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CIVIC CHORALE  
& ORCHESTRA

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**PHOENIX**

A RHODE ISLAND **PREMIERE** OF RENEWAL

SUNDAY, MARCH 1 | 3:00 PM

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# WE ARE PHOENIX

A RHODE ISLAND PREMIERE OF RENEWAL

March 1, 2026 | 3:00pm | Fine Arts Center, University of Rhode Island

**Computing Venus**, selected scenes Timothy C. Takach (2024)

*An opera in one act inspired by the life of Maria Mitchell*

*Winner of the 2024 Domenic J. Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize*

Scene 1: The Observatory at Vassar College

Scene 3: Solar Eclipse

Epilogue

Maria Mitchell – Louise Joyce

Mary – Meghan Rinaldi

Sarah – Lauren Chopy

Ida – Chelsea Gartland

John Raymond – Monty Grable

Agnes – Allison Campbell

**Devon Russo, Artist-Teacher & Director of Opera Theatre**

**Play**, three miniatures for solo piano Takach (2021)

Teotihuacán

Caverna

Pulsar

Anna Musteata, piano

**Thirty-Eight Tears** Takach (2012)

Joshua W. Rohde, cello

**Black-Eyed Susans** Takach (2020)

Devon Russo, bass-baritone

David Gilliland, piano

— BRIEF PAUSE —

**We Are Phoenix** Takach (2025)

*A Rhode Island Premiere*

1. Imagine
2. In the Beginning
3. Turning
4. Nubes Oriebatur: The Eruption of Vesuvius
5. Digging Up a Rose
6. To Risk Your Heart
7. Things Worth Praising
8. New Rising Out of Old
9. Ragnarök
10. I Fall, I Rise
11. Imagine We Are Trees

Jamie-Rose Guarrine, soprano

Joshua W. Rohde, Music Director

**Please join us after the program for a moderated Q&A with Timothy C. Takach**



This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the Rhode Island General Assembly and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

# PROGRAM NOTES:

Life will break you. Nobody can protect you from that...  
You have to love. You have to feel. It is the reason you are here on earth.

— Louise Erdrich  
(excerpted text from *"We Are Phoenix," To Risk Your Heart*)

The world around us, and the lives within us, are filled with pain and heartache. Grief, anger, anxiety. They are unavoidable and all too present. The question is, how do we respond? Where does one turn for inspiration on how to deal with such things? How can we express ourselves, both in these moments and as we come out of them?

To answer these questions, we look to the music of living Minnesota composer, Timothy C. Takach: an award-winning artist who is creating new music today, while facing the same world and challenges we ourselves encounter.

Our program is broken into three sections. We open with scenes from Takach's new opera, **"Computing Venus,"** which shares the story of pioneering scientist Maria Mitchell. Born into a Quaker household in Nantucket in 1818, Mitchell grew up observing the stars with her father and excelled in astronomy and advanced mathematics from a young age. At 29, Mitchell made history when she discovered a comet, subsequently known as Miss Mitchell's Comet, while mapping the stars from the roof of her house. Mitchell was awarded a gold medal by the King of Denmark for her discovery and quickly became the most famous woman in America. A year later, she was hired as the official "computer of Venus" for the United States, one of only eleven professional mathematician astronomers—and the only woman—working in such a capacity in the country. From 1865 on, Mitchell served as the first female professor of astronomy at the newly-founded Vassar College and focused her efforts on cultivating the next generation of women astronomers.

By the 1860s and 1870s, however, women in science saw the tide turn against them, spurred by a publication of Edward Clarke, then a professor at Harvard Medical School, who claimed that higher education had a detrimental physiological effect on women, making them sterile, sexually deviant, and hermaphrodites. As a high-profile, unmarried female professor at Vassar, Mitchell was indirectly targeted by Clarke's claims and became the living embodiment of the fate facing young women who were "too" educated. More than a century after Mitchell's death, women still struggle to access STEM fields and achieve the same recognition and acknowledgement as their male peers.<sup>1</sup>

Now let me tell you how things change,  
new rising endlessly out of old,  
everything altering, form unto form,  
let me be the voice of mutability,  
the only constant in the world.

— Patricia Monaghan  
(excerpted text from *"We Are Phoenix," In the Beginning & New Rising Out of Old*)

The center of the program takes an intimate look at Takach's solo works. The piano miniatures from **"Play"** were composed for and dedicated to Takach's wife and longtime collaborator, Jocelyn Hagen, with the music filled with references to their shared love of board games and cocoa.

