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*Directed by
Alex Ager*

Saturday, 3 pm
May 23, 2026

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and you, our audience, for being here today and sharing the music with us.

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Front cover design by Patsy Catsos.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Samuel A. Ward
Arranged by Paul John Rudoj

O Beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain.
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain.
America, America, God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife.
Who more than self their country loved and mercy more than life!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee.
'Til selfish gain no longer stain the banner of the free!

Reading adapted from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech:

We look forward to a world founded upon four essential freedoms:
Freedom of speech and expression – everywhere.
Freedom of worship – everywhere.
Freedom from want – everywhere.
Freedom from fear – everywhere in the world.

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING

Words by James Weldon Johnson
Music by Rosamond Johnson
Arranged by Roland Carter

"**Lift Every Voice and Sing**" is a hymn written from the context of African Americans in the late 19th century. The hymn is a prayer of thanksgiving to God as well as a prayer for faithfulness and freedom, with imagery that evokes the biblical Exodus from slavery to the freedom of the "promised land." Premiered in 1900, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was commonly sung within Black American communities, while, in 1917, the NAACP began to promote the hymn as a "Negro national anthem" (with the term "Black National Anthem" similarly used in the present day). It has been featured in 49 different Christian hymnals and is frequently performed by various African American singers and musicians.

Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring, ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies. Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod, felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been water'd.
Oh, we have come treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the bright gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might led us into the light, keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee;
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadow'd beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land.

Amen

LOOK DOWN, FAIR MOON

Words by Walt Whitman

Music by Mari Esabel Valverde

Award-winning transgender Mexican-American composer Mari Esabel Valverde has built a reputation as a singer, educator, adjudicator and translator. Following six years as a high school classical voice instructor, she spent two years specializing in transgender voice training. She is proficient in Spanish, French and Brazilian Portuguese and has translated numerous vocal works and documents including Ravel and Villa-Lobos operas.

Composer's notes:

"This nocturne is a setting of poetry contemporary with the American Civil War. With a prayerful tone, in imperative tense, Whitman pleads for calm and healing for those who are wounded or fallen. The images of moon, 'nimbus' or rain clouds, and night are all relevant. During the night, the living recover from the stresses of the day; the rain falling from the sky is a metaphor for cleansing water or tears; and of course, the mysterious beaming moon is an unchanging source of spiritual nourishment. Every time we are made aware of the unspeakable carnage of war or terrorism, foreign or domestic, we are compelled to ponder our humanity and our mortality. In the spirit of elegy, I want to inspire further contemplation and call for the reconciliation and mending of our people."

Look down, fair moon,
and bathe this scene,
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods
on faces ghastly, swollen, purple,
On the dead on their backs
with arms toss'd wide,
Pour down your unstinted nimbus,
sacred moon.

AMERICAN ANTHEM

Words and Music by Gene Scheer

Arranged by John Purifoy

Ken Burns' powerful PBS series "The War" featured this contemporary song by Gene Scheer, beautifully performed by Norah Jones. The lyrics speak to the sacrifice, selflessness and bravery of the men and women who fought on the front lines and the home front during World War II.

All we've been given by those who came before,
the dream of a nation where freedom would endure.
The work and prayers of centuries have taught us to this day.
What shall be our legacy? What will our children say?

Refrain

Let them say of me I was one who believed
in sharing the blessings I received.
Let me know in my heart when my days are through,
America, America, I gave my best to you.

Each generation from the plains to distant shore
with the gifts that they were given were determined to leave more,
battles fought together, acts of conscience fought alone,
these are the seeds from which America has grown.

Refrain

For those who think they have nothing to share;
who fear in their hearts there is no hero there.
Know each quiet act of dignity is that which fortifies
the soul of a nation that never dies.

Refrain

FIND THE COST OF FREEDOM

Words and Music by Stephen Stills
Edited by Nick Page

Stephen Stills wrote this Crosby, Stills & Nash song after visiting a Civil War battle site. After 9/11 this is the song Jay Leno requested to be the first song on *The Tonight Show* as a way of honoring those who died in the attacks.

Daylight again, followin' me to bed.
I think about a hundred years ago, how my fathers bled.
I think I see a valley covered with bones in blue;
all the brave soldiers that cannot get older been askin' after you.

Hear the past a-calling, from Armageddon's side.
When ev'ryone's talking and no one is listening, how can we decide?
Find the cost of freedom buried in the ground.
Mother earth will swallow you, lay your body down.

LOVE IS LOVE IS LOVE AND RESILIENCE

Abbie Betinis

Born in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, Betinis began Suzuki piano and ear training at age 4 at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's American Suzuki Talent Education Center (now Aber Suzuki Center). Valedictorian of her high school class, she enrolled in St. Olaf College on a piano scholarship, but during her sophomore year was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma and was forced to return home to begin chemotherapy. When she returned to St. Olaf, she changed course to pursue music composition and linguistics, graduating in 2001.

