

# UNSUNG VOICES

1,000 years of female composers

**May 13, 2023 • 8pm**

Trinity Parish • Seattle



SEATTLE  
GIRLS  
CHOIR

<b>Isabella Leonarda</b>	Canon Coronato
<b>Chiara Cozzolani</b>	Alma Redemptoris Mater
<b>Hildegard von Bingen</b>	O Viridissima Virga
<b>Caterina Assandra</b>	Duo Seraphim
<b>Amy Beach</b>	Over Hill, Over Dale from Three Shakespeare Choruses
<b>Florence Price</b>	Forever
<b>Clara Schumann</b> <i>arr. Beth Ann Bonnecroy</i>	Loreley
<b>Rosephanye Powell</b>	Non Nobis Domine
<b>Susan Brumfield</b>	No Time
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<b>Caroline Shaw</b>	Its Motion Keeps
<b>Jessica French</b>	O Star of Strength





In the spring of 2019, Prime Voci presented its first “Unsung Voices” at Seattle University’s Chapel of St. Ignatius. I was in the audience and recall feeling astonished that it was my first time hearing a full length concert of music written by women. As a kid growing up in SGC in the nineties, I sang music by female composers from time to time (Hildegard von Bingen and Gwyneth Walker were some favorites), but those composers were highly outnumbered by their male counterparts. When I was made SGC’s Artistic Director last summer, I knew one of the first things I wanted to do was bring back “Unsung Voices.”

Tonight we will present a cross section of music written by women, starting with composers from the medieval and Renaissance periods and progressing through to the present day. I want to note that there are many gaps and omissions. For example, Lili Boulanger and Judith Weir are two composers I would have loved to feature, but didn’t make the cut due to time constraints. We’ll have to save those two (and many others) for our next “Unsung Voices”! The songs on tonight’s program are either personal favorites (pretty much all of the Renaissance repertoire), favorites brought to me by choristers (the Hagenberg and French pieces), or songs that I discovered when building this program.

SGC is first and foremost dedicated to providing a high quality musical education to its choristers. However, it is equally important to us that our singers know that SGC offers a space where they can grow up feeling not only accepted, but empowered. I hope that through studying and learning the music for tonight’s program, our choristers will see themselves represented in the music, and feel inspired to go out and change the world.

Thank you for being here!

  
Sarra Sharif Doyle Artistic Director

## Canon Coronato

*Isabella Leonarda*

Isabella Leonarda (1620-1704) was a prolific composer of the 17th century. As an Ursuline nun (monastic life being essentially the only socially acceptable option outside of marriage for women in the 16th and 17th century), she published no fewer than 20 collections of motets, nearly 200 compositions spanning virtually every genre of sacred music of her time, as well as the only complete collection of instrumental works by an Italian woman in the 1600s. A 1658 convent document also identifies Leonarda as *magistra musicae*, or the official music teacher of the convent.

It appears that Leonarda was over the age of 50 before she started composing and publishing the works we know her for today, such as “Canon Coronato,” a 3-part round with the melody dedicated to St. Mary.

*This work of art I give to you with my heart,  
O Mother Mary, as a symbol of my love.*

*With a devoted soul I make a gift to you  
of the notes of this song to lay humbly at your feet.*

*This offering is small, Mary, I know  
a humble sign of my Love.*

## Alma Redemptoris Mater

*Chiara Cozzolani*

Recognized during her lifetime as one of the finest composers in Italy, Chiara Margarita Cozzolani (1602-c.1677) spent her entire adult life within the four walls of the musically famous convent of Santa Radegonda in Milan. She helped guide the house through difficult times in the 1660’s, when it came under attack by the strict Archbishop Alfonso Litta, who wanted to limit the nuns’ practice of music and other “irregular” contact with the outside world. Contemporary accounts describe the huge crowds that filled the exterior church of the convent to hear the angelic voices of nuns singing Cozzolani’s passionate and ecstatic music. She disappears from the convent’s membership lists between 1676 and 1678, and thus we may presume she died in her mid-seventies.

