

*Alexandria*  
CHORAL  
SOCIETY

WINTER  
CATHEDRALS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2023 | 7PM  
ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

# 1 ABOUT ACS

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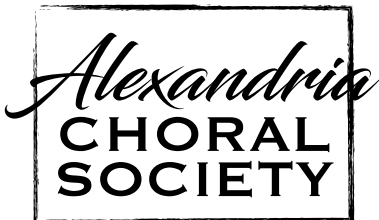
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# W I N T E R C A T H E D R A L S

**ALEXANDRIA CHORAL SOCIETY**

**KATHRYN HARSHA**

INTERIM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**JUSTIN STRELETZ**

PIANO & ORGAN

**SING WE NOW OF CHRISTMAS**

*(Noël Nouvelet)*

**ANONYMOUS**

arr. Craig Courtney (b. 1948)

Pro Coro Alexandria

**WHILE BY MY SHEEP      TRADITIONAL CAROL**

arr. Linda Spevacek-Avery (b. 1945)

**THE NIGHT HE WAS BORN**

**BOB CHILCOTT** (b. 1955)





## 5 PROGRAM

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### **EXSULTATE, JUBILATE**      **KARL JENKINS** (b. 1944)

Exsultate, jubilate,  
O vos animæ beatæ,  
exsultate, jubilate,  
dulcia cantica canendo;  
cantui vestro respondendo  
psallant æthera cum me.

Exult, be joyful,  
O you happy souls,  
exult, be joyful,  
in the singing of sweet songs;  
and in response to your song  
may the heavens sing psalms  
with me.

# INTERMISSION

### **RING OUT, YE BELLS!**

**MARQUES L.A. GARRETT** (b. 1984)

**SAMUEL CARLTON**

**DAN FORREST** (b. 1978)

### **GLOW**

**ERIC WHITACRE** (b. 1970)

### **ON THIS SILENT NIGHT**

**SARAH QUARTEL** (b. 1982)

### **SEASON OF LIGHT**

**JACOB NARVERUD** (b. 1986)

### **ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH**

**TRADITIONAL FRENCH**

arr. Matthew Culloton (b. 1976)

### **GESU BAMBINO**

**PIETRO A. YON** (1886–1943)

*(The Infant Jesus)*

### **GO, TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN**

**TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL**

arr. Lloyd Larson (b. 1954)



SATURDAY, MARCH 9  
CAPITAL ONE HALL, TYSONS

# REMEMBERING FAURÉ

WITH THE VIRGINIA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



SATURDAY, APRIL 20

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# TO THE SEA

PRO CORO ALEXANDRIA



SATURDAY, MAY 11

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# JUST AS I AM

MORE INFO AT  
[ALEXANDRIACHORALSOCIETY.ORG](http://ALEXANDRIACHORALSOCIETY.ORG)

## 7 PROGRAM NOTES

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Opening our concert is a familiar melody with a new sound, as Pro Coro Alexandria brings us **Craig Courtney's** arrangement of ***Sing We Now of Christmas***. The well-known tune is *Noël Nouvelet*, a 15<sup>th</sup>-century carol, but Courtney has given it a decidedly 21<sup>st</sup>-century flavor. He is a prolific composer and arranger, as well as an internationally-known pianist who began studying the instrument at the tender age of three. During his six years on the music faculty of the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, he served in the music ministry of the Salzburg International Baptist Church, and began composing sacred choral music. He later joined the staff of Beckenhorst Press, and became its staff composer and editor by the personal choice of its founder.

The second familiar carol, ***While By My Sheep***, moves us a little more toward the present, as it is based on a 17<sup>th</sup>-century German carol which was arranged as a hymn in the late 1800s by Hugo Jüngst and is now heard in a concert arrangement by **Linda Spevacek-Avery**. The traditional German text, presumably anonymous, was translated by Theodore Baker. The work was first published in 1986, when Linda Spevacek-Avery was about half her present age. She is another amazingly prolific composer, who is on record as having sold over seven million copies of over 700 published works, described as “dynamic, inspiring, creative, and expressive...” All four of these adjectives seem abundantly appropriate.

***The Night He Was Born*** is a carol of 21<sup>st</sup>-century origin. The text is by an important British poet and novelist, Helen Dunmore. Her final poetry collection *Inside the Wave*, published in April 2017 shortly before her death, posthumously won the Poetry and overall Book of the Year awards in the 2017 Costa Book Awards. By now, repeat ACS audience members should start to recognize the name of composer **Bob Chilcott**, whose work has been included in two recent concerts. He 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



## 8 PROGRAM NOTES

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full-time composer in 1997, and has produced a large catalog of music for all types of choirs. This particular carol is unusual in that the characters in the story it tells are not referred to by name, but there is never any doubt as to their identities and the locations of the story.

