November Nights

Cynthia Powell, Artistic Director and Conductor
Jenny Clarke, Founder and Executive Director
Janet Sora Chung, piano

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

The Last Rose of Summer — Irish Melody arr. Earlene Rentz

O Vos Omnes — Pablo Casals arr. Cynthia Powell

Ubi Caritas — Roxanna Panufnik

Sing Me to Heaven — Daniel Gawthrop

Six Choruses for Women's Voices — Sergei Rachmaninoff

I. All Glory
II. Night
III. The Pine Tree - *Soloists: Hilary Baboukis & Zarina Vildanova*
IV. Now the waves are sleeping
V. Captivity
VI. The Angel

An Die Musik — Franz Schubert arr. Cynthia Powell

Abendlied — Josef Rheinberger arr Nadezhda Averina

Lorelei — Clara Schumann arr. Brandon Williams

At the River — Robert Lowry, arr. Aaron Copland

Northern Lights — Ola Gjeilo

Soloist: Ginny Bartolone

Sure on this Shining Night — Morten Lauridsen

Melodia Singers

Soprano		Alto	
	Andrea Lopez		Tara Mulvaney
Ginny Bartolone	Ashley Paskalis	Hilary Baboukis	Annette Mae Pierce
Deliana Daskalova	Chiara Pierangelo	Marisa Brown	Ruston Ropac
Daniela Finlay	Alethea Ruddy	Cara Brownell	Jeanne Ruskin
Janet Gillespie	Esther Shemeth	Renee Carter	Ezinne Umunnabuike
Deb Howard	Erin Siu	Jenny Clarke	Zarina Vildanova
Lucy Janovitz	Tulasi Sundaresh	Derby Elizabeth	Patricia Whyte
Nikhita Karra	Angela Zhang	Rebecca Hart	Claire Wiener

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

As autumn deepens and the days grow shorter, we find ourselves drawn toward the mysteries of the night: the quiet beauty of the natural world, the tenderness of memory, the solace of faith, and the enduring power of love. *November Nights* brings together music spanning centuries and traditions, inviting us to reflect on the changing seasons of life and the light that can be found even in darkness.

From the haunting simplicity of an Irish melody to the luminous harmonies of contemporary choral music, tonight's program explores the many ways that music speaks to the human heart. These works remind us that beauty is fleeting, that love transcends time, and that the act of sharing music together is itself a profound expression of our common humanity.

The Last Rose of Summer
Irish melody, arranged by Earlene Rentz
The beloved Irish melody *The Last Rose of Summer* evokes the poignancy of a fading season and the loneliness of a beauty that remains after all others have passed. The original poem by Thomas Moore, written in 1805, reflects on the last rose blooming alone in a garden, a metaphor for love, friendship, and the passage of time. In Earlene Rentz's arrangement, the simplicity of the melody allows its tenderness and melancholy to unfold with quiet eloquence.

O Vos Omnes
Pablo Casals, arranged by Cynthia Powell
The Latin text, drawn from the Book of Lamentations, asks: "O all you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow." Pablo Casals, celebrated as a cellist and composer, created a setting of extraordinary emotional intensity. The music invites us into a moment of profound compassion, giving voice to suffering while reminding us of our capacity to recognize and share in the pain of others.

Ubi Caritas
Roxanna Panufnik
"Where charity and love are, there God is." The ancient Latin text of *Ubi Caritas* has been sung for centuries in Christian worship, traditionally on Maundy Thursday. Roxanna Panufnik's setting offers a contemporary interpretation of this timeless message. Through its flowing melodic lines and richly expressive harmonies, the work celebrates love not as an abstract ideal, but as a living force that draws people together.

Sing Me to Heaven

Daniel E. Gawthrop

Daniel Gawthrop's moving setting of Jane Griner's poem is a meditation on the enduring power of music. The text imagines music as a companion through life and beyond, offering comfort, joy, and a sense of transcendence. Rather than focusing on a particular religious tradition, the work speaks to the universal human longing for connection and the hope that music can accompany us wherever our journeys may lead.

Six Choruses for Women's Voices

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Written in 1896, Rachmaninoff's *Six Choruses for Women's Voices* reveal a lesser-known but deeply expressive aspect of the composer's artistry. These short works display the rich harmonic language and sweeping lyricism characteristic of his larger compositions, while exploring the unique colors and textures of women's voices. The choruses move through contrasting moods, from intimacy and delicacy to passionate intensity, offering a glimpse into the emotional world of a young composer already developing his distinctive musical voice.

