



A Brighter Garden

Cynthia Powell, Artistic Director and Conductor
Jenny Clarke, Founder and Executive Director

Janet Sora Chung, piano; Allison Sniffin, organ; Samantha White, flute; Paige Andrews, percussion; Rachel Drehmann, French horn

No flash photography. Please set cell phones to silent. This performance is being video recorded.

Ergen Deda

Bulgarian Women's Choir

Soloists: Deliana Daskalova, Zarina Vildanova

Polegnala e Todora

Bulgarian Women's Choir

Quintet: Erin Siu, Hilary Baboukis, Deliana Daskalova, Zarina Vildanova, Ezinne Umunuabuike

Bre Petrunko

Bulgarian Women's Choir

Messe Basse

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Soloist: Chiara Pierangelo

Kyrie

Sanctus/Benedictus

Agnus Dei

Improperium

McNeil Robinson (b. 1943)

Pie Jesu

Andrew Lloyd Webber (b. 1948)

Soloists: Linnea Mumma, Naomi Davidson

The Grey Selchie

Paul Halley (b. 1952)

Soloist: Olivia LaBarge

Pavane pour Une Infante Défunte

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Who Can Sail

Carl Agnestig (1924- 2019)

A Brighter Garden

Paul Halley (b. 1952)

Soloist: Nicole Owen

Shenandoah

Kirby Shaw (b. 1941)

I Wish You Love

arr. Kirby Shaw (b. 1941)

Ordinary Miracles

arr. Kirby Shaw (b. 1941)

Voices of Light

Paul Halley (b. 1952)

Melodia Singers

Soprano

Ginny Bartolone
Shohini Goldin Bhattacharya
Sally Burgos
Elaine Chen
Deliana Daskalova
Naomi Davidson
Alexis Hedvat
Deb Howard
Nikhita Karra
Olivia LaBarge

Linnea Mumma
Nicole Owens
Ashley Paskalis
Chiara Pierangelo
Erin Siu
Tulasi Sundaresh
Sarah Woodruff

Alto

Hilary Baboukis
Marisa Paley Brown

Cara Brownell
Jenny Clarke
Rebecca Hart
Sofia Licir
Lulu Lin
Tara Mulvaney
Ruston Ropac
Tina Rosenberg
Jeanne Ruskin
Ezinne Umuunnabuike
Zarina Vildanova

Melodia Women's Choir History

Founded in 2003, Melodia explores and performs rarely heard music for women's voices in many different styles, and nurtures emerging women composers through commissions and performances. Under the leadership of Jenny Clarke, Executive Director, and Cynthia Powell, Artistic Director, Melodia has performed at Symphony Space, Merkin Concert Hall, DiMenna Center for Classical Music, the Church of Saint Ignatius Loyola in collaboration with Sacred Music in a Sacred Space, and others. Melodia has been heard on WQXR and WNYC radio, including as part of "Her Music: 24 Hours of Emerging Women Composers," in 2014 and again in 2015 and 2016, and seen on NBC television.

Melodia released their first commercial recording in 2014, *Lullaby*, a collection of soothing pieces selected from among the many rare and special works Melodia has performed over the first twelve years of music-making.

Melodia was selected to participate in the WNYC/WQXR Radio's Salute the ARTS Initiative (STAR) 2013 – our second STAR award. Melodia was honored to receive a special proclamation from the New York City Council in April 2018 for "delighting listeners with high quality musical performances and for fostering greater harmony throughout our community and beyond." Melodia was honored by New City Council Member Erik Bottcher in 2023 in celebration of Melodia's 20th Anniversary and for "raising women's voices and fostering greater harmony in New York City."

Notes on the Program

An evening drenched in harmony and melody, with each note and lyric going directly to the soul, *A Brighter Garden*, Melodia's spring concert, will be a respite from the strain of today's world. From contemporary anthems to timeless folk songs, this concert is a journey through a garden of light and delight. It's more than a performance; it's a testament of art's ability to uplift, inspire, and heal. Come take a walk in our bright, musical garden!

Ergen Deda, *Polegnala e Todora* and *Bre Petrunko* all derive from the Eastern European village experience of circle dancing. In *Ergen Deda*, an old man joins a ring dance (hora) and becomes the butt of jokes of the younger dancing women, who all flee, except Angelina, who doesn't know any better (or maybe she just has a heart). *Polegnala e Todora* is a love song about a dreamy summer's day fantasy of being asked to marry, complete with flowers and a gold ring. *Bre Petrunko* is another round dance, but it's not just a song about dance; it is a celebration of community, youth, and the cultural heritage of Bulgaria, inviting everyone to join in the festivities and embrace the joy of life.

Gabriel Fauré's *Messe Basse* is a short setting of the mass (or "low mass," so just the Kyrie, Sanctus and Agnus Dei) The *Messe Basse* is for three-part female choir and was completed in December 1906. Its often surprising harmonic shifts are favorite compositional trademarks of Fauré.

