



HOUSTON  
CHAMBER  
CHOIR



Once  
Upon *a*  
Time





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The Houston Chamber Choir

## Welcoming

Skylark, Sara Walker, Benedict Sheehan, & Courtney Zavala's  
performance of

---

# ONCE UPON A TIME



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# Once Upon a Time

## **HOUSTON CHAMBER CHOIR**

Robert Simpson

*Founder and Artistic Director*

*The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts Artistic Director Chair*

Courtney Zavala

*Narrator*

Saturday, May 21, 2022 | 7:30 pm

South Main Baptist Church, Houston

Virtual Release: Sunday, June 5, 2022 | 2:00 pm CT

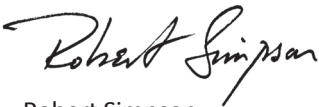
## ***From the Artistic Director***



I can't imagine a happier ending to our season than this concert of childhood fantasies and tales of adventure and true love. The nursery rhymes and stories of enchantment we learn as children remain with us throughout our lives. Thanks to the music of John Rutter, James MacMillan, Benedict Sheehan, and a host of others, we can recapture the delight they brought us once again tonight. And how lucky we are to have the masterful storyteller

Courtney Zavala with us as our guest narrator!

The musicians, board and staff of the Houston Chamber Choir join me in thanking you for the appreciation and support you have shown us this year. Your enthusiastic welcome as we returned to live performance made this season truly magical. We have prepared a special "Thank You" reception for you following the concert. Our volunteers will guide you to the stairs and elevator leading down to the reception in the Fellowship Hall. We are eager to express our appreciation to each of you in person. Please stop by.



Robert Simpson

*Houston Chamber Choir, Artistic Director*

*The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts Artistic Director Chair*



## ***From the General Manager***



Welcome, devoted friends and supporters of the Houston Chamber Choir.

Thank you for joining us for our season finale concert of the 2021-2022 season, *Sing Out the New Day*. This season the choir made a fantastic return to the concert stage; it would not have been achievable or nearly as fun without you! We look to reach all new heights in choral performance, education and outreach in our 2022-23 artistic season.

You are in for an enchanting experience this evening. The choir will be performing *Once Upon a Time* by American composer Benedict Sheehan, a magical choral retelling of the Grimm fairy tale, *Snow White*. Special gratitude goes out to our concert sponsor, Vinson & Elkins LLP, and our venue host South Main Baptist Church.

If you are new to the Houston Chamber Choir, or looking for the latest information on our choir members, concerts, and media (including our recently released album, *Circlesong*), we invite you to visit our website, [HoustonChamberChoir.org](http://HoustonChamberChoir.org). Join us for the virtual release of *Once Upon a Time* on our viewing platform, Houston Chamber Choir Digital Stage, available starting Sunday, June 5.

If you missed any of our in-person concerts this season, or want to relive the choral joy once more, all performances are available for viewing until August 2022! Visit our Digital Stage ([HoustonChamberChoir.tv](http://HoustonChamberChoir.tv)) for more information and to purchase your concert tickets or digital subscription.

Thank you for a spectacular season of memories, community connections, and of course, so much beautiful choral music. Enjoy the concert and I look forward to seeing you next season!

Warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "April Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

April Harris  
*Houston Chamber Choir, General Manager*

## PROGRAM

*This concert is being audio and video recorded. Please turn off alarm watches, cell phones, and audible paging devices. The use of cameras and recording equipment is not allowed.*

***Five Childhood Lyrics*** (1973) John Rutter

*Monday's Child*

*The Owl and the Pussy-cat*

*Windy Nights*

*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

Joshua Chavira, soloist

*Sing a song of sixpence*

***The Gallant Weaver*** (1997) James MacMillan

***Snow White*** (2020) Created for Skylark by Matthew Guard  
Benedict Sheehan and Sarah Walker

***The cloud-capp'd towers*** Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

***Snow White***

Christine Cummins, Rebecca Castillo, Joshua Chavira, soloists

***De grande cuillers de neige*** Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)  
from ***Un soir de neige***

***The Queen's Envy***

Kammi Estelle, Emily Wolfe, soloists

***El Grito*** from ***Suite de Lorca*** Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928-2016)

***Into the Forest***

***Bois meurtri*** from ***Un soir de neige*** Francis Poulenc

***At the Dwarves' House***

Emily Premont, Wayne Ashley, Ryan Brown, soloists

***El Hambo*** Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

***The Poisoned Apple***

***La bonne neige*** from **Un soir de neige**

Francis Poulenc

***The Queen Victorious***

Stacey Franklin, soloist

***La nuit le froid la solitude*** from **Un soir de neige**

Francis Poulenc

***The Dwarves' Lament***

Kelli Lawless, soloist

***Lay a garland***

Robert Pearsall (1795-1856)

***Snow White Awakens***

Ryan Stickney, soloist

***Fatiše Kolo***

Traditional Serbian Folksong

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Season 2 – Episode 12

Benedict Sheehan

Composer and Conductor

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MUSIC**

*With*

**ST. JOHN FLYNN**

*and guest*

**BENEDICT  
SHEEHAN**

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### ***Five Childhood Lyrics***

Filled with joyful innocence and invention, *Five Childhood Lyrics* was composed in 1973 by the celebrated English composer John Rutter. The first song is based on "Monday's Child," a fortune-telling song and nursery rhyme. The text of the second song is "The Owl and the Pussycat," a nonsense-poem by Edward Lear published in 1871. Then comes, "Windy Nights," based on a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson. The text for the fourth song is "Matthew, Mark, Luke, John," a nursery rhyme and evening prayer. Concluding the set is the jolly (and mildly unsettling) "Sing a Song of Six-pence." The composer writes: "*Five Childhood Lyrics* are a kind of 'homage' to the world of children. I chose for my texts some of the rhymes and verses remembered from my earliest years, and set them to music as simply as I could – though the last of the five, which uses a familiar nursery tune, contains a certain amount of tongue-in-cheek elaboration."

