



20th annual Voices in Peace concert

WE RISE!

SONGS OF OVERCOMING



Inspiring confidence, hope, healing, and kindness

Saturday, December 3, 2022 • 8:00 pm

St. Perpetua Catholic Church
3454 Hamlin Road, Lafayette

Sunday, December 4, 2022 • 4:00 pm

St. Mary Magdalen Church
2005 Berryman Street, Berkeley

Mitchell Covington, Artistic Director

Matt Bourne, Accompanist

About Today's Program

Dear Friends,

This season marks Voci's 20th Voices in Peace concert, a cherished tradition since 2001 that started in response to the events of 9/11, which continues to deepen in relevancy each year. Tonight, Voci offers you *We Rise! Songs of Overcoming*, a watershed concert that explores the themes of courage, hope, healing, acceptance, confidence, resilience, redemption, and kindness.

Carefully curated over a period of two years, these songs form a diverse, but unified program that is intended to be a reassuring and enduring balm in these troubled times. Something we all could use right about now.

We Rise! showcases a wide variety of modern choral styles, including an African-American spiritual ("Now Let Me Fly"); a contemplative setting of Bengali poetry ("Peace My Heart"); an intimate, *a cappella* rendition of Paul McCartney's iconic "Blackbird"; and a work inspired by the music of Canadian native peoples ("Truth").

Every performer and audience member brings their own human story to a concert like this. We have all experienced disappointment, separation, loss, and fear in varying degrees. Tonight, we respond with hope, joy, redemption, reconciliation, and love.

All of us with Voci hope that you feel comfortable bringing your whole self to this concert, and that you experience these words and music in your unique way as part of your own path – musically and emotionally.

Working with this music since early September has brought Voci so much joy, healing, and hope. It has brought us closer together as an ensemble and as a community.

It's our hope that this music will have a similar effect on you, and that you'll leave this room feeling better about yourself and the world we share together.

Thank you so much for being here today to share *We Rise! Songs of Overcoming* with Voci.

In Friendship,
Mitchell Covington, Artistic Director

Voci dedicates this concert in solidarity with the brave people of Ukraine, the courageous women and men of Iran, and all others around the world who are fighting for freedom, equality, and human dignity.

Program

Lorica

Joan Szymko

Text attributed to St. Patrick

Flute: Susanne Rublein

I arise today through the strength of Heaven.
Light of Sun, radiance of Moon, splendor of Fire,
Speed of Lightning swiftness of Wind;
Depth of Sea, Stability of Earth, Firmness of Rock.

Truth

Andrea Ramsey

Text by Gardenia Bruce

Djembe: Jon Weiner

My roots are earth,
Muddy river and honeysuckle;
Sturdy and rigid, like farmhouse planks.
I shared a sisterhood with the amber
grasses.
My dreams climbed endlessly like the
kudzu in July.
I shared a sisterhood with the amber
grasses.
My dreams climbed endlessly, no fear in
sight.
In nature, in naive youth,
All the forest was possible;
All the pasture was my own.
My mother told me I was beautiful,
And I believed her then.
Why shouldn't I?

There is no doubt in a pond.
Insecurity does not grow in a meadow.
It will not sprout beneath the Southern
pines.
It is planted by the boys on the school
bus;
Tended by the words of small minds.
And words may wound you,
But are they true?
You are beautiful.
You are enough.
You must believe in that, believe the
truth.
My roots are earth,
Muddy river and honeysuckle.
My roots are beautiful.
My roots are strong.

Now Let Me Fly

Traditional Spiritual

Arranged by Stacey V. Gibbs

Some glad morning when this life is over, I'll fly away.
Let me fly away to a home on God's celestial shore.
Now let me fly to Mt. Zion, yes, Lord, now let me fly.

Way down yonder in the middle of the field,
See the angels workin' on the chariot wheel.
I'm not so partic'lar 'bout the workin' of the wheel,
But I just wanted to see how the chariot feel.
See the hypocrite on the street, good Lord,
First thing he do is show his teeth, my Lord,
And the next thing he do is to tell a lie,
And the best thing to do is just pass him by.

I got a mother in the Promised Land,
And I ain't gonna stop 'til I shake-a her hand,
No, I'm not so partic'lar 'bout shaking her hand, Lord,
I just want to meet her in the Promised Land.

The Dawn Is Not Distant

Christine Donkin

Text from Genesis 15:5 and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Soprano Solo: Lezlee Flagg

Suspice caelum et numera stellas.

Look at the heavens and count the stars.
The dawn is not distant,
Nor is the night starless.

