENNAYA ROBISON (b. 1974)

Ring out! and shout! Ring out! Alleluia!

Hodie Christus natus est!
Alleluia!

Today Christ is born!
Alleluia!

2 PROGRAM

STILL, STILL, STILL

AUSTRIAN CAROL

arr. Matthew Culloton (b. 1976)

Still, still, still, one can hear the falling snow.

For all is hushed, the world is sleeping,

Holy Star its vigil keeping.

Still, still, still, one can hear the falling snow.

Sleep, sleep, sleep, 'tis the eve of our Savior's birth.

The night is peaceful all around you,

Close your eyes, let sleep surround you.

Sleep, sleep, sleep, 'tis the eve of our Savior's birth.

Dream, dream, dream, of the joyous day to come.

While guardian angels without number

Watch you as you sweetly slumber.

Dream, dream, dream, of the joyous day to come.

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

VICTOR C. JOHNSON (b. 1978)

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost (1874–1963)

3 PROGRAM

ALLELUIA

ELAINE HAGENBERG (b. 1980)

Pro Coro Alexandria

Alleluia.
All shall be Amen and Alleluia.
We shall rest and we shall see.
We shall see and we shall know.
We shall know and we shall love.
Behold our end, which is no end.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430)

HALCYON DAYS

MELISSA DUNPHY (b. 1980)

Pro Coro Alexandria

Sacred days draw near, traditions hallowed and wan,
Well-worn prayers embrace their heirs when love returns
as embers.
Dreams delayed, hopes frayed in the blue nights of
winter.
Daybreak dreams of reunions lost.
Rise up, tattered and torn! Rise up, barren and reborn!
Go forth in peace, bring joy to the dawn, and grace, turn
your face upon us.

Jacqueline Goldfinger

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPIRITUAL

arr. Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.
Hallelujah!*

While shepherds kept their watching, o'er silent flocks by
night,
behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.
The shepherds feared and trembled when lo, above the
earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth.

4 PROGRAM

SLEIGH RIDE

LEROY ANDERSON (1908–75)

arr. Thomas Pandolfi

EREV SHEL SHOSHANIM

JOSEF HADAR

(1926–2006), arr. Jack Klebanow (1907–87)

Erev shel shoshanim	<i>Evening of roses</i>
Neytsena el habustan	<i>Let us go out to the grove</i>
Mor besamim ulevona	<i>Myrrh, fragrant spices and incense</i>
Le raglech miftan	<i>Are a threshold for your feet</i>
Shachar homa yona	<i>Dawn, a dove is cooing</i>
Roshech maley telalim	<i>Your head is filled with dew</i>
Pich el haboker shoshana	<i>Your mouth is a rose unto the morning</i>
Ektefey nu li	<i>I will pick it for myself</i>
Laila yored le'at	<i>Night falls slowly</i>
Veru'ach shoshan noshva	<i>And the wind of roses is blowing</i>
Hava elchash lach shir balat	<i>Let me whisper you a song, secretly</i>
Zemer shel ahava	<i>A song of love</i>

Moshe Dor (1932–2016)

5 PROGRAM

OPENING

BOB CHILCOTT (b. 1955)

Welcome, snowdrop!
Your white note brings a melody of hope.
After the shadow, after the chill,
Sunlight dances on the hill.
Bless the things that let me go.
Bless the things I hold.
Bless the way that spring begins after winter's cold.

Welcome, blackbird!
Your bright song makes good all that went so wrong.
After winter's bitterness,
Earth puts on her summer dress.

Winter silence. Winter snow.
There was nothing else to know
Then overnight, the moment came:
The future opened up again.

Winter's dark is in the past, daylight's opening at last.
In this opening, I'll find, all the life I left behind.

Charles Bennett (b. 1954)

SOLIDARIDAD

ROSEPHANYE POWELL

(b. 1962)

Alondra, ¡vamos a cantar!	Lark, we shall sing!
Cascada, ¡vamos a saltar!	Waterfall, we shall jump!
Riachuelo, ¡vamos a correr!	Brook, we shall run!
Diamante, ¡vamos a brillar!	Diamond, we shall shine!
Águila, ¡vamos a volar!	Eagle, we shall fly!
Aurora, ¡vamos a nacer!	Dawn, we shall be born!
Solidaridad!	Solidarity!

Amado Nervo (1870–1919)

6 PROGRAM

SILENT NIGHT

FRANZ XAVER GRUBER (1787–1863)

arr. Laura Jēkabsone (b. 1985)

Silent night! Holy night!	Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright	Son of God, love's pure
Round yon virgin mother	light
and child!	Radiant, beams from thy
Holy infant, so tender and	holy face
mild,	With the dawn of
Sleep in heavenly peace!	redeeming grace,
Silent night! Holy night!	Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!
Shepherds quake at the	<i>Joseph Mohr (1792–1848)</i>
sight!	
Glories stream from	
heaven afar,	
Heavenly hosts sing	
Alleluia!	
Christ the Savior is born!	