### ***My Gallant Weaver***

A tale of true love befitting any storybook, *The Gallant Weaver* was written in 1791 by Scotland's most revered poet, Robert Burns. It tells of a love so true that neither the promise of wealth nor social status can weaken the young lover's resolve to give her heart to "the lad for me." The eminent Scottish composer, James MacMillan, set this text in 1997 to mark the University of Paisley's centenary. Paisley was a prosperous center of the weaving trade in the 18th century and the mention of the nearby River Cart establishes this town as the poem's setting. MacMillan crafts a fitting musical setting by creating a tapestry of interweaving imitative vocal lines, beginning with a soprano three-parts canon.

### ***Snow White***

*Notes by Matthew Guard*

In 2016, Skylark launched a collaboration with storyteller Sarah Walker to develop a new concept for us: the choral story concert. I love fantastical children's stories, I love theater, and I love (obviously!) choral music. What, I thought, if we could bring together some (hitherto unconnected) short choral works of the last few centuries in a way that compellingly brings familiar stories to life?

When I mentioned the project in passing to composer Benedict Sheehan, he was intrigued. He loved the idea of working together to create a new type of composition, a 'Story Score' that is composed with the intention of animating spoken dialogue and bringing it to life with unobtrusive but evocative vocal accompaniment. He was energized by the challenge of



having to work within the context of existing musical material composed by others. In addition to his own musical creations, he has cleverly intertwined and morphed melodic and harmonic ideas from the pieces I had already chosen for the program, including offerings Poulenc, Vaughan Williams, Mäntyjärvi, and Rautavaara.

The result was a story concert called *Once Upon a Time* that included *Snow White*. Skylark shared music at key moments in the narratives. I chose some pieces because of a textual connection, others because the “mood” seemed right, others because the sound-world they created evoked images of what was transpiring in the story.

Although most of this music was composed at different times with different contexts, in this particular form it seems to me as if it were all meant to go together. Some might feel that taking pieces like Poulenc’s *Un Soir de Neige* into a fairy tale world could cheapen the real world reality of its composition in the darkest depths of December during the Second World War. Others might find some of the textual relationships between the music and stories disjunct. These are all valid issues to raise, and I don’t wish to discount them – in fact, I think they can make for a fascinating discussion. But, I’ll be the first to admit that this project was not borne out of deep analysis of any of these issues. Rather, it emerged from a desire to combine a familiar story with less familiar music in a new and beautiful way, in the hopes that people might be surprised by how much they can enjoy music that might otherwise seem esoteric and randomly assembled. My hope is that you might suspend disbelief and listen to the stories as if you were hearing them for the first time, and that you might find that the music speaks more deeply to you than you imagined it would.

### ***The Cloud Capp’d Towers***

Our prelude to the program is *The Cloud-Capp’d Towers*, from *Three Shakespeare Songs*, composed in 1951. Vaughan Williams’ dreamy setting of Prospero’s words from *The Tempest* introduces fantastical stories that are just illusions, that like “the great Globe itself, shall dissolve.” Musicologists have compared this short choral piece to the composer’s sixth symphony, written a few years earlier, which navigates similarly surprising harmonic shifts. I was particularly intrigued by the challenge created by this opening for our composer Benedict Sheehan, whose task was to navigate seamlessly from the key of F minor (which ends this piece) to E minor, which begins Poulenc’s *Un soir de neige*.

### ***De grandes cuillers de neige* from *Un soir de neige***

Poulenc’s *De grandes cuillers de neige* was written in the dark days of December of 1944 and describes great drifts of snow blowing through the icy air, mirroring perfectly the chilling beginning to the *Snow White* story.

### ***El Grito* from Suite de Lorca**

Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara was incredibly prolific in his output of vocal and choral works. His suite based on the text of Spanish poet Federico García is compact, at only 6 minutes in length, but is perhaps his most evocative short choral work. The terrifying sounds of *El Grito* ('The Scream'), with its long glissandi and semitone clusters, sound to me like the sonic embodiment of jealousy and anger.

### ***Bois meurtri* from Un soir de neige**

The third movement of Poulenc's *Un soir de neige* was the first piece of music that I chose for this concert concept. The image of Snow White finding herself in the middle of a dark and terrifying forest seemed to fit perfectly with Poulenc's dark harmonies and disorienting harmonic shifts. I soon realized that all four movements of *Un soir de neige* suited moments in the story incredibly well, and that using the entire piece entitled 'A Night of Snow' was fortuitously fitting.

### ***El Hambo***

Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi has penned some profound masterworks of 21st century choral music. *El Hambo* is not one of his more serious works; in fact, it is meant to be utter nonsense. In his performance notes, Mäntyjärvi even intimates that one of the inspirations for the piece was the Swedish Chef from *The Muppets*. Something about the way this piece sounds struck me as an ideal soundtrack for the fairy tale home of the Seven Dwarves.

### ***La bonne neige* from Un soir de neige**

Poulenc's stunning setting of Paul Éluard's wintry texts explores the dichotomy between the beauty of winter and its profound physical dangers. The second movement, *La bonne neige* ('The Lovely Snow') elegantly encapsulates this duality. Composer Benedict Sheehan cleverly associated the melodic motif of this movement with the poisoned apple, which is both breathtakingly beautiful and deadly.

### ***La nuit le froid la solitude* from Un soir de neige**

The climax of *Un soir de neige* is not a happy one, with the protagonist succumbing to the elements. The Éluard text paints the image of someone lying on their back on the forest floor, literally freezing to death – a fate not dissimilar to Snow White's presumed death from eating the poisoned apple.

