

LIGHT & TRUTH

a joint concert with the Yale Glee Club

Ah sunflower! (2000) by Jonathan Dove

and the swallow (2017) by Caroline Shaw

Ashita wa hare kana, kumori kana (1992) by Toru Takemitsu

Despertar (2021) by Karen Siegel

Go down 'n the valley and pray (2007) by André Thomas

If I were a swan (2012) by Kevin Puts

If we have wisdom (2021) by Rex Isenberg

The increasing light (2023) by Jeffrey Douma

Kaisa-isa niyan (2017) by Nilo Alcala

Lao rahal soti (2020) by Shireen Abu-Khader

Lingua tonga (2023) by Shruthi Rajasekar

November prayer (2007) by Christopher Theofanidis

Raise your voices here (2010) by Jeffrey Douma

Returning (2014) by Aaron Jay Kernis

Ten piedad de nosotros y escucha nuestra oración (2023) by Ismael Huerta Marin

Tuttarana (2016) by Reena Esmail

Voices (2009) by Eric Banks

Ye shall have a song (1936) by Randall Thompson



THE ESOTERICS
Directed by Eric Banks

Saturday | 9 March 2024 | 8:00pm
Plymouth United Church of Christ
1217 6th Avenue | Seattle

Sunday | 10 March 2024 | 4:00pm
Christ Episcopal Church
310 North K Street | Tacoma

LIGHT & TRUTH

a joint concert with the Yale Glee Club

PROGRAM

Please turn off all noise-making devices, and refrain from talking during the performance.

THE ESOTERICS

November prayer (2007)	Christopher Theofanidis (b 1967)
Despertar (2021)	Karen Siegel (b 1980)
Returning (2014)	Aaron Jay Kernis (b 1960)
and the swallow (2017)	Caroline Shaw (b 1982)
If we have wisdom (2021)	Rex Isenberg (b 1987)
Tuttarana (2016)	Reena Esmail (b 1983)

THE YALE GLEE CLUB

Ye shall have a song (1936)	Randall Thompson (1899-1984)
Ten piedad de nosotros... (2023)	Ismael Huerta Marin (b 1996)
Lingua tonga (2023)	Shruthi Rajasekar (b 1996)
Kaisa-isa niyan (2017)	Nilo Alcala (b 1978)
Go down 'n the valley and pray (2007)	arr. Andre Thomas (b 1952)
Lao rahal soti (2020)	arr. Shireen Abu-Khader (b 1972)
The increasing light (2012)	arr. Jeffrey Douma (b 1971)
Ashita wa hare kana, kumori kana (1992)*	Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996)
Ah sunflower! (2000)*	Jonathan Dove (b 1959)
Raise your voices here (2010)	Jeffrey Douma (b 1971)
Eli Yale	Traditional student song
Football medley	arr. Fenno Heath (1926-2008)
Bright college years	Carl Wilhelm, arr. Robert Bonds

*performed by YGC Chamber Singers

COMBINED CHORUS

If I were a swan (2012)	by Kevin Puts (b 1972)
Voices (2009)	by Eric Banks (b 1969)

Special thanks to:

Patricia Lahtinen | Supertitlist
Daniel Powers | Audio Producer
Mitchell Baier | Facilities Coordinator
Matthew Bonner | Volunteer Coordinator

