Rising Waters Collective



PROGRAM

Love Let the Wind Cry	Undine Smith Moore
Creole Girl	H. Leslie Adams & Leslie Morgan Collins
Bésame Mucho	Consuelo Velázquez
Els segadors	trad.
Polo **from *Siete canciones populares españolas***	Manuel de Falla
Crudel, perchè finora **from *Le nozze di Figaro***	W.A. Mozart/Lorenzo Da Ponte
Voi, che sapete **from *Le nozze di Figaro***	W.A. Mozart/Lorenzo Da Ponte
Judy Blume's Bookstore **from *Songs of Resilience***	Sheila Silver/Stephen Kitsakos
May We **from *Songs of Resilience***	Sheila Silver/Rob Lewis
Take What You Need	Reena Esmail

Performers

Julia Benzinger, *mezzo soprano*
Holly Boaz, *soprano*
Amy Boers, *piano*
Ibidunni Ojikutu, *soprano*
José Rubio, *baritone*
Korland Simmons, *tenor*
Lucy Weber, *mezzo soprano*

NOTES

Welcome and thank you for being here with us to celebrate art, beauty, community, and solidarity through the power of music and the human voice.

Tonight's program opens with Undine Smith Moore's **Love Let the Wind Cry**, a setting of Sappho that places one of history's most ancient surviving voices in the hands of one of America's most important composers. Moore, a Black American composer and educator who spent decades at Virginia State University training generations of musicians, understood that love and beauty are forms of resilience.

Creole Girl is the sixth and final song of H. Leslie Adams' song cycle *Nightsongs: Six Afro-American Songs*, composed in 1961 to a text by Leslie Morgan Collins. Adams was known for bringing together the harmonic language of contemporary classical composition with the deep roots of African American folk and jazz traditions, always in service of the poetry he set. Collins' poem asks a woman of mixed heritage where her soul truly belongs, tracing the Spanish, French, African, and American threads of her identity through the simple acts of dancing, laughing, singing, and crying. It is a song about the complexity of carrying multiple inheritances at once, and about the beauty of belonging to all of them.

Bésame Mucho was written by Consuelo Velázquez, a Mexican concert pianist and composer from Jalisco who began playing piano at four years old and performed at Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts by the time she was in her twenties. She wrote it as a teenager, before she had ever been kissed, drawing musical inspiration from an aria by Spanish composer Enric Granados (Often credited as Enrique Granados). The song went on to become the most recorded and covered Spanish-language song of all time, performed by artists from The Beatles to Frank Sinatra to José Carreras. Velázquez was also elected to the Mexican Congress and served as president of the Society of Authors and Composers of Mexico, groundbreaking achievements for a Mexican woman of her era.

Els Segadors, the Catalan national anthem, began as a seventeenth-century harvest song and became an anthem of resistance during the 1640 Catalan Revolt. It has been banned, suppressed, and sung in defiance ever since. Manuel de Falla's **Polo**, from his *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas*, draws from the deep well of Andalusian Romani flamenco. These are two songs from the Iberian Peninsula that speak directly to survival, and cultural survival through music.

Mozart and Da Ponte's **Crudel, perchè finora** is the duet between the Count and Susanna from *Le Nozze di Figaro.* The Count believes he is entitled to whatever he wants, including his wife's chambermaid, Susanna has absolutely no intention of giving in to him, and the story of the intelligence and wit she and the other servants deploy to outmaneuver him is credited with helping fan the flames of the French Revolution.

Judy Blume's Bookstore and **May We** are the fifth and seventh songs of *Songs of Resilience*, both with music by Sheila Silver. The first, with text by Stephen Kitsakos, tells the true story of a narrator who drives from central Florida to Key West after reading about Judy Blume's bookstore on Truth Social, and spends an entire day in defiant, joyful communion with a table of banned books. It is resistance as a daily, personal, entirely human act. The second, with text by Rob Lewis, closes the cycle as a sustained prayer: that the pace of breathing reclaim the pace of living, that the invisible and silent be given back their ancient labels of miracle, and that we walk the round road together where everyone is kin. It ends with the line that carries the weight of everything that came before it: "May we be saved by what we save." Silver was born in Seattle and we are proud to bring her work home this August.

Reena Esmail's **Take What You Need** closes the evening. It has been performed in jails, shelters, schools, and memorial services. It is offered here in the spirit in which it was written: as a space where a room full of people can turn to one another and remember what we are capable of, together.

Julia Benzinger, Holly Boaz, Lucy Weber, & Ibidunni Ojikutu
Co-Directors, Rising Waters Collective

TEXTS

Love Let the Wind Cry **Undine Smith Moore/Sappho**

Love let the wind cry
On the dark mountain,
Bending the ash trees
And the tall hemlocks
With the great voice of
Thunderous legions,
How I adore thee.