## ***Lay a garland***

The text for Robert Pearsall's moving *Lay a Garland* comes from the 1619 play *The Maid's Tragedy*, in which a young woman dies from heartbreak after her beloved is forced into a marriage of convenience with the King's mistress. Pearsall's 8-part composition takes a form based on Renaissance polyphony, and elegantly transports it to the Victorian era.

## ***Fatise kolo***

While I was familiar with the "happily ever after" ending of Snow White's story, I was surprised to read the original Grimm account of the evil queen's demise. The end of the story seemed to call for a particular kind of piece, one that could be half "happy wedding song," yet also part "frantic death dance." The Markovitch arrangement of the Serbian folk song *Fatiše Kolo* seemed to fit the bill, with its lilting mixed-meter and off-kilter acceleration to the finish line.

## **MATTHEW GUARD**

Three-time GRAMMY® Nominee Matthew Guard is quickly earning a reputation as one of the most innovative and thoughtful programmers in American choral music. Praised for his "catalyzing leadership" (Q2/WQXR) and "musically creative and intellectually rich" programming (Opera Obsession), Matthew is passionate about communicating something unique in each concert and recording. He scours the world of available repertoire for each program, exhaustively researches each piece, and crafts concerts and printed programs that captivate audiences with their hidden connections and seamless artistry. In addition to his day-to-day leadership of Skylark and role as a conductor in concerts, Matthew is also an active arranger and editor of scores, as he rarely finds programming ideas that will truly sing without at least one piece specifically arranged or composed for the program.

## **SARAH WALKER**

Sarah Walker is the daughter of two traditional Appalachian storytellers, who instilled in her a love of hearing and telling great tales. She has performed extensively in her home state of West Virginia and throughout New England. Walker made her New York debut as a cast member of Gotham Early Music Scene's medieval drama *The Play of Daniel*. She performs regularly with the Skylark Ensemble and was a featured artist during the 2017 Skylark Spotlight Series. She founded the storytelling and music duo, Chapter House, in 2018 with her husband. Sarah holds degrees in Medieval Studies and Art History from Vassar College and Pratt Institute. She is a children's librarian in Connecticut.

## BENEDICT SHEEHAN

Composer and conductor Benedict Sheehan has been called “a rising star in Orthodox liturgical music” (Orthodox Arts Journal). He is director of music at St. Tikhon’s Seminary and Monastery in Pennsylvania, and artistic director of the Saint Tikhon Choir, a professional vocal ensemble. His 2018 performances of Rachmaninoff’s *All-Night Vigil*, conducting noted Portland-based vocal ensemble Cappella Romana, had one reviewer so “emotionally overwhelmed” that she was “attempting to hold back tears” (Oregon ArtsWatch). Sheehan’s collaboration with conductor Steven Fox on the ClarionChoir’s recording “Kastalsky: Memory Eternal” (Naxos, 2018) was nominated for a Grammy award in the “Best Choral Performance” category. As a composer, Sheehan’s works are attracting attention throughout the choral music world. His pieces are published by MusicSpoke and Musica Russica, and have been performed by the Grammy-nominated PaTRAM Institute Singers, the William Jewell Choral Scholars, the Concordia College New York Choirs, and the Westminster Chapel Choir, among others. He lives and works in Pennsylvania with his wife, vocalist and educator Talia Maria Sheehan, and their seven daughters.



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## PROGRAM TEXTS

### *Five Childhood Lyrics*

#### *Monday's Child*

Anonymous (published 1838)

Monday's child is fair of face,  
Tuesday's child is full of grace.  
Wednesday's child is full of woe,  
Thursday's child has far to go.  
Friday's child is loving and giving,  
Saturday's child works hard for a living.  
And the child born on the Sabbath day  
Is bonny and blithe and good and gay.

#### *The Owl and the Pussy-cat*

Edward Lear (1812-1888)

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea green boat,  
They took some honey, and plenty of money,  
Wrapped up in a five pound note.  
The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
And sang to a small guitar,  
'O lovely Pussy! O Pussy my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are, you are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!'

Pussy said to the Owl, 'You elegant fowl!  
How charmingly sweet you sing!  
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:  
But what shall we do for a ring?'  
They sailed away, for a year and a day,  
To the land where the Bong-tree grows  
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood  
With a ring at the end of his nose,  
His nose, his nose,  
With a ring at the end of his nose.

'Dear pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?' Said the Piggy, 'I will.'  
So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon,  
The moon, the moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.

*Windy Nights*

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Whenever the moon and stars are set,  
Whenever the wind is high,  
All night long in the dark and wet,  
A man goes riding by.  
Late in the night when the fires are out,  
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,  
And ships are tossed at sea,  
By, on the highway, low and loud,  
By at the gallop goes he.  
By at the gallop he goes, and then  
By he comes back at the gallop again.

*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

Anonymous (18th century)

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on.  
Four corners to my bed,  
Four angels round my head;  
One to watch and one to pray  
And two to bear my soul away.

*Sing a song of sixpence*

Anonymous (18th century)

Sing a song of sixpence,  
A pocket full of rye.  
Four and twenty blackbirds,  
Baked in a pie.

When the pie was opened  
The birds began to sing;  
Wasn't that a dainty dish,  
To set before the king?

The king was in his counting house,  
Counting out his money;  
The queen was in the parlour,  
Eating bread and honey.

The maid was in the garden,  
Hanging out the clothes,  
Then came a little blackbird  
And pecked off her nose.

***The Gallant Weaver*** (1997)

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Where Cart rins rowin' to the sea,  
By mony a flow'r and spreading tree,  
There lives a lad, the lad for me,  
He is a gallant weaver.  
Oh, I had wooers aught or nine,  
They gied me rings and ribbons fine;  
And I was fear'd my heart would tine,  
And I gied it to the weaver.