An die Musik

Franz Schubert, arranged by Cynthia Powell

One of the most beloved tributes to music ever written, *An die Musik* ("To Music") celebrates music as a source of refuge and consolation. Schubert's song, composed in 1817 to a poem by Franz von Schober, expresses gratitude for the moments of beauty that music brings into an otherwise difficult world. The speaker finds solace in music's embrace, describing it as a gift that lifts the spirit and offers peace. This arrangement for women's voices allows Schubert's heartfelt melody to become a shared expression of gratitude.

Abendlied

Josef Rheinberger

Josef Rheinberger's *Abendlied* ("Evening Song"), composed in 1878, is one of the most cherished works in the choral repertoire. Its text, drawn from the Gospel of Luke, recalls the disciples' encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus: "Stay with us, for evening is at hand, and the day is now past." The music unfolds with serene simplicity, its gentle harmonic movement creating an atmosphere of stillness and reflection. As darkness approaches, the work offers a prayer for companionship, peace, and the comforting presence of another.

Lorelei

Clara Schumann, arranged by Brandon Williams

The legend of the Lorelei tells of a beautiful woman whose enchanting song lures sailors toward the dangerous rocks of the Rhine River. The myth became a powerful symbol of Romantic fascination with nature, beauty, and the mysterious forces of human emotion. Clara Schumann, one of the great pianists and composers of the nineteenth century, brings a

distinctive musical sensitivity to this evocative legend. Brandon Williams's arrangement for women's voices highlights the work's lyrical character and its haunting atmosphere, drawing us into a world where beauty and danger are inseparable.

At the River

Robert Lowry, arranged by Aaron Copland

Originally a nineteenth-century American hymn, *At the River* expresses the longing for a peaceful crossing into a promised land. The river becomes a metaphor for the passage from earthly life to a place of rest and fulfillment. Aaron Copland's arrangement brings a distinctly American character to the melody, combining simplicity with a spacious, contemplative beauty. The result is both intimate and expansive, evoking the hope of a journey's end and the comfort of a welcoming shore.

Northern Lights

Ola Gjeilo

Inspired by the extraordinary beauty of the aurora borealis, Ola Gjeilo's *Northern Lights* captures the wonder of the natural world through shimmering harmonies and expansive musical phrases. The text, drawn from the Song of Solomon, speaks of love and beauty, creating a connection between the mystery of the heavens and the intimacy of human affection. The music seems to hover between earth and sky, inviting us to experience the sublime as something both deeply personal and beyond our understanding.

Sure on this Shining Night

Morten Lauridsen

Morten Lauridsen's *Sure on this Shining Night* sets a poem by James Agee that reflects on the beauty of the world and the quiet solace found in the night. The poem moves from an awareness of human sorrow toward a profound sense of gratitude and peace. Lauridsen's luminous harmonies and flowing melodic lines create an atmosphere of tenderness and wonder. In this music, the night is not a place of fear or loneliness, but a moment of stillness in which the beauty of existence becomes unmistakably clear.

A Closing Reflection

The music of *November Nights* reminds us that darkness and light are not opposites, but companions. The fading rose, the evening prayer, the river crossing, and the shining stars all speak to the same enduring human experience: the desire to find beauty, meaning, and connection in a changing world.As we listen and sing together, may we discover that music offers more than an escape from the darkness. It gives us a way to meet it—with compassion, with wonder, and with one another.

Text Translations

Last Rose of Summer
Irish Air

'Tis the last rose of summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flower of her kindred,
No rose-bud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes,
Or give sigh for sigh!

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed
Where thy mates of the garden
In the springtime were red.

So soon may I follow,
When friendships decay,
And from Love's shining circle
The gems drop away!
When true hearts lie withered,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?

O Vos Omnes
Text from Lamentations 1:12

O vos ómnes qui transítis per víam, atténdite et vidéte:
Si est dólor símilis sícut dólor méus.
Atténdite, univérsi pópuli, et vidéte dolórem méum.
Si est dólor símilis sícut dólor méus.