THE ESOTERICS

Eric Banks *Founding director*

Aaron Steers

Ally King

Bayta Maring

Brittini Liyanage

Carly Corey

Casey Elkins

Daniel Powers

Dave Doody

Erin Bathurst

Erin Eadington

Gillian Dockins

Gustavo Elias

Jeremy Evans

Jim Peterson

Joe Scott

Jonathan You

Julia Jay

Kelly Baker

Kirsten Lysen

Lillian Ashworth

Livia Lenington

Matty Bonner

Michael Saunders

Mimi Couture

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T H E E S O T E R I C S

Now at the start of its fourth decade, Seattle's most innovative chorus has drawn local, national, and international praise for performing rarely-heard compositions of contemporary music for unaccompanied voices, for infusing elements of the literary, theatrical, and visual arts into the typical concert experience, and for inspiring and performing new *a cappella* choral settings of poetry, philosophy, and spiritual writings by composers around the world. In early 1992, Eric Banks brought together a group of friends to perform his Master's and Doctoral recitals in Choral Studies at the University of Washington. After Banks' recitals were completed, the group wanted to keep singing together, so Banks chose a name for his ensemble based on the Greek adjective **ΕΣΟΤΕΡΙΚΟΣ** – which describes a close-knit community and the secret knowledge that its members share. Since incorporating with this name in 1993, The Esoterics has performed hundreds of concerts throughout the Pacific Northwest, has commissioned and premiered hundreds of new works for *a cappella* voices in myriad languages, and has mastered many of the most virtuosic choral works of the last century in concerts described as “compelling,” “crafted,” “luxuriant,” “lyrical,” “sumptuous,” and “superb.” The Esoterics has released twenty-one CD recordings on its own label (Terpsichore) and has been honored to compete at the 2000 Cork International Choral Festival (Ireland), the 2001 Certamen Coral de Tolosa (Spain), and the 2006 Harald Andersén International Choir Competition in Helsinki (Finland). As well, The Esoterics has demonstrated its continuing commitment to choral education in becoming the only choral ensemble in Washington State that grants continuing-education credit to its members who also teach in the public schools. In recognition for its efforts in choral education and innovation, The Esoterics has been honored five times with the ASCAP and Chorus America Award for the Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music (in 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2017). The Esoterics has been honored to receive grants from the arts commissions of Washington State, King County, and the City of Seattle, as well as funding from Amazon, Google, Microsoft, the Seattle Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the BMI Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Esoterics is a proud member chorus of ACDA (the American Choral Directors Association), Chorus America, IFCM (the International Federation for Choral Music), and GALA (the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses).

M I S S I O N S T A T E M E N T

The Esoterics is a Seattle-based vocal ensemble that is dedicated to performing and perpetuating contemporary *a cappella* choral settings of poetry, philosophy, and spiritual writings from around the world.

While cultivating artistic expression and cultural understanding among its singers and audience alike, The Esoterics aspires to reflect the beauty, power, and significance that are inherent in the music of our time.

E R I C B A N K S

Conductor, composer, clinician, vocalist, linguist, and ethnomusicologist, Eric Banks has garnered significant acclaim as one of the most creative and compelling choral directors in the United States for his unwavering commitment to new music for unaccompanied voices. In 1992, Eric founded The Esoterics, a professional-caliber chamber chorus in Seattle whose mission is to perform and perpetuate contemporary choral music beyond the scope of the established *a cappella* canon. After completing his BA in Composition at Yale University in 1990, Eric relocated to Seattle to study in the departments of Choral Studies and Music Theory at the University of Washington. His MM thesis (1992) is a performance edition of *Dixit Dominus* by Chiara Margarita Cozzolani; his MA thesis (1995) is a postmodern analysis of Arvo Pärt's *Credo*; and his DMA dissertation (1996) surveys the choral music of Mexican composer and Aztec ethnomusicologist Carlos Chávez. In 1997, at the conclusion of his graduate study, Banks traveled to Sweden as a Fulbright Scholar and Lois Roth Fellow in order to learn more about its contemporary choral culture. While in Stockholm, Eric performed with several ensembles, including the Swedish Radio Choir and the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir. In his music, Eric is drawn to ideas that are ‘esoteric’ in origin, and chooses to express concepts that are undiscovered, under-represented, or not easily decipherable to a wider audience. As a composer, Banks has been able to combine his love of poetry, foreign language, classical civilization, social justice, comparative religion, and the natural sciences to create a growing repertoire of new works for *a cappella* chorus. Several of Banks' commissioned works have been recorded by The Esoterics, and can be found on CDs released on the Terpsichore label. Eric was a visiting scholar at the Royal Conservatory of Music and Swedish National Radio in Stockholm, as well as at the Cama Oriental Institute in Mumbai, India. Winner of the 2010 *Dale Warland Singers Commission Award* from Chorus America and the American Composers Forum, Eric has received composition and research grants from 4Culture, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Artist Trust, the Atwood Foundation, New Music USA, the San Francisco Arts Commission, Seattle CityArtists, the Washington State Arts Commission, and three “creativity” grants the National Endowment for the Arts. His upcoming premieres include pieces for Cantori New York, the Taipei Philharmonic Chorus, and the Vancouver Chamber Choir. Eric lives in Seattle with David Gellman, his husband of 27 years (also The Esoterics' graphic design guru). You can read more about Eric's work on his own webpage: www.ericbanks.com. Eric is a member of ASCAP.

Texts and translations

THE ESOTERICIS

November prayer (2007)

from *Messages to myself*

by Christopher Theofanidis (b 1967)

setting a poem by Amy Beth Kirsten

Let love come in whatever way it will.
In music, in friendship, in love for myself,
For others, for my family.
To all who are my family.
Strangers. Friends on the street.
To the homeless, the broken,

Let love come in whatever way it will.
To the thankful who know how to love,
To the calm, to the awake,
To the joyful, let love come.