Let the hoarse torrent
In the blue canyon,
Murmuring mightily
Out of the gray mist
Of primal chaos
Cease not proclaiming
How I adore thee.

Let the long rhythm
Of crunching rollers,
Breaking and bursting
On the white seaboard
Titan and tireless,
Tell, while the world stands,
How I adore thee.

Love, let the clear call
Of the tree cricket,
Frailest of creatures,
Green as the young grass,
Mark with his trilling
Resonant bell-note,
How I adore thee.

But, more than all sounds,
Surer, serener,
Fuller of passion
And exultation,
Let the hushed whisper
In thine own heart say,
How I adore thee.

TEXTS

Creole Girl **H. Leslie Adams/Lesie Morgan Collins**

When you dance, do you think of Spain,
Purple skirts and clipping castanets,
Creole Girl?

When you laugh, do you think of France,
Golden wine and mincing minuets,
Creole Girl?

When you sing, do you think of young America,
Grey guns and battling bayonets

When you cry,
Do you think of Africa,
Blue nights and casual canzonets?

When you dance, do you think of Spain,
Purple skirts and clipping castanets,
Creole Girl?

TEXTS

Bésame mucho — **Consuelo Velázquez**

Bésame, bésame mucho — Kiss me, kiss me a lot
Como si fuera esta la noche — As if tonight were
La última vez — the last time

Bésame, bésame mucho — Kiss me a lot
Que tengo miedo a perderte — For I'm scared to lose you,
Perderte después — lose you again

Bésame, bésame mucho — Kiss me, kiss me a lot
Como si fuera esta la noche — As if tonight were
La última vez — the last time

Bésame, bésame mucho — Kiss me a lot
Que tengo miedo a perderte — For I'm scared to lose you,
Perderte después — lose you again

Quiero tenerte muy cerca — I want to have you close
Mirarme en tus ojos — Look at myself in your eyes
Verte junto a mi — See you together with me
Piensa que tal vez mañana — I think that maybe tomorrow
Yo ya estaré lejos — I will already be far away
Muy lejos de aquí — Very far away from you

Bésame, bésame mucho — Kiss me, kiss me a lot
Como si fuera esta la noche — As if tonight were
La última vez — the last time

Bésame, bésame mucho — Kiss me a lot
Que tengo miedo a perderte — For I'm scared to lose you,
Perderte después — lose you again

Bésame mucho — Kiss me a lot
Que tengo miedo a perderte — For I'm scared to lose you,
Perderte después — lose you again
Que tengo miedo a perderte — For I am scared to lose you,
Perderte después — lose you again
Perderte después — lose you again

Program Notes

TEXTS

Els Segdors — **trad.**

Catalunya triomfant,
tornarà a ser rica i plena.
Endarrera aquesta gent
tan ufana i tan superba.

Catalonia triumphant
Will once again be rich and bountiful,
Drive them back, these people
So conceited and so arrogant.

Bon cop de falç,
Bon cop de falç,
Defensors de la terra!
Bon cop de falç!

A good blow with the sickle,
A good blow with the sickle,
Defenders of the land!
A good blow with the sickle!

Ara és hora, segadors.
Ara és hora d'estar alerta.
Per quan vingui un altre juny
esmolem ben bé les eines.

Now is the time, reapers,
Now is the time to be alert.
For when another June comes,
Let us sharpen our tools well.

Bon cop de falç,
Bon cop de falç,
Defensors de la terra!
Bon cop de falç!

A good blow with the sickle,
A good blow with the sickle,
Defenders of the land!
A good blow with the sickle!

Polo — **Manuel de Falla**

¡Ay!
Guardo una,
¡Ay! Guardo una,
¡Ay!
¡Guardo una pena en mi pecho,
¡Guardo una pena en mi pecho,
¡Ay!
Que a nadie se la diré!

Ah!
I keep a…
Ah! I hold a,
Ah!
I hold a pain in my chest!
I hold a pain in my breast!
Ah!
that will I tell to no one!

Malhaya el amor, malhaya,
Malhaya el amor, malhaya,
¡Ay!
¡Y quien me lo dió a entender!

Curse love, curse it,
Curse love, curse it,
Ah!
And [a curse on] whoever made me feel it!

¡Ay!

Ah!

Program Notes

TEXTS

Crudel, perchè finora
IL CONTE
Crudel! Perché finora
farmi languir così?

SUSANNA
Signor, la donna ognora
tempo ha dir di sì.

IL CONTE
Dunque, in giardin verrai?

SUSANNA
Se piace a voi, verrò.

IL CONTE
E non mi mancherai?