German composer **Franz Biebl** provides our concert with some “Can you believe this?” moments as we review the history of his best-known composition, at least by American audiences. ***Ave Maria (Angelus Domini)*** is a motet originally written using Latin text from — you guessed it — the Ave Maria and the Angelus Domini. The double male choir version was written for a firemen’s chorus to sing in a competition, but languished because German men’s choruses seldom performed religious music. The Cornell University Glee Club met Biebl while touring Europe, and took the song back to the U.S., where it was picked up and recorded by Chanticleer. Biebl himself arranged the work for what seems like every conceivable combination of voices, and it has become a familiar part of the Christmas repertoire. A final tidbit: in 2009–10 a version for wind ensemble — no text — was a cause for litigation, claiming that it could not be used at a high school graduation because of its underlying religious nature. Want to learn more? [Check the Wikipedia entry here.](#)

Norwegian composer **Kim André Arnesen’s *Cradle Hymn*** uses a text by the great 18<sup>th</sup>-century hymnodist Isaac Watts. Watts was known for his metric version of Biblical texts, suitable to be used as hymns. However, the words here set by Arnesen appear to be an original poem, a lullaby using the Christmas story to urge a sleepy child to be a faithful believer. Born in 1980, Arnesen was educated at the Music Conservatory in Trondheim, and his music was first performed in 1999 by the Nidaros Cathedral Boys’ Choir. The first performance of the SSAA version of his *Even When He Is Silent*, which was sung in 2022 by the women of ACS, took place there on July 30, 2011. *Cradle Hymn* is one of many examples of Arnesen’s sensitivity to the thoughts and emotions that are brought forth by the

## 9 PROGRAM NOTES

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lyrics he has chosen.

The next selection lets us do a bit of time travel to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to hear a song by a writer, songwriter, and hymnodist, **James R. Murray**, who also was the editor of twelve hymnals. It is more difficult to name the piece, specifically to know how many times the word "Merry" should appear in the title. It was included in a song book with the title **Merry Christmas Bells**, but on the Hymnody.org website listing of Murray's works ("100 texts, 300 tunes"), the title, like the lyric, repeats the word "Merry" four times. A merry refrain alternates with verses extolling peace, music, mirth, and joy in the Christmas season.

The festivities this time of year are not limited to Christmas; **Betty Bertaux** has given us a delightful arrangement of a traditional Hebrew song for Hanukkah. She describes it as "...a very joyous holiday," celebrating the resanctification of the Temple of Solomon. The story of the miraculous Eternal Flame which burned for eight days when there was only enough oil for one day has become well-known as part of the holiday season. Her description of the song: "The song **S'vivon** depicts the Hanukkah *dreydl*, a small top with four sides. Each side of the *dreydl* contains one of the four Hebrew initials of the phrase, '(A) Great Miracle Happened There.' The *dreydl* is used in games of chance by young and old alike during the Hanukkah festivities." Betty Bertaux was the founder/director of the Children's Chorus of Maryland.

**Sir Karl Jenkins** has perhaps the most extravagant biography of any composer in our program. Raised in Wales, he studied music at Cardiff University and the Royal College of Music in London. Holding a Doctor of Music degree, he has received many awards and honors, including a knighthood at Queen Elizabeth's 2015 Birthday Honors List. It has been said that, "As a composer he recognizes no boundaries — musical, commercial, geographical, or cultural. His is a way of thinking and composing that is perfectly in tune with the spirit of the times."

## 10 PROGRAM NOTES

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Minimalism is “a form of art music or other compositional practice that employs limited or minimal musical materials. Prominent features of minimalist music include repetitive patterns or pulses, steady drones, consonant harmony, and reiteration of musical phrases or smaller units.” Jenkins’ motet, ***Exsultate, Jubilate***, embodies most of these features — listen for them, and see if you agree.

***Ring Out, Ye Bells!*** has the distinction of having the most composers of any piece on the program. Written for the Florida State University Season Celebration 2017, the text is by Paul Laurence Dunbar, one of the first influential Black American poets. The three composers are **Marques L.A. Garrett, Samuel Carlton, and Dan Forrest**. Garrett and Carlton are both alumni of Florida State University, Garrett with a PhD in Music Education (Choral Conducting) and Carlton with a Bachelor of Music in theory and composition and a Master of Music in Conducting. Dan Forrest is known for his major works for large ensembles, including *Lux: The Dawn From On High*, which was a featured work in ACS’s 2021–22 season.