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS TRADITIONAL ENGLISH

arr. John Rutter (b. 1945)

We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

*Good tidings we bring to you and your kin:
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.*

Now bring us some figgy pudding...
And bring some out here.

For we all like figgy pudding...
So bring some out here.

And we won't go till we've got some...
So bring some out here.

We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year!

7 PROGRAM NOTES

In 1992 Alexandria Choral Society, under the leadership of Kerry Krebill, received the first ever ASCAP award for “Adventurous Programming,” based on a season which ended with a concert consisting solely of the works of women composers. Variety and creativity of works performed, commissioned works, and premieres — these are some of the criteria that are considered today. Artistic Directors and Boards of ACS have carried on with this *modus operandi* through the years, and our present Artistic Director and Maestro, Brian Fontaine-Isaac, is no exception. This December holiday concert is a superb example of what adventurous programming sounds like.

The concert opens with ***Peace On Earth***, with words and music by **Errollyn Wallen**, who has been called the “renaissance woman of contemporary British music”. Composer-in-Residence at Darlington International Music Festival, Huddersfield Festival, and Trinity College of Music, and Visiting Composer-in-Residence at Birmingham Conservatoire, Wallen holds both an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) and CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) for services to music.

Her poem touches on the feelings many of us have had through these past few years of uncertainty about how Christmas will happen for us. Listen closely, and realize why this song was chosen to open our program.

More traditionally “Christmassy” is the sound of ringing bells created by the women’s voices of ACS as they perform ***Ring Out*** by American composer, singer, choral director, and educator **Jennaya Robison**. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting from the University of Arizona, Master of Music in conducting and voice from the University of New Mexico, and Bachelor of Arts in music from Luther College. Her song also includes the traditional Latin words telling us that Christ is born today, reminding us that this is a season with a reason.

Still, Still, Still is a traditional Austrian carol, anonymously translated into English, and beautifully set for choir and baritone soloist, a *cappella*. **Matthew Culloton** has captured the spirit of the carol, reminding us that stillness

8 PROGRAM NOTES

and peace can happily follow revelry.

Culloton made his name more as an arranger and performer than as a composer. Much of his work has been directing and performing with choral groups. The Founding Artistic Director and Conductor of The Singers — Minnesota Choral Artists, he holds degrees from Concordia College, Moorhead (BM in Music Education), and the University of Minnesota (MM in Choral Conducting, DMA in Conducting).

Robert Frost's well-known poem, ***Stopping by Woods On a Snowy Evening***, brings its own visions of winter, without ever mentioning a holiday. **Victor C. Johnson** has created a musical picture that enhances our vision of the deserted woods, the puzzled horse, and the narrator going on to face whatever comes next, with "...miles to go before I sleep."

A prolific composer and arranger, Johnson has over 400 choral works, vocal solo books, and keyboard collections currently in print. His first composition was published when he was a sophomore in high school. He has won numerous competitions and has received ASCAP awards for many years. He is in demand as a choral clinician, guest conductor, and adjudicator all across the United States. He retired in 2018 after 18 years of teaching at the Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts.

An Alexandria Choral Society concert would hardly seem complete without Pro Coro Alexandria adding its own contribution. Its first offering is an exciting ***Alleluia***, using an English translation of a text by **St. Augustine** composed by **Elaine Hagenberg**. The 7/8 meter gives the opening a sense of moving forward in anticipation, and the more tranquil sound that accompanies the central poetry leads to an understanding of the "end that is no end," as the Alleluia again rushes forward to the final Amen.

No one will be surprised to learn that Hagenberg has won many awards for her compositions, that in addition to being published by a number of well-known houses she now has her own music publishing company, that she is

9 PROGRAM NOTES

much in demand for any number of appearances at festivals and other events, and that her commissioned works number over 50.

As text for **Melissa Dunphy's *Halcyon Days***, her frequent collaborator poet **Jacqueline Goldfinger** has written a poignant vision of anticipating (in 2020) what it may be like when the pandemic has ended or at least slowed enough to allow us to be together again. Its message seems a perfect fit for a concert in December 2022.

Dunphy is a 2003 immigrant to the United States — from Australia. She has been described as “specializing in vocal, political, and theatrical music.” The mission statement on her website includes these words: “As a composer, I believe that music is not only a form of expression but a means of communication...inspired by and explor[ing] real-world issues of social justice and personal relationships.” The recipient of many awards and commissions, she has recently been commissioned by Oberlin University for an opera expected to premiere in 2023.