SUSANNA
No, non vi mancherò.

IL CONTE
Mi sento dal contento
pieno di gioia il cor.

SUSANNA
Scusatemi se mento,
voi che intendete amor.

W.A. Mozart/Lorenzo Da Ponte
THE COUNT
Heartless! Why until now
do you leave me to languish?

SUSANNA
Sir, every lady
has her time to say yes.

THE COUNT
Then you'll come to the garden?

SUSANNA
If it pleases you, I'll come.

THE COUNT
And you won't fail me?

SUSANNA
No, I won't fail you.

THE COUNT
My contented heart
now feels full of joy!

SUSANNA
Forgive me if I am lying,
all you who understand love's ways.

Voi, che sapete
Voi che sapete
che cosa è amor,
donne, vedete
s'io l'ho nel cor.
Quello ch'io provo
vi ridirò,
è per me nuovo,
capir nol so.
Sento un affetto

W.A. Mozart/Lorenzo Da Ponte
You who know
what love is,
Ladies, see
if it is in my heeart.
All that I feel
I will explain;
Since it is new to me,
I don't understand it.
I have a feeling

Program Notes

TEXTS

pien di desir,
ch'ora è diletto,
ch'ora è martir.
Gelo e poi sento
l'alma avvampar,
e in un momento
torno a gelar.
Ricerco un bene
fuori di me,
non so chi'l tiene,
non so cos'è.

Full of desire,
Which now is pleasure,
Now is torment.
I freeze, then I feel
My spirit all ablaze,
And the next moment
Turn again to ice.
I seek for a treasure
Outside of myself;
I know not who holds it
Nor what it is.

Sospiro e gemo
senza voler,
palpito e tremo
senza saper.
Non trovo pace
notte né dì,
ma pur mi piace
languir così.

I sigh and I groan
Without wishing to,
I flutter and tremble
Without knowing why.
I find no peace
By night or day,
But yet to languish thus
Is sheer delight.

Voi che sapete
che cosa è amor,
donne, vedete
s'io l'ho nel cor.

You who know
what love is,
Laadies, see if it is
What I have in my heart.

Judy Blume's Bookstore
I read about it first on Truth Social,
then Googled it to find out more.
The table in the bookshop with the sign that read:
"We read banned books," in Judy Blume's
Bookstore.
That table draped in yellow caution tape,
a hazard I could not ignore.

Sheila Silver/Stephen Kitsakos

TEXTS

So I had to see it for myself,
That blasphemous table,
That shameful table with the banderole proclaiming:
"We read banned books."
They sell banned books? in Judy Blume's Bookstore.
So I got in my car in central Florida and
Pumped the pedal 'til "Key West Ahead"
Appeared on a sign, ten miles to go,
To that baby blue dot in the middle of red.
And there it was! Judy Blume's Bookstore!
And there she was! Judy Blume!
Surrounded by tourists and families and schnooks.
Enveloped by fans who were buying her books.
Seducing like a spider setting sights on a fly.
Taking selfies and chatting when she caught my eye.
"I'm a mother," I said, and a "Mom for Liberty" too.
"Likewise," she said. "I'm a mother, too,
and I'm all for liberty, through and through."
"Take a look. See what's on offer.
You won't turn into a pillar of salt!"

And there they were on that table of resistance
Margaret Atwood, Jean Jacques Rousseau,
James Baldwin, the Barenstein Bears,
And lots of covers with a rainbow.
Biographies, fiction, roman a clef.
But when I saw Danielle Steel, Danielle Steel, I said
What the F!?? (WTF)
The hours went by, I lost track of time.
They were ready to lock the door.
When I realized I had spent the day
Thumbing through books, reading the books,
loving the books on that table of resistance.
And maybe in this instance, tomorrow,
I'd come back for more in
Judy Bloom's Bookstore.

Program Notes

TEXTS

May We **Sheila Silver/Rob Lewis**

May the pace of breathing
reclaim the pace of living.
May we move slow and mend things.

May the Invisible and the Silent be given back
their ancient labels that say Miracle!

May the one sun keep shining equally on us all.
May it burn through the screen fog
and show us where we are.

May it light the face behind the mask of the
"other" until we see into the mirror.

May the one earth keep rolling beneath our
common feet.

Left feet, right feet, white feet, brown feet,
webbed feet, hooved feet, cloven feet,
feet into talons, wings, fins.

May we walk the round road together,
where every kind is kin.

May we be saved by what we save.

