
SEATTLE PRO MUSICA
KAREN P. THOMAS, CONDUCTOR

New Colossus

Guest composer, Saunder Choi

February 11, 2023

Welcome to *New Colossus*, the fourth concert of our 50th anniversary season! We're delighted to welcome you to our year of celebration—and to the fourth of our five-concert "New American Composer Series."

This year, we celebrate our 50th anniversary by looking forward to our next 50 years, even as we remember our history. In this spirit of re-imagining the future of choral music, we have commissioned five exciting young composers to write new works for our anniversary. Tonight, we feature Saunder Choi, with a performance of five of his choral works, complemented by pieces by Gerald Finzi, Eric William Barnum, and Rupert Lang.

We've enjoyed having Saunder in Seattle this past week to work with the singers of Seattle Pro Musica, and to share his knowledge and talent with students in the Greater Seattle area via our Education and Engagement Program.

We are certain you will enjoy hearing Saunder's music, as well as his insights about his compositional process and the place of new choral music in the world today. Please join us for a meet-and-greet following the concert!

Saunder Choi is a Los Angeles-based Filipino composer and choral artist. His works have been performed by the Philippine Madrigal Singers, the Crossing Choir, the LA Master Chorale Chamber Singers, Tonality, Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, World Youth Choir, Asia Pacific Youth Choir and many others. He has been commissioned by the L.A. Choral Lab, Andrea Veneracion International Choral Festival, SYC Ensemble Singers (Singapore), Choral Arts Initiative, the Earth Choir (Taiwan), Taipei Philharmonic Choir and Women's Choir, Archipelago Singers (Indonesia), and Los Angeles Master Chorale, among others. As an arranger and orchestrator, Saunder has written for Tony Award-winner Lea Salonga, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Filarmónica Portuguesa, ABS-CBN Philharmonic Orchestra, Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, the New York Gay Men's Chorus, Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, the Tim Janis Christmas Shows at Carnegie Hall, Ballet Philippines, and more.



He won the 2017 Indianapolis Symphonic Choir Carol Commission competition and was awarded the 1st prize in the 2014 American Prize for Choral Composition (student division). More recently, he was one of three composers chosen to participate in Pacific Chorale's Choral Sketches Workshop, with renowned composer Tarik O'Regan.

As a tenor, he maintains an active singing schedule in Southern California. He regularly sings with the L.A. Choral Lab, Pacific Chorale, Horizon Chamber Choir, C3LA: Contemporary Choral Collective of Los Angeles, and Tonality. As a SAG-AFTRA session singer, he sang in the soundtrack of Disney's *The Lion King* (2019) and *Mulan* (2020) live action remakes, among others. Born in Manila, Philippines, Saunder holds degrees from De La Salle University – Manila, Berklee College of Music, and the USC Thornton School of Music.

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New Colossus

Guest composer, Saunder Choi
New American Composers Series

February 11, 2023 | Seattle First Baptist Church

CHROMA

Soprano-Alto Ensemble

Spark

Eric William Barnum (b. 1979)

An evocation of the power of music to imbue life with energy and enthusiasm.
Sung in English.

VOX

Mixed-Voice Ensemble

New Colossus

Saunder Choi (b. 1988)

A setting of the last few lines of Emma Lazarus's poem *The New Colossus*, which enshrines the principle that the United States of America has been and will always be a nation of immigrants, regardless of xenophobic political ideologies.
Sung in English.

SEATTLE PRO MUSICA

My spirit sang all day

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

An ecstatic affirmation of the joy that love creates.
Sung in English.

Never again (World premiere)

Saunder Choi

Commissioned by Seattle Pro Musica in celebration of our 50th Anniversary Season, *Never again* is a commentary on the true cost of freedom in a country where the intersection of politics, capitalism, and gun lobbies stands in the way of sensible legislation.
Sung in English.

Earth teach me

Rupert Lang (b. 1948)

A beautiful, meditative, and reflective work based on an Ute Nation prayer. From the Earth we can learn how to live our lives with wisdom and compassion.
Sung in English.

