



Old First Concerts

presents

Musae

Carols and Hymns

Laney McClain Armstrong

Artistic Director

Saturday, December 11, 2021 at 8 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 look forward to having all audiences back in our space when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we are happy to be able to continue presenting artists of the highest caliber to our audience in the Bay Area—and beyond—via livestreamed events. We are following city guidelines and safety protocols to help ensure the safest possible environment for our performers and staff.

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.

WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Concert Patrons,

We are so thrilled to be with you in person again. It has been a full two years since Musae has performed for a live audience and we have been looking forward to this moment since we shut down our rehearsals in March of 2020. It has been a joy to rehearse together again and it is a joy for us to bring this music to you as a part of your December in a tiny part of a march toward normalcy.

Our program today contains hymns and carols, old and new. We begin and end our program with medieval carols, the first in Middle English and the last in Latin. In the middle, we explore some newer songs, some newly composed, and others reimagining songs from long ago. As we reimagine our lives in the face of an ever-changing world, these songs, both old and new, bring comfort to me as an example of how we can continually rethink things that were established long ago in a way that is not just polished, but entirely reformed.

I hope you enjoy your journey with us. We are so glad you are here!

All the best,

Laney Armstrong

PROGRAM

We appreciate your applause. As each set is meant to be performed without interruption, we ask that you reserve your applause for the end of each set. Thank you!

I.

On Yoolis Night (Medieval Carols)

Hodie christus natus est

A nywe werke

Ther is no rose of swych vertu

Owt of your slepe aryse

Kim Baryluk (b. 1959)

Solstice Carole

II.

Matthew Larkin (b. 1963)

Adam Lay Ybounden

Drew Collins (b. 1975) based on a chant by Hildegard von Bingen)

O Frodens Virga

Eleanor Daley (b. 1965)

There Is No Rose

III.

Traditional Hebrew Song, arr. Asia Meirovich

Maoz Tzur

Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941)

Lead Gently, Lord

Traditional Spiritual, arr. Moses Hogan (1957–2003)

This Little Light of Mine

IV.

The Legends of Saint Nicholas (Medieval hymns and conducti)

Intonent Hodie

Exultemus et letemur

Gaudens in domino

Nicholai presulis

J. Fred Coots (1892–1985) arr. Michele Weir

Santa Claus is Coming to Town

ABOUT THE MUSIC

I.

On Yoolis Night is a set of carols edited and curated by the vocal group Anonymous 4. They write in their notes: “During the High Middle Ages (the twelfth through fourteenth centuries), poets and musicians of the British Isles produced a vast array of songs, ballads, carols, and liturgical works on the topic of the incarnation and the virgin birth. In comparison to continental Europe, the number of these pieces is so large that it sometimes seems as if the British invented the celebration of Christmas.” The opening chant, which also serves as the opening processional of Benjamin Britten’s *Ceremony of Carols*, announces the birth of Jesus. The following three carols follow a common pattern of songs for this period: a refrain (or burden) followed by multiple verses telling the story of Christmas. We follow *On Yoolis Night* with a modern carol celebrating the returning of light in *Solstice Carole*.

II.

In these three settings, we explore old carols made new. *Adam Lay Ybounden* and *There Is No Rose* are both reimaginations of medieval English texts exploring two great mysteries of the Christian religion: the fall of Adam and the Immaculate Conception. Both Matthew Larkin and Eleanor Daley totally reimagine the melodies while keeping some of the original mysticism of the medieval settings. Drew Collins’ *O Frondens Virga* sticks more closely to the original source material: a chant by Hildegard von Bingen. He

begins with a metrical interpretation of the chant and then spins off into his own imaginings of Hildegard's melody and text.

III.

This next set of songs do not harken back to the Middle Ages, but are traditional in their own ways. While the text of *Maoz Tzur* may date back to the 13th century, the melody is a traditional German tune that gained popularity in the 17th century. As *Rock of Ages*, it is included in many Christian hymnals. This version invokes the close harmonies of folk and Americana music.