TEXTS

Take What You Need

Reena Esmail (*1983)
Texts: Isa Upanishad (verses 6-7) and selections from Kabir (English and Hindi)

Take a moment
Take a breath
Take time
Take care

Take heart
Take hope
Take a step
Take a chance

Take courage
Take charge
Take a stand
Take pride

Take joy
Take pause
Take a moment
Take a breath

Take what you need

ARTISTS



Julia Benzinger makes opera. She also builds organizations, directs productions, advocates for who gets to stand on the stage and whose stories get told, and is raising three sons in the Pacific Northwest and Barcelona.

In the 2025-2026 season she conceived and directed the *Vox Project* with Rising Waters Collective, a first-of-its-kind opera crawl featuring six unique site-specific interpretations of Poulenc's *La voix humaine* across Seattle in a single day, including a film version released on streaming platforms. This summer, she will be performing **Her** in the North American premiere of *disPLACE*, a contemporary chamber opera addressing displacement and cultural identity, in co-production with Theatre Off Jackson in Seattle's International District.

Over more than twenty years she has performed principal roles on stages across Europe, the United States, and the Middle East, including seven seasons as a principal mezzo-soprano at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Her repertoire defies easy categorization, spanning lyric, dramatic, and character mezzo territory into Falcon soprano, from Strauss and Wagner to Britten, Janáček, Bizet, and Fauré. Favorite roles include: **Komponist** (Ariadne auf Naxos), **Mère Marie** (Dialogues des Carmélites), **Mistress Quickly** (Falstaff), **Venus** (Tannhäuser), Kundry (Parsifal), **The Fox** (The Cunning Little Vixen), **Le Prince Charmant** (Cendrillon), **Fricka** (Das Rheingold and Die Walküre), **Erda** (Götterdämmerung), **Zia Principessa** (Suor Angelica), **Zita** (Gianni Schicchi), **Erste Norn** (Die Götterdämmerung), and the title roles in **Carmen**, **Lucretia** (The Rape of Lucretia), **Casandra** (Gnecchi), **Pénélope** (Fauré), and **Hänsel** (Hänsel und Gretel).

Julia divides her time between Bainbridge Island and Barcelona.



Harrison Leslie Adams Jr. (December 30, 1932 – May 24, 2024) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, where he began piano lessons at age four. He studied voice, piano, and composition at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, earning his bachelor's degree in 1955, followed by a master's from California State University, Long Beach and a Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1973. He served for many years as a choral conductor, musical director, and educator before becoming a composer full time in 1979. His music works largely within the Western classical tradition while incorporating elements of African American vernacular music, including jazz, gospel, and folksong.

His art songs have been performed by leading operatic artists worldwide including Denyce Graves and Damien Geter, and his orchestral works performed by the Cleveland Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, and Iceland Symphony. He was awarded the Cleveland Arts Prize in 2015 and remained active as an organist and composer, revising his works until the end of his life. Nightsongs, his 1961 song cycle setting African American poetry, remains among the most significant works in the American art song repertoire.

ARTISTS



Holly Boaz is a performer, educator, and arts leader whose work spans the stage, the classroom, and the heart of her local arts community. Praised by the Seattle Times for her "expertly sung" performances, she has performed over 30 operatic roles across the U.S. and internationally, including engagements with Seattle Opera and England's Aldeburgh Festival.

A dedicated educator, Holly has served on the voice faculty at Pacific Lutheran University for 18 years. She is a frequent adjudicator and clinician for arts organizations throughout the Northwest and holds degrees from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and The Hartt School. Her training includes fellowships and apprenticeships at the Aspen Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, the Britten-Pears Programme, and Seattle Opera Young Artist Program. Recent and upcoming engagements include appearances with the Northwest Sinfonietta, Symphony Tacoma, Drama Dock Theatre Company, the South Sound New Works Festival, Puget Sound Concert Opera, SkyOpera, and Rising Waters Collective.



Amy Boers is well known as a collaborative pianist, music director, singer, and church musician.

As pianist and collaborator, she currently holds positions at Pacific Lutheran University (staff pianist), Symphony Tacoma (principal keyboard), and Symphony Tacoma Voices (pianist and assistant rehearsal conductor). Her work at Pacific Lutheran University is varied between accompanying the acclaimed Choir of the West, accompanying and coaching private voice students, team-teaching numerous theater classes, and most recently she was named Music Director for productions in PLU's Theater & Dance program, including *Amélie*, music revues Off Broadway, and When You Wish Upon a Star, and Jasper in Deadland (Spring 2024).

As a conductor, in addition to her music directing, Amy has led regional honor choirs and coached developing choral conductors from across the Western Hemisphere at the annual Cascade Conducting Workshop in Tacoma, WA. As a true collaborative artist known for her deep insight and "getting inside the conductor's head," Amy provides feedback through the special lens of accompanist, singer and conductor combined. She has led pedagogical workshops for choral conductors and collaborative artists regionally and in Canada. Her recent session "The Power of Two" focused on collaborative rehearsal techniques to develop between conductor and pianist. Presented at the 2024 Northwest American Choral Directors Association regional convention, she received rave reviews and requests for repeated presentations.

