



Her Time:

Between Darkness and Light

September 28

Sunday • 3pm

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower



SAN ANTONIO
CHAMBER CHOIR



Her Time: Between Darkness and Light

FEATURING

Richard Bjella, Artistic Director
Geoffrey Waite, Collaborative Pianist
with
Ertan Torgul, violin; David Mollenauer, cello
Paul Millette, percussion

Featuring Guest Choir

Alegría
Women's Chorus of San Antonio
Jo Scurlock-Dillard, Artistic Director

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2025 • 3:00PM

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower

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*Through exquisite music and innovative programming, the San Antonio Chamber Choir
elevates the spirit, enlightens the mind, and nurtures the soul.*

PROGRAM

Between Darkness and Light (Arabic)

Jennifer Root

Daphna Rosenberg
(b. 1967)

I

Vieille prière bouddhique (Old Buddhist Prayer)

Let every creature, all things living, without a foe, without hindrance, pain,
and sorrow transcend, and at last attain peace and joy.

Lili Boulanger
(1893–1918)

Graveside

Kim D. Sherman

Tropar an die Heilige Mutter Gotten

Lydia Beasley

Holy Mother of God, listen for our prayers, protect us.
With your mighty hand, help us to defeat the enemy that has attacked us.

Hanna Havrylets
(1958–2022)

Promised Land

Gabriel Treviño and Matthew Hume

Matilda Durham arr. Jennifer Lucy Cook
(1815–1901)

II

Between Darkness and Light (Hebrew)

Cassidy Wallace

Rosenberg

Byrd Transubstantiated

Heather Cole and Gregory Hilliard

Shruthi Rajasekar
(b. 1996)

Hail, true body born of the Virgin Mary, having truly suffered, sacrificed on the cross for mankind, have mercy on me.
O sweet, O Holy, O Jesus, son of Mary.

We Grow Accustomed to the Dark *

Bronwyn White

Lauma Kazaka
(b. 1988)

III

Refugee

Maira Smiley
(b. 1976)

Fire

Lydia Beasley, Valerie Jeannin, Antonia Rahe, Matthew Hume, and Gregory Hilliard

Lucis Birzer
(b. 1995)

PROGRAM

IV

Lao Rahal Soti
Jennifer Root and Michael Zuniga

Samih Choukeir arr. Shireen Abu-Khader

If my voice departs, your throat will not. I look unto tomorrow and my heart is with you.
If the singer goes, the song will remain, bringing together the broken and suffering hearts.

Dance of Zalongo

arr. Carol Barnett
(b. 1949)

Refrain: Farewell, springs, forests, mountains, and hills.

Verses: Farewell, unfortunate world, farewell sweet life, and you, destitute homeland, farewell forever.
The women of Souli haven't learned only how to live; they also know how to die, rather than consent to slavery. As
if to a fair, to see the lilac blossoms, into the abyss they go down, with songs, with joy. Fish do not live on land, nor
flowers on the sandy beach; so the women of Souli do not live without freedom.

Intermission

Lumen

Abbie Betinis
(b. 1980)

Receive the light and pass it on. I give that you may give.

V

As You Sing

Sarah Quartel
(b. 1982)

Psalm 23

Dede Duson
(b. 1938)

I Thank You God

Gwyneth Walker
(b. 1947)

Nickel Medrano, collaborative accompanist

Alegría
Women's Chorus of San Antonio
Jo Scurlock-Dillard, Artistic Director

VI

Alleluia, Gloria in Excelsis

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel
(1805–47)

Natalie Baker

Alleluia, glory in the highest, and I will praise the Lord.

Laus Trinitati

Hildegard von Bingen, arr. Felicia Sandler
(1098–1179)

Lindsey Johnson

Praise to the Trinity, which is sound and life. Creator of all that is, all that has life within it;
and which is the praise of the angelic throng, and the marvelous, mysterious splendor, that
humankind cannot understand; and which is in all that is alive.