Next is the modern composer Adolphus Hailstork's setting of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem *Lead Gently, Lord*. Born in 1872 to two formerly enslaved parents, Dunbar's poetry was a precursor to the literary explosion of the Harlem Renaissance. Hailstork sets the poem in a traditional gospel style with a twentieth-century palette of harmony. We end this set with Moses Hogan's setting of *This Little Light of Mine*, continuing on the theme of Hannukah's light by discussing the light from within. As with most traditional spirituals, this one also has a biblical origin: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount when he instructs his followers to let their light so shine, and not to hide it under a bushel. Hogan's setting begins in an almost lullaby manner, but gains energy and excitement in the last verse with the text "My God gave it to me."

IV.

We end with a set of medieval music celebrating St. Nicholas, also curated and edited by Anonymous 4. From their notes: "The jolly figure of Santa Claus, symbol of the secular side of Christmas, began with a fourth-century Christian named Nicholas...The legend has it that he was born in the port city of Myra, in modern-day Turkey, and that he was elected as its bishop through divine intervention. He spent the rest of his life performing courageous, altruistic, and miraculous acts in defense of his flock, and after his death, his bones exuded a fragrant healing oil, and reports of his miracles steadily increased." We end with a modern tribute to St. Nick, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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 a conductor.

A lifelong singer and Oakland native, **Laney McClain Armstrong** is a music educator and musician who has worked with treble choirs throughout her career. Laney has a BA from Harvard University in Afro-American studies and advanced degrees in choral conducting from the University of Oregon (MM) and the University of Washington (DMA). In the past, she has taught middle and high school and worked at the Cantabile Youth Singers of Silicon Valley. In addition to working with Musae, Laney is the Director of Choral Studies at the San Francisco Girls Chorus and teaches music at The Renaissance International School in Oakland. When she is not making music, she wrangles her four daughters (aged six, five, and two-year-old twins!) with her husband, reads, runs, crochets, and knits. The pandemic has deepened Laney's love of knitting and crochet and solidified her love of audiobooks. She will also continue to buy all her groceries online, when possible!

Allison Lynk spends her days in her home office as a product marketer at Twilio Segment. After spending her life on the East Coast, she made her way to San Francisco a decade ago and has been singing with Musae ever since. Allison enjoys reading, painting, and going on long walks in the city accompanied by an audiobook. The pandemic inspired Allison to get her very first car, so she's been enjoying mini Bay Area adventures and the vastly improved experience of doing errands.

Amy Strauss is thrilled to be in her first season singing with Musae. Besides singing, she is passionate about science literacy and works as a science educator and research mentor to high school students. She also performs her own research into the evolution of vocal communication in songbirds, a system with many parallels to human speech and language. Amy is committed to continuing her pandemic hobby of making time for long walks in Golden Gate Park with her husband, Kevin, and her dog, Durango!

Anjali Jameson has sung with Musae for the past four years. During the day, she builds technology aimed at improving the healthcare experience for all, and when not singing, she can be found taking urban hikes with her kids and husband or sneaking in some time at the piano. When the pandemic lockdown immediately stopped all travel and events, Anjali found herself cooking family dinners seven days a week and actually got pretty good at making different yummy meals every evening!

Barrie McClune lives in Oakland with her two children, Tilda and Leo; her two chickens, Prince and The Revolution; her two beasts, Lupe and Umami; and her lover / baby daddy / husband, Edwin. Barrie loves to learn and chose a career in organization development so that she could learn alongside her clients as they navigate a complex world. During the pandemic, she picked up a weekly “forest bathing” ritual with her parents and sister and will continue to bathe in the majesty of the ancient redwoods even after kitchens tables are determined to be “safe” again.

Caitlin Cobley is so excited to be in her first season with Musae. As the sun sets and her family and friends prepare for bed, Caitlin heads to the hospital where she works as a labor and delivery and postpartum registered nurse. She enjoys traveling, spending time with family and friends, being goofy with her one-year-old nephew Apollo, reading, and playing the piano. Over the course of the pandemic, Caitlin has learned of the importance of self care and her love of used book stores.

Christine Ensley Rojas is very thrilled to be performing her first official season with Musae (her first season got cut short after only a few rehearsals with the pandemic starting). A chemical engineer by trade, she runs product development and operations at a start-up performance nutrition company, and her spare time is currently filled with newlywed house hunting shenanigans. She loves cooking, baking, hiking, playing with her dog Pepper, and hosting (not very big currently, but hopefully soon again!) barbecues in the backyard.