Look! Be: leap;

Libby Larson

Text by Muriel Rukeyser

Look! Be: leap;
paint trees in flame
bushes burning roar in the broad sky
know your color:
be:
produce that the widenesses be full
and burst their wombs
riot in redness, delirious with light,
swim bluely through the mind
shout green as the day breaks
put your face to the wind
FLY
chant as the tomtom hubbubs crash
elephants in the fleshes jungle

reek with vigor
sweat
pour your life in a libation to itself
drink from the ripe ground
make children over the world
lust in a heat of tropic orange
stamp and writhe;
stamp on a wet floor
know earth
know water
know lovers
know mastery
FLY

Rise Up

Jake Runestad

Text from speeches and writings by Susan B. Anthony

Rise up!
There shall never be another season of
silence.
Deepen your sympathy then convert it to
action.
Pray every single second of your life, not
on your knees but with your work.

Think your best thoughts,
speak your best words,
do your best work.
There is so much yet to be done.
Rise up!

How Can I Keep From Singing?

Robert W. Lowry

Arranged by Gwyneth Walker

My life flows on in endless song above earth's lamentation.
I hear the real though distant song that hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing.
It sounds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing?

What though the tempest loudly roars, I hear the truth, it's living!
What though the darkness round me close, songs in the night it's giving!
No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I'm clinging.
Since I believe that love abides, how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble when they hear the bells of freedom ringing.
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?
In prison cell, in dungeon dark, our thoughts to them are winging.
When friends hold courage in their heart, how can I keep from singing?

[Pause]

Blackbird

Paul McCartney

Arranged by Deke Sharon

	<i>Small Group</i>	
<i>Rachel Decker</i>	<i>Lena Hymel</i>	<i>Lisa Sanders</i>
<i>Cassandra Forth</i>	<i>Alissa McLean</i>	<i>Adina Sara</i>
<i>Sam Graff</i>	<i>Terry Meyers</i>	<i>Kathy Walrath</i>

Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these broken wings and learn to fly.
All your life, you were only waiting for this moment to arise.
Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these sunken eyes and learn to see.
All your life, you were only waiting for this moment to be free.
Blackbird fly, blackbird fly
Into the light of a dark black night.

Peace, My Heart (Premiere)

Peace, my heart,
let the time for the parting be sweet.
Let it not be a death but completeness.
Let love melt into memory and pain into
songs.
Let the flight through the sky
end in the folding of the wings over the
nest.

Where the Light Begins

Perhaps it does not begin.
Perhaps it is always.

Perhaps it takes
a lifetime
to open our eyes,
to learn to see
the luminous line of the map in the
dark,

This Day! (Premiere)

Look to this day!
For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course
Lie all the verities and realities of our
existence:
The bliss of growth;
The glory of action;

Mitchell Covington

Text by Rabindrinath Tagore

Let the last touch of your hands be
gentle
like the flower of the night.
Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a
moment,
and say your last words in silence.
I bow to you and hold up my lamp to
lighten your way.

Susan LaBarr

Text by Jan Richardson

the vigil flame in the house of the heart,
the love so searing
we can't keep
from singing, from crying out.
Perhaps this day the light begins in us.
We are where the light begins.

Perhaps it does not begin.
Perhaps it is always.

Mitchell Covington

Text attributed to Kālidāsa

The splendor of beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream,
And every tomorrow is just a vision;
But today, well lived, makes every
yesterday
a dream of happiness,
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Stars in Your Bones

The small plot of ground
on which you were born
cannot be expected
to stay forever
the same.
Earth changes,
and home becomes different
places.
You took flesh
from clay
but the clay
did not come
from just one
place.

Brave

You can be amazing,
You can turn a phrase into a weapon or a
drug.
You can be the outcast
Or be the backlash of somebody's lack of
love,
Or you can start speaking up.
Nothing's gonna hurt you the way that
words do
When they settle 'neath your skin,
Kept on the inside and no sunlight.
Sometimes a shadow wins.
But I wonder what would happen if you

*Chorus: Say what you wanna say and let
the words fall out honestly.
I wanna see you be brave with what you
wanna say*

Joan Szymko

Text by Alla Renée Bozarth

To feel alive,
important, and safe,
know your own waters
and hills, but know
more.
You have stars in your bones
and oceans
in blood.
You have opposing
terrain in each eye.
You belong to the land
and sky of your first cry,
you belong to infinity.