PROGRAM

Juravit Dominus (movement IV from Dixit Dominus)

Marianna von Martines
(1744–1812)

The Lord hath sworn and will not change His mind.
Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

VII

O Oriens

Cecilia McDowall
(b. 1951)

O morning star, splendour of light eternal, and sun of righteousness: Come
and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

When the violin

Reena Esmail
(b. 1983)

Lindsey Johnson, Crystal Jarrell Johnson, Jennifer Root, and Michael Zuniga

Between Darkness and Light (with audience)

VIII

His Eye is on the Sparrow

arr. Zanaida Stewart-Robles

Cassidy Wallace, Crystal Jarrell Johnson, and Gregory Hilliard

The Storm Is Passing Over

arr. Barbara Baker

*World Premiere

PROGRAM NOTES

The song, *From Darkness into Light*, came into being in 2016 for an Israeli-Palestinian gathering in Nazareth. The celebration would commemorate the Israeli Day of Independence and the Palestinian Nakba. Manal Hreib wrote the lyrics in Hebrew and Arabic, while the singer-songwriter Daphna Rosenberg spontaneously created the music and translated it into English.

Child prodigy Lili Boulanger, the first female winner of the *Grand Prix de Rome* composition prize, was the younger sister of Nadia, the most renowned teacher in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, Lili's brilliant career was cut short by tuberculosis when she was only 24 years old. *In Vielle Priere Bouddhique, an Old Buddhist Prayer for the Whole Universe*, is simple, direct, and often in octaves. Boulanger's modal melody speaks to the difficulty of achieving 'peace and joy'.

Kim D. Sherman is a British-born composer who resides in New York City. Her setting of *Graveside*, part of a Ritual Oratorio work for the dead in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The horrific Bosnian war from 1992 to 1995 had over 100,000 deaths, and as many as 50,000 rapes. The heavy wordless moaning is interrupted by three declamations of the words "All war moves on mother's flesh."

Ukrainian composer Hanna Havreylet, wrote a poignant opening to *Tropar an die Heilige Mutter Gottes*, which consists of four repetitions of the haunting tune in the soprano, accompanied by simple harmonization in the divisi lower voices, expressing the deep desire for the 'Holy Mother of God to hear our prayers'.

Promised Land is by Matilda Durham. She may be the first woman composer to publish music in the United States. Her revival hymn first appeared in *Southern Harmony*, 1835. The rugged, rhythmic style is characteristic of the shaped-note Hymnody.

Between *Darkness and Light*, is now sung by the audience in English, "Wherever I go I will open the window of light and plant the seeds of love", then repeated with a declamatory verse by the choirs.

Shruthi Rajasekar's *Byrd Transubstantiated* pays homage to a masterwork in the choral canon, William Byrd's *Ave verum corpus*. She quotes Byrd's motet continually in her piece. In her prefatory note, she emphasizes "the courage of the composer and the strength of his spiritual conviction" in writing Catholic music during a time of the supreme power of the Anglican church. The audience participation called for by Rajasekar is simple but should be sung with great conviction.

Our world premiere selection features Emily Dickinson's poem *We Grow Accustomed to the Darkness*, by the young, gifted Latvian composer, Lauma Kazaka. Her dynamic palette ranges widely and often suddenly to capture each poetic phrase led by our soprano soloist..

Composer Moira Smiley remembers her time in 2016 volunteering at a refugee camp in the French Calais jungle. Her experience is caught musically in her setting of *Refugee*. Using incessant percussion and highly syncopated rhythms, she captures viscerally the plea of the refugees. She builds to the realization with newfound empathy, "I am only what you are."

Lucia Birzer's score for the Emily Dickinson short poem titled *Fire*, is notable for the number of asterisks accompanying the music. That phenomenon indicates that this modern piece requires many effects that are beyond the conventions of our traditional notation. Though the composer uses all the pitches, rhythms, dynamics and expressive markings that are in common usage, some effects just require a few more special explanations.