Improperium is taken from Psalm 68 and describes a pitiful scenario, where an abandoned soul is offered vinegar to quench their thirst. Incorporated into the Palm Sunday liturgy, this poignant text was set by McNeil Robinson, the teacher of both Janet Chung and Cynthia Powell. We are pairing it with Andrew Lloyd Webber's (yes, the composer of *Cats*, and *Phantom of the Opera*) *Pie Jesu*, from his *Requiem*, written in 1982 and premiered at NYC's St. Thomas Church.

Who Can Sail is a beloved Swedish folk song, and this setting by Carl Agnestic is probably the most widely-known. Another sea-faring folk melody, *The Grey Selchie*, is here set by Paul Halley, the prolific English composer who was organist at NYC's St. John the Divine. Its strange tale of a morphing seal who becomes human, fathers a child, and is killed by the child's human father, is rife in the folklore of the Orkney Islands. It is believed that Selchies arose in legends when early Scottish settlers and shipwrecked Spaniards married dark-haired, fur-wearing Finnish and Saami native women.

Ravel's haunting *Pavane pour Une Infante Défunte*, often translated as "Pavane for a dead princess" originated as a piano solo, and was later orchestrated by Ravel. It even became a popular song, *The Lamp is Low*, in the mid 20th century. When asked how he arrived at the title *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, Ravel smiled coyly and replied, "Do not be surprised, that title has nothing to do with the composition. I simply liked the sound of those words and I put them there, c'est tout."

Paul Halley has been on Melodia's favorite composer/arranger list since our beginning, and tonight's performance of *A Brighter Garden* brought oohs and ahhs from our long-standing members. We're very excited to sing his *Voices of Light* as the closing piece, and welcome Samantha White as our very talented flutist!

Shenandoah is likely the most popular American folk song, dating back to the early 19th century and is believed to have originated from French travelers journeying down the Missouri River. By the 1880s, the song had become popular both on land and at sea.

The two pop songs we're singing reflect my fondness for the incredible Barbra Streisand, whose album 'Je m'appelle Barbra' was a staple in my younger years, as was the very interesting *Ordinary Miracles*, with music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Marilyn and Alan Bergman.

We're so happy you are able to walk with us in this wonderful musical garden tonight!

- Cynthia Powell

Texts

Ergen deda

Unmarried old man, red-faced old man,
Just like this, just like that,
Has put his cap askew,
Just like this, just like that,

Has put his cap askew,
Just like this, just like that,
To the one side, to the other side (of his head)
Just like this, just like that,

To the one side, to the other side,
Just like this, just like that,
And went to the village,
Just like this, just like that,

And went to the village,
Just like this, just like that,
And took place in the ring dance,
Just like this, just like that.

E-e-e-eh
Just like this, just like that
And took place in the ring dance,
Just like this, just like that,
In the ring dance among the young girls,
Just like this, just like that.

In the ring dance among the young girls,
Just like this, just like that,
All the young girls have run away,
Just like this, just like that.

All the young girls have run away,
Just like this, just like that,
Only the youngest has stayed,
Just like this, just like that.

Only the youngest has stayed,
Just like this, just like that,
The youngest, called Angelina,
Just like this, just like that.

E-e-e-eh
Just like this, just like that

Polegnala e Todora

Choir: Todora lay down for awhile, Oh maiden Todoro
Solo qt: under the tree, the olive tree
Choir: a soft breeze began to blow
Solo qt: it snapped a small olive twig and wakened Todoro
Choir: And she became bitterly angry at it
Solo qt: Hey wind, hey, blow hard
Choir: I was having a sweet dream
Solo qt: that my true love came and brought a beautiful bouquet
Choir: and brought a beautiful bouquet and on the bouquet a golden ring.

Bre Petrunko

Bre Petrunko, my dear
Bre Petrunko, my dear, don't be sad
Everything will be fine, my dear
Everything will be fine
Nowhere, my dear, will I find
Nowhere, my dear, will I find
In your village, my dear, until three
In your village, until three

First, my dear, the Petrunki
First, the Petrunki
The Petrunki, my dear, in the garden
The Petrunki, in the garden
Down the hill, my dear, the young man goes
Down the hill, the young man goes
Don't be angry, my dear, in the middle

Don't be angry, in the middle
Be angry, my dear, at dawn
Be angry, at dawn
At dawn, my dear, until Petrunk
At dawn, until Petrunk
With a peach, my dear, you are like a flower
With a peach, you are like a flower
With a nut, my dear, you are like a hazelnut
With a nut, you are like a hazelnut - oh!

Messe Basse

Kyrie

Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

Sanctus/Benedictus

God is holy. God's glory is everywhere. Joy! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, have mercy, grant peace.

Improperium

Improperium expectavit cor meum et miseriam
et sustinui qui simul (mecum) contristaretur et non fuit;
consolantem me quæsi et non inveni:
et dederunt in escam meam fel,
et in siti mea potaverunt me aceto.