O all you who walk by on the road, pay attention and see:
if there be any sorrow like my sorrow.
Pay attention, all people, and look at my sorrow:
if there be any sorrow like my sorrow.

Ubi Caritas
Antiphon from the liturgy of Maundy Thursday

Ubi cáritas et amor, Deus ibi est	Where charity and love are, God is there.
Congregávit nos in unum Christi amor	Love of Christ has gathered us into one.
Exsultémus et in ipso iucundémur	Let us rejoice in Him and be glad.
Timeámus et amémus Deum vivum	Let us fear, and let us love the living God.
Et ex corde diligámus nos sincéro	And from a sincere heart let us love one another.

Sing Me to Heaven
Words by Jane Griner

In my heart′s sequestered chambers lie truths
stripped of poet's gloss
Words alone are vain and vacant,
and my heart is mute
In response to aching silence,
memory summons half-heard voices
And my soul finds primal eloquence
and wraps me in song
Wraps me in song

If you would comfort me, sing me a lullaby
If you would win my heart, sing me a love song
If you would mourn me and bring me to God
Sing me a requiem
Sing me to Heaven

Touch in me all love and passion
Pain and pleasure, touch in me
Touch in me, grief and comfort
Love and passion, pain and pleasure
Sing me a lullaby

A love song
A requiem, love me
Comfort me, bring me to God
Sing me a love song
Sing me to Heaven

Six Choruses for Women's Voices
Texts Translated by Anthony Antolini

I. **All Glory**
Words by N. Nekrasov

Glory, all glory to all our people!
Pride of the nation, joy for the soul,
Freedom and peace are prized overall!

Glory, all glory to all our people!
Through countless battles,
Freedom and peace have been left to us
By past generations.

We all a loving family united,
Peace has been strengthened,
Carrying forward freedom's just cause.

Glory, all glory to all our people!
Pride of the nation, joy for the soul,
Freedom and peace are prized over all!

Glory!

III.**The Pine Tree**
Words by M. Lermontov

In wild northern country
There stands unprotected
On top of a mountain a pine,
And dreaming while rocking,
In robes made of snowflakes,
Her raiment is priestly and fine.
In dreaming she sees, far away
In a desert a kingdom where dawn is aglow,
Alone and forlorn on a mountain so scorching
A beautiful palm tree must grow.

II. **Night**
Words by V. Ladizhensky

Now the nighttime with her wings so dark
Hovers o'er our sleeping sphere;
Somewhere sadly drifts a mournful song,
Darkly clouded with a tear.
Go away, you melancholy tune,
Soon the dark of night shall pass
And arising, day victorious
Shall bring people happiness.
So the weary earth shall be refreshed
After sleeping the night through,
By a crimson sunrise
Glistening in a cloudless sky of blue.

IV. **Now the waves are sleeping**
Words by K. Romanov

Now the waves are sleeping,
Sky as clear can be,
And with radiance,
Shines the full moon
O'er the azure sea.
As the silver ocean
Shimmers in the night,
So will gladness
Conquer sadness with its light,
With its radiant light.

V. **Captivity**
Words by N. Tsiganov

"What's wrong, little nightingale,
Why do you not eat?
Why do you just hang your head,
Singing not a note?"

"I was glad to sing my song
In the woods in spring
But, alas, I hang my head
Caged and languishing!
My lover on branches for me is pining away,
My children are all moaning while I'm put on display!"

"Open is your window, the woods want you to sing,
Be happy, my little one, speedily take wing!"

VI. **The Angel**
Words by M. Lermontov

Through heavens at midnight an angel did fly,
His song softly filling the sky;
The moon and the stars and the clouds all around
Gave ear to this wonderful sound.

He sang of the bliss of the souls filled with love
In heavenly gardens above;
Of God the Almighty he sang,
And his words of praise were sincere.

He carried a youthful soul held to his breast
Down to a world sadly oppressed.
The sound of the song in the tender young heart,
Though it had no words, would not depart.

And suffered for ages alone in the world,
With longing so wondrously filled;
The heavenly grace of his song was not drowned
By clamorous din of earthly sound.

An die Musik
Text by Franz von Schober

Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden,
Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt,
Hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb entzunden,
Hast mich in eine beßre Welt entrückt,
In eine beßre Welt entrückt!

