



presents

Choral Holiday Special

featuring

Ragazzi Boys Chorus

Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir

Musae

Lacuna Arts Chorale

Sunday, December 13, 2020 at 7 PM
Old First Church
1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 474-1608 www.oldfirstconcerts.org

ABOUT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

- Great venue for music with beautiful acoustics and amazing Steinway concert grand piano.
- Primarily local emerging and mid-career professional musicians presenting innovative programs.
- Every concert offers new insights and virtuosic performances.
- Complimentary refreshments served at intermission or after the concert.
- An independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization devoted to presenting music at affordable prices, especially for low-income seniors and students.
- Solo, chamber music, and world music concerts year-round since 1970.

DONATING TO OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Ticket sales provide about 38 percent of our operating revenue each year. In addition, we rely on support from private foundations and Grants for the Arts from the city of San Francisco. Our generous individual donors complete the picture. We invite you to join us in our mission to connect audiences and local musicians and build up the classical music and world music scene in San Francisco. Donations are tax-deductible and donating on our website is easy and secure: www.oldfirstconcerts.org/give/, or checks can be mailed to: Old First Concerts, 1751 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Thank you!

COVID-19 RESPONSE: RETURNING TO THE MUSIC

Old First Concerts is committed to the health and safety of our audiences, performers and staff. We hope to resume concerts soon and have implemented a number of policies and procedures to help us reach that goal, which you can read about on our website.

In the meantime, know that all tickets are fully guaranteed—so if we have to cancel or postpone an event that you’ve purchased a ticket to, you can choose to use the ticket for any concert between now and June 1, 2021, or you can be fully refunded.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Following us on **Facebook** is a great way to keep informed about the latest concert information. While you are there, don’t forget to **share** events with your friends and hit the “Like” button liberally. [facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/](https://www.facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/)

You can also find us on **Instagram** [@oldfirstconcerts](https://www.instagram.com/oldfirstconcerts) with information about upcoming events plus photos and videos from our concerts.

PROGRAM

RAGAZZI BOYS CHORUS

Kent Jue, Director

Training Group

Mark Burrows (b. 1971)

We Are the Day!

Concert Group & Choral Scholars

Gaspar Fernandez (1566–1629)

Xicochi

Eastern Mongolian Folk Song, arr. Xixian Qu (1919–2008)

Pastorale

Ragazzi Boys Chorus

Lodovico Grossi da Viadana (c.1560–1627)

ed. Earlene Rentz (b. 1956)

Exultati Justi

A. R. Rahman (b. 1967)

Zikr: An Islamic Chant

Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1554–1612)

O Magnum Mysterium

Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir

Eric Tuan, Director

Ancora—Robert Geary, conductor

16th-c. French carol, arr. Eric Tuan (b. 1990)

Ding Dong Merrily On High

Concert Choir—Andrew Brown, conductor

Z. Randall Stroepe (b. 1953)

Lux aeterna

Mark Winges, *organ*

Ecco—Eric Tuan, conductor

Josquin des Prez (c. 1450–1521)

Gaude Virgo

Ensemble—Eric Tuan, conductor

Reed Criddle

Quiet Enlightenment

Commissioned by Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir
archival performance of world premiere

Mei Takeuchi, *whistling soloist*

Alexa Borden, Cayden Kurio, Ruth Radwin,
and Anna Klein, *vocal soloists*

Virtual Choir performance

Personent Hodie from **Piae Cantiones** (1582)

with **Vox Aurea** (Finland), **Sanna Salminen, director**

Heini Vesterinen, viola da gamba

Konsta Litmanen, percussion

Pekka Toivanen, medieval harp

Farshad Sanati, santur

Sanna Salminen, medieval fiddle

Special thanks to Minja Niiranen for assistance with backing tracks, and to Professor Aila Mielikäinen for language research and coaching.

Musae

Laney Armstrong, Director

Huron Carol traditional

Eric William Barnum (b. 1979)

Heaven Full of Stars

Nüüd ole, Jeesus, kiidetud Kihnu Island traditional

Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Northern Lights

Lacuna Arts Chorale

Sven Edward Olbash, *Artistic Director*

Artistic director Sven Edward Olbash discusses Lacuna Arts, their new education program, and their O1C performance of Distler's *The Story of Christmas* with soloist Maria Metcalf Meyer.