Takach describes the middle work for solo cello, **"Thirty-Eight Tears,"** which was written to honor the thirty-eight Dakota warriors who lost their lives in the US-Dakota War in 1862. Thirty-eight Dakota warriors were hanged at the end of the war. As they marched to their execution, they were singing the hymn "Many and Great" by Joseph Renville. The hymn tune is featured at the beginning and throughout the piece, sometimes buried in the texture. In the piece there are thirty-eight sharp events that interrupt the music, representing each life that was lost.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Timothy C. Takach, "Computing Venus," [timothyctakach.com/computingvenus](http://timothyctakach.com/computingvenus).

<sup>2</sup> Timothy C. Takach, "Thirty-Eight Tears," [timothyctakach.com/thirty-eight-tears](http://timothyctakach.com/thirty-eight-tears).

The sequence ends with the incredibly moving art song **"Black-Eyed Susans"** for baritone and piano. The narrative takes place in the prairie, as spelled out in the gentle flowing piano. The story begins simply and then unfolds throughout the song, with each line the baritone sings describing vivid scenes and moments of heartbreak.

We move back and forth between grief and laughter,  
each adding meaning to the other.  
Alone, now together.  
Broken, now whole.

— C.J. Nichols  
(excerpted text from *"We Are Phoenix," I Fall, I Rise*)

The program closes with the Rhode Island premiere of **"We Are Phoenix,"** a grand multi-movement work for chorus, strings, soloist, and projections. Takach explains the origins of the work, sharing that it started with the "exploration of the idea that we are not separate from nature, nor above it, but intrinsically a part of it. I was struck by how the planet endures cycles of destruction and trauma, and yet, time and again, it adapts, regenerates, and moves forward. That resilience felt like a profound metaphor for the human condition—our capacity to suffer, to grieve, and yet, ultimately, to rebuild and keep going."<sup>3</sup>

To illuminate this idea, Takach collected a series of texts that weave a compelling narrative throughout the work. One instantly finds real points of connection, from the descriptions of gardening and watching flocks of birds to the harrowing scenes of West Coast wildfires. Scaffolding these relatable moments are two scenes of epic destruction. Movement 4 sets Pliny the Younger's first-person account of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD, which completely destroyed and covered Pompeii in volcanic ash. This is mirrored by the incorporation of Ragnarök in Movement 9—the apocalyptic event in Norse mythology, where the world is destroyed through a fierce battle and fire before its eventual rebirth. Through the musical setting of such diverse scenes, Takach's work takes us through darkness and light, through the grand and overwhelming to the intimate and delicate, while experiencing both pain and hope.

Takach encourages us, stating "The texts here are moving, beautiful, and warrant reflection and reading on their own. I hope that they illuminate a new perspective on yourself, on humanity, and on the strength of the human spirit... Let the music remind you that, like the earth itself, you are capable of renewal—of healing, of rising, of continuing forward."

Soon the real day returned, and even the sun shone out. Every object that presented itself to our faltering eyes seemed changed...

— Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Tacitus*, 61 - 112 AD  
— Translated by William Melmoth, with revisions by Anne Groton  
(excerpted text from *"We Are Phoenix," Nubes Oriebatur: The Eruption of Vesuvius*)



Joshua W. Rohde  
Music Director

<sup>3</sup> Timothy C. Takach, "We Are Phoenix," [timothyctakach.com/phoenix](http://timothyctakach.com/phoenix).



## 1. Imagine

### 2. In the Beginning

Before land, sea, sky, before all that:  
nature was chaos; our cosmos, all chaos;  
all the same enormity, all in one;  
there was no form, no moon to walk  
the night, no earth to dance with air...

Now let me tell you how things change,  
new rising endlessly out of old,  
everything altering, form unto form,  
let me be the voice of mutability,  
the only constant in the world.

— Patricia Monaghan

### 3. Turning

There comes a time in every fall  
before the leaves begin to turn  
when blackbirds group and flock and gather  
choosing a tree, a branch, together  
to click and call and chorus and clamor  
announcing the season has come for travel.

Then comes a time when all those birds  
without a sound or backward glance  
pour from every branch and limb  
into the air, as if on a whim  
but it's a dynamic, choreographed mass  
a swoop, a swerve, a mystery, a dance

and now the tree stands breathless, amazed  
at how it was chosen, how it was changed.

— Julie Cadwallader Staub

### 4. Nubes Oriebatur: The Eruption of Vesuvius

Nubes oriebatur.

(Praecesserat per multos dies tremor terrae.)

Nubes oriebatur, cuius similitudinem et formam non alia  
magis arbor quam pinus expresserit.

Nam longissimo velut trunco elata in altum quibusdam ramis  
diffundebatur, credo quia recenti spiritu evecta.

Nubes atra et horrenda, ignei spiritus tortis vibratissime  
discursibus rupta, in longas flammaram figuras dehiscebat;  
fulguribus illae et similes et maiores erant.