Lao Rahal Soti was composed by Samih Choukeir and arranged by Shireen Abu-Khader. The English translation of the title reads "If my voice departs, your voices will not." This gains special significance for the arranger. She is a Palestinian, Jordanian musician who believes that "all those who have been silenced continue to resonate in our music." The setting requires a free, rubato tempo and singing with ornamentation in an improvisatory style.

Dance of Zálongo is a Greek folk song arranged by Carol Barnett. It recalls a heroic action by the women of the village of Souli, who danced to the edge of the nearby Zálongo canyon and one by one leapt to their death rather than be captured by the enemy. The arranger sets the piece in an infectious asymmetrical 7/8 meter, while percussion and strings add a dancelike feel. SACC members welcome the women of Alegría to join them for this exciting arrangement.

Abbie Bertinis is an American composer living in St. Paul, Minnesota. She uses a Latin aphorism for the text of her simple chant and canon: "*Lumen accipe et imperti. Do ut des,*" (I give that you may give, as the light is passed): This motto is used

PROGRAM NOTES

by many schools as a teaching lesson. The composer concludes, “I also imagined the light growing and growing each time it passes. The music starts with small intervals and gradually expands to larger leaps and longer scales.”

Sarah Quartel is one of Canada’s most internationally celebrated and widely performed living choral composers. Known for her fresh, exciting, and chorister-centred approach to music making, Sarah writes in a way that connects singer to singer, ensemble to conductor, and performer to audience. *As You Sing* is a fast and energetic piece that sets a text celebrating the joy of singing. The melody weaves in and out of the texture, supported by dynamic vocal accompaniment and rhythmically driven forward by the hand drum.

Dede Duson is a native Texan who is now in retirement after a long career of serving as a collaborative accompanist for various musical groups in addition to her composing responsibilities. *Psalms 23* is composed using a modern translation of the beloved and tender text found in the Hebrew Bible’s Book of Psalms.

Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer Gwyneth Walker is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. The text is adapted from the e.e. Cummings poem “i thank you God for most this amazing day.” This is a song of praise that uses the broad range of the keyboard with elegant vocal expression.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel was a woman who entered the world of composition at a time when it was still socially frowned upon. Many of her compositions were ignored during her lifetime. Her *Alleluia, Gloria in excelsis* is the final movement of a larger work, in praise of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music.

Hildegard von Bingen is one of the earliest female composers known today. Felicia Sandler, arranger of Hildegard’s *Laus Trinitas*, finds that her earlier counterpart is a “kindred spirit for our times. Her imagery is vibrant and green, and her understanding of God is expansive.”

Juravit Dominus is movement IV of *Dixit Dominus* by Marianna Martines. Having lived in the 18th century, she was well-versed in the conventions of the Viennese Classical style exemplified by Haydn and Mozart. The piece features a formal fugue written in 4/2 meter, a nod towards its earlier models.

MacDowell’s setting of *O Oriens* perfectly expresses the vastness of ‘light eternal’ through her brilliant harmonic shadings and increasingly rising rhythmic and harmonic tension, climaxing just nine measures before the end.

When the violin, written by Indian-American composer Reena Esmail, creates an interplay between the cello (substituting for the violin) and voices. The cello is given solo lines to be played freely and that float between the singer’s contour. The poet Hafiz, expresses that people need to love, because love is the soul’s life, love is simply creation’s greatest joy. The final sounds of the sopranos coupled with the harmonics in the cello express this eternal ecstasy.

The concert theme, *Between Darkness and Light*, receives one more reprise in English with the audience. It is accompanied here by piano, suspended cymbal, and pizzicato playing by cello and violin.

His Eye Is On the Sparrow was composed by Temperance composer Charles Gabriel and arranged by Zeaida Stewart Robles. The piece begins with the bass section singing the tune accompanied by beautiful, rich divisi chords in the women. The following homophonic verse climaxes at “Jesus is my portion, a constant friend is he.” The startling modulation up a half-step leads to the ending repetition, many times repeating “And I know he watches me.” Poetry was written by Civilla Martin and composed by Charles Gabriel in 1905.