Hugo Distler (1908–1942)

Magnificat, *The Story of Christmas*

Chorale: Lob, Ehr sei Gott, dem Vater, *The Story of Christmas*

Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir

Ancora—**Robert Geary**, *conductor*

Franz Biebl (1906–2001)

Ave Maria

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Founded in 1987, **Ragazzi** provides outstanding musical education and performance opportunities for boys and young men, ages 5 to 18. We have 250 singers in our internationally recognized program. They come from over 100 schools in over 30 communities, and over the course of our program they advance through 6 tiered levels. We hold auditions in May, summer, and January.

We've been named one of the Best Choirs on the Peninsula by CBS news, and have been hailed by critics as "one of the Peninsula's finest treasures."

Under the leadership of Artistic and Executive Director Kent Jue, Ragazzi Boys Chorus performs a wide range of traditional and contemporary works for both the treble and changed voice. The chorus performs throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, including Belmont, Berkeley, Redwood City, Pacifica, Palo Alto, Portola Valley, San Carlos, San Francisco, San Mateo, Saratoga, and Stanford.

The chorus appears regularly with other outstanding Bay Area performing arts organizations. Ragazzi collaborates with the San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, Opera San Jose, West Bay Opera, Lawrence Pech Dance Company, Peninsula Symphony, Masterworks Chorale, and the Stanford University Symphonic Chorus.

Ragazzi participated in the San Francisco Symphony's recording of Stravinsky's *Perséphone*, which was included in the Symphony's Grammy Award for best classical album and best orchestral performance.

Ragazzi Boys Chorus made its Carnegie Hall debut in 2014 and regularly tours in the United States and internationally to widen chorus members' musical and cultural horizons, and deepen Ragazzi's reputation for performance excellence.

Kent Jue, *Artistic & Executive Director*, is an experienced choral conductor, music educator, and facilitator for lifelong learning in music. An energetic teacher, adjudicator, guest clinician, workshop presenter, and mentor, he is known for building high-level musicianship skills through his engaging style and rapport with students. He has a passion for uncovering the full artistic and expressive potential of individual choristers in an ensemble setting. Kent conducts Ragazzi's most accomplished treble singers, Concert Group, and the select tenor and bass Choral Scholars. He has toured extensively with the Ragazzi program and has led Ragazzi choirs to numerous festivals. An avid collaborator, Kent has prepared ensembles for performances with organizations including San Francisco Symphony, Symphony Silicon Valley, Opera San Jose, and West Bay Opera. Kent has also conducted youth choruses at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and performed and recorded with the Golden Gate Men's Chorus and the Gay Men's Choruses of San Francisco and Boston. He has a Masters of Music Education, with a Kodaly Emphasis from Holy Names University, a Bachelor of Music, Music Education from the University of the Pacific, a certificate in the Orff-Schulwerk method of music education, and holds a CA teaching credential. As Ragazzi's second Artistic Director, Kent is honored to continue Ragazzi's legacy of musical excellence, and its tradition of developing choral artists of character and distinction.

The internationally-acclaimed **Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir** offers children throughout San Francisco's East Bay an outstanding program of choral training and performance. Started in 1982 by Robert Geary and Susan Rahl, the Choir has a vigorous program of innovative new music projects, commissions, and premieres, and has established itself as a leading force in international choral activities, with far-reaching collaborations, high marks in competitions worldwide, and the establishment of the Golden Gate International Children's and Youth Choral Festival.

Recognizing that the creation of art is a forward-looking and forward-thinking endeavor, the Choir has commissioned and premiered dozens of new works by living composers, including Kui Dong, Mark Winges, Pekka Kostianen, Kirke Mechem, Sue Bohlin, Pablo Ortiz, Zae Munn, Olli Kortekangas, Stacey Garrop, Eric Tuan and many others.

Recognized for his adventurous programming and passion for musical excellence, Artistic Director **Eric Tuan** brings a wealth of experience in the choral arts to the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir. Tuan received his B.A. in Music with Honors from Stanford University, and completed a Master of Music in Choral Studies with Distinction at the University of Cambridge with the support of a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. Tuan began his musical journey in the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir as a young chorister, and served on faculty as Ecco conductor and composer-in-residence before beginning his tenure as Artistic Director in July 2019.