My daddie sign'd my tocher-band,  
To gi'e the lad that has the land;  
But to my heart I'll add my hand,  
And gi'e it to the weaver.  
While birds rejoice in leafy bowers:  
While bees delight in op'ning flowers;  
While corn grows green in summer showers,  
I'll love my gallant weaver.

***Snow White*** (2020)

***The cloud-capp'd towers***

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind: We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

***De grande cuillers de neige*** from ***Un soir de neige***

Paul Éluard (1895-1952)

Great scoops of snow  
Shovel up our frozen feet  
And with harsh word  
We stumble into stubborn winter  
Each tree has its place in the sky  
Each rock its weight on earth  
Each stream its spring  
We have no fire.

***El Grito*** from **Suite de Lorca**

Federico García Lorca (1898 - 1936)

The ellipse of a cry  
reaches from hill to hill.  
Soaring from the olive trees,  
it appears as a black rainbow  
above the azure night.  
Ay!  
Like the bow of a viol,  
the cry has made the long strings  
of the wind vibrate.  
Ay!  
(The people of the caves  
hold out their oil lamps.)  
Ay!

***Bois meurtri*** from **Un soir de neige**

Paul Éluard

The slaughtered wood,  
The wood lost on a winter voyage  
A ship upon which snow takes hold  
The wood that is a sanctuary  
The dead wood, where, with all hope lost,  
I dream of the sea of splintered mirrors  
One great moment in the cold water  
Seized the drowned men  
My scrambled body is racked with pain  
I grow weaker, I am fading away  
I acknowledge my life, my death,  
The rest of the world.

***El Hambo*** (Nonsense syllables)

***La bonne neige*** from **Un soir de neige**

Paul Éluard

Fine snow, dark sky  
Dead branches, the torment  
From the forest strewn with traps.  
Shame on the hunted animal  
Fleeing swiftly as an arrow through the heart  
The tracks of a terrible prey  
That fears no wolf  
And it is always the most beautiful  
And it is always the last left alive  
That is stalked by the full weight of death.



***La nuit le froid la solitude*** from **Un soir de neige**

Paul Éluard

Night, cold, solitude  
Closed carefully in upon me  
But the branches sought out their path in the prison  
Around me the grass found the sky  
The sky was bolted shut  
My prison came tumbling down  
The living cold, the burning cold  
Holds me firmly in its hand.

***Lay a garland***

Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher (17th century)

Lay a garland on her hearse  
of dismal yew.  
Maidens, willow branches wear,  
say she died true.  
Her love was false, but she was firm  
Upon her buried body lie  
lightly, thou gentle earth.

***Fatiše Kolo***

The girls from Vranje started a circle dance  
The girls of Vranje, at Vranje's fountain.  
At the head of the round is damsel Taša  
Damsel Taša, our beauty.



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## GUEST



**COURTNEY ZAVALA** is an Emmy® Award-nominated journalist, co-hosting KPRC 2's Houston Life. A proud mother of two, Courtney is excited to share her zest for family, fitness and healthy living with her fellow Houstonians. She is a workout enthusiast with a few half-marathons under her belt, and a passion for volunteering with numerous local organizations, including Passages for Women, Houston Area Parkinson Society, and as a Mombassador for the Houston-based Mommie Series.

A Chicago native, Courtney graduated from St. Xavier University and spent more than 20 years covering news for network affiliates across the country while racking up multiple Emmy nominations. Courtney's journalism career had her covering major stories like hurricanes, Super Bowls and the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster.

You can catch Courtney weekdays on Houston Life, the show which provides an hour of daily news you can use segments focused on family, fun, and fashion, featuring cooking, local and national celebrity guests, and much more. It's your one-stop shop for all things going on in and around the Houston area.

### ***Houston Chamber Choir Wishes to Thank...***

**South Main Baptist Church**, Dr. Steve Wells, Senior Pastor;  
Stephen Bedford, Interim Music Director;  
Dr. Yuri McCoy, Organist;  
Brenda Brundrett, Music Ministry Assistant

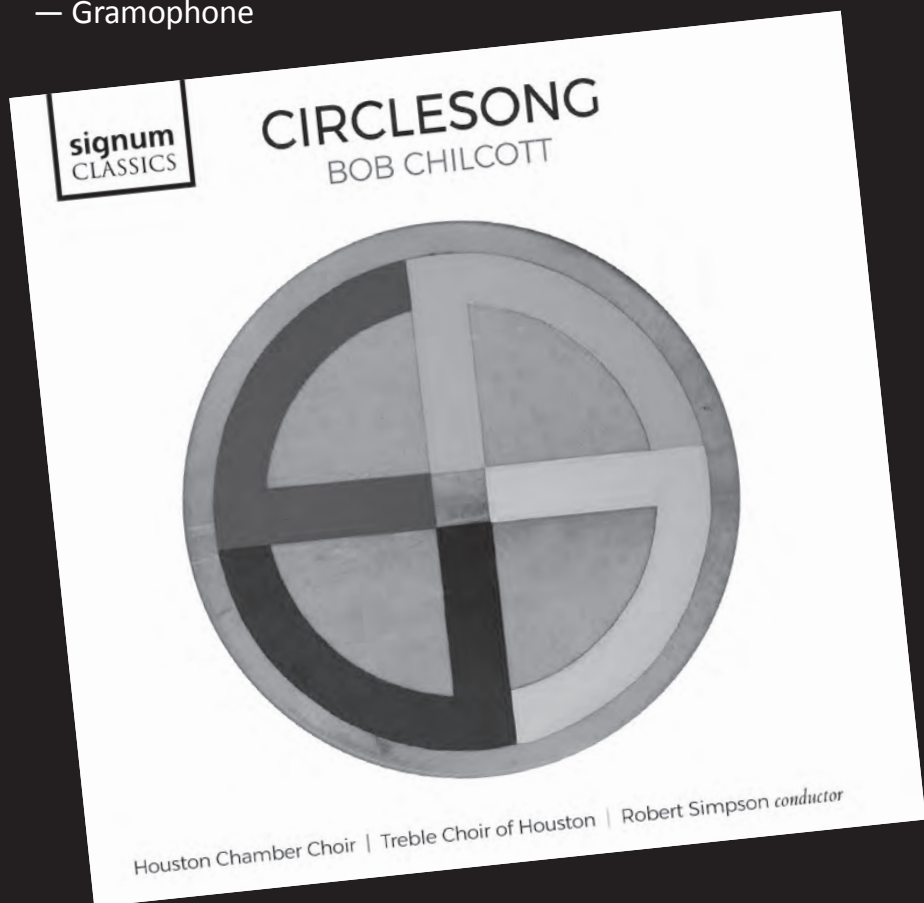
**The Very Rev. Barkley S. Thompson, Dean**, and  
**Christ Church Cathedral (Episcopal), Houston**,  
for giving the Houston Chamber Choir  
a space to work and rehearse.