My heart expected reproach and misery
and I waited for one to grieve with me, but there was none;
I sought one to comfort me, but I found none:
and they gave me gall for my food,
and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Pie Jesu

Pie Jesu,
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona eis requiem, dona eis requiem

Merciful Jesus,
You take away the sins of the world
Give them rest, give them rest

Pie Jesu,
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona eis requiem, dona eis requiem

Merciful Jesus,
You take away the sins of the world
Give them rest, give them rest

Agnus Dei,
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona eis requiem

Lamb of God,
You take away the sins of the world
Give them rest

Dona eis requiem sempiternam

Give them eternal rest

The Grey Selchie

Words and music: Traditional Scottish
Arranged by Paul Halley

In Noraway there sits a maid.
Bye-loo my baby she begins.
Little know I my child's father,
Or if land or sea he's living in.

Then there arose at her bed feet
An grumley guest, I'm sure it was he,
Saying, "Here am I, thy child's father,
Although that I am not comely.

I am a man upon the land,
I am a selchie in the sea,
And when I am in my own country,
My dwelling is in Su Skerrie."

Then he hath taken a purse of gold
And he hath put it upon her knee,
Saying, "Give to me my little wee son,
And take thee up thy nurse's fee.

And it shall come to pass on a summer's day,
When the sun shines hot on ev'ry stone,
That I shall take my little wee son
And I'll teach him for to swim in the foam.

And you will marry a gunner good.
And a proud good gunner I'm sure he'll be.
And he will go out on a May morning,
And kill both my wee son and me."

And lo! she did marry a gunner good.
And a proud good gunner I'm sure it was he,
And the very first shot that e're he did shoot,
He killed the son and the grey selchie.

Who Can Sail

Who can sail without a wind?
Who can row without oars?
Who can leave a parting friend
Without shedding tears?

I can sail without the wind,
I can row without oars,
But I can't leave a parting friend
Without shedding tears.

A Brighter Garden

Words: Isaac Watts (1674 - 1748) and Emily Dickinson
(1830-1886)

Music: Paul Halley

We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness.

Awake, O, heav'nly wind! and come,
Blow on this garden of perfume;
Spirit divine! descend and breathe
A gracious gale on plants beneath.

Here is a little forest,
Whose leaf is ever green;
Here is a brighter garden,
Where not a frost has been;
In its unfading flowers
I hear the bright bee hum:
Prithee, my brother,
Into my garden come!

Shenandoah

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to see you
Away, you rolling river
Oh, Shenandoah, I long to see you
Away, we're bound away, across the wide Missouri

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
Away, you rolling river
Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
Away, we're bound away, across the wide Missouri

Ordinary Miracles

Change can come on tiptoe
Love is where it starts
It resides, often hides
Deep within our hearts
And just as pebbles make a mountain
Raindrops make a sea
One day at a time
Change begins with you and me
Ordinary miracles happen all around
Just by giving and receiving
Comes belonging and believing
Every sun that rises
Never rose before
Each new day leads the way
Through a different door
And we can all be quiet heroes
Living quiet days
Walking through the world
Changing it in quiet ways
Ordinary miracles, like candles in the dark
Each and every one of us, lights a spark

I Wish you Love

I wish you bluebirds in the spring
To give your heart a song to sing,
And then a kiss, but more than this,
I wish you love

And in July a lemonade
To cool you in some leafy glade,
I wish you health,
But more than wealth
I wish you love

My breaking heart and I agree
That you and I could never be,
So with my best, my very best
I set you free;

I wish you shelter from the storm,
A cozy fire to keep you warm,
But most of all, when snowflakes fall
I wish you love;

Voices of Light

Words: 6th cent. Latin, I John 1:5,
additional words by Paul Halley

O blest creator source of light,
You gave the day with splendor bright,
When on the new and living earth,
You brought all things to glorious birth.
- 6th century Latin, trans. A.K. LeCroy

Lord of the shining heavens,
Lord of the stars above,
Lighten our eyes to see you,
Radiant with perfect love.

- Paul Halley

God is light and in God is no darkness.
- I John 1:5

Meet the Directors



Jenny Clarke, Founder and Executive Director of Melodia, combined her lifelong love of choral music and her career as an arts administrator to form Melodia in 2003. She has a B.A. in music and English from Leeds University, England, and an M.A. in arts management from New York University. In addition to singing with Melodia – her true passion – Jenny has sung with the Royal Choral Society in England, and Riverside Choral Society in New York, performing at venues including Avery Fisher Hall (Mostly Mozart Festival), Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space, and Merkin Concert Hall.

Jenny has worked extensively in arts administration in music, theater, and dance in London including the South Bank Concert Halls, the Royal Court Theatre and London Sinfonietta, and – for the past 33 years – in New York, including Symphony Space, the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, and Chamber Music America. Jenny is the Executive Director of the National Flute Association.