The Storm Is Passing Over is a traditional Black Gospel song written by Charles Albert Tinsley and arranged by Barbara Baker. The arranger provides each verse with meticulous interpretive markings, e.g., a variety of accents, tenuto, staccato, etc. She writes a powerful ending “special chorus” on the word “Hallelujah.” That ending is given five repetitions in building to a foot-stomping, hand-clapping conclusion.

– Program notes by John Silantien, with assistance from Rick Bjella and Roland Barrera

SAN ANTONIO CHAMBER CHOIR

Richard Bjella, Artistic Director
Roland Barrera, Executive Director

SOPRANO 1

Lydia Beasley
Lindsey Johnson
Bronwyn White

ALTO1

Courtney Bopp
Kelly Leary
Cassidy Wallace

TENOR 1

Mary Cowart
Gregory Hilliard
Alexander Montalvo

BARITONE

Andrew McNair
Chaz Nailor
Matthew Hume

SOPRANO 2

Natalie Baker
Heather Cole
Antonia Rahe

ALTO2

Crystal Jarrell-Johnson
Valerie Jeannin
Jennifer Root

TENOR 2

Klint Fabian
Gabriel Treviño
Sean Osman

BASS

Bill Gokelman
Colin Powell
Michael Zuniga

ALEGRÍA WOMEN'S CHORUS OF SAN ANTONIO

Alegría Women's Chorus of San Antonio (Jo Scurlock-Dillard, Artistic Director) is dedicated to the enrichment of San Antonio and its surrounding communities through artistic and educational performances of high-quality choral literature. Their vision is to expand the visibility of treble music by preserving and honoring the rich literature composed for female voices. They aim to discover and illuminate the beauty of women's choral music, setting a high standard of excellence that challenges and inspires. Their commitment is to encourage involvement, appreciation and support of this unique genre of music, fostering a vibrant community that celebrates and sustains its legacy.

SOPRANO 1

Tiffanie Clausewitz
Samantha Oliver
Valerie Rocha
Brittnee Simone
Becky Westlund
Kate Widdowson
Lyndsea Woodhall
Kinsey Ness

SOPRANO 2

Patricia Balmer
Carolyn Cruse
Emily Jodon
Mariana Lopez-Levi
Francheska Lugo
Hannah Marks
Jaclyn Rivera-Bowers
Joanna Thomasson
Victoria Reyna Varville
Bonnie Wolfe
Bridget Perez

ALTO1

Molly Bruni
Beth Hernandez
Amanda Jeffries-Hardy
Kealy Martinez
Kathy Mayer
Leslie Paleo
Ashley Pollack
Jennifer West
Sophie Anderson
Milena Sousa

ALTO2

Christie Brown
Mary Cowart
Laura Shook
Sara Trammell
Katie Vanderpot
Libby Wardlaw
Courtney Bopp
Olivia Wehrung

BIOGRAPHIES

Richard Bjella

Richard Bjella has distinguished himself as an internationally acclaimed conductor, clinician, choral pedagogue, and choral arranger. In 2014, Bjella was appointed Artistic Director of the San Antonio Chamber Choir. He retired from Texas Tech University in 2017, but previous to his work in Lubbock, Bjella served 25 years as Director of Choral Studies at the Lawrence Conservatory of Music. Choirs under his leadership have performed on numerous occasions for the American Choral Directors Association and the Texas Music Educators Association. Bjella has presented countless workshops at several prestigious international and national professional organizations as well as serving as the TMEA All-State Large School Mixed Choir Conductor at the 2025 conference in San Antonio.

He is the editor for the Richard Bjella Choral Series with Hal Leonard Publications and has presented sessions on programming for teachers and graduate students in over 30 universities in the last five years. He served as Guest Professor at Carthage College (2021) and at the University of Madison (2023-24). Bjella was the recipient of the Professor of Excellence Award at Texas Tech and the Lawrence University Teaching Award. He was also honored to receive lifetime awards of achievement from the Wisconsin Choral Directors.