And when it does
(The gigantic, magnificent mirror)
It will tell us at all times we are one,
How beautiful we are.

Let love come in whatever way it will.

Despertar (2021)

by Karen Siegel (b 1980)

setting a poem by Carlos Pintado

(translated to English by Lawrence Schimel)

Despertar y verse,
To awaken and see oneself
no en la hoja, no en el árbol,
not in the leaf, not in the tree,
siguiera en el campo
not even in the field
que se extiende sin remedio.
that stretches relentlessly.

Despertar y verse
To awaken and see oneself
tan solo en la semilla,
only in the seed,
en su conciencia, pujando,
in its conscience, striving,
y saber que nada de eso existe,
and knowing that nothing of this exists,
que pronto seremos consumidos
that soon we'll be consumed
por el paisaje,
by the landscape,

que lloverá sobre nosotros,
that it will rain upon us,
que una mano más o menos hermosa,
that a hand that's more or less lovely,

humana siempre,
always human,
no lanzará al polvo
will cast us into the dust
y que el polvo
and that the dust
hará lo mismo que la mano
will do the same as the hand

y que nadie vendrá a hablamos
and that no one shall come to speak to us
de sosiego, de labilidad,
of tranquility, of instability,
porque todo pasará tan rápido
because everything will happen as fast
como un canto de estrellas en el cielo.
as a song of the stars in the sky.

Returning (2014)

from *The wheel of time, the dance*

by Aaron Jay Kernsi (b 1960)

setting a poem by Wendell Berry

I was walking in a dark valley
and above me the tops of the hills
had caught the morning light.
I heard the light singing as it went
among the grass-blades and the leaves.

I waded upward through the shadow
until my head emerged,
my shoulders were mantled with the light,
and my whole body came up
out of the darkness, and stood
on the new shore of the day.

Where I had come was home,
for my own house stood white
where the dark river wore the earth.
The sheen of bounty was on the grass,
and the spring of the year had come.

and the swallow (2017)

by Caroline Shaw (b 1982)

setting verses from Psalm 84

how beloved
is your dwelling place,
o lord of hosts
my soul yearns
my heart and my flesh cry

the sparrow found a house
and the swallow her nest
where she may raise her young

they pass through the valley of bakka
they make it a place of springs
the autumn rains also cover it with pools

If we have wisdom (2021)

by Rex Isenberg (b 1987)

setting an excerpt from

"Letter of George Washington
to the Hebrew congregation of
Newport, Rhode Island" (1790)

If we have wisdom, we cannot fail
to become a great and happy people.
All alike possess liberty of conscience
and immunities of citizenship.
It is now no more
that toleration is spoken of
as if it was the indulgence
of one class of people.

For happily these United States,
which give to bigotry no sanction,
to persecution no assistance
require only that they
who live under its protection
demean themselves as good citizens.

And may the children
of the Stock of Abraham,
who dwell in this land,
continue to merit and enjoy
the good will of the other inhabitants;
while every one shall sit in safety
under his own vine and fig tree,
and there shall be none
to make him afraid.

And may the father of all mercies
scatter light and not darkness
on our paths,
and make us all useful here,
and in his own due time and way
everlastingly happy.

Tuttarana (2016)

by Reena Esmail (b 1983)

setting onomatopoeic rhythmic syllables,
with no use of specific words,
inspired by classical Hindustani music

THE YALE GLEE CLUB

Ye shall have a song (1936)

from *The peaceable kingdom*

by Randall Thompson (1899-1984)

setting Isaiah 30:29

Ye shall have a song,
as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept;
and gladness of heart,
as when one goeth with a pipe
to come into the mountain of the Lord.

**Ten piedad de nosotros y
escucha nuestra oración (2023)**
by Ismael Huerta Marin (b 1996)

Ten piedad de nosotros
Have mercy on us
y escucha nuestra oración.
and hear our prayer.

Lingua tonga (2023)
by Shruthi Rajasekar (b 1996)
setting the English word "tongue"
and the Hindi word "tonga"

Kaisa-isa niyan (2017)
by Nilo Alcala (b 1978)
setting the text from a children's
game chant from Maguindanao,
in the southern Philippines

Kaisa-isa niyan,
Just one,
Kaduwa-duwa niyan,
Then two,
Katelo-telo niyan,
Or three of that.
Kapati pingapatan,
Four are alternating.
Kalima ni tagedteb,
Five: too noisy, it's disturbing.
Kanem idagedeban,
Six: a sound so loud!
Kapito-pito naga,
Seven: a dragon.
Kawalo banubugan,
Eight: pounds heavily on a puddle.
Kasiyam kabankaban,
Nine: a box.
Kasapolo bindasan.
Ten: a drawer.