In addition to her keyboard artistry, she is an active singer both recording commercial music and performing live. She treasures singing with Musing, a beautiful project-based treble ensemble, as well as her vocal collaborations in the studio with local composers and singers. She is currently in the midst of recording vocal tracks for an upcoming album of new arrangements of traditional gospel songs and hymns, as well as new compositions in this genre.

When not making music, she loves to garden, cycle, and travel with her family. Most important to her at this time is spending time with her three beloved grandchildren, Adler, Jack, and Holden.

ARTISTS



Lorenzo Da Ponte (born March 10, 1749, Céneda, near Treviso, Veneto [Italy]—died Aug. 17, 1838, New York, N.Y., U.S.) was an Italian poet and librettist best known for his collaboration with Mozart.

Jewish by birth, Da Ponte was baptized in 1763 and later became a priest; freethinking (expressing doubts about religious doctrine) and his pursuit of an adulterous relationship, however, eventually led, in 1779, to his expulsion from the Venetian state. Taking up residence in Vienna (probably in 1780), he became official poet to the court of Emperor Joseph II and in that capacity wrote successful librettos for numerous musicians. It was there in 1783 that Da Ponte made the acquaintance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and entered upon the finest period of his literary career. Three masterpieces appeared in rapid succession—*Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), and *Così fan tutte* (1790). During the same period he achieved his greatest popular success with the libretto to Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara* (1787). Da Ponte's enduring merit derived from his ability to infuse borrowed themes with new life and to interweave tragic and comic elements. His version of the Don Juan legend, in particular, exercised a lasting literary influence.

Left without support after Joseph II's death in 1790, Da Ponte resumed his wanderings. After a period in London (1792–1805), he emigrated to the United States to escape his creditors, settling finally in New York, where he devoted himself to teaching Italian language and literature at Columbia College and promoting Italian cultural activities. His four-volume *Memorie* (1823–27; Memoirs of Lorenzo Da Ponte), although mainly concerned with portraying the author as a victim of fate and enemies, is valuable for its portrait of early 19th-century America. -Britannica



Reena Esmail's music weaves together the traditions of Hindustani and Western classical music, drawing musicians from many perspectives into shared creative spaces. She divides her attention evenly between orchestral, chamber and choral work. She has written commissions for ensembles including the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Seattle Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony and her music has featured on multiple Grammy-nominated albums, including The Singing Guitar by Conspirare, BRUITS by Imani Winds, and Healing Modes by Brooklyn Rider. Many of her choral works are published by Oxford University Press, and her piece TaReKiTa has sold over 100,000 copies worldwide. Her life and music was profiled on Season 3 of PBS Great Performances series Now Hear This, as well as Frame of Mind, a podcast from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Esmail was the Los Angeles Master Chorale's 2020-2025 Swan Family Artist in Residence, and was Seattle Symphony's 2020-21 Composer-in-Residence. She has been in residence with Tanglewood Music Center (co-Curator – 2023), Spoleto Festival (Chamber Music Composer-in-Residence – 2024) and Marlboro Music Festival (2025 Composer in Residence)

Esmail holds degrees in composition from The Juilliard School (BM'05) and the Yale School of Music (MM'11, MMA'14, DMA'18). Her primary teachers have included Susan Botti, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Theofanidis, Christopher Rouse and Samuel Adler. She received a Fulbright-Nehru grant to study Hindustani music in India. Her Hindustani music teachers include Srimati Lakshmi Shankar and Gaurav Mazumdar, and she currently studies and collaborates with Saili Oak. Her doctoral thesis, entitled Finding Common Ground: Uniting Practices in Hindustani and Western Art Musicians explores the methods and challenges of the collaborative process between Hindustani musicians and Western composers.

ARTISTS



Manuel de Falla was born in Cadiz in 1876 to a Valencian father and Catalan mother. While his family moved to Madris when he was a teenager, de Falla remained fascinated by the music and culture of his native Andalusia, and in particular that of flamenco. He composed numerous operas and *zarzuelas* and is often cited as one of Spain's most important composers. He dies in exile in Argentina after fleeing Spain in 1939, following Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War.



Stephen Kitsakos is an opera librettist, writer, and theater practitioner. His work in opera includes writing the libretto for *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, adapted from the bestselling novel by Khaled Hosseini (Seattle Opera, Nominee Best New Opera World Premiere International Opera Awards), *The Wooden Sword*, and the opera cantata, *The White Rooster: A Tale of Compassion* for the Smithsonian, all with composer, Sheila Silver. With composer, Martin Hennessy, he wrote the libretto for the opera adaptation of Tomasz Jedrwoski's modern LGBT classic, *Swimming in the Dark*, in collaboration with the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, *The Pleasing Recollection*, and the opera-theater monologues, *An Incident in Sutton Square* (Finalist 2023 National Opera Association Chamber Opera Prize), and *The Woman in Penthouse A*.