**The Houston Chamber Choir Volunteers**,  
for their unwavering support.

**Donors and Supporters** of the Houston Chamber Choir –  
we couldn't make music without  
your continued support, season after season.

*“Robert Simpson handles his well-drilled forces with aplomb, aided by superb support from his sextet of pianists and percussionists.”*

— Gramophone



*“...again the Houston Chamber Choir dazzles...Marianna Parnas-Simpson’s Treble Choir of Houston shows marvelous sophistication and musicality.”*

— The Journal, Association of Anglican Musicians



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## BEHIND THE MUSIC

*with*

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*and guests*

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*with*

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*and guests*

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# HOUSTON CHAMBER CHOIR

Robert Simpson, *Founder & Artistic Director*

<b>Sopranos</b>	<b>Altos</b>	<b>Tenors</b>	<b>Basses</b>
Rebecca Castillo	Joshua Chavira	L. Wayne Ashley	Fredy Bonilla
Christine Cummins	Clipper Hamrick	Derrick Bready	Ryan Brown
Kammi Estelle	Marianna Parnas- Simpson	Jack Byrom	Rameen Chaharbaghi
Stacey Franklin	Emily Premont	Jeffrey Ragsdale	Greg Goedecke
Kelli Lawless	Ryan Stickney	Alphonso Seals	Randy Murrow
Carolyn Orr	Kaleigh Sutula		Patrick Schneider
Emily Wolfe			



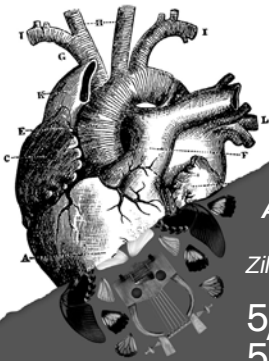
*Houston Chamber Choir is a member of CHORUS AMERICA,  
an association of professional and volunteer vocal ensembles.*

Founded in 1995 by Artistic Director Robert Simpson, the Houston Chamber Choir received the 2019 Grammy® Award for Best Choral Performance for its recording of the complete choral works of Maurice Duruflé. Other honors include Chorus America’s Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence, and the American Prize. Dubbed by Jamie Bernstein “the choral equivalent of the Harlem Globetrotters,” the Houston Chamber Choir delights in singing a wide range of styles from early music to jazz. Eager to promote the music of our day, it has commissioned and performed works from Christopher Theofanidis, Christian McBride, Jocelyn Hagen, Tarik O’Regan, Pierre Jalbert, Karim Al-Zand, Mark Buller, Anthony Brandt and Daniel Knaggs. It was among the 24 international ensembles selected to appear at the World Symposium on Choral Music in Auckland, New Zealand. Signum Classics recently released its latest CD featuring *Circlesong*, a major new work by British composer Bob Chilcott based on words and wisdom of indigenous peoples of North America. For this recording, the Houston Chamber Choir is joined by the Treble Choir of Houston directed by Marianna Parnas-Simpson.

**ROBERT SIMPSON** is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Houston Chamber Choir. He also serves as Canon for Music at Houston's historic Christ Church Cathedral, and Lecturer of Church Music at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. He is the recipient of Chorus America's Michael Korn Founders Award for the Development of the Professional Choral Art, and the 2015 American Prize in Choral Conducting. Choirs under his direction have toured the United States, Europe and Mexico, and performed before national conventions of Chorus America, the American Choral Directors Association, the American Guild of Organists, the Association of Anglican Musicians, and the Hymn Society of America. They have appeared nationally on CBS-TV, ABC-TV, and American Public Radio. Mr. Simpson is married to Marianna Parnas-Simpson, the noted children's choir conductor.