Candida interdum, interdum sordida et maculosa prout  
terram cineremve sustulerat.

Nec multo post illa nubes descendere in terras, operire maria;  
iam cinis, adhuc tamen rarus.

Mox dies verus; sol etiam effulsit.

Occursabant trepidantibus adhuc oculis mutata omnia  
altoque cinere tamquam nive obducta.

— Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Tacitus*, 61 – 112 AD  
— adapt. TCT

*A cloud was ascending. (There had been noticed for many days  
before a trembling of the earth.)*

*A cloud was ascending, the appearance of which I cannot give you  
a more exact description of than by likening it to that of a pine tree.*

*For it shot up to a great height in the form of a very tall trunk,  
which spread itself out at the top into branches of a sort; Because,  
I believe, it was occasioned by a sudden gust of air that impelled it.*

*A black and dreadful cloud, broken with rapid, zigzag flashes,  
revealed behind it variously shaped masses of flame: these last  
were like sheet-lightning, but much larger.*

*It was sometimes clear and bright and sometimes dark and  
spotted, according to whether it had picked up earth or cinders.*

*Soon afterwards, the cloud began to descend, and cover the sea.*

*The ashes now began to fall upon us, though it was still sparse.*

*Soon the real day returned, and even the sun shone out. Every  
object that presented itself to our faltering eyes seemed changed,  
being covered deep with ashes as if with snow.*

— Translated by William Melmoth, with revisions by  
Anne Groton

## 5. Digging Up a Rose

I dug up a rose in my garden.  
To make room for something new.  
Less formal.  
Less fussy.  
More me.  
I dug up a rose.  
Dropped it sideways in a broken pot.  
And forgot it was there.  
Then summer came.  
And the old discarded rose  
Shocked me with a shock of pink.  
With a cloud of old-fashioned blooms.  
It refused to let me choose.  
Refused to let me deny its value.  
But bloomed.  
To spite me.  
Bloomed.  
In spite of me.  
Bloomed.  
To remind me.  
To know my worth.  
And to know it most of all.  
When sideways in a broken pot.

— Caitlin Vincent

## 6. To Risk Your Heart

Life will break you. Nobody can protect you from that, and living alone won't either, for solitude will also break you with its yearning. You have to love. You have to feel. It is the reason you are here on earth. You are here to risk your heart. You are here to be swallowed up. And when it happens that you are broken, or betrayed, or left, or hurt, or death brushes near, let yourself sit by an apple tree and listen to the apples falling all around you in heaps, wasting their sweetness. Tell yourself you tasted as many as you could.

— Louise Erdrich

## 7. Things Worth Praising

Rain. Soft rain. Hard pelting rain. Sleet and snow.  
Clouds: white, grey, dark. A spring breeze.  
The predictability of stars and moon and sun.  
  
Green small hills. Craggy slopes. Granite cliffs.  
Topsoil deep and rich. The melody of rivers.  
The powers of tides. The cycle of change.  
  
Industry of bee and worm. Sweet fruit that follows.  
Microbes that make cheese. Ones that cure us.  
Profound cooperation that begets lichen.  
  
Birdsong carried on wind. The shadow of a horse  
against a limestone wall. A dog's warmth.  
Blood. Flesh. Bones. Hearts. Breath.  
  
A friend's hand, reaching out for help or tea.  
A sigh, an honest smile, a body dancing.  
Everything that connects and is connected. Everything.

— Patricia Monaghan

## 8. New Rising Out of Old

Now let me tell you how things change,  
new rising endlessly out of old,  
everything altering, form unto form,  
let me be the voice of mutability,  
the only constant in the world.

— Patricia Monaghan

## 9. Ragnarök

Hagalaz (*wrath of nature*), Sowilo (*sun*)...

Dark grows the sun,  
and in summer soon  
Come mighty storms:  
would you know yet more?  
Brothers will fight one another  
and kill one another  
the world will be a hard place to live in.

skeggold, skalmold, (*an age of the axe, an age of the sword*),  
vindold, vargold, (*an age of storms, an age of wolves*),

Before the world sinks in the sea,  
there will be no man left who is true to another.

The old tree sighs  
when the giant shakes it—

Yggdrasil still stands, (Skelfr Yggdrasils)  
but it trembles. (askr standandi.)

The sun turns black,  
the earth sinks into the sea,  
the bright stars  
fall out of the sky.  
Flames scorch  
the leaves of Yggdrasil,  
a great bonfire  
reaches to the highest clouds.

Here is a house,  
here is a neighborhood.  
Here is a street, a door, a room, a window.  
Here is a drought, here a beetled pine.  
Here is a wildfire leaping from limb to roof.