“Alma Redemptoris Mater” is a hymn sung in honor of St. Mary from one of Cozzolani’s four volumes of published music. Settings of this ancient text are often sung as part of a prayer service at the end of the day called Compline.

*Loving Mother of the Redeemer,  
who remains the accessible Gateway of Heaven,  
and Star of the Sea,  
Give aid to a falling people  
that strives to rise;  
O Thou who begot thy holy Creator,  
while all nature marveled,  
Virgin before and after,  
receiving that “Ave” from the mouth of Gabriel,  
have mercy on sinners.*

“Singing  
‘Alma Redemptoris’  
has always brought me  
joy. It’s such a playful song  
to sing, and SO dramatic. I  
love the way it transports me  
to a place where I can feel free  
to experiment more with artistic  
techniques, simply because  
the song calls for it.”

**Lise**  
Prime Voci Chorister



O Viridissima Virga

Hildegard von Bingen

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) became a member of German monastic life as a young girl. She eventually became the spiritual leader of her community of Benedictine nuns, and her first theological text, *Scivias*, recorded visions she described as “fiery light, flashing intensely...from the open vault of heaven and poured through my whole brain.” She is one of the best-known composers of sacred monophony, as well as the most recorded in modern history. In addition to her morality play *Ordo Virtutum*, sixty-nine musical compositions survive and at least four other texts are known, though their musical notation has been lost. Hildegard was officially recognized as a saint as well as a Doctor of the Catholic Church in 2012, putting her theological work on par with the likes of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

“O Viridissima Virga” is one of a series of sequences (a form of chant) attributed to Hildegard von Bingen. As in much of her music, Christian faith and love is represented symbolically through nature in springtime, nurtured by St. Mary.

O branch of freshest green,  
O hail! Within the windy gusts of saints  
upon a quest you swayed and sprouted forth.  
When it was time, you blossomed in your boughs—  
“Hail, hail!” you heard, for in you seeped  
the sunlight’s warmth  
like balsam’s sweet perfume.  
For in you bloomed  
so beautiful a flow’r, whose fragrance wakened  
all the spices from their dried-out stupor.  
And they all appeared in full viridity.  
Then rained the heavens dew upon the grass  
and all the earth was cheered,  
for from her womb she brought forth fruit  
and for the birds up in the sky have nests in her.  
Then was prepared that food for humankind,  
the greatest joy of feasts!  
O Virgin sweet, in you can ne’er fail any joy.  
All this Eve chose to scorn.  
But now, let praise ring forth unto the Highest!

Duo Seraphim

Caterina Assandra

Caterina Assandra (1590-1618) was a famous Italian organist, composer and (you guessed it) Benedictine nun. While at the cloister, Assandra studied counterpoint with leading teachers of the time. Her compositions were largely published between 1609 and 1616, and it is assumed that her duties as a nun took over after that point, halting her composing career. Two of her motets were later re-published in German anthologies and, unlike many other nuns who wrote music at that time, her work was known beyond the boundaries of her home country.

Assandra’s setting of *Duo Seraphim* uses word-painting throughout the piece, with the opening line describing two angels calling to one another depicted by two parts entering one after the other. Later in the piece each voice part describes an aspect of the holy trinity (the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit), then join together on the words “and these three are one.”

Two seraphim proclaimed one to another:  
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts  
All earth is filled with his glory.  
There are three who give witness in heaven:  
The Father, The Word, and The Holy Spirit  
and these three are one.  
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts.  
Heaven and earth are filled with your glory.



Over Hill, Over Dale  
from Three Shakespeare Choruses

Amy Beach

Amy Beach (1867-1944) quickly showed promise as a gifted pianist and composer, working with a number of notable teachers in Boston throughout her childhood and adolescence. When she was 18 she married Dr. Henry Beach, and afterwards her husband discouraged her from performing publicly, with the exception of a few performances for charity. He suggested that she pursue composition as a hobby but kept her from a formal education. Despite this, in 1892 her *Mass in E-flat Major* became her first major work to be performed when it was presented in concert by the Handel and Haydn Society and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It was the first work composed by a woman to be performed by either group. Her “Gaelic” Symphony, premiered by the BSO in 1896, was the first symphony composed and published by an American woman.