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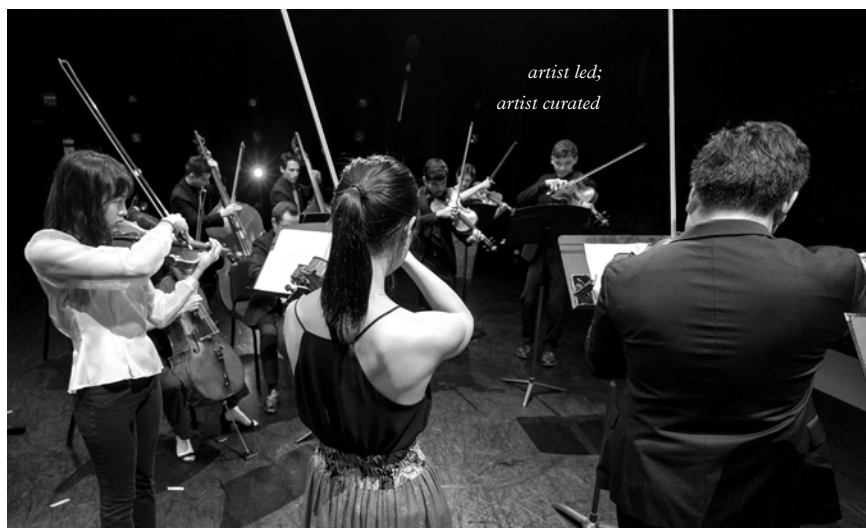
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**MATTHEW LYON HAZZARD** is an award-winning Filipino-American conductor and composer. He earned his M.M. in Choral Conducting from the Bob Cole Conservatory at California State University Long Beach, and his M.A.T. and B.M. in Music Composition from East Carolina University. Prior to graduate studies, Hazzard taught high school for four years where his choirs received consistently superior ratings. At CSULB, Hazzard directed the Bel Canto treble ensemble, the Cantus tenor-bass ensemble, and the Bob Cole Chamber Choir. He conducted

CSULB choirs at regional festivals, and received the top University Award for Outstanding Graduate Student in Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity. Hazzard is in his final year of the Doctorate in Musical Arts at the University of Houston, where he directed the University Women's Chorus and Soundscape treble ensemble. For the last two seasons, he has served as a rehearsal conductor for the Houston Symphony Chorus.



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# HOUSTON CHAMBER CHOIR



**L. WAYNE ASHLEY**, tenor, is a versatile artist known for his charismatic vocal tone and appreciation for many genres. A native of Arkansas, Wayne was raised in a stellar musical environment surrounded by Gospel, Delta Blues, Zydeco and RnB musicians, many within his own family. A graduate of Henderson State University and the University of Houston's Moores School of Music, Wayne is a choir member and Cantor for St. Paul's United Methodist Church - Houston, founding member of the Cloudburst Vocal Jazz Quartet and soloist with the Houston Ebony Opera Guild. Beyond his love for music, Wayne is an avid follower of current events, politics and public policy. Wayne can be heard on the Houston Chamber Choir's 2020 Grammy® Award-winning album *Durufle: Complete Choral Works*. This is Wayne's fourteenth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**FREDY BONILLA**, bass, is a singer and clinician in the Houston area. He taught choir for five years at Kerr HS in Alief ISD, and two years at Clear Lake HS in Clear Creek ISD. Choirs and ensembles under his direction received "superior ratings," "sweepstakes," and "best in class" awards. He has sung with several choruses in Houston including, Houston Grand Opera, Chorus Anglorum, Houston Symphony Chorus, and Cantare Houston. He is also a member of the choir at Christ Church Cathedral (Episcopal). He holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Houston where he was a member of the Moores Concert Chorale and the Moores Opera Center. This is his second appearance with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**DERRICK BREADY**, tenor, is currently the assistant choral director at Deer Park HS. Previous positions include Deepwater JH, J. Frank Dobie HS, and Pearland HS. At Pearland, Derrick's choirs were invited performing choirs to SWACDA (2010 & 2014) and TMEA (2011 & 2013) conventions, respectively. In 2015, the Pearland HS Kantorei Madrigal Singers were the 1st Place winners of the prestigious American Classic Madrigal and Chamber Choir Festival and later the 2016 Honor Choir. Derrick has won the Tommy Tune Award for Best Musical Direction (2006, 2011, and 2016) and Best Musical (2013) for his musical productions at Pearland HS. Derrick is in his 3rd year as the Director of Traditional Worship at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (Nassau Bay) and is an avid Walt Disney World traveler, Houston Astros fan, and Orangetheory Fitness competitor. This is Derrick's seventh season with the Houston Chamber Choir.

## 2021-2022 SEASON



**RYAN BROWN**, bass, recently located to Houston to serve as Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Choirs at Lone Star College – University Park. Previously, Ryan served as a Teaching Fellow at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, Choral Director at California School of the Arts San Gabriel Valley, Associate Conductor for the National Children's Chorus, Artistic Director for "Diamonds from The Dust," and as Choral Director at Wachusett Regional High School in Holden, Massachusetts. Ryan has performed with Seraphic Fire, Los Angeles Master Chorale, VOCES8 Scholars, Red Shift, Quartz Ensemble, De Angeles Vocal Ensemble, and Concora. Ryan is passionate about storytelling in choral music and the performance of contemporary oratorio. This is Ryan's first season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**JACK BYROM**, tenor, has sung professionally for over a decade. Jack is particularly grateful for his experiences with The University of Texas Chambers Singers and Longhorn Singers, the Choir of St. Edward's University, Conspirare's Company of Voices, and the San Antonio Chamber Choir. He studied voice with Darlene Wiley at The University of Texas at Austin, but ultimately pursued a Doctor of Jurisprudence and currently practices law. He owes his love of choral music to the support of his parents and sisters, and his high school choir director, Dr. Morris Stevens. This is Jack's eighth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**REBECCA CASTILLO**, soprano, holds a Master of Music from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music and Bachelor of Music from Sam Houston State University. She has taught choir and orchestra at both the middle and high school levels. As a vocalist she was a semi-finalist at the Lois Alba Aria Competition (2019) and won the Encouragement Prize at the Audrey Rooney Vocal Competition (2016). She has performed several operatic roles, including Monica (*The Medium*), Annina (*La Traviata*), Papagena (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*). She has performed with Clear Lake Chamber Ensemble, Bach Society Houston, Pasadena Philharmonic Orchestra, Vocal Arts Ensemble, EXIGENCE: A Sphinx Vocal Ensemble, and Houston Grand Opera's Educational Outreach - Storybook Opera. This is Rebecca's fourth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.