There is a law of lightning, law of wood.  
There is a need to burn, to lose, to grow.  
There is the charred scar, there the flying ash.  
To dwell is not to shelter, we should know.

Here are the people packing their cars to flee.  
Here are the photos in frames, the pets on leashes.  
Here are the children bewildered, coughing smoke.  
Here are the firemen climbing the hills in the heat.

Berkana (*growth*), Dagaz (*day*)...

I see the earth  
rise a second time  
from out of the sea,  
green once more.  
Waterfalls flow,  
and eagles fly overhead,  
hunting for fish  
among the mountain peaks.

We are the street, we are the neighborhood.  
We are the garden living and dying to bloom.  
We are the parched yards, we are the trembling deer.  
We are the long walk looking to find our home.

I see the earth rise a second time.  
Rise.

— *Poetic Edda: Völuspá (41, 46, 55, 57), translated  
by Dr. Jackson Crawford, sung in English and Old Norse.  
"The Fires," by David Mason.*

## 10. I Fall, I Rise

A wonder of biology and stardust combines to form me.  
Improbable, yet here I am—trillions of cells with rhythm and life,  
each breath and heartbeat a quiet symphony.  
Each movement a melody

I hope to keep falling in love with this world again and again,  
with every stranger's kindness,  
with every life bent low that finds the strength to rise.  
A caterpillar turns inward before it grows wings,  
a forest survives and prospers from fallen trees,  
and I am transformed by each experience of loss and joy.  
When I am broken, my mind rewires,  
regrows, together.

We move back and forth between grief and laughter,  
each adding meaning to the other.  
Alone, now together.

Broken, now whole.  
We are fire. We are ash.  
We are Phoenix.

Oh, this delicate flight of the soul.  
I fall, I rise.

I withdraw, then reach out.  
I find myself in love with this intricate,  
beautiful world.

— *C.J. Nichols*

## 11. Imagine We Are Trees

Imagine we are trees.  
Both about to bud  
We are itching with tiny leaves  
To shake and shade each other with.  
We've known each other forever,  
Weathered all of it.  
There, when you lost a limb  
I swayed and prayed in my trunk  
you'd not go down. We shed  
what we no longer need  
no longer can hold up  
to the light. I've seen you  
in twilight blue, seen the moon  
cradled in your branches.  
This morning your canopy  
Glazed in tangerine light.  
If this isn't love  
I don't know what is.

— *Julia Klatt Singer*



## Timothy C. Takach

Inspired by captivating narrative, speculative fiction, and making better humans through art, the music of Timothy C. Takach is a mainstay in the concert world. Applauded for his melodic lines and rich, intriguing harmonies, Takach has received commissions and premieres from GRAMMY Award-winning ensembles Roomful of Teeth and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the St. Olaf Band, Cantus, U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus, Lorelei Ensemble, VocalEssence, the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, The Rose Ensemble, and numerous other organizations. His compositions have been performed on *A Prairie Home Companion*, the Boston Pops holiday tour, nationwide on PBS, in many All-State and festival programs, and at venues such as the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, and the Royal Opera House Muscat.

He is a co-creator of the theatrical production of *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914*, by Peter Rothstein. The critically adored show has had over 120 performances since its premiere in 2006. He was also selected for the 2014 Nautilus Music-Theater Composer-Librettist Studio. Takach and librettist Caitlin Vincent won the 2024 Domenic J. Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize, and their opera *Computing Venus* premiered at the Crane School of Music in 2024. In 2018 his oratorio *We, the Unknown* premiered at the Folly Theatre in Kansas City featuring the Heartland Men's Chorus, and in 2019 "Su Rahva Koda (The House of Your Kindred)" was premiered by the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. 2019 also saw the premiere of *Helios*, Takach's new 65' work for a cappella choir inspired by the solar system. In 2015 Takach placed third for The American Prize for Composition for Wind Ensemble for his piece "Frost Giant." His choral ballet *Unfashioned Creature*, an adaptation of *Frankenstein*, was created in collaboration with choreographer Penelope Freeh and premiered in 2023 by the James Sewell Ballet and MPLS (imPulse). The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* named it "one of the 10 most memorable dance events in 2023." He was Composer-in-Residence for the Texas Boys Choir from 2019 – 2021, The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists from 2018 – 2023, and is a Co-Composer in Residence with Jocelyn Hagen for True Concord Voices & Orchestra from 2022 to the present.

Takach has frequent work as a composer-in-residence, presenter, conductor, clinician, and lecturer for conventions, schools, and organizations across the country. He is a full-time composer and lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two sons.