“Over Hill, Over Dale ” was written in 1897 and arranged for chorus in 1907, three years before the death of Beach’s husband and her return to public performances across the US and Europe. The text is taken from A *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and is spoken by a fairy preparing for the arrival of Titania, the fairy queen.

Forever

Florence Price

Florence Price (1887-1953) was a composer of symphonies, choral works and numerous other orchestral, chamber and piano pieces. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Price won first prize in the Wanamaker Competition with her *Symphony in E Minor* and as a result, became the first Black female composer to have a symphonic work performed by a major national symphony orchestra. Although this premiere brought momentary recognition and fame to Price, she would continue to wage an uphill battle to receive the recognition she deserved. Despite Price’s talent and drive, most classical music performers and institutions put her music aside, and her work failed to gain traction with the large, almost exclusively white institutions that could have brought her art to a larger audience. Her music came perilously close to being lost to time, with many manuscripts only being recovered in the past two decades. Luckily, this rediscovery has meant a renaissance of Price’s music, with performers and conductors hastening to program this historically important and impactful body of work.

“Forever” is an undated song by Florence Price which sets to music a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar, widely considered to be America’s first influential Black poet.

Loreley

Clara Schumann, arr. Beth Ann Bonnetcroy

Clara Schumann (1819-1896) is considered to be one of the most significant women in musical history. In addition to being a tremendously gifted pianist and pedagogue, she wrote numerous songs alongside other works in various genres. She is also credited with transforming the reputation of her initially unsuccessful husband Robert Schumann through her determined championing of his music after his death. Schumann struggled with the pressure of balancing her work as a housewife and mother with that of her independent musical pursuits. During sixteen years of marriage, she bore eight children while also assisting Robert by preparing keyboard arrangements of his orchestral works, playing for rehearsals and much else. After Robert’s death in 1856, she threw herself back into her own performing career.

“Loreley” is a great example of Clara Schumann’s command of melody and expressive accompaniments. Setting a poem by Heinrich Heine, Schumann employs driving eighth-note figures for the piano while singers tell the dramatic story of a sailor lost to Loreley, a beautiful maiden transformed into a siren-like creature who lures fishermen to destruction.

I do not know what it means  
That I should feel so sad;  
There is a tale from olden times  
I cannot get out of my mind.  
  
The air is cool, and twilight falls,  
And the Rhine flows quietly by;  
The summit of the mountains glitters  
In the evening sun.  
  
The fairest maiden is sitting  
In wondrous beauty up there,  
Her golden jewels are sparkling,  
She combs her golden hair.  
  
She combs it with a golden comb  
And sings a song the while;  
It has an awe-inspiring,  
Powerful melody.  
  
It seizes the boatman in his skiff  
With wildly aching pain;  
He does not see the rocky reefs,  
He only looks up to the heights.  
  
I think at last the waves swallow  
The boatman and his boat;  
And that, with her singing,  
The Loreley has done.



Non Nobis Domine

Rosephanye Powell

Rosephanye Powell (b.1962) has distinguished herself in the choral field for her work in composition, singing, music education, and research into the preservation and performance of African-American spirituals and gospel music. Dr. Powell received her doctorate from Florida State University in vocal performance and now teaches at Auburn University. Her well-crafted arrangements of spirituals have become standard repertoire for many choirs, but her creative output extends beyond arrangements into original compositions of both sacred and secular music in a variety of choral voicings. Dr. Powell’s works have been conducted and premiered by nationally and internationally renowned conductors at distinguished halls around the country, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Dr. Powell’s works have been commissioned by many professional choral ensembles.

“Non Nobis, Domine” sets up a rhythmic ostinato (repeating musical phrase) in the lower voices, over which the upper voices sing a hard-driving melody. These powerful rhythms and harmonies combine with the simple text to great effect, and that energetic pulse continues relentlessly right up to the final chord.