Welcome Table

Saunder Choi

The composer writes: "As a BIPOC, gay immigrant, I often wonder if I will ever be truly welcome in this country... It seems that people are confusing nationalism and love for country with xenophobia and hatred... Perhaps one of these days, we will all be welcome at the table."
Sung in English.

ORPHEON

Tenor-Bass Ensemble

Leron, Leron Sinta

Traditional Filipino song,
arr. by Saunder Choi

"My Dear, Little Leron," is a popular Filipino folk song, portraying people harvesting fruits in the field.
Sung in Tagalog.

SEATTLE PRO MUSICA

A Journey of Your Own

Saunder Choi

An expansive piece about the meaning of "home". The composer says: "Whatever your story is, wherever your journey leads, may it be of your own choosing—always leading with love and courage."
Sung in English and Tagalog.

OUR MISSION

To enrich and inspire our audiences, singers, and community through the experience of choral artistry, and to increase access to and appreciation of choral music.

OUR STATEMENT ON CULTURAL EQUITY

Everyone deserves equal access to a full and vibrant creative life, and this access is essential to a free and healthy society. To support the creative life of our community, Seattle Pro Musica commits to policies and practices of cultural equity that foster equal access, inclusion, and justice.

We recognize cultural equity as a framework of values, policies, and practices that ensures arts institutions serve the needs of all people, especially those who have historically been underserved based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, size, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion.

As we pursue our artistic mission, we will hold ourselves accountable to cultural equity. By acknowledging and challenging inequities, both as an individual arts organization and in partnership with others, we can and will make change happen.

These performances are supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, ArtsFund, ArtsWA, Chorus America, 4Culture, Classical KING FM 98.1, and the City of Seattle, Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs.

Please mute all cell phones and electronic devices. No photography during performances. Thank you.

Program notes, texts, and translations

Conductor and composer **Eric William Barnum's** compositions have been performed throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia. Barnum is currently the Director of Choral Activities at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa and previously, the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. His compositional voice and vision continue to gain popularity around the globe with performances from choirs Internationally. He composes for choral ensembles of all types, from professional to youth choirs, and has received numerous awards and prestigious grants such as a Bush Foundation Artist Fellowship and a McKnight Foundation Grant. He has also held residencies with such ensembles as Choral Arts (Seattle, WA), Cantus (Trondheim, Norway), The Rose Ensemble (St. Paul, MN), Kantorei (Denver, CO), as well as with many collegiate choirs.

Spark is a setting of the well-known poem "To Music" by Maude Gordon-Roby (1868-1927), who believed that music held the power to imbue life with energy and enthusiasm.

Spark

FLY back where Melodies like lilies grow,
My weary heart is bending low;

Fly higher yet to joyful realms above,
Where holy Angels dwell in love.

Fly higher still and hear the Angel throng
And bring to me their Glory-song:

Ah Music, thou and I above the World
May dwell where heaven with shining song is pearled!

While Sun and Moon and all the planets roll
I'll love thee, Music, language of my soul!

Music— lark from on high, song that doth fly, Spark of the sky!

Our concert takes its title from **Saunder Choi's** stunning work, *The New Colossus*, about immigration in the United States. The composer writes:

"I chose to set Emma Lazarus's poem *The New Colossus* because it makes sacrosanct the principle that the United States of America has been and will always be a nation of immigrants, regardless of xenophobic political ideologies. The notion of condemning immigration is against the concept of liberty and the land of the free. In this setting, I chose to only set the last few lines, arguably the more famous part of the poem. The post-minimalistic approach of relentless pulse and repetition is interspersed with a warm, lush section of hope and welcome."

The New Colossus

'Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!'

—Emma Lazarus

The 20th century English composer **Gerald Finzi** is renowned for the lyricism of his songs, especially settings of poems by Thomas Hardy. Finzi grew up during World War I, and the war took a great toll on him, as all three of his brothers were killed, as was his composition teacher. He found solace in poetry, especially that of Thomas Hardy, whose poems, as well as those by Christina Rossetti, he began to set to music. In the poetry of Hardy, and others, Finzi was attracted by the recurrent motif of the innocence of childhood corrupted by adult experience. He taught at the Royal Academy of Music from 1930 to 1933, then moved to the countryside, where he devoted himself to composing and apple-growing, saving a number of rare English apple varieties from extinction.