**Eric Whitacre** has become world famous for his pioneering work in creating the Virtual Choir, which was conceived years before it became perhaps the only way choral music could continue to exist during the pandemic. Originally conceived as an experiment in social media and digital technology, it involves individual singers who each record a voice part; the recordings are then processed into a choral whole. The first Virtual Choir recording was published in 2010 with 185 singers from 12 countries. Today more than 100,000 singers from more than 145 countries have participated in the Virtual Choir recordings. ***Glow*** was composed for Disney’s “World of Color Winter Dreams” event and premiered in Disneyland Adventure Park in December 2013. As with several of Whitacre’s other Virtual Choir works, the words are by the elusive poet Edward Esch. Both words and music seem to tell us that while the snow falls, the light rises.

**Sarah Quartel** is a Canadian composer and educator known for her fresh and exciting approach to choral music.

## 11 PROGRAM NOTES

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She celebrates the musical potential of all learners by providing singers access to high quality repertoire and engaging music education. She has said that singing in choirs was her best preparation for becoming a composer. After college, she taught elementary school music while composing on the side. But after a few years the number of commissions she was receiving started interfering with her teaching and she became a full-time composer. She had been a singer-songwriter in her younger days, and she still often writes her own lyrics. Her poetry for ***On This Silent Night*** is translated into sounds reminding us of winter's magic, how we feel the fire's warmth, and sleep while the storm blows outside.

***Season of Light*** follows the same theme of the season's magical quality in the words and music of **Jacob Narverud**. The "notes from the composer" tell us: "I wrote *Season of Light* ... to invoke the feeling of a simple, old-fashioned holiday carol or hymn. ...[It] invites all people to bring to mind thoughts and remembrances of the season and to reflect on this meaningful time of year." His instruction to the singers is to make the first verse "Warm & inviting" and begins the second verse with, simply, "Joyful." Narverud is a native of Meriden, Kansas, and began his musical education studying vocal performance. He holds a master's degree in Conducting from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and is currently a doctoral student there.

**Matthew Culloton** has made his name more as an arranger and performer than as a composer, but his truly unique setting of the traditional French carol ***Angels We Have Heard On High*** goes beyond arrangement. A repeated "Gloria" motif that is not part of the original carol sets the rhythmic pattern of the piece, and near the end an interloper carol sneaks in for a couple of lines. Much of Culloton's 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 (B.M. in Music Education) and the University of Minnesota (M.M. in



## 12 PROGRAM NOTES

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Choral Conducting, D.M.A. in Conducting).

In 1907, a 21-year-old virtuoso immigrated to the United States to take the position of organist in Manhattan's St. Francis Xavier Church. Ten years later, **Pietro A. Yon** gave his adopted country — and the world — one of the most glorious Christmas songs of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. **Gesù Bambino** (*The Infant Jesus*) was originally written with Italian lyrics, and is the most widely known work by this prolific composer. Later provided with the English version which is best known today, by poet, writer, translator, and librettist Frederick H. Martens, *Gesù Bambino* takes as its refrain the words from the carol *Adeste Fidelis*: "O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord."

**Go, Tell It On the Mountain** is a traditional spiritual which has gained popularity as a Christmas classic, and has been arranged in many styles over the years. This arrangement, by **Lloyd Larson** in a light swing style, has the melody for the verses sung by sopranos, with the rest of the choir providing harmonic background. The bass and tenor voices provide a rhythmic counterpoint to the traditional refrain, and emphasize that this good news needs to be told — "over the hills and everywhere!" Larson was formerly the Associate Pastor for Music and Worship at Meadow Park Church in Columbus, Ohio. An ordained minister as well as a widely-published composer, he now resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

*Mimi Stevens*

# ALEXANDRIA CHORAL SOCIETY

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\* section leader

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## 14 ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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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.

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Interim Artistic Director **Kathryn Harsha** holds a Master of Music in Conducting from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a Bachelor of Arts in Piano Performance from Bluffton University. While studying at the Sorbonne in Paris, she served as Assistant Conductor of the Chorale des Étudiants Etrangères and studied conducting at the Messiaen Conservatoire in Saint-Maurice, France.

Ms. Harsha served as Music Director of the Lakeland Civic Orchestra for eight seasons and Opera per Tutti, now the Cleveland Opera Theater. Kathryn has been the Music Director of the Sing Out! for Cleveland Rape Crisis Center Benefit since 2002, where the Visionary Voice award was named in her honor in 2018. These concerts have raised millions of dollars for the center, transforming its work and scope.

For the last four seasons, Kathryn served the Peabody Children's Chorus in various capacities, beginning as Assistant Director and Accompanist, and later adding on the role of Chorus Manager. Prior to her work at Peabody, she was on the faculty at the Opus Community Music School, and served as Executive Director for five years, overseeing a significant transformation of the organization and expansion of musical opportunities for all ages.