The music of Abbie Betinis has been described as "inventive [and] richly melodic" (*The New York Times*), and "the highlight... bold...cathartic" (*The Boston Globe*). Having quickly emerged as one of the strongest voices in American choral composition today, Betinis chooses meaningful texts to set in a unique, yet accessible style. The two compositions offered here are taken from her *Justice Choir Songbook*.

Composer's Notes:

"Love is Love is Love is Love is dedicated to the victims and survivors of hate crimes everywhere and specifically for those at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando on June 12, 2016. Love is often the bravest thing we do. May love prevail.

Love Is love is love is love. All we need is love. *Ubi caritas at amor.* Where there's love, all we need is love

Composer's notes, cont'd:

Resilience is a mindset born in the hardest days, when you're scared or sad or tired, when progress toward your goal is slow, and the barriers seem impenetrable...and yet you keep going, because somewhere deep down you know that what you're fighting for will be so much better. As a three-time cancer survivor, I continue to learn about resilience."

Resilience, we are strong; shoulder to shoulder keep movin' on
Resilience, make a new plan; stand up together and say, "Yes we can."
Oh, oh, we are strong. Hold on! I wanna make it and I know we will,
yes, it's hard to keep goin' but it's worse to stand still.

SHENANDOAH

American Folksong
Arranged by James Erb

O, Shenandoah, I long to see you. And hear your rolling river.
'Way, we're bound away, across the wide Missouri.
I long to see your smiling valley, and hear your rolling river.
'Way, we're bound away, across the wide Missouri.
'Tis sev'n long years since last I see you and hear your rolling river.
'Way, we're bound away, across the wide Missouri.

HOPE LINGERS ON

Lissa Schneckenburger
Arranged by Andrea Ramsey

My mother, when love is gone, in our darkest hour, hope lingers on.
My father, when peace is gone, in our darkest hour, hope lingers on.

Refrain

I will not hate and I will not fear. In our darkest hour, hope lingers here.

My sister, when equality's gone, in our darkest hour, hope lingers on.
My brother, with tolerance gone, in our darkest hour, hope lingers on.

Refrain

My love, when honor is gone, in our darkest hour, hope lingers on.
My country, when justice is gone, in our darkest hour, hope lingers on.

Refrain

THE STORM IS PASSING OVER

Charles Albert Tindley
Arranged by Barbara W. Baker

Have courage, my soul, and let us journey on.
Though the night is dark and I am far from home.
Thanks be to God the morning light appears.
The storm is passing over, Hallelu!

THE MORNING TRAIN

Gwyneth Walker

Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer Gwyneth Walker is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. Dr. Gwyneth Walker is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in Music Composition. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont before returning to live in her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut.

A composer since age two, Gwyneth Walker has always placed great value on writing in a broad array of genres. More than 400 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo instruments, chorus, and solo voice have been created—all arising from the impetus of performers and collaboration with musicians. Over the decades, she has traveled throughout North America to attend performances of her works and to meet her musician colleagues.

Gwyneth Walker is a proud resident of New England. She was the recipient of the 2000 "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Vermont Arts Council and the 2018 "Alfred Nash Patterson Lifetime Achievement Award" from Choral Arts New England.

Composer's notes:

"This is a set of songs about trains. There are many colorful American songs on this topic. It is hoped that this new work will capture the 'train spirit' and bring it onto the concert stage with chorus and instruments....

Going Home on the Morning Train

Traditional Song Arranged by Gwyneth Walker

Composer's notes, cont'd:

"A train whistle ...is heard in the distance. Then, the train draws closer as the music grows in dynamics and tempo. By the time that the chorus enters, the music is filled with energy. This is a celebratory song of going home 'to the Promised Land...(where) all my sins been taken away.'

I'm going home on the morning train.
If you don't see me, you can hear me singing. All my sins been taken away.
Sister Mary wore three links of chain and on each link was Freedom's name.
The devil has got a slippr'y shoe. If you don't watch out, she'll slip it on you.
That's what she does! Keep your eye on that plow. Hold on!
I'm going home to the Promised Land. Lord, God Almighty, please hold my hand.

Freight Train

Original Song by Libba Cotton (ca. 1905) Arranged by Gwyneth Walker

Composer's notes, cont'd:

(This piece) "combines the speed of the train with nostalgic remembrance of places traveled. 'There's one more place I'd like to see to watch those Blue Ridge Mountains climb while I ride Old Number Nine.' The rider, perhaps a hobo, feels the most at home when riding the train. For his final resting place, he wishes to be buried where he can hear the train rumbling by. (The accompaniment [the train] is particularly lively and 'mobile' in this song.)

Freight train, freight train, going so fast.
Please don't tell what train I'm on, so they won't know where I'm gone.
Freight train, freight train, going round the bend.
Freight train, freight train, gone again.
One of these days turn the train around, going back to my hometown.
And one more place I'd like to see, to watch the Blue Ridge mountains climb
while I ride Old Number Nine.
And when I die, please bury me deep, down at the end of Bleeker Street,
So I can hear Old Number Nine as she goes rolling by.