Cynthia Powell, Conductor and Artistic Director, celebrates her 22nd season with Melodia. A graduate of Westminster Choir College, she has worked with many musical groups in the NY metropolitan area and has conducted major works for chorus and orchestra. She has served on the guest faculty at Sarah Lawrence College, led the St. George's Choral Society in NYC, and was a guest conductor at the International Choral Festival in Havana, Cuba. She is also the Artistic Director of the Stonewall Chorale, and Organist/Choirmaster of Temple Sinai in Tenafly, NJ. Her passion for music and commitment to the choral art is

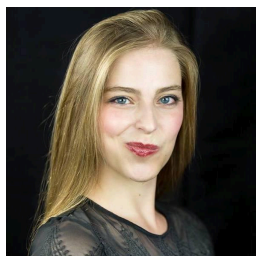
coupled with a desire to generate awareness and funds for timely causes, and she has produced recitals, oratorios and concerts to benefit Bailey House, a homeless residence for people with AIDS, for Doctors Without Borders, the Pastors for Peace Cuba Caravan, and Water is Life, Kenya. At home as both a conductor and an organist, she freelances in a number of area churches, including Holy Apostles, Riverside, St. Luke in the Fields, and Church of the Ascension.



Dr. Janet Sora Chung is an organist, pianist and violinist in New York City where she is the co-artistic director of the Christopher Street Collegium, an ensemble that vivifies the sacred works of Bach, Buxtehude and Couperin among others. Chung's interpretations of Messiaen and Bach have met with acclaim. She has performed at St. Mary the Virgin, St. Ignatius of Loyola Church, SUNY Purchase Performing Arts Center, the University of Scranton, Winspear Centre and Riverside Church. She earned her Doctorate of Musical Arts from the Manhattan School of Music,

studying with McNeil Robinson and garnering the Bronson Ragan Award for outstanding ability in organ performance. She loves to arrange pieces for solo organ and for organ and saxophone duo. To expand this repertoire, she and Jay Rattman (saxophone) have commissioned or premiered works by Walter Hilse, Rachel Laurin, James Chirillo and transcribed pieces by Debussy and others. She recently premiered her arrangement of Bach's Goldberg Variations for the 200th anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church's where she serves as Music Director & Organist. In addition, she is Cantor-Organist of the New York Finnish Lutheran Congregation and Director of the Contemporary Ensemble at Holy Trinity Church:

Meet the Melodia Singers



Hilary Baboukis is thrilled to be singing again with Melodia! Ms. Baboukis is the Associate Director of Music at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in NYC, the Administrator of Great Music under a Byzantine Dome, and an Adjunct Professor of Voice at Wagner College, Staten Island. As a professional mezzo-soprano, she performs frequently with ensembles and organizations across New York and New Jersey. Ms. Baboukis studied at Columbia (NYC), the American University in Cairo, and Oklahoma State University (Stillwater). She lives in Jersey City, where she also teaches voice and piano privately.



Ginny Bartolone has been a member of Melodia since 2020 and is delighted to be back performing with the group for the fourth time. In addition to singing with choirs since childhood, she studied theatre at Drew University where she performed with a variety of choral and a cappella groups. She is now a professional writer and spends her days working with the editorial department of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.



Shohini Goldin Bhattacharya is thrilled to be singing with Melodia. A member since 2014, she started her vocal training in the Hindustani tradition of India, and later participated in select choirs throughout middle and high school. After a stint in college a cappella at Johns Hopkins University, she worked for UBS in London and joined the bank's Choral Society. Now working in startup marketing in NYC, she is grateful for the support of her family and friends who always encouraged her to continue making music!



Marisa Paley Brown is thrilled to return to choir singing with Melodia Women's Choir. A long-time choir singer, Marisa has been singing from an early age in musical theatre, school choirs, concert choirs, regional choirs, university choirs and close harmony a cappella jazz choirs. This return to singing has brought her such joy after a long time away. Marisa spends her days working west coast hours as a Director of Marketing for a west coast healthcare company but dreams about doing something more creative. She dedicates this return to music to her family and friends who have been so very supportive for so many years.



Cara Brownell joined Melodia in 2013. Choral singing and harmony have been her intercessors from an early age, in church & community choirs, high school (and a folk rock band, of course), SUNY Binghamton University Chorus and Women's Madrigal Ensemble. Cara's guitar-playing soprano sister nourished the pathway! Transplanted from Saratoga Springs in the 1970's, early years in NYC found her accompanying dance classes at NYU, Marymount Manhattan College, active in the downtown Soho/Lower East Side performance scene (Simone Forti, Douglas Dunn, Collaborative Projects, Inc.) and teaching vocal

and movement improvisation in her loft. Cara is a founding member of the Lafayette Inspirational Ensemble, a gospel choir based at historic Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, Ft. Greene, Brooklyn and also sings in the classical Lafayette Choir.



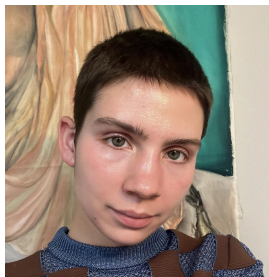
Sally Burgos is a proud returning member of the Melodia women's choir. Previously, she sang as a Soprano 1 vocalist with the William Paterson University Chamber Choir in New Jersey. She had the opportunity to go on a European Tour, where she performed at the Pantheon (Rome, Italy), St. Marks Basilica, Basilica di San Marco, (Venice, Italy), Melk Abbey (Melk, Austria), Salzburg Dom (Salzburg, Austria) & St. Peters Dom (Vienna, Austria). She was also a member of the New Jersey Choral Society. Sally holds a Masters in Professional Communication with concentrations in professional writing & digital media. She is a digital marketing consultant. When she is not assisting businesses with strategic ways to expand their brand presence, she is pursuing her lifelong passion as a singer. She currently lives in Astoria Queens with her dog Gizmo and is happy to be back with the Melodia team.