A modern version of an old familiar carol follows: **Rosephanye Powell's** gospel-style arrangement of the traditional African-American spiritual, ***Go Tell It On the Mountain***. This toe-tapping, “Get up and dance!” version emphasizes the joyful spirit of the season, as if Errollyn Wallen's hope for Christmas cheer is being fulfilled. With a solo voice contrasting with the choir, and the addition of a rhythm section, who could ask for more?

Choral composer, singer, professor — these words are starting to sound familiar, aren't they? They seem to be part of the description of most of the artists whose works come together in this concert. Powell fits in well, though researcher and author can be added to the list. She also has the distinction of being the only composer featured twice on the program.

What could be more evocative of snow than a ***Sleigh Ride***? The chorus gets a chance to catch its breath while our amazing pianist **Thomas Pandolfi** entertains us with his arrangement of the toe-tapping tune by **Leroy Anderson**.

10 PROGRAM NOTES

The cover of the published edition of **Erev Shel Shoshanim** ("Evening of Roses") subtitles it "A Sensitive Portrait of the Israeli Desert...and Love" — but it is often referred to as an Israeli folksong. The lyrics by **Moshe Dor** are largely taken from the biblical "Song of Songs" and the original music to accompany them was composed in 1956 by **Josef Hadar**. **Jack Klebanow** later created a choral arrangement and piano accompaniment, and **Sara Kramer**, an Israeli living in the United States, has provided a new translation. (The publisher notes that the translation is not to be sung.)

This over-the-years and mostly not-in-person collaboration has provided us with both a lovely song and a wonderful example of how people working toward the same end — and that includes the conductor, the pianist, and the singers — can make the desert blossom like a rose.

We are only a few days before the winter solstice, so the earth will soon be turning toward spring. **Charles Bennett** (poet) and **Bob Chilcott** (composer) take us into the new year in their first glimpse of spring as embodied in a snowdrop. Commissioned to mark the 120th anniversary of the Glasgow Phoenix and Orpheus Choirs and published in 2021, **Opening** moves us forward at a not-quite-steady pace. Chilcott's rhythmic pattern of a bar (or sometimes two) of 7/8 time followed by one or more bars in 2/2 seems to want us thrown off balance just a little bit by the changes we see. We welcome the advancing year by greeting a blackbird, pause to remember what winter was like, and look to the future.

Bob Chilcott has enjoyed a lifelong association with choral music, first as a chorister and choral scholar in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, and for 12 years as a member of the King's Singers. He became a full-time composer in 1997 and has produced a large catalogue of music for all types of choirs. Charles Bennett is an award-winning poet, currently an Associate Professor of Poetry at the University of Northampton. Bennett and Chilcott frequently work together, and Bennett is developing a reputation as a librettist through his work with Chilcott.

11 PROGRAM NOTES

To emphasize the reminder of warmer days, the men of ACS are heard in ***Solidaridad***, one of **Rosephanye Powell's** *Three Spanish Songs for Men's Choir*. Each stanza of **Amado Nervo's** poem begins with the name of something in nature, followed by an exhortation to action. Powell has set this poem, with its anticipation of linguistic minimalism, for four-part men's voices, with some *divisi*, and piano accompaniment. The meter is a moderately fast 6/8, perfectly suited to the pattern of the text. Rhythm is one of Powell's trademarks, as this work demonstrates.

Nervo was one of the most important Mexican poets of the 19th century. Also an educator, journalist, novelist, and writer in other genres, his final career was as Mexican Ambassador to Argentina and Uruguay, where he was serving when he died. His poems have been set to music by Argentine and Mexican composers; we are happy to have an American added to the list.

Could a December concert really be complete without a little more Christmas music? **Laura Jēkabsonsone** didn't think so. The year 2018 marked the 100th anniversary of **Franz Xaver Gruber's** ***Silent Night***, and performances with the Latvian Voices ensemble led her to create a new arrangement. In her own words, "In complete silence, I realized that the first bars of this song was playing in my head, again and again, so I sat down at the piano and started to write it down. Arranging this popular Christmas melody, I deviate from the song's classical sound, dressing it in close harmony chords."

Jēkabsonsone is a Latvian composer, conductor, vocal coach, and singer. Born in 1985, she graduated from a Music High School in Riga and received her Bachelor's degree in Music Education from the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music in 2009. She has received many awards and prizes, and has led master classes all around the world. She is the assistant conductor and vocal coach of the youth choir Maskā, which regularly performs her works in competitions and concerts. In 2009, she and some friends formed the ensemble Latvian Voices, and in 2017 created the Latvian Voices A Cappella Festival.

