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Old First Concerts

presents

Light and Love

Ragazzi Boys Chorus

Kent Jue, *Artistic & Executive Director, Director of Concert Group & Choral Scholars*

Isabella Custino, *Assistant Director of Concert Group & Choral Scholars*

Yongyu Gao, *Collaborative Pianist*

Travis Rogers, *Director of Young Men's Ensemble*

Nancy Whitecar, *Assistant Director of Young Men's Ensemble & Collaborative Pianist*

Jon Ellis, *Vocal Coach*

Sunday, December 10, 2023 at 4 PM

Old First Church

1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

(415) 474-1608 www.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.

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:

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contact: curtishuth@oldfirstconcerts for more information.

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You can also find us on **Instagram @oldfirstconcerts** with information about upcoming events plus photos and videos from our concerts.

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COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Monday, February 5 at 7:30 pm

Earplay—*The Poetry of Physics*

Challenging the audience to broaden its concept of music with new emotional and auditory experiences, Earplay performs the World Premiere of stellar Chilean-American composer Miguel Chuaqui's Ad Hoc, West Coast Premieres by Suzanne Sorkin and Yotam Haber, and works by Kaija Saariaho and Ines Thiebaud.

Sunday, February 18 at 4 pm

Duo Chiaroscuro—*Love and Dreams*

Tristana Ferreyra-Rantalaiho, alto; Johanna Tarcson, piano

Duo Chiaroscuro explores the play of light and shadow in art and music, with works by Franz Schubert, Lili Boulanger, Ernest Chausson, Henri Duparc, Emile Paladilhe, Claude Debussy, Peter Lieberon, Carlos Guastavino and Alberto Ginastera.

Friday, February 23 at 8 pm & Sunday, February 25 at 4 pm

Sixth Station Trio

Anju Goto, violin; Federico Strand Ramirez, cello; Katelyn Tan, piano

Sixth Station Trio, whose mission is to keep classical music accessible to the general public and to challenge the boundaries of what a classical piano trio can do, debuted at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in 2023 in a sold-out concert featuring music from the films of Studio Ghibli.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

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PROGRAM

CONCERT GROUP AND CHORAL SCHOLARS

c. 13th Century Chant, Bibliotheque Nationale MS, arrs., eds.
Veni Veni Emmanuel

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Laudamus Te from *Gloria*

Arthur Scholom, *soloist*

Katerina Gimon (b. 1993)

My Light

Susan LaBarr (b. 1981)

Where the Light Begins

John Henry Hopkins (1820-1891) arr. Will Todd (b. 1970)

We Three Kings from *Three More Jazz Carols*

Ensemble: Andrew Altorfer, Amos Bankhead,
Simon Braun, Yanni Cheng, Sam Dickey,
Colin Henderson, Jonah Hsu, Olivier Kondo,
Krishna Nagarajan, Hudson Stadtlander,
Connor Statton, Thomas Williams, Colin Xiellie
& Ayden Yang

CONCERT GROUP

Lyn Williams (b. 1963)

Festive Alleluia

Isabella Custino, *conductor*

Meir Finkelstein (b. 1951) arr. Rebecca Thompson

L'dor Vador

Hersh Saxena & Brenden Yu, *soloists*

YOUNG MEN'S ENSEMBLE

Michael John Trotta (b. 1978)

Ubi Caritas

Traditional French Carol arr. Craig Courtney (b. 1948)

People Look East

Stanley M. Hoffman (b. 1959)

Haneiro Halalu

Paul Sapilewski, *soloist*

Steve Parsons (b. 1951)

Waiting for the Light of Morning

Spencer Bergland, Simon Braun, Miles Kaludzinski,
& Luke Suffoletto, *soloists*

Edward Caswall (1814-1878) & John Goss (1800-1880)

arr. Dan Forrest (b. 1978)

See Amid the Winter's Snow

Shawn Kirchner (b. 1978)

Cornerstone

Miles Kaludzinski, Matteo Navarro,
& Thomas Williams, *soloists*

COMBINED ENSEMBLES

John Williams (b. 1932)

Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas from *Home Alone*

Isaac Watts (1674-1748), arr. William Llewelyn (b. 1925)

Joy to the World

Yongyu Gao, *organ*

COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Monday, January 22 at 7 pm

Amateur Music Network presents Sarah Cahill's Backstage Pass

with guest artist Jason Vieaux, guitar

How does a jazz pianist create a unique arrangement of a standard? Why do notation and improvisation seem like such separate worlds? We'll explore these questions and more in this new series, with guest artists demonstrating and revealing the secret processes behind their music.