Colleen O'Hara has been a member of Musae since 2005 and works in consulting for a CRM, ticketing, and fundraising software company. She currently lives in Berkeley with her husband and their pets, where she loves to hike and enjoy the wonderful green space in the East Bay. During the pandemic, this love of the outdoors became a big part of keeping sane and she lost count of how many mysteries she read.

Danielle Schickele has been a member of Musae since 2018. She works for an executive search firm in San Francisco. Outside of singing and working, she enjoys exploring the city, checking out new restaurants, and running along the Embarcadero. During the pandemic Danielle became a frequent park-goer and hopes to continue to enjoy the city's many parks year round.

Erin Ichimura is a private music teacher for piano and voice. She loves working with young students and creating a safe space for making music. She loves creating art, walking her puppy Kermit, and finding new music to enjoy on Spotify. During the pandemic Erin found new hobbies in sewing and self-care. This is her first season with Musae.

Helene Grotans is a new member of Musae this fall 2021! She is a band, orchestra and choir teacher at Borel Middle School in San Mateo. Helene plays violin with the Symphony Parnassus and area string quartets. She grew up in Kalamazoo, MI, where she sang with honor choirs and women's ensembles. She also sings in a rock n' roll band called The Okmoniks! For fun, Helene plays

competitive pinball and runs half marathons. Her pandemic hobby has been bird watching!

Kate Huizinga is a new member of Musae and recently moved to the Bay Area. She teaches choir at Albany High School and Middle School. Kate has a passion for singing in a wide variety of styles from opera to pop. She enjoys watching Netflix, playing cards, spending time with family and friends, and drinking coffee. During the pandemic, she got a dog and has loved being more active and getting doggie cuddles after work.

Katie Innes joined Musae in 2007 and is delighted to be singing with the group again after a year abroad in Ireland and the subsequent pandemic-cancelled seasons. A reluctant stay-at-home mom, Katie is looking forward to a new career now that her children are—finally!—both in school. She's always followed the Giants, but became a women's soccer fanatic during the pandemic and will support the USWNT and Portland Thorns for many years to come!

Kim McClain lives in Oakland and teaches music at Synergy School in San Francisco. Kim has been singing with Musae since 2013, and she now also has the pleasure of serving as Musae's administrative director. She serves on the board of directors for Synergy School and for the Northern California American Orff Schulwerk Association. During the pandemic Kim learned to sit quietly every day and notice the breath, coming and going, over and over. This practice has been transformative!

Kirstin Cummings volunteers with Oakland's feral cat population, helping get them fixed and vaccinated. She grew up in the Bay Area and has sung with Musae since its inception, seventeen years ago. Over the past year she has discovered the joys of simply wandering the neighborhood with no particular path in mind and stopping to look at everyone's gardens.

Michela Macfarlane spends most of her time volunteering at her sons' schools, coordinating extensive soccer schedules, and

enjoying multiple daily walks with her family's pre-pandemic Russian rescue dog Mishka. For over twenty-five years Michela has sung professionally — anything from medieval and baroque to jazz, folk, and pop music. 2010-2011 was her first season with Musae. The pandemic brought Michela closer to the ocean through extended stays in Santa Cruz and her family's newfound love for surfing.

Ronika McClain is an artist and writer masquerading as a graduate admissions counselor at California College of the Arts. In her artwork, she uses photography, video, and critical writing as a way to work through and with her own trauma as a cathartic practice and to destigmatize the experiences of queer women with c-PTSD. This is her first season with Musae. She lives in Oakland with her fiancée. In her spare time, she runs a queer abolitionist reading group aimed at unlearning white supremacist, colonial thinking outside educational institutions. She is a cinephile whose best pandemic purchase was a subscription to the Criterion Collection.