**Go down 'n the valley
and pray (2007)**
arranged by Andre Thomas (b 1952)

I feel the spirit movin'!
Don't you feel the spirit movin'?

Brother, didn't conscience come and tell
you to go down 'n the valley and pray?

Sister, didn't conscience come and tell
you to go down 'n the valley and pray?

God told Noah at the rainbow side.
Then the rain came.

Rain for forty days and forty nights
without stopping.

He is not ashamed
to honor my Lord.

He is not ashamed
to go down 'n the valley and pray

Don't you feel the spirit movin'?

Lao rahal soti (2020)
by Samih Choukeir (b 1957), arranged
by Shireen Abu-Khader (b 1972)

لو رحل صوتي ما بترحل حناجرکم
læw rahal sowti
If my voice departs,
mæ bʔɪrɪhæl hæɲæzɪrkum,
your throats will not,

عيوني على بكره وقلبي معكم
ʔayuni ʔala bukrah
I look unto tomorrow
waqalbi maʔkum.
and my heart is with you.

لو راح المغني بتظل الأغاني
læw rah ɪlmʊvanni
If the singer goes,
bitðal ɪʔævæni
the songs will remain

تجمع لقلوب المكسورة والبتعاني
tɪzmaʔ ɪlqɪʊb
bringing together broken
ɪlmæksura walbitʔæni.
and suffering hearts.

The increasing light (2012)
traditional Shaker melody,
arranged by Jeffrey Douma (b 1971)

The increasing light of truth,
like the morning's cheering beams
Will chase away the darkness
of the past.

All the waning forms of night
wrapped within its glowing light
Will fade before the radiance
that will last.

With joy now we behold
the promises fulfill'd
Which inspired the hope
of those who came before.

We reap where they have sown,
for the harvest fields have grown,
and the fruits of faith
and harmony restore.

Ashita wa hare kana (1992)
by Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996)
setting a poem by the composer,
translation by Ella Louise Rutledge

昨日の悲しみ
Kinono kanashimi,
Yesterday's sorrows
今日の涙
kyono namida,
today's tears
明日は晴れかな、
Ashita wa hare kana,
Will tomorrow, I wonder,
曇りかな
kumori kana
be cloudy or clear?

昨日の苦しみ
Kinono kurushimi,
Yesterday's troubles
今日の悩み
kyono nayami,
today's pain
明日は晴れかな、
Ashita wa hare kana,
Will tomorrow, I wonder,
曇りかな
kumori kana
be cloudy or clear?

Ah sunflower! (2000)
by Jonathan Dove (b 1959)
setting a poems by William Blake

Ah sunflower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the travellers journey is done.
Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my sunflower wishes to go.

Raise your voices here (2010)
by Jeffrey Douma (b 1971)

Time passes quickly here,
everything new.
Childhood behind us now,
fading from view.
Four years stretch out before you,
hope rushing in.
Just breathe in and close your eyes,
Time to begin.

Raise your voices here
for an evening.
Raise your voices here
for a time.
Raise your voices
and in the weaving,
Yours will lift
the sound of mine.

Time passes quickly still,
life richly drawn,
Wisdom of lessons learned,
youth nearly gone.
Our bright college years
endure as memories within
But always the song rings out:
once more begin.

Eli Yale

Traditional student song

Lyrics not available.

Football medley

arranged by Fenno Heath '50

Lyrics not available.

Bright college years

by Carl Wilhelm,

arranged by Robert Bonds '71

Bright College years, with pleasure rife,
The shortest, gladdest years of life;
How swiftly are ye gliding by!
Oh, why doth time so quickly fly?
The seasons come, the seasons go,
The earth is green or white with snow,
But time and change shall naught avail
To break the friendships formed at Yale.

In after years, should troubles rise
To cloud the blue of sunny skies,
How bright will seem, through memory's haze
Those happy, golden, bygone days!
Oh, let us strive that ever we
May let these words our watch-cry be,
Where'er upon life's sea we sail:
"For God, for Country and for Yale!"

COMBINED CHORUS

If I were a swan (2012)

by Kevin Puts (b 1972)

setting a poem by Fleda Brown

If I were a swan
I would ride high
above my own white
weight. I would ride
through the lightening
of the earth
and the darkening,
stillness and turbulence
coming on in the core
of me, and spreading
to the hard rain,
to the dazzle.