## **Soprano** **Jamie-Rose Guarrine**

Soprano Jamie-Rose Guarrine is acclaimed for her “utterly thrilling, agile voice” and praised for bringing “pathos, beauty, and heartbreaking skill” to her performances. She has performed on the stages of Los Angeles Opera, Minnesota Opera, The Santa Fe Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Chicago Opera Theater, Austin Opera, Utah Opera, Madison Opera, Fort Worth Opera, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, The National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, and the Santa Fe Symphony, among many others.

Her diverse performance repertoire ranges from the masterworks of Bach, Mozart, and Donizetti, to modern works such as Mark Adamo’s *Lysistrata* and Philip Glass’s *Galileo Galilei*, and she recently performed in the world premiere of White Snake Projects’ *Rev. 23* in Boston and New York. Dr. Guarrine’s debut album, *Transparent Boundaries: Songs set to the Words of Dickinson, Whitman & Emerson*, featuring newly commissioned works by Lori Laitman and Scott Gendel, debuted in 2020 on the PARMA label and all streaming platforms, with reviews featured in numerous publications including *Gramophone Magazine*. Dr. Guarrine is an alumna of the UW-Madison Mead Witter School of Music, and proudly serves as Professor of Voice at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



## **Bass-Baritone, Artist-Teacher & Director of Opera Theatre** **Devon Russo**

Devon Russo, Bass-Baritone, Director, & Conductor, performs frequently as a soloist and ensemble member in Opera, Contemporary Music, Early Music, and Musical Theatre throughout the United States and Europe. He has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Trinity Repertory Company, Boston Early Music Festival, Odyssey Opera, Boston University Opera Institute, Opera in Williamsburg, Opera Providence, Salt Marsh Opera, the Handel & Haydn Society, Seraphic Fire, the Sante Fe Desert Chorale, Ensemble Altera, Chorus of Westerly, Quicksilver Baroque, Brevitas, the Rhode Island Civic Chorale & Orchestra, Musica Dolce and the Star Island Chamber Music Festival, the Blacksburg Master’s Chorale, and Upper Valley Baroque.

Devon is currently a Jane & Steven Alkin Emerging Artist with the Boston Lyric Opera. Devon has taken part in the Internationalen Sommerakademie am Mozarteum Salzburg, Boston Early Music Festival Young Artist Program, the Voces8 Choral Scholar Programme, Académie Orford Musique, the Seraphic Fire Professional Choral Institute at the Aspen Music Festival and School, Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute, Source Song Festival, the Manhattan Opera Studio Summer Festival, Singing Down the Barriers at the University of Michigan with the Hampsong Foundation, the Amherst Early Music Festival Opera Project and Winter Workshop, the Haymarket Opera Summer Institute, the Baroque Opera Workshop at Queen’s College, and Connecticut Lyric Opera’s Young Artist Program. He has been a vocal apprentice at the Nahant Music Festival and a Choral Scholar with the Oratorio Society of New York, the Berkshire Choral Festival, and Trinity Church (Newport, RI). Devon is currently a Choral Fellow at Marsh Chapel in Boston. He was a Semifinalist in the Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition in 2023 and 2024, the National First Place Winner of The American Prize in Voice Friedrich & Virginia Schorr Memorial Award in 2023, and in 2012 was the runner-up for the NATS Artist Awards Competition.

A passionate educator and conductor, he is currently the Director of Choral Activities at Bryant University and Artist-Teacher in Classical Voice and Director of the Opera Theatre at the University of Rhode Island. Devon earned his Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance at Boston University, his Master’s in Vocal Performance from the Manhattan School of Music, and his Bachelor’s in Vocal Performance and Music Education from the University of Rhode Island.



**Music Director**  
**Joshua W. Rohde**

Dr. Joshua W. Rohde is the Director of Choral Activities at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, where he conducts all four of the university's choral ensembles—Alden Voices, Glee Club, Festival Chorus, and the Chamber Choir. At WPI, he overhauled the choral curriculum to create a program where the diverse and poignant repertoire the students perform helps to shape their view of the world, empathize with others, and express their emotions related to difficult and important issues. In the classroom, he added the topics-focused course *Music in Time of Conflict*, which combines elements of theory, history, and analysis to use music as a tool to address issues such as the destruction of war, rehabilitation in prisons, and medical studies involving Alzheimer's. Rohde was the WPI 2021 Recipient of the Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education.

Rohde is the Music Director of the Rhode Island Civic Chorale & Orchestra and an active professional cellist throughout the New England area. His work spans multiple musical genres, including new music from living composers. This is seen through his dissertation on living Scottish composer Sir James MacMillan and work as the founding manager of Harvard University's New Music Initiative. Notable world premieres of new music include Rohde's work with Pulitzer Prize winning composers David Lang (Birmingham New Music, England, 2014) and John Luther Adams (Lincoln Center, New York City, 2018).