My spirit sang all day is from Finzi's collection, *Seven Partsongs*—Poems by Robert Bridges, composed in the mid-1930's. The music perfectly captures the poem's ecstatic affirmation of the joy created by love.

My spirit sang all day

My spirit sang all day
O my joy.
Nothing my tongue could say,
Only My joy!
My heart an echo caught
O my joy
And spake,
Tell me thy thought,
Hide not thy joy.
My eyes gan peer around,
O my joy
What beauty hast thou found?
Shew us thy joy.
My jealous ears grew whist;
O my joy
Music from heaven is't,
Sent for our joy?
She also came and heard;
O my joy,
What, said she, is this word?
What is thy joy?
And I replied,
O see, O my joy,
'Tis thee, I cried, 'tis thee:
Thou art my joy.

Never again by **Saunder Choi** (bio on page 1) is the fourth of five new works commissioned by Seattle Pro Musica in honor of our 50th anniversary.

The composer writes:

“In the wake of the shooting in Uvalde, Texas, National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman wrote: ‘May we not just grieve, but give: May we not just ache, but act’ in her poem *Hymn for the Hurting*. This call to action is the inspiration behind *Never Again*, a commentary about the true cost of freedom in a country where the intersection of politics, capitalism, and gun lobbies stands in the way of sensible legislation.”

Never again

Sister’s backpack came home without her.
We may never speak again.

Not enough amendments to mend a broken heart;
A country ripped apart by freedoms, begging
For control, controlled by weapons
In the shape of men, pens poised
To write another future, hearts poisoned
To the thought of change.

Sister’s backpack came home without her.
Again we speak: never again.

If there is power in pain, let us build
A monument beyond our founding,
Life and liberty on the same line,
a line in the sand between just enough
& justice, & we have had enough,
Not enough amendments to mend a broken heart;
A country ripped apart by freedoms.

Sister’s backpack came home without her.
We may never speak again.

—Brian Sonia-Wallace

Rupert Lang is the Director of Music and Organist at Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver, British Columbia. Born in Red Deer, Alberta, he studied music at Cambridge in England, with such luminaries as George Guest, Gillian Weir and John Scott. In 1983 he founded the Vancouver Children’s Choir, which he still directs. ***Earth teach me*** is a beautiful, meditative, and reflective work based on an Ute Nation prayer. From the Earth, we can learn how to live our lives with wisdom and compassion.

Earth teach me

Earth teach me stillness as the grasses are stilled with light.
Earth teach me suffering as old stones suffer with memory.
Earth teach me humility as blossoms are humble with beginning.
Earth teach me caring as the mother who secures her young.
Earth teach me courage as the tree which stands alone.
Earth teach me limitation as the ant which crawls on the ground.
Earth teach me freedom as the eagle which soars in the sky.
Earth teach me resignation as the leaves which die in the fall.
Earth teach me regeneration as the seeds which rise in the spring.
Earth teach me to forget myself as melted snow forgets its life.
Earth teach me to remember kindness as dry fields weep with rain.
Earth teach me.

Saunder Choi (bio on page 1) writes:

“I decided to write ***Welcome Table*** as a follow up to my pieces *New Colossus* and *Give You Rest* (both written for the L.A. Choral Lab) to form a set called *Songs of Welcome*, my personal and continuing musical reflections on being an immigrant in this country. As a BIPOC, gay immigrant, I often wonder if I will ever be truly welcome in this country. Tensions surrounding immigration are at an all-time high, with mothers being separated with their kids, children in detention cells, visa bans; even the legal immigrant status is threatened. It seems that people are confusing nationalism and love for country with xenophobia and hatred. *Welcome Table* is inspired by and reflects on the civil rights spiritual “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table,” examining it from the eyes of an immigrant and the other. Perhaps one of these days, we will all be welcome at the table.”

Seattle Pro Musica co-commissioned this work in 2019.