Sunday, January 28 at 4 pm

Ives Collective

Kay Stern, violin; Susan Freier, violin/viola; Stephen Harrison, cello; Elizabeth Schumann, piano

Presenting powerful live music experiences through fresh and informed interpretations of established masterworks and under-appreciated gems, the Ives Collective's winter set builds on last season's commitment to presenting lesser heard works by women composers, with works by Mélanie Bonis and Dame Ethel Smyth.

Saturday, February 3 at 8 pm & Sunday, February 5 at 4pm

Circadian String Quartet with Amy Zanrosso, piano

Monika Gruber & David Ryther, violins; Omid Assadi, viola; David Wishnia, cello

Circadian String Quartet, founded in 2013 to perform classical and contemporary repertoire of folkloric or cultural significance, are joined by pianist Amy Zanrosso in two-day festival of piano quintets by Schumann, Dvořák, Shostakovich and Stravinsky/Ryther.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Friday, December 15 at 8 pm

Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco

The award-winning chorus returns to Old First Concerts for its beloved annual *Carols by Candlelight* performance. Start your holiday season with this exquisite candle-lit concert, presenting traditional carols and those re-envisioned – alongside original seasonal works.

Saturday December 16 at 8 pm

Golden Bough—*Christmas in a Celtic Land*

Share the laughter, song and joy with rare versions of Celtic songs of Winter, and a unique take on better known Christmas Carols.

Sunday, December 17 at 4 pm

KITKA—*Wintersongs*—Shira Cion, Director

What sustains us in times of darkness, scarcity, uncertainty, and hardship? Kitka's *Wintersongs* program this year is a musical response to this question, featuring songs that express wonder and gratitude for the miracle of creation, the diversity of life on Earth, and the mysterious influences of heavenly bodies.

Sunday, January 7 at 2 pm

Sarah Cahill, piano

Sarah Cahill, hailed as "a sterling pianist and an intrepid illuminator of the classical avant-garde" by *The New York Times* and "a brilliant and charismatic advocate for modern and contemporary composers" by *Time Out New York*, has commissioned and premiered over seventy compositions for solo piano. For this concert, she will perform Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Forest Scenes, Op. 66*, along with other works.

For tickets & more information visit www.olderfirstconcerts.org

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

GRAMMY Award-winning **Ragazzi Boys Chorus**, Silicon Valley, provides outstanding musical education and performance opportunities for boys and young men ages 5 to 18. The largest boys' chorus in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ragazzi serves over 200 choristers in six tiered levels. Under the leadership of Artistic and Executive Director Kent Jue, Ragazzi shapes the lives of boys from diverse backgrounds, developing tenacious and confident young musicians who pursue choral arts of the highest caliber together.

Ragazzi is a prominent collaborator in the area, providing vocalists for such notable organizations as the San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, Opera San Jose, Symphony Silicon Valley, and the Stanford University Symphonic Chorus, among others. Recent collaborations include Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* with the San Francisco Symphony and Opera San Jose's production of *Tosca*.

The group tours throughout the United States and internationally to widen chorus members' cultural and musical horizons and deepen Ragazzi's reputation for performance excellence. The chorus has concertized in historic venues including Carnegie Hall in New York City, St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, and MuTH Concert Hall in Vienna. Ragazzi will make its Sydney Opera House debut in July 2024.

Kent Jue, *Artistic and 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. Kent has conducted Ragazzi in performances with the San Francisco Symphony and for Chorus America. An avid collaborator, he has prepared ensembles and soloists for organizations such as Symphony Silicon Valley and Opera San Jose. 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 Master 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 California teaching credential. Kent currently serves as the Children and Community Youth Chair for the California Choral Directors Association. 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.

Isabella Custino, *Assistant Director of Concert Group and Choral Scholars*, is a passionate choral conductor and music educator from the San Francisco Bay Area. She is a California state certified K-12 music teacher with degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University (MA Music & Music Education) and the USC Thornton School of Music (BA Choral Music).