Jo Scurlock-Dillard

Jo received a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master of Arts in 1975 from Stephen F. Austin State University. She taught Choral Music and Theatre for 35 years before retiring from the classroom. Jo is a Past President of the Texas Music Educators Association, and also served two years as the Vice President in charge of the Vocal Division. She has served in many Music Advisory Committees: UIL Sightreading Committee, UIL Prescribed Music List Committee, Chair of the SWACDA Repertoire and Standards Committee for Women's Choirs, Chair of the TCDA Ways and Means Committee, and the UIL Music Advisory.

In 2000, Jo was named the recipient of the Southwestern Bell UIL Sponsor of the Year for her work with students in choir. She was also named as SFASU's Music Alumnus of the Year. In 2011, she was awarded TCDA's Choral Excellence Award. Choirs under Jo's direction have been chosen to perform for the TMEA, SWACDA, and ACDA conventions. In 2022, Jo was named the Texas Choral Directors Association's "Choir Master of the Year." Jo continues to be active as a Choral conductor, advocate, clinician, and consultant.

Geoffrey Waite

Geoffrey Waite, keyboard artist, hails from the Northeast, but has enjoyed living in San Antonio for three decades now. He holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in organ performance from Westminster College in PA and Syracuse University, and recently retired from a 40 year career as a full-time church musician, having served as Organist and Director of Music for Laurel Heights United Methodist Church in San Antonio for the last 15 of those years.

He is very much sought after as a collaborative pianist, music director, and coach, and has served as the principal accompanist for the San Antonio Mastersingers and the San Antonio Choral Society. He has also performed with the San Antonio Symphony, the Youth Orchestra of San Antonio, the Children's Chorus of San Antonio, and with numerous other performing ensembles and recitalists throughout the region. Geoffrey is also an award-winning conductor and music director on the San Antonio musical theater scene, and loves playing jazz.

Ertan Torgul

Turkish-American violinist Ertan Torgul is a recitalist, chamber musician, soloist, concertmaster, and teacher. Mr. Torgul is also a founding member of SOLI Chamber Ensemble and serves as its Managing/Artistic Director. He also serves as a Lecturer of Violin & Chamber Music at University of California, Santa Barbara, and Affiliate Artist in violin at University of Houston.

David Mollenauer

David Mollenauer is a founding member of SOLI, he also serves as the Assistant Principal Cello of the San Antonio Philharmonic, and currently teaches cello at Trinity University.

Paul Millette

Paul Millette currently serves as a lecturer in percussion at the University of Texas at San Antonio and has enjoyed a career as a performer, educator, and composer throughout the United States.

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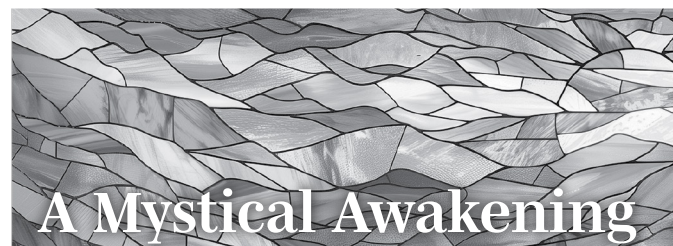
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20**

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U.I.W. Diane Bennack Concert Hall

Saturday, December 20, 2025 | 7:30pm

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**18
APR**

**19
APR**

Saturday, April 18, 2026 | 7:30pm

Sunday, April 19, 2026 | 3pm *Venue
locations still to be determined*

Between Darkness and Light

Daphna Rosenberg

♩ = 10

Voice

Cm F A flat Gm Cm B flat

Be-tween dark-ness and light I will

7 Cm Gm A flat B flat G A flat

al - ways walk and where - ev - er I will go, I will o - pen the

14 E flat G7 Cm A flat B flat G7

win-dow, the win-dow of light, and will plant the seeds of love. I will

21 A flat E flat G G7 Cm A flat Cm

o - pen the win-dow, the win-dow of light, and will plant the seeds of love.