Oft hat ein Seufzer, deiner Harf entflossen,
Ein süßer, heiliger Akkord von dir
Den Himmel beßrer Zeiten mir erschlossen,
Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür,
Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir!

You lovely art, in how many gray hours,
Where I was stricken by life
You ignited my heart for warm love,
You brought me to a better world,
Brought me to a better world!

Often a sigh, that left your harp,
A sweet, holy chord from you,
Has shown me the existence of a better time
You lovely art, I thank you for it,
You lovely art, I thank you!

Abendlied
Text from Luke 24:29

Blieb' bei uns, denn es will Abend warden;
Und der Tag hat sich geneiget, sich geneiget,
O bleib' bei uns, denn es will Abend earden.

Bide with us, for evening shadows darken,
And the day will soon be over, soon be over,
O bide with us, for evening shadows darken.

Lorelei
Words by Heinrich Heine

Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten
Daß ich so traurig bin;
Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn.

Die Luft ist kühl und es dunkelt,
Und ruhig fließt der Rhein;
Der Gipfel des Berges funkelt
Im Abendsonnenschein.

Die schönste Jungfrau sitzet
Dort oben wunderbar,
Ihr goldnes Geschmeide blitzet,
Sie kämmt ihr goldenes Haar.

Sie kämmt es mit goldenem Kamme
Und singt ein Lied dabei,
Das hat eine wundersame,
Gewaltige Melodei.

Den Schiffer im kleinen Schiffe
Ergreift es mit wildem Weh,
Er schaut nicht die Felsenriffe,
Er schaut nur hinauf in die Höh.

Ich glaube, die Wellen verschlingen
Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn.
Und das hat mit ihrem Singen
Die Lorelei getan.

I do not know the reason why
To sorrow I'm inclined.
A story from the olden days
Is preying on my mind.

Light's fading and the air is cool
And quiet flows the Rhine,
The mountain top's still glowing
As the sun's last rays decline.

Seated up there, gorgeous,
A maid beyond compare,
Her golden jewellery glitters,
She combs her golden hair.

She combs it with a golden comb
And sings a song betimes,
A song with a strange melody,
With strange and powerful rhymes.

The boatman in his little boat,
Gripped by a savage love,
Does not see the rocky reef,
Sees only what's above.

I think the waves consumed them,
Boat and boatman, bye and bye.
And that's what, with her singing,
Was done by Lorelei.

At the River
Robert Lowry

Shall we gather by the river
Where bright angel's feet have trod
With its crystal tide forever
Flowing by the throne of God?

Yes, we'll gather by the river
The beautiful, the beautiful river
Gather with the saints by the river
That flows by the throne of God

Soon we'll reach the shining river
Soon our pilgrimage will cease
Soon our happy hearts will quiver
With the melody of peace

Yes, we'll gather by the river
The beautiful, the beautiful river
Gather with the saints by the river
That flows by the throne of God

Northern Lights
Text from Song of Solomon

Pulchra es amica mea,
Suavis et decora filia Jerusalem,
Pulchra es amica mea,
Suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem,
Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.
Averte oculos tuos a me
Quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.

Thou art beautiful, O my love,
Sweet and beautiful daughter of Jerusalem,
Thou art beautiful, O my love,
Sweet and comely as Jerusalem,
Terrible as an army set in array.
Turn away thy eyes from me,
For they have made me flee away.

Sure on this Shining Night
Text by James Agee

Sure on this shining night
Of star made shadows round
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground

The late year lies down the north
All is healed, all is health
High summer holds the earth
Hearts all whole

Sure on this shining night
I weep for wonder
Wandering far alone
Of shadows on the stars

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 34 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 24th 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 serves as music director of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Englewood, NJ, and Organist/Choirmaster of the Welsh Congregation of NYC, and Temple Sinai of Tenafly, NJ. 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 was the Artistic Director of the Stonewall Chorale for 24 years. 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.



Janet Sora Chung is a New York City-based organist, pianist, violinist, and conductor. In 2022, she co-founded the Christopher Street Collegium, an ensemble dedicated to bringing the sacred works of Schütz, Bach, Buxtehude, and Couperin to life in intimate settings. A dedicated proponent of the keyboard works of J.S. Bach, the French symphonic tradition, and the music of Olivier Messiaen, Chung frequently arranges pieces for solo organ and organ-saxophone duo. Alongside saxophonist Jay Rattman, she has commissioned and premiered new literature from

composers including Rachel Laurin and James Chirillo, in addition to performing arrangements of Duke Ellington and debuting her own transcriptions of works by Debussy and Bach. She is the Music Director and Organist at St. Mary's Church in Long Island City.