12 PROGRAM NOTES

John Rutter introduces himself thus on his website: "Gender: male; Nationality: British; Status: married; Age: not important." He was on the staff when Oxford University Press published the 5-volume series of choral anthologies, *Carols for Choirs* (1961–1987). Later in life, Rutter collaborated with Sir David Willcocks to produce the well-known *100 Carols for Choirs*, some of which are Rutter's own, either original carols or arrangements. Over the years, carols from these books have often been heard in Alexandria Choral Society's holiday concerts.

The first program of our 2022–23 season in October featured Rutter's *Requiem*. Tonight's concert ends with Rutter in a completely different spirit, as ***We Wish You a Merry Christmas***.

Mimi Stevens

13 SINGERS

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Mandi Chapman
Sharon Collins
Dot Dannenberg
Jenna Dawkins *
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Jonathan Hung
James Martin
Alan Morris
Jeffrey Nickeson
Kevin Simpson *
Mimi Stevens
Troy Tanner

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Anne Buckborough *
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Kaitlin Costello
Alison Fitzgerald
Peggy Heiser
Heather Hurley
Marion Lange
Janie Lee
Jacqueline Morgan
Anne Simpson
K.C. Sykora
Stacy Tanner
Allison Wickens

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Zachary Byers *
Clifford Gay *
Sigfried Hache *
Joshua Heit
Terry Langendoen
David Pritzker *
Richard Simpson *
Ian Stout
Wallace B. Wason, Jr.

14 ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Founded in 1970, **Alexandria Choral Society** aspires to enhance the cultural life of the city of Alexandria by presenting diverse and engaging musical programs at the highest artistic level. Alexandria Choral Society ensembles consistently offer meaningful and exciting musical experiences to both singers and audiences through diverse repertoire, education, community outreach, and performance excellence.



Brian Fontaine-Isaac is honored to serve as the Artistic Director of the Alexandria Choral Society (Alexandria, Va.). He is also the Artistic Director of Encore Creativity for Older Adults (Annapolis, Md.), the nation's largest nonprofit choral arts organization for older adults, and the Founder/Artistic Director of Church Circle Singers (Annapolis, Md.).

Mr. Isaac was most recently the Managing Director for Arts Laureate, a recording team which delivered over 1,500 virtual performances across the country during the Covid-19 pandemic. Previous appointments include: Artistic Director of the Williamsburg Choral Guild (Williamsburg, Va.), music faculty at Encore University, Interim Director of Choral Music at Thomas Nelson Community College (Hampton, Va.), adjunct music faculty at Tidewater Community College (Portsmouth, Va.) and Old Dominion University (Norfolk, Va.), Assistant Conductor with the Washington Master Chorale (Washington, D.C.), and Director of Choirs at Damascus High School (Damascus, Md.).

Mr. Isaac's ensembles have commissioned and premiered new works by composers such as Tawnie Olson, Lori Laitman, Christopher Hoh, Jonathan Kolm, and Ola Gjeilo. Reviews include: "perfectly brilliant" (composer Dr. William Averitt, Shenandoah Conservatory) and having "fine balance" and "delivering sounds that ranged from sensitively soft to knock your socks off soaring" (*The Virginia Gazette*).

Mr. Isaac holds a Master of Music in music education from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University and a Bachelor of Music Education from Old Dominion University. A former Marine, Mr. Isaac also holds a Bachelor of Science in English from the United States Naval Academy.

15 ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Thomas Pandolfi began his music career early on at The Juilliard School (BM & MM) where the young prodigy caught the influential ears of Vladimir Horowitz, who would become his mentor, and legendary composer Morton Gould. Since then he has been an audience favorite, selling out the world's most prestigious stages, including Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Strathmore, The Kennedy Center, Kiev Opera House, Bucharest's Romanian Athenaeum, London's Cadogan Hall, and many others. In addition to being hailed as one of the greatest interpreters of Polish masters such as Chopin and Paderewski, this versatile pianist has received accolades from everything from Bach to Gershwin, with Morton Gould saying, "It's the finest performance of Gershwin I have heard since the composer himself." His original and virtuosic transcriptions of works such as *West Side Story* and *The Phantom of the Opera* are one-of-a-kind, jaw-dropping, and dramatic encores that keep audiences of all ages returning to his performances again and again. Maestro Pandolfi is a Steinway Artist and when he is not on tour resides in Northern Virginia.

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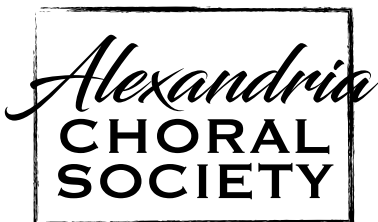
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