Sabrina Adler is a public health attorney at ChangeLab Solutions in Oakland. When not working on public health, she is busy wrangling her two young sons, both of whom love music (one is a singer and the other more of a dancer). She has sung with Musae since its founding. Sabrina's main "hobby" during the last 20 months has been trying to survive the newborn days and months of her feisty second child amidst a global pandemic (not part of the original plan!), so she is looking forward to reclaiming some time as she emerges from that fog. She is thankful to Musae for providing one of the first opportunities to do so!

Teresa Newmark is a pediatric speech-language pathologist and feeding therapist who has sung with Musae since 2017. During the pandemic she learned four chords on the guitar, trained her daughter to open her class Zoom link in response to an alarm, baked too much bread and bought a pandemic kayak. She hopes that 2022 involves more kayaking and less Zooming.

Tiffany Ou-Ponticelli teaches middle and high school orchestra. She finds reliving everyone's most awkward years on a daily basis very rewarding, and pretty hilarious. Tiffany is an active violist and orchestral educator in the Bay Area, and has been singing with Musae since 2018. She lives in San Francisco with her husband and their two kittens, Kishi and Bashi. Her pandemic hobby is singing songs at/about Kishi and Bashi at full volume.

Valerie Moy spends her workday hours writing code for Pinterest while occasionally getting distracted by the hummingbirds outside the window of her home office in the Mission. In her spare time, Valerie enjoys going on walks around the city, searching for perfect bites, and of course singing, both with Musae and the International Orange Chorale. She first joined Musae in 2010, and is thrilled to be returning after several years' hiatus. Like many other people during the pandemic, Valerie took up home-buying (which she hopes never to do again) and sourdough baking (which she looks forward to continuing).

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COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Sunday, December 12 at 4 pm

Ragazzi Boys Chorus—*Mysteries and Miracles*

Kent Jue, *Artistic & Executive Director*; **Yongyu Gao**, *pianist*

Travis Rogers, *Young Men's Ensemble Director*; **Nancy**

Whitecar, *Assistant Director & pianist*

Ragazzi Boys Chorus makes its triumphant return to the stage with treasured yuletide gems and contemporary festive pieces for unchanged, mixed, and changed voices to celebrate the season.

Friday, December 17 at 8 pm

Golden Bough—*Christmas in a Celtic Land*

Margie Butler, Paul Espinoza & Kathy Sierra

This joyful Celtic Christmas Concert is a wonderful opportunity for the whole family to gather together to celebrate and drive the cold winter away with Golden Bough's unique Yuletide presentation.

Saturday, December 18 at 8 pm

Robin Sutherland: celebrating a towering musical genius

Christopher Basso, Elizabeth Dorman, Keisuke Nakagoshi,

Marc Shapiro, *piano*; **Jack Van Geem & Daniel Hallett**,
marimbas

Celebrating the life of Robin Sutherland with performances of music by Bach, Debussy, Beethoven, Respighi, Bolcom, and Bernstein by several of his closest friends.

Friday, January 7 at 8 pm

Solomon Ge, *piano*

A young rising star pianist and Bay Area native, Solomon Ge makes his San Francisco recital debut with a program of beloved works by Bach, Ravel, Beethoven, and Prokofiev, plus one of his own compositions.

For tickets & more information visit www.olderfirstconcerts.org

COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Saturday, January 8 at 8 pm

Slow Wave—**Kyle Beard**, *clarinet*; **Justine Preston**, *viola*;
Naomi Stine, *piano*

Exploring the slower end of the sound wave spectrum, Slow Wave performs the World Premieres of works by Bay Area composers Joowan Kim, Emma Logan, and Kyle Hovatter, plus recent works by Brett Eastman and Kalevi Aho.

Sunday, January 23 at 4 pm

Basma Edrees, *violin* & **Ava Nazar**, *piano*

From Brahms to Piazzolla through Reza Vali

Basma & Ava's program revolves around the music of the contemporary Iranian composer Reza Vali. Nicknamed the Persian Bartók, Vali is considered one of today's leading exponents of using folk songs as a basis for composing contemporary music.

Friday, January 28 at 8 pm

Chelsea Hollow, *soprano* & **Taylor Chan**, *piano*

Cycles of Resistance

A program chronologically exploring poetry and texts of resilience and rebellion throughout the 20th and 21st centuries featuring nine world premieres in eight languages.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

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