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 Director of Artistic Operations and Programming at Teatro Grattacielo. As a professional mezzo-soprano, she performs with ensembles and organizations across New York and New Jersey. 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 sixth 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 an actress, writer, and a long-distance hiker, recently completing her fifth trek on the Camino de Santiago.



Marisa 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. She thanks her family and friends who have been so very musically 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.



Renee Carter is excited to be joining Melodia for her first season. Originally from Indiana, Renee began singing in church around age nine. From church, she has performed in a variety of choral ensembles and musicals. Earning a B.A. in theater from Indiana University, Renee performed in the iconic IU Soul Revue under the direction of James Strong. Renee also co-founded a local, female-led girls' group, Yours Truly. Currently, Renee is working as an Ambassador at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In her free time, Renee enjoys watching documentaries, reading, and seeing theater.



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 for this fall's "November Nights" concert.



Derby B. Elizabeth is excited to join Melodia for her first season. Derby is a classical composer and librettist turned management consultant, focused on People and Culture strategy within Fortune 500 companies. She is a classically trained contralto, and received her degrees in Literature and Music Composition from Tulane University, where she also studied the popular music genre and its foundation in societal identity. During Covid, she withdrew from her PhD in Musicology to get her MBA in Corporate Finance from Cornell University, but still continues her study of genre with her songwriting collective in her hometown of New Orleans. She has an album coming out this December, written by that same collective, that serves as an exercise in the different subgenres of pop.



Janet Gillespie earned her masters in voice performance & pedagogy *with distinction* at Westminster Choir College. As a member of the Westminster Symphonic Choir (Joseph Flummerfelt, director), she performed major works with the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Vienna Philharmonic. With the Westminster Choir, she performed at the private memorial concert for Leonard Bernstein at Carnegie Hall. Janet spent many summers singing opera and concert repertoire with the chorus of the Festival dei Due Mondi in Spoleto, Italy (Donald Nally, director). Janet also sang in the chorus at Opera Company of Philadelphia and semi-pro and community choruses. In addition, for 19 years she directed the high school choral program in Irvington, NY. She is delighted to be performing her second concert with Melodia.



Daniela Finlay is excited to be singing with Melodia for her second season. She grew up in New York City singing in a variety of choirs including the National Children's Chorus and her high school's select choir. She is an urban planner and in her free time enjoys going on long walks, reading, watching movies, and cooking!



Rebecca Hart - is an actor, singer/songwriter, lyricist/librettist. Recent work includes her original solo show *How To Read Tarot Cards* at The Cell in NY and the Firehouse Theatre in Newport RI; writing residencies at the Woodstock/Byrdcliff Residency and the Catwalk Art Institute, and three nights opening for singer/songwriter Ryan Montbleau at Club Passim in Boston. Her album 'The Magician's Daughter' is available on bandcamp.com. Favorite things include: being an aunt, doing yoga, baking, fronting her alt folk band The Wrong Band, 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!



Lucy Janovitz is thrilled to be joining Melodia for her third season! A lifelong choral singer, Lucy grew up in Massachusetts singing in school choirs, including a high school ensemble that traveled to China. She went on to sing with the chamber and community choirs at Skidmore College in upstate New York. Lucy now lives in Brooklyn and works as a grantwriter at a nonprofit organization.



Nikhita Karra is thrilled to be singing with Melodia for her fourth season. 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!



Andrea Lopez is thrilled to be joining Melodia for her first season. Originally from Middletown, New Jersey, she has been singing in choirs, acapella groups, and musical theater productions since age 12. In high school, she was a member of the New Jersey All Shore Chorus in 2017-2021. After moving to New York to attend Barnard College, she sang with the Barnard-Columbia Chorus for one semester. She is excited to return to performing and reconnect with her love of choral music!



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 has offered students and their families a creative outlet during field trips and after school activities at places like the MoMA, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall. She spends her spare time among butterflies in the Museum of Natural History.



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.