Elaine Chen is thrilled to be joining Melodia as a soprano 2 for her first season. Prior to singing for Melodia, she sang soprano 1 for various choirs at school and played trumpet for the jazz band. She also plays guitar and piano for fun and dabbles in songwriting during her free time. While she was in college, she joined the choir and also sang for Hunter's acapella group where she then became associate music director. Outside of singing, Elaine works as a Pediatric Registered Nurse and has returned to school to study graphic design. On top of school and working as a nurse, she is working at a women's financial education firm as the marketing/graphic design intern and will be interning for a marketing agency this summer for their creative team.



Deliana Daskalova has been singing in choirs since the age of eight, starting with the youth choir "Danube Waves" in her hometown of Ruse, Bulgaria. After moving to the US she continued singing mainly in the Washington, DC area with The Washington International Chorus and Rockville Chorus. With a background in Theatre (BA/University of Maryland), Visual Anthropology (MA/Goldsmiths, London), and Film/TV in New York, she's been very lucky to work with amazing filmmakers, create her own projects, and continuously reinvent herself as the times change, with choir singing being the unchanging constant. Deliana joined Melodia in January 2020 and is excited to help bring to life the music of her native Bulgaria in this Spring's "A Brighter Garden" concert.



Naomi Davidson is thrilled to be joining Melodia for her first season. Born and raised in Iowa, Naomi moved to New York in 2016 to attend Vassar College where she studied voice with Drew Minter while pursuing a degree in film. A lifelong fan of choral music, she has sung in ensembles ranging from church choirs to the Vassar College Chamber Singers. She lives in Brooklyn and works as a production manager for an eyewear company.



Alexis Hedvat is so excited to join Melodia for her first season. She has been involved with music her entire life, both as a pianist and choir singer. She studied with the Mannes School of Music Preparatory Program from ages 6 to 18 and continued her choir journey while pursuing a degree in computer science at Tufts University. A proud lifelong New Yorker, Alexis works as a software engineer and has a deep love for Broadway, show tunes, and all things musicals.



Rebecca Hart - is happy to be returning to Melodia this spring! She is an actor, singer/songwriter, and lyricist/librettist. Recent and upcoming projects include: singing the role of Irish activist Maud Gonne in *The Battle of Blythe Road* (Prospect Musicals/On the Quays IGNITE Festival), the original solo show *How To Read Tarot Cards* at The Cell NYC (2023) and the Woodstock/Byrdcliff Residency (upcoming, August '25), a National Playwriting Foundation 'Relentless' Award Honorable Mention for her musical *IRON JOHN: an american ghost story* (libretto/lyrics) and a Catwalk Institute Summer Residency to develop her play/opera *SUBMERSIBLE* (August '24). Favorite

things include: being an aunt, doing yoga, baking, her side business Clear Tarot NYC, and of course, Melodia.



Deb Howard retired from a career in affordable housing and community development and sought to join another choir, which would be both challenging and rewarding. She has been singing in choirs since she was five years old and has sung at Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in both the Inspirational Ensemble and classic choirs for 40 years. After attending several concerts given by Melodia, she knew that this was the choir of which she wanted to be a part as the sound was so beautiful and the repertoire amazing! She is glad to be in this wonderful choir!



Nikhita Karra is thrilled to be singing with Melodia for her second season this spring. She has been singing since she was a child, beginning with formal training in the Indian classical traditions of Carnatic and Hindustani music. She transitioned to voice lessons and choral music in middle school, and has sought out choirs ever since. She first joined a treble choir in high school, and is so glad to be singing music for treble voices again with Melodia. Outside of Melodia, she loves to read and is always looking for new book recommendations!



Olivia LaBarge has spent the past five years enjoying a vibrant career as a professional vocalist. After studying classical voice and musical theatre at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, she went on to perform with companies such as Hong Kong Disneyland, Holland America Line, and regional theaters across the country. Her voice can also be heard on a few children's musical cast recordings produced by Broadway Licensing. In addition to performing, Olivia teaches vocal feminization with the Seattle Voice Lab and will begin her master's in Arts Administration at Columbia University's Teachers College this fall. She is grateful to be singing with Melodia, where her

passion for music continues to grow. She hopes you enjoy this beautiful repertoire as much as she does!



Sofia Licir is joining Melodia Choir for her very first season! As an avid choral arts enthusiast, Sofia has dedicated over a decade to music. While in Texas, Sofia partook in the extensive and competitive TMEA All-State and Texas State Solo & Ensemble competitions, and honorably placed in the TMEA Treble Choir in 2017, along with first rank in 2015 & 2016 for TSSEC. Through moving to New York to pursue an academic career in digital anthropology, Sofia joined various choirs to maintain her love for the choral arts - including the Deutsches Haus choir, and the NYU Chorale. The gift of performing within a community of dedicated musicians is one she cherishes deeply, and hopes to continue to flourish within Melodia Choir!