She has conducted choruses and orchestras across the U.S. and abroad, with notable performances in France, Italy, Austria, and Germany, recently conducting in Severance Hall and at the Kennedy Center. She currently conducts ensembles for Encore Creativity in Silver Spring, Rockville, and Annapolis.

Kathryn is honored to serve as the Artistic Director of the Alexandria Choral Society for its 54<sup>th</sup> season.

## 15 ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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**Justin Streletz** is a local collaborative pianist, music director, and elementary music teacher. He studied piano at West Chester University with Dr. Patricia Powell. Upcoming projects include conducting *Tuck Everlasting* and music directing *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.



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- Jun 7-8 Summer Pops Concert

### WORKSHOPS

- Oct 21 "Sing for Your Life!" - Free
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- Jan 16 Guest Night & Open Auditions
- Jan 23 Guest Night & Open Auditions

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- **To Thee All Angels Cry Aloud**  
Symphonic Chorus  
Sunday, October 22, 2023 – 4:00 pm  
St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church, Clifton, VA
- **Silent Auction Fundraiser**  
Sunday, November 12, 2023 – 5:00 pm  
Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, Fairfax, VA
- **Nowell! Sing Nowell!**  
Youth Choruses  
Tuesday, December 5, 2023 – 7:00 pm  
Annandale United Methodist Church, Annandale, VA
- **Light, Love, and Peace**  
Symphonic Chorus, Vocal Arts Ensemble,  
Master Singers, and Concert Choir  
Sunday, December 10, 2023 – 7:00 pm  
Capital One Hall, Tysons, VA
- **Christmas in Fairfax**  
Symphonic Chorus and Vocal Arts Ensemble  
with the City of Fairfax Band  
Saturday, December 16, 2023 – 7:00 pm  
Fairfax High School Auditorium, Fairfax, VA
- **The Earth, The Air, The Deep: Songs of Nature and Life**  
Vocal Arts Ensemble  
Sunday, March 10, 2024 – 4:30 pm  
Annandale United Methodist Church, Annandale, VA
- **May the Road Rise to Meet You: Songs of the British Isles**  
Symphonic Chorus  
Sunday, March 17, 2024 – 4:00 pm  
Providence Presbyterian Church, Fairfax, VA
- **Poetry of Music**  
Youth Choruses  
Tuesday, March 19, 2024 – 7:00 pm  
Annandale United Methodist Church, Annandale, VA
- **Spring Follies!**  
Youth Choruses  
Friday, May 17, 2024 – 7:00 pm  
Richard J. Ernst Community Cultural Center, Annandale, VA
- **Homeland**  
United States Navy Sea Chanters and  
Symphonic Chorus  
Sunday, May 19, 2024 – 4:00 pm  
Providence Presbyterian Church, Fairfax, VA
- **VAE on Broadway**  
Vocal Arts Ensemble  
Sunday, June 2, 2024 – 4:30 pm  
Annandale United Methodist Church, Annandale, VA





Recommended by  
The Washington Post

2023 / 2024

OCTOBER 22

DECEMBER 10

MARCH 3

**I, TOO, SING AMERICA**  
*Church of the Epiphany*

Celebrate contributions by contemporary Black American composers to the choral music canon, featuring music by Mason Byner, Ronald Walton, Marcea McGuire, and Adolphus Hailstork.

**SWEET WAS THE SONG**  
*St Ann's Catholic Church*

Join us for a treasured holiday tradition of seasonal choral music featuring rarely heard old English and American carols, along with holiday favorites and audience caroling.

**A BEL CANTO SALON**  
*National Presbyterian Church*

Two Steinways grace the stage to celebrate this beloved operatic style with works by Rossini, Brahms, and Liebeslieder. With contemporary work by Lori Latiman on texts from the suffragist movement.

# Amadeus Concerts

Concerts include a preview "prep talk" at 3:15 PM and a post-concert reception with the artists.

Tickets available at the door for \$45; youth and active-duty military admitted free of charge.



Join Us in the New Year!

**Cooperstown String Quartet**

Sunday, February 18, 2024 at 4 pm, Great Falls Grange, Great Falls, VA

**Benefit Concert & Auction**

Saturday, March 9, 2024 at 3 PM, St. Francis Episcopal Church, Great Falls, VA

**Baumgarten Trio**

Sunday, April 14, 2024 at 4 pm, St. Francis Episcopal Church, Great Falls, VA

**Amadeus Strings**

Sunday, May 12, 2024 at 4 pm, St. Francis Episcopal Church, Great Falls, VA

A. Scott Wood, conductor

[www.amadeusconcerts.com](http://www.amadeusconcerts.com) • 703.759.5334