Leaves would turn, but I
would keep my eyes
in my head, watching
for grasses. This
is what I would know
deeply: the feathering
of my bones
against the bank.

For the rest,
I would be the easiest
wave, loving just enough
for nature's sake.
The world would move under me
and I would always be exactly
where I am, dragonflies
angling around my head.

Under the black mask
of my face, I would think
swan, swan,
which would be nothing
but a riding, a hunger,
a ruffle more pointed
than wind and waves,
and a hot-orange
beak like an arrow.

Voices (2009)

by Eric Banks (b 1969)

**setting a poem by Constantine Cavafy,
translated by the composer**

Ιδανικές φωνές κι αγαπημένες
'ιδανikes fones, ki 'agapimenes,
Voices, beloved and perfect,

Εκείνων που πεθάναν, ή εκείνων που είναι
'ekinon pu pethanan, 'i 'ekinon pu 'ine
Of those who are now gone,

Για μας χαμένοι σαν τους πεθαμένους.
'ja mas 'hameni, san tus pethamenus;
Or of those who are now lost to us, like the departed;

Κάποτε μες στα όνειρά μας ομιλούνε·
kapote mes sta 'onira, mas 'omilune,
Sometimes they speak to us when we are dreaming,

Κάποτε μες στην σκέψι τες ακούει το μυαλό.
kapote mes stin skepsi, tes 'akui to mialo;
Sometimes we notice them while we are thinking;

Και με τον ήχο των για μια στιγμή επιστρέφουν
ke me ton 'i'ho ton, 'ja m'ja sti'gmi, 'epistrefun,
And after they return, even if only for a moment,

Ήχοι από την πρώτη ποίησι της ζωής μας
'hi, 'apo tin proti piisi tis zois mas,
They resound, like the first poetry of our lives,

Σα μουσική, την νύχτα, μακρυνή, που σβύνει.
sa musiki, tin ni'hta, makrini, pu zvini.
Then they recede, like distant music, into the night.

UPCOMING ESOTERICA

Please join us for
the rest of this season!

SPLENDOR & SOLACE

A rare glimpse into our
pristine surroundings

An immersive, surround-sound
concert experience for triple
chorus and chamber orchestra,
featuring *Anges nus* by French
composer Philippe Bodin, and
Eric Banks' *To have been there
before*, setting texts by John Muir.

18 May 2024

Plymouth Church | Seattle

19 May 2024

Plymouth Church | Seattle

ORBIT & ORACLE

A reimagining of ancient
astronomical legends

A concert-length performance of
the cycle *Planets and gods*, as well
as other works based on objects
in our Solar system by German
composer Michael Ostrzyga.

19 October 2024

Plymouth Church | Seattle

20 October 2024

Christ Episcopal Church | Tacoma

CHAKRA & CHIME

A choral meditation from
the Pacific Crest Trail

The Pacific Northwest premiere of
the *From wilderness*, a journey of
transformation for chorus, cello,
and Tibetan singing bowls by Los
Angeles composer Jeffrey Derus.

14 December 2024

Plymouth Church | Seattle

15 December 2024

Christ Episcopal Church | Tacoma

THE ESOTERICS

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The Esoterics' continued success as an arts organization is directly related to you and your generosity. If you are committed to the future of the choral art, then please consider supporting The Esoterics: invite friends to our performances, or make a tax-deductible contribution to the group. Thank you!

If you would like to receive information about future concerts, or are interested in volunteering, please contact us:

The Esoterics | 1815 24th Avenue
Seattle WA 98122-3014 | 206.551.1379
info@TheEsoterics.org

The Esoterics would like to acknowledge our generous rehearsal and concert venues, as well as their staff, for their contributions to The Esoterics' success this year:

Pastor Annie Grogan, Mary Palmer, and Cheri Bowles at Queen Anne Christian Church in Seattle
Reverend Maria Gwyn McDowell, Deborah Brenemen, and Paul Tegels at Christ Episcopal Church in Tacoma
Reverend Kelle Brown, Toni Arthur, and Diane Jacobsen at Plymouth United Church of Christ in Seattle

The Esoterics' 31st concert season was sponsored by generous support from:

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THANK YOU

The financial contributions of those listed below have been instrumental to the success of The Esoterics in the last year.
To all of you who have given so generously, The Esoterics extends its warmest thanks.

Benefactors (\$5000 and above)

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