Sara Bareilles and Jack Antonoff

Arranged by Audrey Snyder

String Bass: Tom Elliott

Percussion: Jon Weiner

*And let the words fall out honestly.
I wanna see you be brave.*

Everybody's been there,
Everybody's been stared down by the
enemy.
Fallen for the fear and done some
disappearing,
Bow down to the mighty.
Don't run, just stop holding your tongue.
Maybe there's a way out of the cage
where you live.
Maybe one of these days you can let the
light in and
Show me how big your brave is.
Chorus
And since your history of silence
Won't do you any good,

(did you think it would?)
Let your words be anything but empty.

Why don't you tell them the truth?
Chorus

Ain't No Grave Can Hold My Body Down **Traditional Spiritual**

Arranged by Paul Caldwell and Sean Ivory

String Bass: Tom Elliott

Percussion: Jon Weiner

*Chorus: Ain't no grave can hold my body
down.*

*There ain't no grave can keep a sister
underground.*

Oh I will listen for the trumpet sound.

Ain't no grave can hold my body down.

You know they rolled a stone on Jesus.
And then they tried to bury me.
But then the Holy Ghost it freed us
So we could live eternally.

Sister you better get your ticket
If you wanna ride.
In the morning when Jesus calls my
number,
I'll be on the other side.

Chorus

Ain't no grave is gonna hold me.
Ain't no man is gonna bury me.
Ain't no serpent gonna trick me.
Ain't no grave can hold my body down.

I will fly to Jesus
In the mornin' when I die.
I know he will take me
Home to live with him on high.
I will fly to Jesus in the mornin'

Don't look here. I'll be way up in the
sky.

Soon one day he's gonna call me up to
heaven

For a chariot ride.

Chorus

Ain't no grave, ain't no grave.

Ain't no grave dug deep enough to hold
me.

Ain't no devil been slick enough to trick
me.

Ain't no grave digger man enough to
bury me

You can't hold me down!

Ain't no grave can hold me down.

You can't keep me underground.

When the silver trumpet sounds,

Ain't no grave can hold me down.

Ain't no grave ever been dug so low.

No grave digger been born so strong.

Ain't no man that can,

Ain't no devil can,

Ain't no grave can hold me.

Ain't no grave that goes so low,

Ain't no grave dug low enough down.



Composers

(In order of appearance in the program)

Joan Szymko (SHIM-koh) was born in Chicago in 1957 and now resides in the Pacific Northwest, where she is widely known as a composer and choral director. “I am drawn to texts that invoke divine grace, speak to the universal yearning for good and that nurture a compassionate heart.” “Lorica” (2008) is a colorful and energetic setting of words traditionally attributed to St. Patrick (c. 385 - c. 461). The Latin word *lorica* originally described armor worn on the breast of Roman soldiers but came to refer to a protection prayer in which the power of God is invoked by the petitioner as a safeguard against evil.

About her work “Stars in Your Bones” (2017), Szymko writes, “The opening chords and exuberant unison suggest the ‘big bang’ — the singular explosion theorized by astronomers as the origin of our expanding universe. The piano ostinato that follows lends an unstable, fluctuating quality to the lyrics. As the accompaniment settles, the lyrical quality of the setting takes hold, building toward a galvanizing expression of belonging.”

“You are beautiful. You are enough.” These encouraging words evoke memories of her mother, writes **Andrea Ramsey**, composer of “Truth.” A native southerner from Arkansas, Dr. Ramsey is a devoted educator, a distinguished choral conductor, and a prolific composer for a wide range of voices and levels. Her own life experience has shown her the power of music to create a sense of community and a better understanding of our humanity.

“Now Let Me Fly” is a traditional spiritual arranged by **Stacey V. Gibbs** (b. 1964), who is a prolific and highly sought-after composer and conductor whose works have been widely performed both domestically and internationally. He is considered one of the most popular arrangers of traditional spirituals. This song also incorporates another spiritual song, “I’ll Fly Away” (Albert Brumley, 1905-1977), which celebrates overcoming life’s challenges.

Christine Donkin (b. 1979) was born in Alberta and currently teaches in Victoria, British Columbia. Her compositions include choral, chamber, and orchestral works and are performed across Canada and beyond. “The Dawn Is Not Distant” is a work of

ethereal simplicity, combining words from the 19th century poet Longfellow with a Latin text.

Libby Larsen (b. 1950) is an award-winning American composer, musical philosopher, and speaker whose works cover a wide range of musical genres. She takes inspiration from the sounds she hears around her, particularly the energy and rhythmic diversity of the American language. She composes without bar lines, finding a natural common meter afterwards, giving many of her compositions a feeling of free internal rhythm. “Look! Be: leap;” was composed as a commission in 2014 to a poem by American political activist **Muriel Rukeyser** (1913-1980). Her poetry focused on the truths of outrage, possibility, and the challenge to action.