Welcome Table

Am I welcome?
Am I welcome to sit at the table and eat with you,
Drink with you, feast on milk and honey with you?
Am I welcome?
Are they welcome too?
Are we welcome to sit together as all kinds of people do?
The poor, the hungry, the homeless, refugees?
Are they welcome too?
Are you satisfied?
Are you satisfied with the world that you live in?
Are you satisfied with your wealth, money, and power?
That you eat and never get hungry.
Are you satisfied?
Or are you hungry?
Hungry for wealth, money, power?
Hungry for everything your privilege gets you, un-giving and unforgiving? Are you hungry?
Am I worthy?
Am I self-sufficient?
Able to stand on my own two feet, and dream with you, hope with you, Love with you?
Am I welcome?
Am I welcome to sit at the table and eat with you,
Drink with you, feast on milk and honey with you?
Perhaps one of these days.

Leron, Leron sinta or "My Dear, Little Leron," is a popular Filipino folk song from the Tagalog region. It is traditionally a work song, portraying those who are in the fields harvesting fruits, though the origin is unclear due to the lack of scholarly literature that examines Philippine folk music. Because of its catchy tune, it is often presented as a children's song, though some parts of the text may have been meant for a more mature audience. Some sources also refer to it as a courtship song.

Leron, Leron sinta

Leron, Leron sinta,
 buko ng papaya
 Dala-dala'y buslo,
 sisidlan ng bunga.
 Pagdating sa dulo'y,
 nabali ang sanga.
 Kapos kapalaran,
 humanap ng iba.
 Gumising ka, neneng;
 tayo'y manampalok.
 Dalhin mo ang buslong,
 sisidlan ng hinog.
 Pagdating sa dulo'y,
 lalamba-lambayog.
 Kumapit ka, neneng;
 baka ka mahulog.

Ang iibigin ko'y
 babaeng maganda.
 Ang rosas niya'y pito;
 ang saya niya'y siyam.
 Ang lalakaran niya'y
 parte ng dinulang.
 Isang pinggang pansit
 ang kanyang kalaban.

Leron, Leron my dear,
 blossoms of the papaya tree,
 with a bamboo basket,
 he'd gather some fruits.
 But when he reached the top (of the tree)
 the branch broke.
 Oh, what a trick of fate,
 he had to search for another.
 Wake up, neneng*;
 let's pick some tamarind fruits.
 Take the bamboo baskets,
 to put the ripe ones in.
 Upon reaching the top (of the tree),
 the branches swayed heavily.
 Hold on tight, neneng,
 As you might fall.

The one I will love
 is a beautiful girl.
 She has seven roses
 and nine dresses.
 The journey she will take
 is the distance of a table.
 A plate of noodles
 is her foe!

**neneng is a colloquial term referring to a girl, and does not have an adequate English translation.*

A Journey of Your Own was commissioned by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, and premiered at the Walt Disney Concert Hall on January 30, 2022. **Saunder Choi** (bio on page 1) writes:

"As I reflected on the idea of home, I realized January 2022 will mark 10 years since I left Manila for the US, in pursuit of music, education, and even liberation from the environment I grew up in. The idea of home as a physical location has dissolved and transformed into something else—a community, a family you're born into or one that you've chosen. I now feel at home in Los Angeles, amongst friends and loved ones, as I once did in Manila, amongst family. For this reason, I invited two poets to collaborate with on this project, one from an old home and one from my new. Joey Vargas and I met as choristers in the Philippine Madrigal Singers. He is one of the most gifted writers and theater artists back in the Philippines. Brian and I met when I was a grad student at USC, and we collaborated on some art songs. He is now a published author and the poet laureate of West Hollywood, and an Academy of American Poets fellow. Each of us shared a place, a story, overlapping in intertwining convergence in our individual journeys. Whatever your story is, wherever your journey leads, may it be of your own choosing—always leading with love and courage."

A Journey of Your Own

Look up, call everywhere heaven,
 a journey's a name you can claim as your own.
 Journey on, & keep crossing oceans
 — an ocean's a mirror: no happy hereafter,
 just the here that you've sown.
 A journey of your own.
 Journey on, & keep crossing oceans
 — an ocean's a mirror. Search for somewhere
 to name as your own. Look ahead,
 call everywhere heaven: no happy hereafter,
 just the here that you've grown.
 A journey of your own.