When she is not working with Ragazzi, Ms. Custino conducts Allegra for the Peninsula Girls Chorus, a sister organization to Ragazzi, of which she's a proud alumna. She feels lucky to

CHORAL SCHOLARS

Ian Bass	Miles Kaludzinski†	Armaan Sharma
Spencer Bergland	Olivier Kondo	Luke Suffoletto
Simon Braunt	Lyn Leonard	Declan Twomey
Yanni Cheng†	Henry Liu	Tom Vosgian
Danny Cox	Michael Long	Thomas Williamst
Manny Cox	Liam Lowitz	Ethan Zettler-Bray
Christopher Culwell	Krishna Nagarajan	
Sam Dickey	Matteo Navarro	†Section Leader

YOUNG MEN'S ENSEMBLE

Aaron Bao	Miles Kaludzinski†	Johan Sijp
Ian Bass	William Keller	Aarkan Singhal
Jacob Bau	Simon Kirjner	Agustya Sinha
Spencer Bergland†	Olivier Kondo	Christopher Spurling
Calvin Blanford	Kavan Kumar	Nikhil Srinivasan
Simon Braunt	Elliot Lee	Luke Suffoletto
Ben Carlson	Lyn Leonard	Chase Thompson
Yanni Cheng	Ethan Liu	Javier Tulabing
Danny Cox	Henry Liu	Declan Twomey
Manny Cox	Michael Long	Eshu Vinnakota
Logan Crawford	Liam Lowitz	Tom Vosgian
Christopher Culwell	Darius Monstavicius	Theo Waltuch
Nick Damon	Krishna Nagarajan	Andrew Wang
Jack Day	Smaran Narayanan	Thomas Williams
Sam Dickey	Matteo Navarro†	Malcolm Xiellie
Alex Dujmovic	Diego Ramirez	Ethan Zettler-Bray
Kui Fine	Peter Reeves	
Eli Hart	Rhys Salma	
Talinn Hatti	Paul Sapilewski†	
Carter Hendrix	Armaan Sharma†	†Section Leader

Jon Ellis, *Vocal Coach*, has brought his powerful tenor voice and dramatic presence to numerous concerts, operatic performances and solo recitals throughout the United States and Europe, as well as several televised and radio performances. Mr. Ellis has sung with Opera San Jose, Opera International, Torrey Pines Opera Theatre, Contemporary Opera of Los Angeles, OperaWorks, Chelsea Opera, Novato Concert Opera, Scholar Opera, Monterey Opera, Cleveland Opera Theatre, Seattle Civic Light Opera, appearing in a wide variety of roles including Cavaradossi (Tosca), Pinkerton (Madama Butterfly), Eisenstein (Die Fledermaus), and Don Ramiro (La Cenerentola). Mr. Ellis earned a Bachelor of Arts in Vocal Performance from Seattle Pacific University, a Master of Music Degree from Cleveland Institute of Music and a Master Degree of Music from Case Western Reserve University, focusing on Vocal Performance and Vocal Pedagogy.

CONCERT GROUP

Andrew Altorfer**	Finn Reese&	* <i>Head Chorister</i>
Amos Bankhead	Hersh Saxena	# <i>Assistant Head</i>
Nathan Bannister	Arthur Scholom^^	<i>Chorister</i>
Ethan Carton-Serrano	Hudson Stadtlander	^ <i>Team Captain</i>
Rohan Gupta	Connor Statton+	^^ <i>Student Conductor</i>
Colin Henderson	Alex To	** <i>Head Chorister</i>
Bryant Ho	Oliver To	<i>Emeritus</i>
Jonah Hsu#	Iker Vahamaki	+ <i>Team Captain</i>
Kiran Kadambi	Abraham Villeda	<i>Emeritus</i>
Henry Lin^	Justin Vives*	& <i>Student Conductor</i>
Brandon Liu	Carlton Weibell	<i>Emeritus</i>
Isaac Liu	Alex Wonnacott	
Albert Luo	Eddy Wu	
Aaron Ma	Colin Xiellie	
Florian Mayssat-Basu	Stephen Yan-Zhao	
Alexander Monstaviccius	Ayden Yang	
	Brenden Yu	
	Joshua Zheng	

be returning to the Bay Area choral scene as an educator after participating as a student.