His work as a writer includes the novel, The Accidental Pilgrim (ASD Publishing), and co-editor, with Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan, Key West Noir for Akashic Books. He has been a contributing writer for The Sondheim Review and ABC-CLIO's Music in American Life.

Kitsakos has worked as a Theater director and dramaturg concentrating on developing new works with established and emerging playwrights as well as the experimental one-act plays of Tennessee Williams for the Tennessee Williams Key West Museum.

Kitsakos is the recipient of grants or commissions from the Seattle Opera, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Commission on the Arts, the Florida Council on the Arts, the Catskill Watershed Commission, the Episcopal Diocese of New York, the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys, the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, NYFA, the American Opera Project, the Rowe Foundation & the Majors Downs Fund. His Professional affiliations include Opera America, the Dramatists Guild, and ASCAP.

A graduate of New York University & the BMI Musical Theater Workshop, he was a member of the Theatre Arts Faculty at SUNY New Paltz in New York's Hudson Valley from 1999-2013 teaching courses in performance & theater studies. Additional teaching includes work at Shantigar, the spiritual retreat of Jean-Claude van Italie, Kripalu, The Studios of Key West and UCLA Osher.

ARTISTS



A musical prodigy from the age of six, **W.A. Mozart** is considered by many to be the greatest musician of all time. His legions of works include famous pieces for symphonies and operas, choral and piano; nearly every one is considered a masterpiece of the classical music form.

Beginning at age 10, Mozart composed fifty symphonies during his life. In his youth, he was knighted by the Pope and performed for the King and Queen of England. Gifted with "perfect pitch," Mozart's inborn abilities as a natural musician became increasingly evident the older he grew. Other seemingly supernatural gifts were equally stunning. It was not uncommon for young Mozart to pick up an instrument and play it without a single lesson.

At twenty-five, Mozart married and settled in his homeland of Austria. Although Emperor Joseph of Austria briefly employed him, Mozart struggled to clothe and feed his family. Ironically enough, the emperor clothed Mozart in fine apparel and bestowed upon him the gift of a large ring to be worn during performances.

Mozart wrote every genre of music known to him, including symphonies, concertos, chamber music, church music, operas, and operettas—most of which are regarded as masterpieces today. Among his most acclaimed works are the operas *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Although Mozart died at the age of thirty-five, his legacy on western music is profound: not just in terms of sheer numbers, but in their emotional impact, his works include the frivolous and lively to the solemn and morose.
-The Kennedy Center



A frequent performer in the Pacific Northwest (and Bellingham High School alum), Soprano **Ibidunni Ojikutu** is known for having a strong foundation in traditional and contemporary repertoire and has studied extensively in both areas. Ms.Ojikutu made her Seattle Opera debut as **Strawberry Woman** in their 2011 production of *Porgy and Bess*. Opera News said of her performance, "Ibidunni Ojikutu's turn as Strawberry Woman was as charming as the lilt in her voice."

A recipient of the top award in the Seattle Opera Guild Training Grant Competition, Ms. Ojikutu is a teaching and freelance artist with Seattle Opera Outreach and Seattle Opera. Ms. Ojikutu was also pleased to reprise the role of Strawberry Woman in Seattle Opera's 2018 production of Porgy and Bess along with making her role debut as **Serena** in the same production. Other Seattle Opera performances include singing the debut of "*Burn*" a new opera created for the Seattle Opera Creation Lab.

Ms. Ojikutu was thrilled to make her debut with Seattle Art Song Society (SASS) as a performer in their Black Voices and Womxn's Voices Concerts. It was also a privilege to be included as a featured artist on Lakewold Garden's "Music From Home" concert series, as well as being a featured performer on Bellingham Symphony Orchestra's "Home For The Holidays" concert.

Ms. Ojikutu's project, *Roar* with collaborative pianist Rebecca Manalac, was a concert of songs of and about women. Featuring the works of Florence Price, Nina Simone, Libby Larsen, and others, Roar also featured the west coast premier of "Nobody Knows" with words by Mahze Kane & music by Nailah Nombeko.

Upcoming projects include "*In The Garden of Sonder*", a film project with Lakewold Garden's Music From Home, a debut with Portland Opera in their upcoming production of Pulitzer-winning *The Central Park Five* and a currently unnamed recording project featuring Libby Larsen's "*Try Me Good King*". Ms. Ojikutu is also an active adjudicator and masterclass clinician.