Previous experience includes work at Boston University's Marsh Chapel, the Harvard University Choruses, the Quincy Choral Society, the University of Birmingham (UK), and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Chorus (UK). Rohde holds degrees from Boston University (DMA and MSM - Conducting), the University of Birmingham in England (MM - Conducting), and the University of Minnesota (BM - Cello Performance and BS - Civil Engineering). He has prepared choruses to sing for conductors such as Harry Christophers, Andris Nelsons, and John Storgårds. As a soloist, he has played cello concertos with orchestras including Elgar and Shostakovich, and regularly works as a continuo cellist playing the choral-orchestral works of Bach.



**Assistant Conductor and Accompanist**  
**Nicholas Rocha**

Nicholas Rocha is a choral conductor, keyboardist, and composer of the greater Providence area, having worked with local choirs and ensembles since 2012. Rocha has worked with the Rhode Island Civic Chorale & Orchestra (RICCO) as an accompanist since 2014, and as an assistant conductor since 2021. Rocha has served as the artistic director of the Bristol County Chorus since 2018, a community chorus based in Bristol, RI known best for its annual Christmas concert with orchestra. He has also directed the Oure Pleasure Singers (OP) of Attleboro since 2019. This ensemble, with roots as a madrigal choir, is an auditioned chorus with a focus on unaccompanied choral music. An organist and cantor, Rocha is currently the music coordinator for both Holy Angels Church of Barrington and Saint Sebastian's of Providence.

Rocha premiered an original setting of the traditional Latin Christmas text *O magnum mysterium*, accompanied by piano and strings, with both the Bristol County Chorus and the Worcester Polytechnic Chorus, under the direction of Dr. Joshua Rohde, in December of 2021. Rocha's latest offering, a 40-minute odyssey set in eight movements entitled *Abyssopelagic*, written for choir, piano, clarinet, tenor saxophone, and cello, will premiere in spring 2026, and will feature poetry written by the composer. Passionate about early music, Nick has also presented lecture recitals on Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1179) locally at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Bristol, and at St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Providence.

Mr. Rocha earned a Master's in Choral Conducting from The Boston Conservatory in 2017, where he studied with Dr. George Case. Rocha holds a B.A. in music from Vassar College. He has studied voice with Drew Minter, James Ruff, and Dr. Thomas Gregg. Rocha is especially grateful for a formative eleven years of piano lessons with Pauline Dufour of Somerset, MA.

# THE RHODE ISLAND CIVIC CHORALE

Theresa Atkinson*	Vickie Gerdon	Patty McDermott	Karin Schwartz
Debbie Barber	Sarah B. Graumann	Joanne Medbery	Erica Scott-Adjei
Steven Barreto	Stacy Grooters	Margaret Mottola Menna*	Nancy Scott
Ross Beatty	Emily Harris	Kara Mickas	Samir Shah
Amelia Berg	Samantha Hartsfield	Laurie Mokaba	Evan Smith
Arlene H. Berrol	Grace M. Hermes	Ruthie Moran	Petra Smith
George Blais	Erika Holshoe	Jacob Morse	Natasha Sokol
John Blakeslee	Paul Hossfield	Darra D. Mulderry	Courtney Sowa
Patricia (Tish) Brennan	Terry Karaniuk	Jane Murphy	Evanne Subia
John C. Campellone*	Bill Karner	Stephen J. Nelson	Fred Surr
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# HISTORY OF THE CHORALE

Since its beginning in 1956, the Rhode Island Civic Chorale & Orchestra has been a community organization of people from all walks of life, united in their love of choral music. Over recent years, the singers and board of RICCO have reaffirmed our commitment to be a welcoming organization: to preserve the tradition and encourage the vital growth of choral music. We have seen this vital growth in our singer community and in our audience sizes. The Directors of the organization are dedicated volunteers who give their time, energy, and financial resources in recognition of the valuable cultural contribution that the Chorale makes to the community.

The Chorale was founded by Dr. Louis Pichierri, who was also Director of Music for Providence Public Schools. He conducted the Chorale from its inception until his untimely death in 1972. The Chorale has since sung under the direction of Ronald Morris, Robert Bass, and Edward Markward. Dr. Edward Markward was Music Director and Conductor of the Chorale for 32 years and was awarded the honorary title of Conductor Laureate upon his retirement in Spring 2019. Dr. Joshua W. Rohde was appointed Music Director and Conductor in 2019 and continues to bring vitality to the organization through his musicianship and leadership.

