

SACRA/PROFANA

SEASON 14 - REIMAGINE

Togetherness

REIMAGINED

FRIDAY MAY 19, 2023
7:00 PM

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

MEET THE CONDUCTORS



JUAN CARLOS ACOSTA – ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Juan Carlos Acosta is a critically acclaimed American conductor specializing in contemporary vocal music who has led world and regional premieres of choral works by Anthony Davis, Saundra Choi, Sarah Kirkland Snider, Kim André Arnesen, Brandon Waddles, and many others. He served as chorus master for the live world premiere of the film *Star Trek: Beyond* (Michael Giacchino) and the live premiere of music from the television series *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (Bear McCreary). In addition to contemporary works, Juan Carlos has conducted nearly twenty different masterworks for choir and orchestra, and served as musical director and conductor for six productions of *All Is Calm: the Christmas Truce of 1914*, including San Diego Opera's award-winning production, which was hailed as "excellent" by *Broadway World*, "masterfully conducted" by the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and "nothing short of amazing" by *OperaWire*. Juan Carlos has made conducting appearances with the New York City Opera, Vancouver Chamber Choir, San Diego Opera, Bodhi Tree Concerts, and the Los Angeles Choral lab. In addition to his role as Artistic Director, Juan Carlos serves as the Director of Worship at the Village Community Presbyterian Church, where he directs the Chancel Choir, Village Community Chorale, and Youth Choir.

KRISHAN OBEROI – FOUNDING DIRECTOR & PRINCIPAL GUEST CONDUCTOR



Krishan Oberoi, aka Renoir Kobashi, is a graduate of Yale University and a musical artist with numerous critical accolades. Ensembles under his direction have been praised for their "impressive warmth and verve" (*Boston Globe*) "startling depth" (*Variety* magazine) and "clear diction, perfect pitch, and clear purpose" (*San Diego Union-Tribune*). he is the Founder & Principal Guest Conductor of SACRA/PROFANA, a critically acclaimed San Diego-based chorus described as "a divine vocal canopy" by *The Los Angeles Times*.

Hailed for his "visionary direction" (*San Diego Story*), Krishan has championed the music of living composers, conducting world premiere recordings of works by Shawn Kirchner, Sarah Kirkland Snider, and Pulitzer-Prize winner David Lang. SACRA/PROFANA's 2017 collaboration with composer Stephen Feigenbaum was described by *Time* magazine as "a sharply orchestrated piece of futuristic pop." Krishan has also prepared ensembles for Oscar-winning film composer Michael Giacchino, Tony award-winning composer Alan Menken, and producer Carlton Cuse (*Lost*, *Locke & Key*).

In 2022, Santa Barbara Music Publishing released Krishan's choral piece *Telescope*, with text by British poet Kate Wakeling. His music for the stage includes a 2015 collaboration with Emmy award-winning choreographer John Malashock. As Renoir Kobashi, he collaborated with Brooklyn-based playwright Rhiannon Ling in creating the original musical *Best Time To Be Alive*. Described by Lexi Lawson (*Broadway* cast of *Hamilton*) as "euphoric, magical... a musical masterpiece in the making", *Best Time To Be Alive* is currently in development with NYC-based BEDLAM Theatre.

AARON BURGETT – ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR



Aaron Burgett—an active director, composer, and performer—received his Bachelor's degree in Music Composition from PLNU, his Master's degree in Choral Conducting from SDSU, and now enjoys teaching and performing in a variety of styles. He has taught at schools and churches throughout San Diego County, working with students anywhere from the age of five to eighty-five. Currently, Aaron is the Director of Choral Worship at Solana Beach Presbyterian Church, as well as the Assistant Conductor of SACRA/PROFANA. When not making music, Aaron can be found filming weddings with his wife (Madeleine), playing fetch with their dog, or enjoying the Southern California sun on various outdoor adventures.

PROGRAM

EXPECTING THE MAIN THINGS FROM YOU.....NICO MUHLY (2005)

1. I HEAR AMERICA SINGING.....JIACHAE MCGEE, SOPRANO
2. INTERLUDE (A FARM PICTURE).....ELLIE MOUT, MICHAEL SAKELL, BECCA UNG, LIBBY WEBER
3. POETS TO COME

INTERMISSION

SONGS OF HOPE IN STRANGE TIMES.....AMY GORDON (2020-23)

1. IN TIMES OF DESCENT
2. IN TIMES OF HIBERNATION
3. IN TIMES OF STASIS
4. IN TIMES OF RE-EMERGENCESLAV SOKOLOV, BARITONE
5. IN TIMES OF RISINGADAM DAVIS, SEAN MCCORMICK, JIACHAE MCGEE, MEGHAN ROSSI

TOGETHER.....ALISA AMADOR (2021)



PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXT

EXPECTING THE MAIN THINGS FROM YOU

Expecting the Main Things from You begins with a series of exchanges between the choir and ensemble, defining the harmonic progressions that make up the first movement. A third of the way through, a solo violin begins outlining a series of chords through arpeggiation, which then gradually fill in and become a single shimmering chord. From this, the choir begins the second part of the poem, and ending in the far distance. Each movement of Expecting ends with a series of wordless pulses, a sort of musical punctuation. If the first and third poems reference the political urgency of the city, the second movement is a pastoral interlude. Accordingly, the percussion parts in this movement are built around three expanding and contracting rhythms in the woodblock, tam-tam, and vibraphone. Three quarters of the choir sings a stylized Morse code (I was inspired by watching satellites pass overhead in the middle of the woods in Vermont; the now-omnipresent invisible haze of technology even in the fields), while some sopranos and altos overlay long, endless lines. The third movement is the most urgent and the most aggressive in its patterns: I wanted to reinforce Whitman's movement from the general to the very specific and accusatory second person of the end of the poem. A series of expanding and contracting rhythms and another wordless pulse brings the piece to a quiet close. – Nico Muhly

1. PART ONE *I Hear America Singing*

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear;
Those of mechanics--each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong;
The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work;
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat--the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck;
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench--the hatter singing as he stands;
The wood-cutter's song--the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning,
or at the noon intermission, or at sundown;
The delicious singing of the mother--or of the young wife at work--or of the girl sewing or washing--Each singing what belongs to her, and to none else;
The day what belongs to the day--At night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs. (No. 91)

2. INTERLUDE *A Farm-Picture*

THROUGH the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,
A sun-lit pasture field, with cattle and horses feeding;
And haze, and vista, and the far horizon, fading away. (No. 93)

3. PART TWO *Poets to Come*

POETS to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!
Not to-day is to justify me, and answer what I am for;
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than before known,
Arouse! Arouse--for you must justify me--you must answer.
I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,
but advance a moment, only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.
I am a man who, sauntering along, without fully stopping, turns a casual look upon you,
and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you. (No. 90)

TOGETHER

All of the people of all of the Earth
Each with a piece of all this hurt
Some take it in, some give it away
Among other things that I can't explain
Child-like wonders that wither and flicker and fade
But when we're together opening heart
It doesn't matter that all falls apart
When we're together there lies the art
We'll make it better when it falls apart
Will it always fall apart?

All of the people of all of the Earth
Each with a reason, a heart, and a worth
Some devastate when you're in their way
And dig themselves deeper in hopes that you stay
Child-like blunders that cover up feeling afraid
But when we're together wandering soul
We'll build a ladder and climb out of that hole
When we're together our only goal
Is to make it better when it all unfolds
For it always does unfold

SONGS OF HOPE IN STRANGE TIMES

The music and lyrics of Songs of Hope in Strange Times were written during the COVID-19 global pandemic of 2020-onwards. The overall song cycle is five movements long, with each movement reflecting on how to find hope and meaning during strange and unknown times of life.

I. IN TIMES OF DESCENT- In Times of Descent is the frenzied opening movement of the cycle, representing those first chaotic and terrifying days when COVID-19 appeared in March, 2020 in the United States. The piece portrays this unsettling time through sinking, descending chromatic lines and heavy metal-inspired pulsating strings. This feeling of descending can be applied to those times in life when the world as we know it seems to fall apart and the end is nowhere in sight, such as the first days following a loved one's passing, the minutes after receiving life-altering news, or other moments immediately following a tragedy. This movement acts as a mirror of the fifth and final movement In Times of Rising, which has a similar but inverted form: using rising instead of falling lines, referencing the "sky and sea" (which are clouded by the darkness described in In Times of Descent), and other elements of contrast.

II. IN TIMES OF HIBERNATION- After the first scary and frenetic days in March, 2020 when the severity of COVID-19 started to become apparent in the USA, the world then seemed to enter a deeper state of hibernating and waiting, but it was not always clear exactly what was being waited for. In this second movement, In Times of Hibernation, the text asks whether we can find meaning in times of deep hibernation and seemingly-endless waiting. The answer may be that we have to simply wait and hold our breath along with time as the events unfold. It may be that the deepest meaning may be found during the quietest of times.

III. IN TIMES OF STASIS- This movement represents the sense of stasis deep in the waiting period of the pandemic. Without being able to observe the normal markers of time passing, such as birthdays, school years, or holidays, time seemed to stand still as each day blended into the next. This sense of moving neither forward nor backward is reminiscent of walking in the ocean tide, where one wave is crashing on shore and another is receding, creating the sense one is simply standing still. While it can be hard to find meaning in these static times, perhaps just being alive and present in this moment is in itself enough.

IV. IN TIMES OF RE-EMERGENCE- This movement represents a joyful return to one's life, albeit a cautious return initially, after a prolonged hiatus. The 9/8 meter has a dance-like quality, allowing a lighter mood after the more intense third movement, In Times of Stasis. The overall Strophic form (containing three Verses with the same melody and overall harmonies) allows for the performers and audience alike to relax in the familiarity of the material as it unfolds.