In addition to teaching and conducting, Ms. Custino has participated in various choral ensembles. During her time at USC, she was a member of the prestigious USC Chamber Singers under the direction of Dr. Jo-Michael Scheibe. She was also Conducting Intern for the Orange County Women's Chorus under the direction of Eliza Rubenstein in 2021-2022. With these ensembles, she has performed at various venues such as Desert Trip with the Rolling Stones and Walt Disney Concert Hall as well as touring to destinations like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Carnegie Hall in New York.

Yongyu Gao, *Collaborative Pianist*, began playing the accordion at age four, establishing a strong musical foundation for piano studies she began at the age of 10. In 2005, Yongyu won first place in the Beijing National Accordion Competition, and third place in the Beijing National Piano Competition. This experience helped her focus on piano, and in 2009, she graduated with a BA from South China University in Music Education with an emphasis in piano performance. After moving to the United States, she played for the Inna Opera Group at the Community Music Center in San Francisco. Yongyu continued her study in piano performance as a Walker Scholar at San Jose State University, earning her Master's degree in 2013. She accompanies for the Burlingame School District and Junipero Serra High School in San Mateo, and is an active performer throughout the Bay Area. She also serves as a pianist and organist at Burlingame United Methodist Church. She is a member of the Music Teachers Association of California, and her piano students regularly participate in the Certificate of Merit and Royal School of Music programs and exams.

Travis Rogers, *Young Men's Ensemble Director*, has been a professional choral conductor for 45 years. He retired from Napa High School in Napa, California, in June of 2017 after thirty-seven years as the choral music director. Mr. Rogers directed the activities of over 300 students (at least half of them boys) each school year in seven different ensembles. Choirs at the school toured frequently nationally and internationally, performing in world famous venues such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York City, St. Patrick's and Christ Church Cathedrals in Dublin, Notre Dame in Paris, the Sydney Opera House in Australia, Westminster Abbey in London, and Sagrada Familia and the Barcelona Cathedral in Spain. NHS ensembles also earned top honors at several national and international competitions in New York City, Hawaii, Australia, Austria, and England as well as top ratings and awards at local, regional and state festivals and competitions. Mr. Rogers has served the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) California Chapter in many capacities including repertoire and standards chair for high school and male choirs, summer conference chair and President. He is also a Past-President of the western region of ACDA. Travis Rogers has conducted over thirty honor and district choirs in northern and central California. He has been a choral competition/festival adjudicator and clinician for over thirty years as well as a frequent presenter at professional conferences for ACDA and California Music Educators Association (CMEA).

Nancy Whitecar, *Collaborative Pianist and Assistant Director of Young Men's Ensemble*, is a professional musician and music educator with over 35 years of experience. She teaches general music classes at The Music School at the Sunnyvale Presbyterian church, and accompanies for instrumentalists and choirs throughout the Bay Area. Nancy has directed

children's and youth choirs, and taught piano to students of all ages. She served as accompanist and assistant director of the BeckRidge Chorale in Southeast Michigan for over 20 years, and as Associate Director of Music at the First United Methodist Church in Plymouth, Michigan. Nancy is a member of the Music Teachers National Association, and the California Association of Professional Music Teachers. She graduated from the University of Illinois and holds a Piano Teacher Certificate from Schoolcraft College in Michigan.

Isabella Custino, *Assistant Director, Concert Group & Choral Scholars*, is a passionate choral conductor and music educator from the San Francisco Bay Area. She is a California state certified K-12 music teacher with degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University (MA Music & Music Education) and the USC Thornton School of Music (BA Choral Music). In addition to her duties with Concert Group and Choral Scholars, she teaches in Ragazzi's Primary Group. When she is not working with Ragazzi, Ms. Custino conducts Allegra for the Peninsula Girls Chorus, a sister organization to Ragazzi, of which she's a proud alumna. She feels lucky to be returning to the Bay Area choral scene as an educator after participating as a student. In addition to teaching and conducting, Ms. Custino has participated in various choral ensembles. During her time at USC, she was a member of the prestigious USC Chamber Singers under the direction of Dr. Jo-Michael Scheibe. She was also Conducting Intern for the Orange County Women's Chorus under the direction of Eliza Rubenstein in 2021-2022. With these ensembles, she has performed at various venues such as Desert Trip with the Rolling Stones and Walt Disney Concert Hall as well as touring to destinations like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Carnegie Hall in New York.