Annette Mae Pierce first joined Melodia in 2006 and is grateful to be back after some years. A chorister since age 10, Annette was fortunate to have been generously given years of individual classical singing training by her high school teacher, retired world-class opera singer Mrs. Viola A. Gilliam, a Black woman who was unapologetically successful in the very white classical world of decades past. Outside of choir, Annette runs a small urban kayaking program, enjoys being involved with community radio, is a newly certified welder, avid polar plunger, bona fide plant hoarder, and loves her job as Program Director at NYC's largest makerspace.



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).



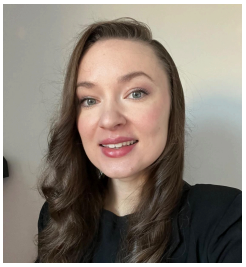
Ruston Ropac is a dynamic explorer of eclectic vocal soundscapes. She is the vocalist for the BlackBox Ensemble, a NYC-based chamber music collective, and Four and Twenty Strings, Long Island's premier early music ensemble. She holds a Master of Music degree in Contemporary Vocal Performance from the 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.



Alethea Ruddy is excited to sing with Melodia again this season. She sang many choirs through high school and college. As a soprano at the College of Idaho, she toured to China and sang in Carnegie Hall under Eric Whitacre's direction. While studying Mathematics, she minored in Music and Vocal Performance. She moved to NYC two years ago and lives in Brooklyn with her husband and dog, Jaco.



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.



Esther Shemeth is delighted to join Melodia for her first season, marking a return to choral music after many years. She began studying classical piano at age four and competed nationally as both a pianist and vocalist through NFAF and AACS competitions. She grew up performing with the New England Girls Choir and competitive choral ensembles, as well as a handbell choir performance at Carnegie Hall. Now based in Brooklyn, she leads global campaigns for an education organization and enjoys composing original piano works. Inspired by her late mother, a pianist who performed with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and later served as a music director, she is grateful to return to the choral community through Melodia and carry on her mother's musical legacy.



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 reading, writing, playing piano, and doing yoga.



Tulasi Sundaresh is excited to join Melodia for her fourth 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 Umunnabuike is excited to sing with Melodia 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, performing in Tatar and dedicated to promoting her cultural heritage. In 2025, she was nominated for the Berlin Music Video Awards and won the London Music Video Awards. She is an artist of the independent Tatar label YummyMusic and has released several singles and albums. A graduate of GITIS in Moscow and the College of Music in Kazan, Zarina balances her artistic career with motherhood. She participates in various festivals representing Tatar culture in the USA. She is also a music teacher at the annual Tatar children's camp at Alima Academy in Canada. Since 2024, she has been a member of the Melodia Women's Choir, performing as an Alto 1.



Patricia Whyte is excited to sing with Melodia. Singing and performing were a large part of her growing up, and she has enjoyed rediscovering a childhood joy with this group. A graduate of Fordham University, Patricia currently works in publicity where she spends her days sending many, many emails.



Claire Wiener is excited to sing with Melodia again this season! Originally from Arizona, Claire toured with the Phoenix Children's Chorus to Australia and performed at the Sydney Opera House. She went on to sing with choirs at Seattle University and headed the first Senior Recital at the school. Melodia is honored to be learning from and alongside such wonderful, talented people.



Angela Zhang is excited to sing with Melodia this season. Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, she has been a musician for most of her life, playing the piano, violin, flute, singing, and studying music theory since childhood. Angela graduated from Cornell University in 2020 and moved to NYC in 2023. She is currently a product manager and loves running, hiking, reading, and watching movies.

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This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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 John's Lutheran Church and Church of the Holy Apostles 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; choir choreography, Ginny Bartolone; 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 December/January. Contact JenniferClarke446@gmail.com to schedule an audition.

Melodia Women's Choir of NYC
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212-252-4134
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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 Tofig 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.

2025-2026
Radiant Voices - sacred music across time. Interpretations of such classics as Schubert's *Psalm 23*, Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*, and Franck's *Panis Angelicus* are intertwined with contemporary reflections by Kim André Anresen, Ola Gjeilo and others.
Global Echoes - blending works with global folk traditions and sacred repertoire with multiple languages and roots.

2026-2027
November Nights - music that conjures the glow of fall including works by Roxanna Panufnik, Lauridsen, Rachmaninoff, Schubert, Stanford, Clara Schumann, and more.