ARTISTS



Internationally acclaimed baritone **José Rubio** has garnered attention performing at major and regional venues across the world. Mr. Rubio's international operatic engagements have included his operatic debuts in Vienna and Germany, including Berlin Staatsoper, and the famed Elbphilharmonie concert hall. Through involvement with the iSing! International Festival, he has performed extensively throughout China leading to debuts at the most important opera houses in China, the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, Shanghai Grand Theater, and the Jiangsu Grand Theater in Nanjing.

His operatic credits include the title roles in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Gianni Schicchi*. Other credits include **Escamillo** in *Carmen*, **Enrico** in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, **Marcello** and **Schaunard** in *La Bohème*, **Guglielmo** in *Così fan Tutte*, **Tarquinius** in *The Rape of Lucretia*, **Tonio** in *I Pagliacci*, **Alfio** in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, **Dr. Malatesta** in *Don Pasquale*, **Hannah Before** in *As One*, **El Payador** in *Maria de Buenos Aires*, **Harlekino** in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, **Dr. Falke** in *Die Fledermaus* and **Captain Von Trapp** in *The Sound of Music*. His leading credits include principal roles for Cincinnati Opera, Seattle Opera, Portland Opera, Nashville Opera, Alamo City Opera, Asheville Lyric Opera, Music of Remembrance, Tacoma Opera, Vashon Opera, and Juneau Lyric Opera.

On the concert stage he has appeared as a soloist at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall and the Tianjin Julliard School. He has been a guest soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, the Suzhou Symphony Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, Macau Symphony Orchestra, Chengdu Symphony, Albany Symphony, Evansville Philharmonic, Boise Philharmonic, Bellingham Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Northwest, and the Rogue Valley Symphony.



Sappho (born c. 610, Lesbos [Greece]—died c. 570 bce) was a Greek lyric poet greatly admired in all ages for the beauty of her writing style. She ranks with Archilochus and Alcaeus, among Greek poets, for her ability to impress readers with a lively sense of her personality. Her language contains elements from Aeolic vernacular speech and Aeolic poetic tradition, with traces of epic vocabulary familiar to readers of Homer. Her phrasing is concise, direct, and picturesque. She has the ability to stand aloof and judge critically her own ecstasies and grief, and her emotions lose nothing of their force by being recollected in tranquillity.

Her work contains only a few apparent allusions to the political disturbances of the time, which are so frequently reflected in the verse of her contemporary Alcaeus. Her themes are invariably personal—primarily concerned with her thiasos, the usual term (not found in Sappho's extant writings) for the female community, with a religious and educational background, that met under her leadership. Sappho herself attacks in her poems other thiasoi directed by other women.

Frequent images in Sappho's poetry include flowers, bright garlands, naturalistic outdoor scenes, altars smoking with incense, perfumed unguents to sprinkle on the body and bathe the hair—that is, all the elements of Aphrodite's rituals. In the thiasos the girls were educated and initiated into grace and elegance for seduction and love. Singing, dancing, and poetry played a central role in this educational process and other cultural occasions. As was true for other female communities, including the Spartan, and for the corresponding masculine institutions, the practice of homoeroticism within the thiasos played a role in the context of initiation and education. In Sappho's poetry love is passion, an inescapable power that moves at the will of the goddess; it is desire and sensual emotion; it is nostalgia and memory of affections that are now distant, but shared by the community of the thiasos.

ARTISTS



Sheila Silver is an important and vital voice in American music today. Her compositions have been commission and performed by numerous orchestras, ensembles, and soloists throughout the world. She has written in a wide range of mediums: from solo instrumental works to large orchestral works; from opera to feature film scores. Her musical language is a unique synthesis of the tonal and atonal worlds, coupled with a rhthmic complexity which is both masterful and compelling. Again and again, audiences and critics praise her music as powerful and emotionally charged, accessible, and masterfully conceived. "Only a few composers in any generation enliven the art form with the musical language and herald new directions in music. Sheila Silver is such a visionary." (Wetterauer Zeitung)

Her opera, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, based on Khaled Hosseini's internartional best-selling novel, was premiered in 2023 by Seattle Opera to rave reviews and was short-listed for "Best World Premiere" by the International Opera Awards 2023.



Praised for his ringing voice and easy stage presence, tenor **Korland Simmons** is a recent transplant to the Pacific Northwest. Most recently, he has appeared in the following roles: **Nate** in *Highway 1 USA* (Puget Sound Concert Opera), **Police Buddy 2/Congregant 2** (Blue -Seattle Opera), **Don Ottavio** (Don Giovani-Opera Bend), and **Andres/Cochenille/Franz/Pittichinaccio** (Les Contes d'Hoffmann-Pacific Northwest Opera). Previous roles include **Don Basilio/ Don Curzio** (Le Nozze di Figaro), **Mendoza** (Hiram Titus' Rosina), **Remus** (Treemonisha), **Remendado** (Carmen), **Eduardo Milfort** (La Cambiale Matrimonio) and **Mayor Upfold** (Albert Herring).