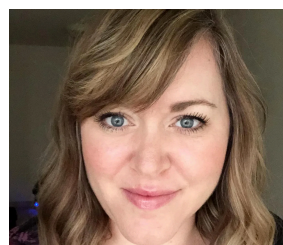
Lulu Lin started singing in public when she was drafted to the children's choir at church. She has been performing ever since, in musicals, different choirs wherever she happens to land, and even in a capella group. After a long pause due to various life responsibilities, Lulu is eager to be singing again. She is gratified to be harmonizing with the Melodia Women's Choir, and hopes you love the music as much as she does.



Tara Mulvaney is grateful to have found a place with Melodia since Fall 2023. She was rigorously trained in her youth as a classical vocalist but quit after losing her connection to her voice. In 2022, her love for vocal music was rekindled with the emergence of a burgeoning and mildly notorious Brooklyn-based music arts organization, the Gaia Music Collective. As a special educator, she works alongside Gaia to offer students and their families a creative outlet during field trips or after school activities at places like the MoMA and Lincoln Center. She spends her spare time among butterflies in the Museum of Natural History.



Linnea Mumma joined Melodia last season and is thrilled to be singing with the group. She has been singing as long as she can remember, beginning formal training as a middle schooler and continuing to this day. She graduated from Kenyon College in 2022 with degrees in music and English, where she participated in Chamber Singers as a soloist and choir member, performed every semester in Opera and Musical Theater workshop, and won the 2019 and 2021 Knox County Symphony Young Musicians Competition. She has participated in numerous singing programs, including Assisi Performing Arts, Baldwin Wallace Conservatory Vocal Intensive, Music Mountain, and New Jersey Performing Arts Center. She now lives in New Jersey and works as a freelance PR consultant for the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music as well as a bookseller at a local bookstore.



Nicole Owen is thrilled to be singing with Melodia! A lifelong choir nerd, Nicole has been singing since she could talk and makes it a point to join a choir wherever she's lived. Previous choir experience includes: Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra (Santa Fe, NM), Key Chorale & Chamber Singers (Sarasota, FL), Saints Unified Voices (Las Vegas, NV), and many more! She holds a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Florida. Currently working as a Marketing Project Manager for a software

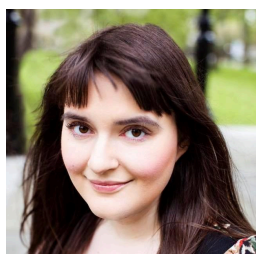
company, she enjoys decorating cakes, being outdoors, and spending quality time with family and friends. Nicole's favorite duet partner is her husband, Brian.



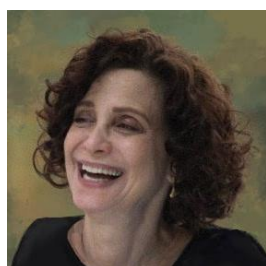
Ashley Paskalis had been singing with Melodia since fall 2010. Singing since grade school, Ashley studied vocal performance and sang in the Treble Choir at Wagner College, where she graduated in 2006 with a degree in Arts Administration. Currently working in healthcare PR/media relations, she spends her free time playing softball and of course, singing with Melodia. She'd like to thank her NYC family for continuing to support our concerts.



Chiara Pierangelo is excited to be singing with Melodia again this season! Originally from Padova, Italy, she has sung with vocal groups since childhood. Chiara has a deep love for Baroque, Renaissance, and Medieval music; with *Cantus Anthimi*, she recorded three albums of Medieval and Renaissance music, and is a founding member of *SolEnsemble*, a female a cappella group focused on medieval and contemporary repertoire. She holds a Master's in Ancient Greek Literature and studies classical voice with several esteemed teachers (Elisabetta Tiso, Francesco Signor, Rosetta Pizzo, and Sandro Naglia).



Ruston Ropac is a dynamic explorer of eclectic vocal soundscapes. She is the vocalist for the BlackBox Ensemble, a NYC-based chamber music collective, and Four and Twenty Strings, Long Island's premier early music ensemble. She holds a Master of Music degree in Contemporary Vocal Performance from the Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Redlands. She currently lives in Manhattan and enjoys writing poetry and playing tabletop games in her spare time.



Tina Rosenberg is enjoying her second season as a member of Melodia. She has sung with Voce In Tempore in Mexico City and the Yiddish Philharmonic Chorus in New York City. Singing is a family activity; she and her oldest daughter sing together in the Glass Menagerie Chorus. Her day job is in journalism. She is co-founder of the Solutions Journalism Network.