V. IN TIMES OF RISING- the fifth and final movement of the song cycle celebrates our return to life, being together, and finding joy once again. It explores how the world around us seems so different once we have gone through difficult experiences. This feeling of seeing things in a different light can apply to so many transformative periods in our lives, including relationships, birth, death, and personal journeys. The hope with this movement and the entire Songs of Hope in Strange Times cycle is to provide a framework in which to process powerful experiences, heal from tremendous loss, and arrive at the other side with wiser minds and hearts.

I
We descend below the surface
To where no light breaks through.
Is it here in total darkness,
Where there is no sky or sea?
In this floorless ocean,
Is it here the answer finds us?

II
Half the world in slumber
Half know neither night nor day
The ticking of the clock stopped
The rustle of pages silent.
Is it here, in this state of waiting,
We hold our breath with time?

III
When you are suspended
In crystallized time,
Neither ebbing nor flowing
Caught mid-crosscurrent in the tide,
Is it here you simply breathe,
Knowing that This.
You.
It is enough.

IV
When light long-darkened begins to
Sneak in, seep in, & sweep in again,
When birds long-silenced
begin to start
Winging, mingling, & singing again,
Is it here you dream once more?

When voices long-distanced begin to
Reach out, seek out,
& speak out again,
When hope long-dampened
begins to start
Growing, floating, and flowing again,
Is it here you imagine the
sun once more?

When souls long-downcast
begin to start
Coping, hoping, & reopening again,
When you, long-discouraged, begin
Searching, preserving,
& re-emerging again,
It is here you come alive once more.

V
We rise above the surface,
The light looks different now.
The cliffs and shores we knew before
Have shifted yet remain somehow.

The sky and sea,
An unknown brilliant blue,
The ocean's floor,
A marker of the depth we fell,
Remind us that our stories
Are songs that only time can tell.

We rise above the surface,
We too are different now.
Like time-tossed stone turned to sand,
We've changed yet remain somehow.

We rise!

TONIGHT'S PERFORMERS

SOPRANO

APRIL FISHER
JIACHAE MCGEE
JESSICA TROST
REBECCA UNG
LIBBY WEBER

ALTO

SONJA BRUN
LANETT GRANT
ELLIE MOUT
MEGHAN ROSSI
MICHAEL SAKELL

TENOR

ANDREW BEARDEN*
AARON BURGETT
BRAD FOX
SEAN MCCORMAC
KURT WONG

BASS

SHELBY CONDRAY
ADAM DAVIS
JONATHAN GONZALES
THOMAS LOKENSGARD
ZLATOSLAV SOKOLOV

INSTRUMENTALISTS

ORGAN - ADAM FERRARA
VIOLIN 1 - VICTORIA BIETZ
VIOLIN 2 - JUSTYNA PONULAK
VIOLA - ROBYN GLASSON
CELLO - JOANNA MORRISON
GUITAR - ANDREW BEARDEN

TREBLE CHOIR

KELLY CALLEJO
CIELLE CHAN
MITCHIE HAGLE
NATASHA KEEPER
ALEXIS OLAES
SOPHIA PEREZ
ALEKS PLUTH
HEATHER SALANGA

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

SATURDAY JULY 15, 2023 -- 6PM
SUMMER CHORAL INTENSIVE CONCERT
@POINT LOMA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

STAY TUNED FOR SEASON 15

*CHORUS PREPARATION FOR "EXPECTING THE MAIN THINGS FROM YOU"

ABOUT SACRA/PROFANA



SACRA/
PROFANA

SACRA/PROFANA awakens and nurtures enthusiasm for the choral art through vibrant performances and focused education outreach. Our debut album, *Elegies & Ecstasies*, was released in 2012, and in 2014 SACRA/PROFANA produced the world premiere recording of when we were children by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang, available on the Cantaloupe Music record label. Our second album, *A Longing for Christmas*, was released in 2021.

SACRA/PROFANA has accomplished remarkable things in 14 seasons, including numerous world and U.S. premieres and collaborations with leading regional arts organizations: San Diego Symphony, Art of Élan, San Diego Opera, California Ballet, and many more. SACRA/PROFANA also has performed with many artists of worldwide renown, including the legendary Irish band the Chieftains, producer Carlton Cuse (of ABC's hit show *Lost*), composer Michael Giacchino (*Star Trek*), and composer Alan Menken and lyricist Stephen Schwartz in the development of Disney Theatrical's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at La Jolla Playhouse.

We are pleased that our 2022-23 Season includes innovative choral programming, renewed collaborations with local and regional artists/groups, and service to our community through unforgettable performances and education programs that change choral students' lives.

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JUAN CARLOS ACOSTA - *Artistic Director*
KRISHAN OBEROI - *Founding Director & Principal Guest Conductor*
AARON BURGETT - *Assistant Conductor*
BECCA UNG - *Chorus Manager*
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