Jake Runestad (b. 1986) is an Emmy-award-winning and frequently performed American composer who’s been called a “choral rockstar” by American Public Media. The words of “Rise Up” are taken from speeches and writings by American suffragette **Susan B. Anthony**.

Now 75, **Dr. Gwyneth Walker** has remained for decades a force in contemporary American music and an inspiration for American women composers. She is known for her brilliant tone painting through her challenging piano accompaniments as well as vocal dynamics and harmonies. “How Can I Keep from Singing?” is one example of her many arrangements of traditional hymns and songs.

Written in 1968 by **Paul McCartney** and inspired by J.S. Bach’s *Bourree* in E minor, “Blackbird” reflects the racial tensions escalating in the US during the spring of that year; as McCartney himself put it, “the black people’s struggle in the southern states.” Its haunting simplicity calls out to the broken, “You were only waiting for this moment to arise.” This *cappella* arrangement is by San Francisco native **Deke Sharon**.

Mitchell Covington is an award-winning composer, arranger, conductor, and educator. He believes in the power of music to change lives and make the world a better place and is a gentle guiding hand and beloved inspiration to Voci, which he founded in 1991. Both premieres on this program were written specifically for this concert theme. “Peace, My Heart” delicately reflects the words of **Rabindrinath Tagore** (1861-1941), who was a poet, philosopher, social reformer, friend of Mahatma Gandhi, and first non-European winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913). He is revered as one of the great thinkers of modern India and traveled widely promoting Indianism, humanism, and the emancipation of the dispossessed.

Covington’s “This Day!” is an uplifting and optimistic “Salutation of the Dawn” based on a poem attributed to the classical Sanskrit author **Kālidāsa** (c. 4th-5th century), about whom little is known. Kālidāsa is considered ancient India’s greatest poet and playwright. Although only a handful of his works remain, his influence has been widespread in Indian writing, notably that of Rabindrinath Tagore.

Susan LaBarr (b. 1981) is a composer and choral editor from Missouri, where she earned her degrees in music. The text to “Where the Light Begins” is by writer/artist **Jan Richardson**; while originally written for Advent, it uses universal language that speaks of peace and hope.

Sara Bareilles (b. 1979) and **Jack Antonoff** (b. 1984) wrote “Brave” in 2011, inspired by the struggles that a close friend of Sara’s endured on coming out. The song has been received almost as a civil rights anthem. Bareilles is a versatile singer, songwriter, actress, and author. Antonoff is a guitarist/singer with the band “Fun.” They met through friends and wrote “Brave” the first time they sat down together.

Paul Caldwell and **Sean Ivory** have collaborated since the early 1990s, both working in community, school, and college choirs in the Midwest. “Ain’t No Grave Can Hold My Body Down” (2005) is based on a traditional gospel refrain from the American South, characterized by a powerful rhythmic affirmation driving an optimistic text.



About Voci

Now in its 31st year, **Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble** is recognized as one of the finest choral groups in the Bay Area. Voci is dedicated to musical excellence in the performance of new and innovative music, as well as treasured repertoire within the classical choral tradition. It enjoys a reputation among Bay Area audiences and critics for its adventurous programming and elegant, passionate sound. Composed of 24-28 experienced choral singers, Voci has performed with a wide range of artists and choruses at concerts, festivals, and benefits and has commissioned and premiered over 32 new works.

Artistic Director

Mitchell Covington is an accomplished choral and orchestral conductor who has led many exquisite ensembles over his career. He has directed choirs and orchestras in performances in the United States and throughout Europe. Mitchell received a Bachelor of Music degree from San Francisco State University, where he studied choral conducting with Byron McGilvray and orchestral conducting with Lazlo Varga. He received a master's degree in Conducting from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, graduating with honors. At USC he studied choral conducting with Rod Eichenberger, orchestral conducting with Hanz Beer, and choral arranging with Morten Lauridsen. He was the founding director of Voci (then Voci Women's Chamber Choir) from 1991–1995, directed the Bay Choral Guild from 1995–2001 and led a seven-choir music program with over 300 participants at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley for 23 years. Mitchell has served on the Executive Board of the American Choral Directors Association—Western Division. He frequently serves as guest conductor and clinician for church and school choirs throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and as an adjudicator and clinician for choir festivals and conferences. He is also an award-winning composer, whose compositions include works for orchestra, chorus, stage, film, and television. After a 23-year break Mitchell returned as guest conductor for the spring 2017 season and was appointed artistic director in summer 2017.