Jeanne Ruskin has appeared on Broadway, and in many roles for the Roundabout Theatre, regional theaters, summer stock, and television. She has taught acting, voice and speech in colleges and universities and as a private coach. She is founder/artistic director of RFTC, Inc/Red Flute Theatre, and has presented four productions to date, including "Awakenings", her dramatization of Kate Chopin's 1899 novel *The Awakening*: <https://bit.ly/3Hj435T>. As a teenager she toured South America with the Michigan Youth Chorale. She toured with the USO during the Vietnam years. She performed as Ma Joad in "The Grapes of Wrath" in Moscow. Her travels changed her life. She is very

happy to be singing again with Melodia (of which she has been a member since 2010). Music is truly the international language and we need the arts now more than ever.



Erin Siu joined Melodia Women's Choir as a Soprano 1 in 2020. Prior to Melodia, she sang with NYU Steinhardt's Women's Choir, and spent seven years with the San Francisco Girls' Chorus. Outside of singing, Erin spends her time attending NYU as an MBA student, playing piano, doing yoga, reading, and making ramen.



Tulasi Sundaresh is excited to join Melodia for her first season as a Soprano 1. Tulasi is a lifelong musician, studying music theory, vocal performance, viola, violin, and piano throughout her life. She has grown up singing in choir all throughout her schooling in Connecticut. Tulasi attended Boston University and graduated in 2020, moving to NYC in 2021. She is currently a graphic designer and can be found baking, thrift shopping, or searching for the best new pasta spot in the city.



Ezinne Umannabuikwe is excited to join Melodia for her first season and looks forward to singing with the group every week. She sang in choirs throughout grade school in Columbus, Ohio and moved to NYC in 2013 to study writing at The New School. She works as a paralegal and enjoys reading and writing science fiction in her free time.



Zarina Vildanova is a professional singer and songwriter who performs in Tatar. She is dedicated to promoting and preserving her cultural heritage, sharing the richness of Eastern traditions with audiences worldwide. She actively works to sustain and pass on Tatar culture among the local Tatar community. A graduate of the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts (GITIS) in Moscow and the College of Music in Kazan, Zarina balances her artistic career with motherhood. She joined Melodia Women's Choir in 2024 (alto 1) and this is her third season.



Sarah Woodruff is happy to be singing with Melodia! She was a member of multiple choirs during her time at Penn State University, and has been singing most of her life. After ten years in book publishing, she joined a Brooklyn-based environmental nonprofit to work on outreach around NYC's Curbside Composting program (which will be citywide by October 2024!). She can frequently be found writing, hiking, and playing guitar.

More About Melodia

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Thanks to all our donors, including the most recent online contributors who may not be listed here.

Institutional Supporters:

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Special thanks to Erik Bottcher, New York City Council Member District 3.



Donate to Melodia and help us find and sing music for women's voices now and in the future.

Your fully tax-deductible donation helps us to perform gorgeous, rarely-heard music for women's voices and commission women composers to write new works. Please help by mailing a check to the address below. Make checks payable to Melodia Women's Choir. You can also donate with a credit card at our website: www.melodiawomenschoirnyc.org or via Venmo: Melodia Women's Choir NYC @MelodiaWomensChoir. Your support truly makes a difference!

Special Thanks

Special thanks to all those who have helped make this concert possible, including the staff at St. Luke in the Fields Church and St. John's Lutheran Church, and the Melodia Board of Directors.

Postcard design: Jill Vedric. Thanks to Melodia singers for all the extras, including: Section leaders: Ashley Paskalis, Chiara Pierangelo, Jeanne Ruskin, Jenny Clarke; program notes, Cynthia Powell; Social media and marketing, Kayla Oderah.

Audition for Melodia

Do you love to sing? We are a women-powered organization exclusively dedicated to exploring, creating, and performing exemplary music for women's voices. Come and explore this wonderful repertoire with us! We're auditioning experienced choral singers in July/August. Contact JenniferClarke446@gmail.com to schedule an audition.

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212-252-4134
www.melodiawomenschoirnyc.org
womenschoir@mindspring.com

Melodia Women's Choir History

2003-04

Salut Printemps ~ Our first season, and a celebration of spring.
Monteverdi to Meredith Monk
Participation in Festival of Women and Girls' Choirs, NYC

2004-05

November Song ~ Rachmaninov, Holst, Elgar and more
Sirens ~ Songs of the Sea, haunting tales of the deep, with piano, harp, flute and bassoon

2005-06

Twilight in the Garden of Dreams ~ celebrating Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's
200th birthday, with piano and strings
Participation in Wall to Wall Igor Stravinsky at Symphony Space
A Thousand Sweet Refrains ~ with four French horns, Brahms to Stravinsky
Participation in Carmina Burana at Merkin Concert Hall

2006-07

Óyeme con los ojos (Hear Me with Your Eyes) ~ world premiere commission
by Allison Sniffin, Merkin Concert Hall, Queens Library
Shout, Sister, Shout! ~ Girl Groups from 12th to 21st Centuries,
Hildegard von Bingen to the Dixie Chicks

2007-08

Sweet Interlude ~ featuring all-female performance of Vivaldi Gloria,
and world premiere commission by Becca Schack
Force of Nature, celebrating the living world, 20th & 21st century works
Participation in Wall to Wall Bach at Symphony Space