Not to us, O Lord, but to your name be the glory.

No Time

Traditional Camp Meeting Song, arr. Susan Brumfield

Dr. Susan Brumfield is the founder and Artistic Director of the West Texas Children’s Chorus. She holds a Ph.D. in Music Education from the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Brumfield is known for her work as a teacher, author, composer and conductor. She is in frequent demand as a commissioned composer, clinician and guest conductor. An internationally recognized expert in the Kodály music training approach, Dr. Brumfield is the author of *First, We Sing! Kodály-Inspired Teaching in the Music Classroom*, a series of textbooks and song anthologies published by Hal Leonard Music, and is a contributing author for Music Express Magazine and McGraw Hill’s Music Studio.

“No Time” is a sweeping and expressive arrangement of a camp meeting song. Prime Voci’s virtual choir recording of this piece went viral in March of 2020 when it received national attention through several news outlets around the country.

“I first heard ‘No Time’ in 2020, sitting in my bed watching Prime Voci sing it virtually. I remember holding my phone close to my chest to try and simulate the feeling of being surrounded by voices. The idea that I would one day be singing it in person with PV seemed impossible at the time. I feel very lucky to sing it today.”

Miriam  
Prime Voci Chorister

Refuge

Elaine Hagenberg

Elaine Hagenberg (b.1979) is an award-winning composer, whose works are performed worldwide. In addition to composing full-time, Elaine actively engages in bringing her music to life as the guest artist and featured clinician for professional conferences and festivals both in the U.S. and abroad as a composer, conductor, and accompanist of her work. With over fifty commissioned pieces, she has composed new music for the American Choral Directors Association, professional choirs, colleges and universities, community choirs, high schools, and churches.

Sara Teasdale’s poem is given a dramatic setting in this concert work, “Refuge.” From the composer: “In ‘Refuge,’ the piano frantically races out of control as the cello becomes the voice of heartache and despair. As the poetry unfolds, the choir sings of crushed dreams, confusion, and a yearning for help. But through singing, we can turn our eyes from the surrounding darkness, and lift our voices to offer comfort, beauty and hope.”

“Elaine Hagenberg is one of my all time favorite composers! I recommended that we sing one of her pieces and Sarra chose ‘Refuge.’ I love the piece because it conveys such emotional intensity, and I really feel fully encompassed and touched whenever I sing it or listen to it.”

Josie  
Prime Voci Chorister

Wild Embers

Melissa Dunphy

Born to refugee parents and raised in Australia, Melissa Dunphy (b. 1980) immigrated to the United States in 2003 and has since become an award-winning and acclaimed composer specializing in vocal, political, and theatrical music. Her composition, “What do you think I fought for at Omaha Beach” has been performed by Chanticleer and many other groups nationally. She received her PhD in music composition from the University of Pennsylvania and currently teaches at Rutgers University. In addition to her concert and choral music, she is a Barrymore Award-nominated composer and sound designer, performs in a rock duo with her husband, is an acclaimed actor, and an amateur archaeologist.

In this anthemic setting of a poem by Nikkita Gil, we hear the crackling of embers mere moments away from being stirred up into an uncontrollable wildfire.

Its Motion Keeps

Caroline Shaw

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982) is a musician who moves among roles, genres, and mediums. She often works in collaboration with others, as producer, composer, violinist, and vocalist. Shaw is the recipient of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Music, several Grammy awards, an honorary doctorate from Yale, and a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship. She has written over 100 works in the last decade, for Yo Yo Ma, Renée Fleming, Dawn Upshaw, LA Phil, Philharmonia Baroque, and the Seattle Symphony to name a few. Her work as vocalist or composer has appeared in several films, TV series, and podcasts including *The Humans*, *Bombshell*, *Yellowjackets*, *Maid*, *Beyonce’s Homecoming*, and *Tár*.