In addition to opera, Korland is also chorister at Seattle Opera. Korland sang the role of the **Magician** in Puget Sound Concert Opera's production of *The Consul* in March 2026.

Korland made his Rising Waters Collective debut as **Him** in the 2025 Vox Project.

ARTISTS



American baritone **Morgan Smith** is widely admired for the power and beauty of his voice and for dramatic portrayals that bring extraordinary emotional depth to the operatic stage. One of the most prolific interpreters of modern repertoire working today, Morgan has been entrusted with the creation of 17 roles in world premieres, including **Starbuck** in Jake Heggie's widely celebrated *Moby-Dick*, a performance praised for its moral gravity and searing intensity. His commitment to contemporary opera has also included major roles in such works as *The (R)Evolution of Steve Jobs*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Silent Night*, *The Passenger*, *Morning Star*, *Blind Injustice*, and *All Is Calm*, as well as workshops and recording projects for new operas including Kevin Puts' *The Hours*.

Alongside his leadership and advocacy for new works, Morgan has earned consistent acclaim for his interpretation of roles in the core repertoire, including **Scarpia** (Tosca), **Escamillo** (Carmen), the title role in **Don Giovanni**, **Sharpless** (Madama Butterfly), **Count Almaviva** (Le nozze di Figaro), the **Four Villains** (Les contes d'Hoffmann), **Marcello** (La bohème), and the title role in **Eugene Onegin**. Morgan's performances have taken him to leading companies in the United States and abroad, including Seattle Opera, Dallas Opera, Florida Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, LA Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival, Israeli Opera, Houston Grand Opera, the Taiwan National Symphony, and the Berliner Staatsoper. Fully fluent in German, he spent four seasons as a resident artist with Oper Leipzig, singing a wide range of repertoire including: **Figaro** in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, **Billy** in *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, **Papageno** in *Die Zauberflöte*, **Dr. Falke** in *Die Fledermaus*, **Leandre** in *The Love for Three Oranges*, **Whitelaw Savory** in *One Touch of Venus*, **Marcello** in *La bohème*, and **Guglielmo** in *Così fan tutte*.

A frequent concert soloist, Morgan has appeared with orchestras such as the Dallas Symphony, Seattle Symphony, National Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, performing repertoire ranging from Bach, Handel, and Mozart to Brahms, Vaughan Williams, Sir James MacMillan, and Detlef Glanert. Upcoming engagements include a collaboration with Cristian Macelaru (the new Music Director of the Cincinnati Symphony), as soloist in J.S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion.

In this current chapter of his career, Morgan has also become an avid songwriter and Executive Producer. He is currently Executive Producing a recording of Jack Perla's opera, *An American Dream* (set for release in Spring of 2027), which tells the story of a Japanese American family torn apart by incarceration during World War II.



Consuelo Velázquez Torres (1916–2005) was a Mexican concert pianist, composer, and songwriter from Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco who began playing piano at four years old and made her public debut at six. She studied at the National Conservatory in Mexico City and performed at the Palace of Fine Arts, then considered the height of classical music prestige in Mexico. She composed *Bésame Mucho* in 1940, reportedly before she had ever been kissed, drawing musical inspiration from Spanish composer Enrique Granados. She initially performed her own compositions on radio under male pseudonyms, because a young Mexican woman of virtuous standing was not supposed to be on the radio at all. *Bésame Mucho* went on to become the most recorded Spanish-language song in history, covered by The Beatles, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, José Carreras, and hundreds more. Velázquez was also elected to the Mexican Congress and served as president of the Society of Authors and Composers of Mexico.

ARTISTS



Mezzo Soprano **Lucy Campbell Weber** has been a member of the Seattle Opera Chorus since 2008. She has toured with Seattle Opera as a performing artist in their Partnership and Programs department, singing for children in schools throughout Washington State.

She has toured with the productions of Our Earth, Cinderella in Spain, *The Three Feathers*, and is currently touring *Earth to Kenzie* as the **Avatar**.

Lucy has sung roles with the Ohio Light Opera, Tacoma Opera, Sky Opera, N.O.I.S.E, Vashon Opera and Kitsap Opera. She has also performed with Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Spectrum Dance Company.

Lucy is a Co-Director of Rising Waters Collective and made her company debut as **Elle** in *The Vox Project*, a contemporary English adaptation of *La voix humaine*.

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