Guest artists at Women's History Month Celebration of NYC
Participation in Holst The Planets at Symphony Space

2008-09

Wrapped in Song ~ Britten's Ceremony of Carols and works by
Thompson, Tormis, Holst and Kodály

Guest artists at Women's History Month Celebration of NYC

Visions of Eternity ~ with orchestra, featuring Messiaen Trois Petites Liturgies,
Church of St. Ignatius Loyola/Sacred Music in a Sacred Space

2009-10

Notes Upon the Breeze ~ world premiere commission by
Chris Lastovicka, plus works by Pergolesi, Holst and Raminsh

Songs from the Heart ~ Merkin Concert Hall, works by Schumann, Brahms,
Fanny Hensel Mendelssohn, and US premiere of songs by Tofiq Guliyev

2010-2011

Timeless ~ Britten Missa Brevis, works by Poulenc, Szymko, Casals, Fauré,
plus world premiere commission by Becca Stevens

Mornings with You ~ world premiere commission by Christina Whitten Thomas,
works by Meredith Monk, Ned Rorem, Charles M. Loeffler

2011-2012

Journey ~ Amy Beach, The Chambered Nautilus, world premiere by Cathy Aks,

Colors of the Sun ~ NY premiere by Cecilia McDowall, plus works by Whitacre, Fauré, Holst, Verdi

2012-2013 – 10th Anniversary Season

Questions About Angels ~ world premiere commission by Sally Lamb McCune, plus early American sacred songs and
medieval selections

A Breath of Spring ~ world premiere commission by Nina Siniakova, plus works by Stravinsky, Duruflé, Debussy,
Rutter, and Daley.

2013-2014

Visions of Peace ~ celebrating Britten 100, plus works by Holst and Csonka, and jazz samba selections.

The Poet's Song ~ World premiere commission by Errollyn Wallen, plus American Songbook favorites

2014-2015

Windsong ~ works by Franz Biebl, Gwyneth Walker, Peter Warlock, Ola Gjeilo and more.
Released our first commercial CD – Lullaby

2015-2016

¡Alegría!

Works by Susa, Núñez, Chilcott, Carrillo, and more.

With Vox Nova Girls' Choir

Cassandra. World premiere commission by Hilary Purrington, plus works by Meredith Monk and Emma Lou Diemer.

2016-2017

Autumn Rhapsody

Featuring Vivaldi's Magnificat, works by Ola Gjeilo, Rudi Tas, Tõnu Kõrvits, Eleanor Daley, & arrangement of "Largo"
for NY Philharmonic 175th Anniversary.

Awakening The Spirit

Visions for upper voice choir, harp and strings ~ John Rutter, (US premiere)

The Dancers ~ Grace Williams
Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda ~ Gustav Holst

2017-2018

15th Anniversary Season

Autumn Fire

Works by Fanny & Felix Mendelssohn, Aiblinger, and Rheinberger

The Harmony of Morning

Works by Melodia commissioned composers Christina Whitten Thomas and Sally Lamb McCune; early work by Elliott Carter; U.S. premiere by Paul Halley

2018-2019

Where Shadow Chases Light – world premiere commission by Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian, NY premiere by Deanna Witkowski, works by György Orbán, Eric Whitacre, Gustav Holst, and Elena Kats-Chernin

Gloria - Lifting the Veil on Vivaldi's Masterpiece

2019-2020

Incantations – world premiere commission by Allison Sniffin. U.S. Works by C.V. Stanford, Robin Milford and Mediaeval Baebes.

From **fall 2019-2021**, Melodia's concert programs were on hiatus due to the pandemic. The choir produced a selection of virtual choir video recordings during this time.

2021-2022

Sun, Moon, and Stars

Light of a Brand New Day - Reimagining American roots music for women's voices with the Melodia Bluegrass Band!

2022-2023 - 20th Anniversary Season

A Winter's Welcome - Featuring spoken word performed by a cast of NYC actors including poems by Maggie Dietz, William Shakespeare, and Robert Frost. Musical selections include Mel Bonis, Katerina Gimon, John Rutter, and Barry Manilow.

Always Something Sings - 20th Anniversary concert - stories of courageous women and their achievements. Music by Hildegard von Bingen, Florence B. Price, Margaret Bonds, Abbie Betinis, Ola Gjeilo, and Emma Lou Diemer, excerpts from Melodia-commissioned works by Allison Sniffin and Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian. Spoken word by members of Melodia.

2023-2024

The Circle Never Ends – world premiere commission by Zanaida Stewart Robles, music by Amy Beach, Ron Perera, Dan Forrest and more.

A Tapestry of Song – world premier commission by Emily Mason, works by Josef Rheinberger, Gustav Holst celebrating 150th anniversary of his birth, Sally Lamb McCune and more.

2024-2025

She Sang the Stars - New York premiere by Sarah Quartel plus works by Kim André Arnesen, Hildegard von Bingen and Ethel Smyth.

A Brighter Garden - a potpourri of music from Melodia's garden of favorite repertoire. Music by Fauré, Paul Halley, and folk-oriented favorites.,