The Chorale has enjoyed continuous growth and community support over its 69 years. Its repertoire includes established choral masterpieces such as Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, *Passions*, and *Magnificat*; the Verdi *Manzoni Requiem*; Mendelssohn's *Elijah*; and works of Vivaldi, Orff, Mozart, Duruflé, Dvořák, Poulenc, and other masters. We have also been privileged to perform original works of contemporary composers.

Although nationally known soloists often perform with the Chorale, it has been our policy to promote talented young soloists from area colleges and universities. The Chorale holds an annual Collegiate Vocal Competition, now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, that provides the opportunity for young singers to perform with full chorus and orchestra.

The Chorale has performed Handel's *Messiah* over 50 times and performed works by more than 75 composers. The Chorale has collaborated with many other arts organizations, including but not limited to Ballet RI, Fusionworks Dance Company, Newport Contemporary Ballet, Jump! Dance Company, the RI Philharmonic Orchestra, Swanhurst Chorus, and the Greater Bridgeport Symphony Orchestra. The 2024 concerts of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* were a collaboration with the Worcester Polytechnic Institute's chorus and orchestra, bringing over 200 singers and 80 orchestra members together for this great work.

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## Mission Statement

The Chorale strives to ensure a growing and vibrant arts culture through participation, outreach, education, and advocacy.