“Its Motion Keeps” is based on the words from the first verse of the American shape note hymn Kingwood, and begins with a pizzicato (strings played by plucking rather than with a bow) line from the cello. Shaw states that this work is influenced by Benjamin Britten, and echoes of his “This Little Babe” from *A Ceremony of Carols* can be heard as the choir follows the contour of the melody laid out by the cello, then splits into swiftly overlapping canonic figures.

“There’s something inexplicable about singing such a syncopated song well. The song segments range from seemingly chaotic to unified within just a few measures. This kind of organized chaos perfectly encompasses the feeling of being in choir with the people I love to be with.”

Jade  
Prime Voci Chorister

O Star of Strength

Jessica French

Jessica French (b. 1984) is an award-winning Seattle composer specializing in choral music, both sacred and secular. Her works have been commissioned and performed by various ensembles including the St. Olaf Cantorei, the Madeleine Choir School and Cathedral Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Pro Musica, Choral Arts Northwest, and of course Seattle Girls Choir. Most recently, she was commissioned by the American Guild of Organists to compose two separate works for their 2022 National Convention. French has a rare neurological ability called synesthesia, in which the senses of the brain are linked to one another, mainly in the form of colors associated with notes, timbres, and words. This ability lends a singularly unique voice to her writing style, as she writes both for the actual sounds she hears as well as the colors she literally sees.

“O Star of Strength” was commissioned by Seattle Girls Choir for our 40th anniversary season. Choristers helped choose the theme and specific text of the piece (a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow) in a collaborative process with the composer.

“O Star of Strength’ has been such a gift for Prime Voci to premiere and sing over these last two years. To me, this song touches on the dark times that can cloud us, but ends with unity and strength. Jessica French is an inspiration and we are honored to have worked with her.”

Sophie  
Prime Voci Chorister



## Prime Voci

*Prime Voci is the most senior vocal ensemble of Seattle Girls Choir.*

Frances Alls	Mathilde McFadden
Aether Ayer	Ella McLaughlin
Lilly Buffalo	Mica Mickelson
Clementine Davis-Hall	Sophie Nash
Hadley Delahunty	Eva Nelson
Skye Duplessis	Josie O'Brien
Bryn Fleck	Adrian Rattray
Cecilia Fontana	Eden Reppart
Miriam Gaster	Makena Shephard
Stella Harman	Adele Shuman
Paige Johnson	Lilliana Wald
Aspen Lillywhite	Lise Weller
Libby Lohraff	Nora Yu
Jade Louscher	

### **Sarra Sharif Doyle** • Artistic Director, Prime Voci Conductor

This past summer, Sarra became Seattle Girls Choir's first female Artistic Director in its 40-year history. Sarra has served on SGC's faculty since 2009, directing *Dolcine*, *Allegra*, and now *Prime Voci*. Prior to her appointment as Artistic Director, Sarra taught choir in private and public schools for fifteen years. As a professional singer, Sarra performs regularly with the Byrd Ensemble, Tudor Choir, and Pacific Northwest Ballet. Sarra holds music education degrees from the University of Washington and Columbia University, and is a National Board Certified Teacher.

### **Susanna Valleau** • Prime Voci Accompanist

Susanna earned her Masters of Music at the University of Washington in organ performance and has earned top prizes in multiple nation-wide organ competitions. She serves as music director of St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in Shoreline, performs recitals across the country, maintains an active piano studio, and collaborates regularly as an accompanist and in chamber music settings on piano, harpsichord, and organ.

### **Savannah Helming** • Cellist

Savannah Helming is currently a cello performance major at the University of Washington and studies with Saeunn Thorsteindottir.

### **Meaghan Leferink** • Executive Director

### **Stacia Cammarano** • Office Manager

### **Jamie Sanidad** • Program Coordinator



Founded in 1982, SGC is a community that provides young singers with a high quality music education and a place to belong. SGC has progressive levels of instruction for choristers in kindergarten through high school, and emphasizes vocal technique, musical literacy, and ensemble performance.

[seattlegirlschoir.org](http://seattlegirlschoir.org)