Tuan currently serves as the founding Artistic Director of Convivium, the Peninsula-based chamber chorus he founded in 2012, and as Director of Music at Christ Episcopal Church,

Los Altos. His dedication to the creation and exploration of new music has led him to conduct and perform the world premieres of over thirty works, including a program of new choral works celebrating the 500th anniversary of King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Tuan has sung professionally with Volti, Cappella SF, and the Philharmonia Baroque Chorale, and has received acclaim for his sensitive work as a collaborative pianist, continuo player, and répétiteur. Among his mentors and conducting teachers are Stephen M. Sano, Jameson Marvin, Craig Jessop, Robert Geary, Stephen Layton, Stephen Cleobury, and David Skinner.

Tuan's choral works, published by E.C. Schirmer, draw upon his diverse musical background to explore questions of transcendence and social justice. He has been widely commissioned by ensembles throughout the United States and Europe including Musae, the Fog City Singers, the Peninsula Women's Chorus, and Vox Aurea. His music has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Estonian Public Broadcasting.

Musae is a women's vocal ensemble based in San Francisco. The group takes its name from the original "ladies of song," the classic nine Muses of Greek mythology. Since its founding in 2004, Musae has performed diverse and accessible music throughout the Bay Area, and continues to stretch the boundaries of traditional repertoire for women's voices.

Musae functions as a musical collective in which each singer identifies as a leader and soloist contributing actively to the artistic process. The group's singers are trained in the choral tradition, but not bound by it. Each singer may sing a range of voice parts based on the aesthetic demands of the music,

and the group performs largely without conductor.

In 2016, Laney McClain Armstrong became Musae's artistic director. She is a singer and conductor who has made choral music and choral music education her life's work. As a conductor and educator, Dr. Armstrong strives to cultivate a love of music in each singer through quality programming, building skills and musicianship, and devotion to the music and texts.

Laney McClain Armstrong, *Artistic Director*, is a singer and conductor who has made choral music and choral music education her life's work. As a conductor and educator, Dr. Armstrong strives to cultivate a love of music in each singer through quality programming, building skills and musicianship, and devotion to the music and texts. She has toured internationally with the San Francisco Girls Chorus and the Harvard University Choir as a singer, and was one of the founding members of the Choral Fellows program at Harvard University in 2001. As a recipient of a Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship in 2009, she studied the Estonian language and culture and assisted in cataloguing entries in the University of Washington's Baltic Choral Collection. Dr. Armstrong has worked with singers of many ages, including teaching middle- and high-school choir in Virginia, working with elementary-aged students in Bay Area schools with limited music programs, leading introductory music classes to five- and six-year-old girls, and directing the San Francisco Girls Chorus' Alumnae Chorus. Dr. Armstrong was the Associate Artistic Director and Director of Musicianship at the Cantabile Youth Singers of Silicon Valley, where she worked with children and young adults ages eight to eighteen. She currently works music teacher at the

Renaissance International School in Oakland. Dr. Armstrong has been Musae's artistic director since 2016.

Dr. Armstrong holds a Bachelors of Arts from Harvard University in Afro-American Studies, a Masters of Music in Choral Conducting from the University of Oregon, where she studied with Dr. Sharon Paul, and a Doctorate in Musical Arts in Choral Conducting from the University of Washington, where she studied with Dr. Geoffrey Boers. Her dissertation, entitled *From the mouth and from the heart: the Spiritual Folksongs of Cyrillus Kreek* explores the life of the Estonian composer and his arrangements of folk hymns, with a focus on those written for treble voices. Dr. Armstrong holds a Level I Certification in Kodaly teaching, and has prepared singers to sing with the San Francisco Opera, the San Francisco Symphony, and Opera Parallèle.

Lacuna Arts is a San Francisco-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting excellence in vocal and choral music through performance, education, and community outreach. In medieval music, a *lacuna* is a gap or missing section in a particular manuscript. Under the artistic direction of Sven Edward Olbash, Lacuna Arts bridges the gap between large community choruses and small professional choirs in the San Francisco Bay Area.

We provide training for adult learners of music to take their singing to the next level. We present engaging, accessible concert performances to expose the general public to a variety of rarely performed *a cappella* masterworks from all musical style periods from the Renaissance to the 21st century. While for many of our members music is a hobby (most work in fields unrelated to music), some have gone on to study music

in full-time college programs, to present vocal recitals, and even to direct their own small *a cappella* ensembles. We believe that even a small organization can make big impact.