Maid of Constant Sorrow

Traditional Song
Arranged by Gwyneth Walker

Composer's notes, cont'd:

"A familiar American folk song is 'A Man of Constant Sorrow.' Adaptations exist for a maid of constant sorrow as well. This is a very simple melody, placed in the key of C major. The message is a mournful one. The soul is troubled, and not at rest. 'All through this world, I'm bound to ramble perhaps I'll take the very next train.' Then, later, 'perhaps I'll die upon this train.' Some comfort is taken with the lines 'I know we'll meet on God's Golden Shore.' But the life on this earth is one of constant sorrow.

I am a maid of constant sorrow. I've seen trouble all my days.
I'm going back to my New England, place where I was born and raised.
All through this world I'm bound to ramble through sun and wind, through driving rain.
I'm going to ride the Northern Railway. Perhaps I'll take the very next train.
O fare thee well my gentle lover. I'll never see your face again.
I'm bound to ride these tracks forever. Perhaps I'll die upon this train.
Maybe your friends think I'm a stranger. And I'll return to you no more.
But there is one promise given. I know we'll meet on God's Golden Shore.

Worrisome Blues

Traditional Song, G. Walker, alt.
Arranged by Gwyneth Walker

Composer's notes, cont'd:

"The closing song is perhaps the best known and most rousing of the set. The original is 'Worried Man Blues.' But in this new arrangement, the women join in with the theme and sentiment. So, the title has been changed to 'Worrisome Blues.'

"The story of this song is that 'he' runs afoul of the law, and wakes up with shackles on his feet. (!) The judge sentences him to 'twenty-one years on the Rocky Mountain Line.' He accepts this fate with good nature, 'I've still got ninety-nine (years)!' However, his girlfriend notes that during his twenty-one-year absence, she will be in her 'prime.' She is not pleased with the idea of having to wait for twenty-one years for romance! Therefore, she boards a train which is 'sixteen coaches long' and waves farewell to him. At the end, they part, singing 'So long! So long!' – she triumphantly, he with resignation."

It takes a worried man to sing a worried song. I'm worried now, but I won't be worried long.
I went across the river and lay down to sleep. When I awoke, there were shackles on my feet.
I asked the judge, now what will be the fine. "Twenty-one years on the Rocky Mountain Line."
That's twenty-one years to pay for my crime. Oh, twenty-one years when I am in my prime.
But I've still got ninety-nine.

The train that I ride is sixteen coaches long. The girl I love is on that train and gone.
I looked down the track as far as I could see. Her little hand was waving after me.
So long! So long!



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ALEX AGER, who joined the Chorale in the fall of 2017 as a singer in the bass section, has been Artistic Director since 2019. He holds a Master of Music in Music Education from Boston University and a Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Plymouth State University. A classically-trained musician, he is the K-12 music teacher for the Sunapee School District where he teaches elementary general music and middle and high school band and choir. Previously he was the K-8 music teacher at Andover Elementary/Middle School for five years. In addition to his teaching duties, he is also active as a keyboard player in many local musical theater productions.



JOE HENDERSON has been collaborative pianist with the Chorale since 2013 except for a brief hiatus from 2023-24. He first studied piano at age 10 and oboe at age 13 and began his undergraduate study at Florida State University School of Music (studying piano, oboe and vocal accompaniment), later graduating from FSU with a BA degree in chemistry. Further study led to advanced degrees in physiology (MA), medicine (MD) and epidemiology (MPhil). Professor (Emeritus), Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College, he focused on the use of computer, media, and communication technologies for the education of health professionals and patients. Henderson has also had a long career as a musician from secondary school and undergraduate days to the present. He has played Oboe and English Horn with Orlando Symphony (later, Florida Symphony), served as a church organist in Buffalo, NY, and is currently regular substitute organist/pianist for Lyme, NH, Congregational Church. He also played in a pit band for the musical “A Man of No Importance” in White River Junction, VT among other musical theater ensembles.

Spring 2026 Kearsarge Chorale

Soprano

Linda Barnes
 Erin Chervinsky
 Jody Cooper-Rubin
 Olivia Etchings
 Joyce Kellogg
 Nancee Leach
 Nonie Reynders
 Betty Stockwell
 Sue Venable*

Alto

Priscilla Carr
 Patsy Catsos
 Thia Daniels
 Maggie Devine-Sullivan
 Hannah Hernick
 Gretchen Hildebrand
 Libby Howell
 Andrea Jennison*
 Lucy Mueller
 Alice Perry
 Nina Rogers
 Sarah Will

Tenor

Paul Currier
 Betsy Forsham
 Carol Foss*
 Molly Kidane
 Nick Ourusoff
 Nancy Tripp

Bass

Richard Beffa*
 Charles Kellogg
 John Mathewson
 Dave Munn
 Caleb Parsons
 Ralph Parsons

*Section Dean

New London Brass

Trumpet–Dan Wright
 Trumpet –Doug Deen
 French Horn – Ako Shiffer

Trombone – Vicki Moore
 Tuba – Dan Brown

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