# HOUSTON CHAMBER CHOIR



**RAMEEN CHAHARBAGHI**, bass, who "has a simply lovely voice" (*DC Theatre Scene*), is an emerging artist from Maryland who is now based in Houston, Texas. His most recent operatic roles include Maximilian (*Candide*), Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), and the Prince (*The Goose Girl*). He has performed with Opera in the Heights, Houston Grand Opera Chorus, Portland Opera to Go, the Capital Fringe Festival, and the Castleton Festival. Concert work includes *From Darkness to Light* (Henderson), the *Mass in B minor* (Bach), the *Messe jubilo* (Durufié), and Graun's *Der Tod Jesu*. In spring of 2018, he premiered the role of the Crocodile in *Monkey and Francine in the City of Tigers* as part of Houston Grand Opera's Opera to Go. He holds a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Maryland and a Master of Music from the University of Houston. This is Rameen's sixth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**JOSHUA CHAVIRA**, alto, is a Houston native and music educator in the area. After completing his graduate degree in Vocal Performance from Stephen F. Austin State University, he moved back to Houston to perform with groups such as the Houston Chamber Choir, Bach Society Houston, and as a staff singer at Christ Church Cathedral. This is Joshua's fourth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**CHRISTINE CUMMINS**, soprano, from Atlanta, Georgia, has a background in voice, musical theatre as well as lyric theatre performance. She received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Florida State University and recently finished her Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Houston, where she studied with professor Melanie Sonnenberg. Her recent roles include La Fée in Massenet's *Cendrillon* as well as her debut the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, both performed at Opera in the Ozarks. In addition to singing, Christine loves doing puzzles and watching movies with her friends. This is Christine's first season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



## 2021-2022 SEASON



**KAMMI ESTELLE**, soprano, is a cum laude graduate from Stephen F. Austin State University with a Bachelor of Music degree. She is currently the Director of Choral Activities at Cypress Park High School in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, which she helped open this past fall. Before Cypress Park, Kammi was the Head Choir Director at Kahla Middle School, also in Cy-Fair ISD, where she taught for 12 years. An active clinician and adjudicator, choirs under her direction receive consistent Sweepstakes ratings at UIL Concert and Sight Reading Contest. Kammi's choirs have received many titles and awards such as "Outstanding Overall Choir" at many festivals. In 2012, her Varsity Treble Choir from Kahla Middle School was invited to sing as the middle school guest choir at the Houston Chamber Choir's annual "Hear the Future" invitational concert. Besides teaching, Kammi is also an active soprano in the Houston community and has performed as a soloist and choir member around the world. This is Kammi's seventeenth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**STACEY FRANKLIN**, soprano, is swiftly garnering a reputation for her shimmering tone and expressive artistry. As a featured soloist on the Houston Chamber Choir's 2015 album *Soft Blink of Amber Light* (MSR Classics), Stacey is praised by *Fanfare* magazine for "crystal-clear diction, dead-on intonation, and fearless fluency in the numerous treacherous turns of her lines." Recent performance highlights include Yum-Yum in *A Topsy Turvy Mikado* with The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Houston, multiple recitals with Grace Song, Inc., and three seasons with The Houston Ballet Nutcracker Chorus. She also maintains an active performance schedule as a sought-after professional harpist and a charter member of Six of One, the city's premier all-female a cappella ensemble. This is Stacey's tenth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**GREG GOEDECKE**, bass, is Assistant Choir Director at Porter High School. He graduated from the University of Houston, where he studied voice with Dr. Timothy Jones. He was with the UH Concert Chorale when they won Grand Prix at the Béla Bartók International Choir Competition, and when they sang most recently at ACDA, NCCO, and TMEA conventions. In 2018, he was a TCDA undergraduate student conductor and scholarship recipient. Greg has sung with Bach Society Houston, Houston Men's Chorus, and Suono Chamber Choir. He is currently a singer at St. Paul's UMC. This is Greg's third season with Houston Chamber Choir.

# HOUSTON CHAMBER CHOIR



**CLIPPER HAMRICK**, alto, is a Houston native and choral educator. She is currently employed in her seventh year as a choral teacher and presently serves as the Head Choral Director at Moorhead Junior High in Conroe ISD. As a choral educator, Clipper has earned several accolades, earning consistent superior and excellent ratings at UIL Concert and Sight Reading Contest and Choral Festivals around the greater Houston area. Clipper graduated from the University of Houston, receiving a Bachelor of Music with Elective Studies in Music Marketing. This is Clipper's eighth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**KELLI LAWLESS**, soprano, is rapidly becoming sought after for her gossamer tone and superb musicality. As a featured soloist on the Houston Chamber Choir's 2013 world premiere recording, *Psalmi ad Vesperas* (MSR Classics), Kelli's performance was praised by *Fanfare* magazine as "floating with a clear and brilliant tone." She is in demand to premiere and record new choral works, and was a soloist on noted composer Daniel Knaggs' CD *A New Spring Time*. She has also premiered new works for popular composers Dominick DiOrio and Kinley Lange. Kelli is the soprano recording artist for Educational Enterprises Recording Company, for whom she has been recording the official TMEA All-State Choir rehearsal tracks since 2007. She is also a founding member of Six of One, Houston's premier all-female a cappella ensemble. Kelli is a graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University, where she earned a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and a Master of Music in Vocal Performance. This is Kelli's seventeenth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**RANDY MURROW**, bass, holds the Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Oklahoma and the Master of Music in Voice Performance from the University of Houston. Currently he serves as Associate Director of Music at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, where directs the St. Cecilia Women's Choir, administers the Bridges Academy of Fine Arts, and maintains a private voice studio. In addition to the Houston Chamber Choir, Randy has sung several seasons with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Conspire, and Cantare Houston. This is Randy's fifth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.