Conductor and lyric baritone **Sven Edward Olbash** began his musical career as a specialist in avant-garde and experimental vocal music, making his San Francisco professional recital debut at Old First Concerts in a program of all 20th century works as a tribute to his late mentor, composer and fellow Lynn, MA native Daniel Pinkham. During his four seasons as a member of new music ensemble Volti, Sven performed works by over 50 living composers—including 20 world premieres—and worked with Per Nørgård as soloist in his *Wie ein Kind* at the Other Minds Festival. He has also performed more traditional operatic roles with Longwood Opera, Lowell House Opera, and North Shore Light Opera.

As organist and music director for San Francisco's Eglise Notre Dame des Victoires (NDV) from 2005-2012, he established the concert series *Music at the French National Church*, applying his experience with new music to the performance of Renaissance polyphony, approaching this early repertoire not as historical artifact, but as it might have been experienced by the first interpreters of the then "new" music. His work with the choirs of NDV led them to be invited to perform music of Lassus and Gregorian chant at La Sainte Trinité in Paris.

As the yet unnamed Ensemble-in-Residence at NDV began to perform more and more concerts every year, and in the interest of bringing his work with Euouae to a wider community, Sven established the nonprofit organization Lacuna Arts in 2012 in order to "promote

excellence in vocal music through performance, education, outreach, and community service." From then on, the concert choir was known as the Lacuna Arts Ensemble. In 2014, Lacuna Arts was recognized as an independent 501(c)3 tax exempt organization. Since then the organization has expanded to include the larger Lacuna Arts Chorale and the educational Lacuna Arts Workshop in addition to the original small Ensemble.

Sven pursued his baccalaureate studies at Boston University with a double-major in Music and Education. He holds a Master of Music from New England Conservatory where he completed coursework for degrees in Voice Performance and Vocal Pedagogy and taught Voice for undergraduate music majors. His stage directing credits include Handel's *Xerxes* at NEC as well as assisting director Colin Graham in the East Coast premiere of Jonathan Dove's *Flight* at Boston Lyric Opera. He has been a clinician with SF Choral Society, Piedmont Choirs and SF Lyric Opera, leading sessions on music history, theory, singing technique, and French diction. He has been a Teaching Artist with San Francisco Opera's ARIA program since its inception and has served on the Board of Directors of Circus Center, a nonprofit circus training school in San Francisco. He is currently Director of Music at Star of the Sea Church in San Francisco, where he conducts Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony for a Latin High Mass (Missa Cantata) every Sunday.

COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Friday, December 18 at 7 pm

Daniel Glover, piano

A Covid compromise—a program of symphonies and concertos without orchestra, honoring Beethoven's 250th birthday—rare solo piano works that also exist(ed) as orchestra works. Since we currently have no chance to attend live orchestra concerts, this recital will remind us of what we have been missing. Works by Muzio Clementi, Beethoven-Alkan, Corigliano, and Liszt, as well as a work by Beethoven only just discovered earlier this year!

Saturday, December 19 at 7 pm

KITKA—Wintersongs

In lieu of their beloved annual Wintersongs concert tour, we have worked with Kitka to curate a selection of newly produced music videos and highlights from previous Wintersongs performances at Old First Concerts.

Sunday, December 20 at 4 pm

Golden Bough—Margie Butler, Paul Espinoza, and Kathy Sierra

Share the laughter, song and joy as Golden Bough performs rare versions of Celtic songs of Winter, as well as their unique take on better known Christmas Carols.

Friday, January 22 at 8 pm

Samantha Cho, piano

Debussy's *Images* and Grieg's youthful and spirited *Sonata in E minor* performed along with works by Germaine Tailleferre.

Sunday, January 24 at 4 pm

Ives Collective—featuring Elizabeth Schumann, piano

Smetana's *Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 15* and Dvořák's *Piano Trio in F minor, Op. 65*

Friday, January 29 at 8 pm

Ensemble 1828

Nicole Oswald, violin; Isaac Pastor-Chermak, cello; Alison Lee, piano

An evening of French chamber music featuring Debussy's *Cello Sonata*, Franck's *Violin Sonata in A major*, and Ravel's *Piano Trio in A minor*.

Tickets and more information at oldfirstconcerts.org

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Old First Concerts' piano is a New York Steinway D model, circa 1980, with Hamburg action. It was donated by The Stanley Ibler Fund, and is maintained by David Love Piano Service and Restoration.