Accompanist

Voci Accompanist **Matt Bourne** is a pianist who performs and accompanies for vocalists and choral groups all around the Bay Area. He is a musical director and conductor for musical theatre productions at many local companies. He is staff accompanist for Campolindo High School, pianist at First United Methodist Church of Hayward, a piano teacher, and a composer. He is a Bay Area native and a graduate of the music program at UCLA.

Guest Musicians

Susanne Rublein, Flute
Tom Elliott, String Bass
Jon Weiner, Percussion

Voci Singers

Rosalinda Anguinano	Samantha Graff	Nancy Nicholson
Barbara Brenner Buder	Rose Hansen	Hannah Parrilla
Helene Byrne	Valerie Hodgskiss	Karla Sagramoso
Laurel Covington	Lena Hymel	Lisa Sanders
Rachel Decker	Pauline Ma-Senturia	Adina Sara
Vicky Faulk	Alissa McLean	Victoria Skerritt
Lezlee Flagg	Terry Meyers	Kathy Walrath
Cassandra Forth		Lucy Williams

Voci Staff

Artistic Director: Mitchell Covington

Accompanist: Matt Bourne

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Victoria Skerritt (Secretary), Rachel Decker, Nancy Nicholson, and Nicky Reed.
Mitchell Covington (ex officio)

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Program: Lezlee Flagg and Hannah Parrilla
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Copy Editor: Kathy Walrath
Librarians: Adina Sara and Victoria Sterritt
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House Staff: Cassandra Forth (lead) and Lena Hymel
House Manager: Valerie Gibbins
Crew Lead: Alissa McLean

Thank you to St. Mary Magdalen Church, St. Perpetua Church, Orinda Community Church, and to all the friends, family, and members of Voci who volunteer countless hours of work to make our performances possible!

Watch Voci's 30th Anniversary Celebration video,
highlighting favorites from the first 30 years plus interviews with past directors.
Find it on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/VociSings1

Sing with Voci!

Voci seeks experienced women choral singers in all voice parts to join the ensemble. Auditions will be held through January 11 or until all positions are filled. Visit our website (VociSings.org) to learn more. Contact Artistic Director Mitchell Covington at mcovington@VociSings.org to schedule an audition.

Voci is supported by your generous individual donations; the Alameda County Arts Commission, Grants for the Arts Program; the Alameda County Arts Relief Grant Program; and the California Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program, Nonprofit Cultural Institutions Program.

Voci is a not-for-profit 501c3 organization and welcomes contributions.
Please visit our website for more information: VociSings.org



Please consider a donation to Voci's annual fund. Ticket sales only cover a portion of our budget. Scan this QR code to make a donation



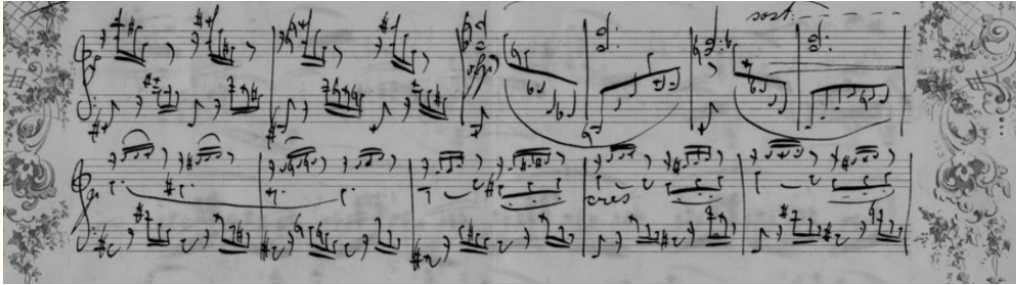
Please complete our audience survey to help us gather information for our grants and marketing. Your information will not be shared. Use QR code or paper form.



Please join us this season:

In the Time of Brahms:

Music for Women's Voices from the Master and his Friends



Piano 4 hands, 2 horns and harp

Saturday, March 25, 2023 • 8:00 pm

St. Perpetua Catholic Church
3454 Hamlin Road, Lafayette

Sunday, March 26, 2023 • 4:00 pm

St. Mary Magdalen Church
2005 Berryman Street, Berkeley



A Little Night Music

*Beloved songs from
American Musical Theatre*

Sunday, May 7, 2023 • 4:00 pm

St. Perpetua Catholic Church
3454 Hamlin Road, Lafayette