—Brian Sonia-Wallace

ang lahat ay paroroon at paririto
 tungo sa kung saan
 patungo, sa dulo;
 ang paglalakbay ay paghahanap,
 paghahanap ng hangganan —
 paghahanap ng hangganan
 ng paglalakbay, ng paghahanap;
 pagdating sa dulo: muli,
 ang lahat ay paroroon at paririto.

—Joey Vargas

every one comes and goes
 going to wherever
 one goes, to the end;
 the journey is a search,
 a search for a destination —
 a search for a destination
 of the journey, of the search;
 reaching the end: again,
 every one comes and goes.

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Soloists

Earth teach me – Sylvie Busch, soprano; Matthew Johns, baritone;
Danny Szydlo, tenor

Never again – Liz Reed Hawk, alto

Welcome Table – Jacob Bernado, tenor

Journey of Your Own – Julia Bezems and Jenny Spence, sopranos

Acknowledgements

Darren Hochstedler, Seattle First Baptist Church

Land Acknowledgement

Seattle Pro Musica acknowledges that we gather on Indigenous land: the traditional territory of Coast Salish peoples, specifically the dx̱w̱ḏw̱ʔaḇš, or Duwamish, 'The People of the Inside.' We are grateful to the land and its people, and we offer our support through Real Rent Duwamish (realrentduwamish.org). For more information about the Duwamish, visit duwamishtribe.org.

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Be a part of our vision

Nothing compares to sitting in a concert hall and sharing in the joy and wonder of hearing choral music performed at the highest levels of artistry. The power of music created with only the human voice creates a special link between singers and audience. Another way to connect with us, one that helps to make our artistry possible, is to support Seattle Pro Musica with a donation.

Subscriptions and ticket sales cover only a third of our concert expenses, so we rely on supporters like you to help us achieve our mission of making choral beauty accessible to as many as possible. Seattle Pro Musica is a registered 501(c)3 organization, so your gift can qualify as a charitable donation for tax purposes. In addition to knowing that your gift will support our art, your name will be included with our thanks in all our concert programs.

We're thrilled to have you in our audience, and we thank you for considering a deeper relationship with us. We look forward to welcoming you into our giving family!

Give sustainably with Fermata

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Seattle Pro Musica's Education and Engagement Program

Seattle Pro Musica seeks to inspire singers and audiences of the future. For our 50th anniversary season (2022–2023), we have commissioned five composers to write new works for us, and to be in residence in Seattle for their premieres. As part of this program, the composers will lead workshops with student choral musicians, ranging from primary school through college. They will visit schools in the Greater Seattle area throughout the season, leading experiences for students that allow for intentional cultural exchange, demonstrative and hands-on workshops, and group singing.

Additionally, we will create opportunities for our audiences to meet and engage with the five composers at our concerts this season. Each of our "New American Composer Series" concerts will include a pre-concert talk with the composer, audience members, and SPM Artistic Director Karen P. Thomas. Following the concerts, we will hold a "Meet & Greet" for audience members and the composer in residence.

Each of the five composers you will hear this season has a specialized area of expertise in addition to their work as composers:

- **Marques L. A. Garrett** has done extensive research on traditional music of the African diaspora, as well as contemporary choral music by Black composers.
- **Melissa Dunphy's** compositional work focuses on themes of social justice and gender equality.
- **Shruthi Rajasekar** is a performer of traditional Indian Carnatic (Southern India) music, and composes music influenced by Carnatic traditions.
- **Saunder Choi's** specialties include Filipino choral music, both folk traditions and contemporary choral composition.
- **Jerod Impichchaachaaha'Tate** is a classical composer, citizen of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma, and is dedicated to the development of American Indian classical composition.

We hope you will join us for all of these events this season—we're excited to introduce you to five amazing and gifted composers from across the country!

Seattle Pro Musica is grateful to Chorus America for its generous support of this 50th Anniversary education program.

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MOBILE 206.718.2000 WEB davidowenhastings.com INSTAGRAM [davidowenhastings](https://www.instagram.com/davidowenhastings)