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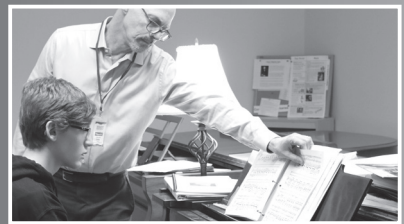
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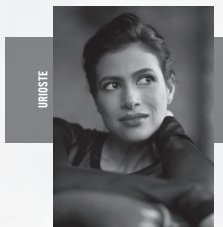
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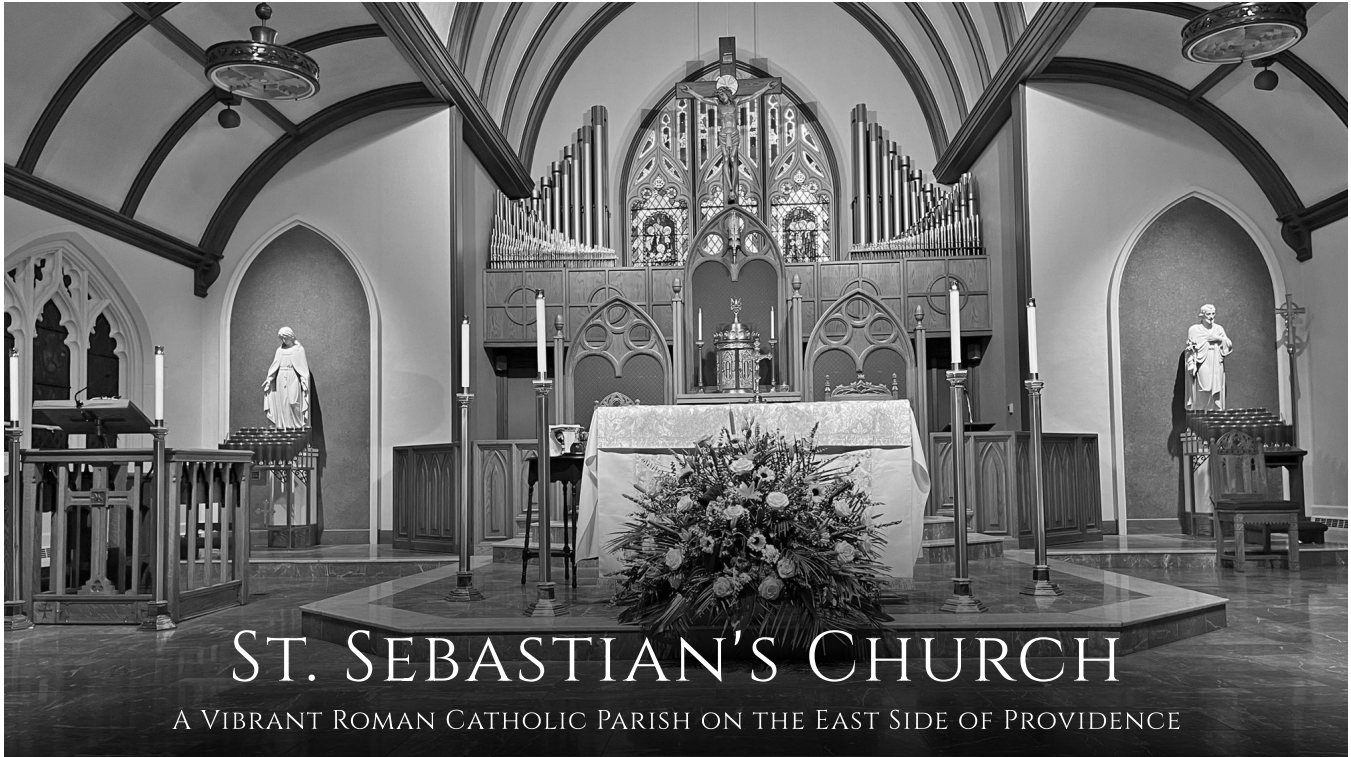
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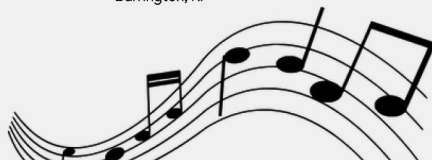
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| <p><b>24</b> An Afternoon of Chamber Music<br/>Featuring members and friends of COBSJ</p> <p><b>28</b> Waves and Echoes: Nature, Myth, and Majesty<br/>Mendelssohn's "The Hebrides" Overture, Rhode Island composer Eliane Aberdam's <i>Otohimne: Double Bass Concerto</i>, arranged for chamber orchestra, and Haydn's majestic <i>Symphony No. 104, "London"</i><br/>Joseph Bentley, guest soloist (double bass)<br/>Eliane Aberdam, guest composer</p> <p><b>9</b> Voices of Power: Beethoven, Bloch &amp; Farrrenc<br/>Beethoven's <i>Prometheus Overture</i>, Bloch's <i>Concerto Grosso No. 1</i>, and Louise Farrrenc's powerful <i>Symphony No. 3, Op. 36</i><br/>Gideon Rubin, guest soloist (piano)</p> | <p><b>8</b> A Sanctuary in Sound<br/>Costa Rican composer Julio Fonseca's sacred-inspired <i>El Cenáculo y el Gólgota</i> paired with Brahms's <i>Lyrical Serenade No. 1, Op. 11</i></p> <p><b>3</b> Masterworks and Milestones<br/>Music Director Luis Viquez performs Mozart's <i>Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622</i> under the baton of Maestro Emeritus Dr. Edward Markward, followed by Beethoven's iconic <i>Symphony No. 7, Op. 92</i></p> <p><b>31</b> An Afternoon of Chamber Music<br/>Featuring members and friends of COBSJ</p> |
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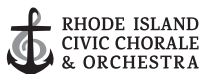
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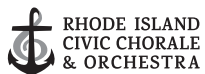
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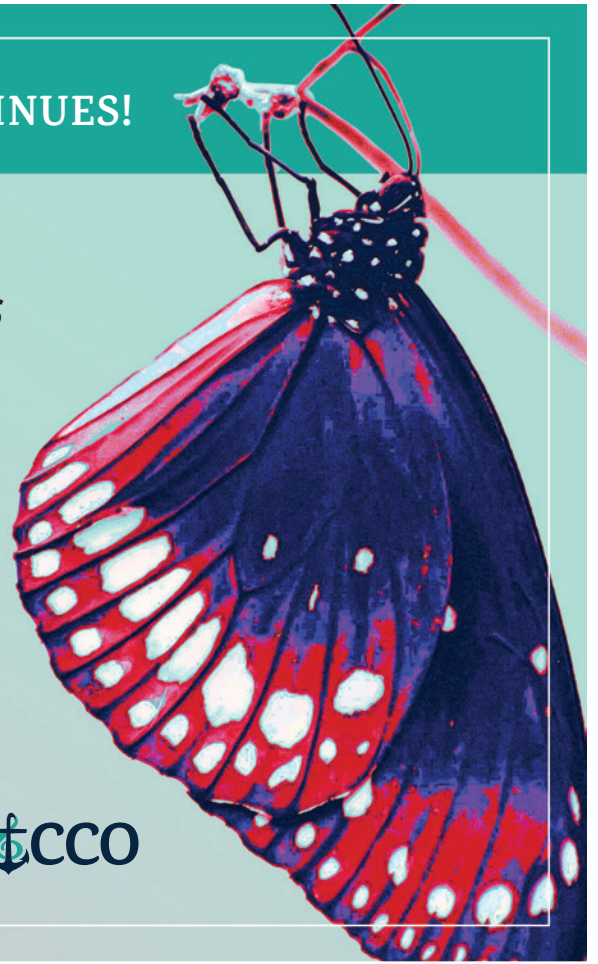
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**Everlasting Light:  
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We spend an afternoon celebrating the richness of Jewish musical heritage, featuring the luminous vocal works of Salamone Rossi along with Leonard Bernstein's electrifying *Chichester Psalms*. Experience the profound spirituality, passion, and joy of musical expression in this stirring program.

Sunday, May 31, 2026 | 3:00pm  
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Any questions?  
Please be in touch with Dr. Devon Russo  
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