## 2021-2022 SEASON



**CAROLYN ORR**, soprano, is a recent graduate from Baylor University where she studied under the tutelage of Dr. Robert Best. This past season Carolyn performed the role of Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* with the Matador Opera Workshop, as well as Pamina from *Die Zauberflöte* with LAH-SOW. In 2020, she competed in the Music Teachers National Association Young Artist Voice Competition where she was honored to have won first place. While in school, Carolyn performed the role of Poppea in Baylor Opera Theater's production of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Clara in Pasatieri's *Signor Deluso*, as well as Ifigenia in Handel's *Oreste*. She has recently returned to Houston to teach private voice lessons. This is Carolyn's first season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**EMILY PREMONT**, alto, is a choral educator from the Sugar Land area. Emily graduated from the University of Houston in 2016 with a Bachelor of Music and minor in Psychology. She serves as the choral director at Rowe Middle School in Cypress Fairbanks ISD. Her choirs have consistently earned superior and excellent ratings at UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Contest and festivals in the Houston area. She sings with various ensembles around the Houston area and serves as a staff singer at Christ Church Cathedral. This is Emily's third season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**MARIANNA PARNAS-SIMPSON**, alto, graduated with a master's degree in Choral Conducting from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Russia. She founded the award-winning St. Petersburg girls' choir, KAMERTON, which she directed for ten years before coming to the United States. Since 1999 Ms. Simpson has taught at Parker Elementary School, a Houston ISD magnet school for music, building a chorus program from 30 to 250 children. In 2005, she was named Teacher of the Year. In 2006, Marianna founded the Treble Choir of Houston, an ensemble for young women grades 6-12. The mission is to help young women find their voice. From 2008 to 2010, Ms. Simpson served as the Artistic Director of the summer program for the American Boychoir in Princeton, NJ. Her choirs have been selected to perform at Carnegie Hall, Houston Symphony, Organization of American Kodály Educators Conference, TMEA, and ACDA multiple times. She has conducted numerous children's chorus festivals and workshops. Marianna Parnas-Simpson is the founding member of the Houston Chamber Choir.

# HOUSTON CHAMBER CHOIR



**JEFFREY RAGSDALE**, tenor, sings at St. Martin's Episcopal and the professional choir at Congregation Emanu-El. He received his Bachelor of Music from Houston Baptist University and does music editing and transcription. This is Jeff's twenty-third season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**PATRICK SCHNEIDER**, bass, hails from Homer, Alaska. He currently sings with several Houston choral groups, including the Houston Chamber Choir, Chorus Angelorum, and the St. John the Divine Chorale. Recent performances include the role of Fiorello in *The Barber of Seville* at Moore's Opera House and Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* at First United Methodist Church, Pearland. As a proponent of both early and new music, Patrick has premiered several works by up-and-coming composers and enjoys performing rarely-heard Renaissance and Medieval music. He recently led the Piping Rock Singers in a performance of Banchieri's madrigal opera *Barca di Venetia per Padova*. When he isn't singing, Patrick also enjoys arranging songs across a multitude of genres. He holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Puget Sound and a Master of Music from the University of Houston. This is Patrick's sixth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**ALPHONSO SEALS**, tenor, holds a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi. He currently studies voice with Joseph Evans at the University of Houston. Some of the roles that he has had the opportunity to perform are Don Basilio in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Dominique You in Amy Beach's *Cabildo*, The Magician in Menotti's *The Consul*, and Spalanzani in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffman*. This is Alphonso's sixth season with the Houston Chamber Choir.

## 2021-2022 SEASON



**RYAN STICKNEY**, alto, returned to Houston after completing a master's degree in Contemporary Improvisation at New England Conservatory in Boston. Ryan received a bachelor's degree in voice from the Shepherd School of Music and one in linguistics from Rice University. At Rice, Ryan also participated in theater, music-directing several productions, and writing an original show. Ryan co-leads a rock recording project called Vivat & Hail and publishes multi-tracked solo performances of both early music and originals, including one featured on BBC Radio 3, as Rionsanura. Currently a staff singer at Palmer Memorial Episcopal, Ryan also makes free open-source textbooks at OpenStax, a Rice nonprofit. The Houston Chamber Choir has sung several arrangements Ryan has supplied. This is Ryan's eleventh season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**KALEIGH SUTULA**, alto, received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Music Education and Performance from Abilene Christian University in 2015 and earned a Master of Music in Vocal Performance and Literature at the Eastman School of Music in 2018. In addition to teaching in choral and private voice settings, Ms. Sutula has an extensive performance background. During her time at Eastman, Ms. Sutula sang the lead role of Elisabeth in Phillip Glass' *Les Enfants Terribles* with Eastman Opera Theatre. Regionally, she performed the roles of Kate Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) and 2nd Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*) with Buffalo Opera Unlimited. Recently, Ms. Sutula had the honor of being selected as the soloist in the TMEA performance of Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*. Ms. Sutula works at Bonnette Junior High in Deer Park ISD. This is Kaleigh's first season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



**EMILY WOLFE** is a graduate of Baylor University with a degree in Vocal Performance and a minor in Non-Profit Studies. In 2018, she won first place in Texoma NATS in the Senior Women's division and the following year won again in the same category. While in school, Emily performed the roles of Ermione in Händel's *Oreste*, Nella in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, and prepared the title role in Massenet's *Manon*. She attended summer music programs such as Amalfi Summer Music Festival and AIMS in Graz. Emily recently returned to Houston and has begun singing with the Houston Chamber Choir, Cantabile Houston and the St. Paul's Choir. This is Emily's second season with the Houston Chamber Choir.



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2021-2022 SEASON

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