GMChorale ~ Joseph D'Eugenio, Artistic Director and Conductor

Alchemy Vocal Chamber Ensemble

Elm City Girls' Choir, Saecula Singers ~ Thomas Brand and Rebecca Rosenbaum, Music Directors

Harmonia Chamber Orchestra

Dann Coakwell, tenor

PRESENT

Splendor, Caritas, Nox

Elaine Hagenberg

Movements 1-3 from "Illuminare"

Sing On!

Thomas Brand

World premiere, commissioned in honor of GMChorale's 50th season
in loving memory of Barbara L. Budd

Saint Nicolas, Op. 42

Benjamin Britten

Cantata for tenor solo, chorus, and orchestra

Sunday - November 15, 2026 - 4:00pm

Santo Fragilio Performing Arts Center at Middletown High School, Middletown, CT

Please silence all devices and refrain from texting or taking photos during the concert.
There will be a 15-minute intermission at the conclusion of Sing On!

1977 • 2027

A Welcome from the Artistic Director …

It is with great pleasure and honor that I welcome you to GMChorale's 50th anniversary season!

This afternoon's program includes the premiere of Tom Brand's new choral work, ***Sing On!*** This piece was commissioned for today's performance to celebrate the Chorale as a choral arts organization that includes more than 100 active choral members, Alchemy Vocal Chamber Ensemble, and Harmonia Chamber Orchestra. We are very proud to partner with the dynamic Elm City Girls' Choir and Saecula Singers, along with their directors, Tom Brand and Rebecca Rosenbaum.

The music of both Britten and Brand is scored for mixed chorus, treble chorus, soloists, and chamber orchestra. Due to our longstanding collaborations with ECGC and Saecula Singers, we are proud to present these complex scores that call upon multiple ensembles to execute their thematic and theatrical elements.

When I ponder the Chorale and the music we sing, I cannot help but think about the centuries-old choral tradition itself, its historic continuum and grand sweeping arc. Relatively speaking, the small but important contributions we make to the tradition loom large in our everyday lives, motivating us to challenge ourselves, to confidently enter the realm of creative chaos, and mix our musical hopes and aspirations with our own special brand of music making. Individual lives transform in the wake of great music, our community evolves, a place is provided for everyone, and vision remains paramount to keep moving forward into the future.

The Chorale continues to be inspired and compelled to do more, plan more, connect more, and sing more so as to deepen our personal and communal experiences alongside each other. As a human race, we need and yearn for community, music, and song! It is literally in our DNA.

The choral arts act as a window into our souls and how we as global citizens relate and tenderly interact with one another. Music is our universal language. It is a force, an energy, a vibration, created and guided by the gods of musical invention which include giant figures such as Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Britten, and… Brand!

There is a collective story behind every concert produced over these past fifty years, a story treasured by each individual who participated in them, and a new chance each and every season to invite others to sing, to listen, and witness the miracle of music in action; the miracle of GMChorale with each person involved ready to help author the next part of our shared chorale story.

So, please join us this season as we keep creating, singing, loving, caring, and enjoying the choral arts we have been gifted with each other and our community. Let's continue to "sing for a lifetime," and reap the benefits of songs well sung, and hearts filled with warmth and fulfillment.

We are grateful for your steadfast support and value everyone whose lives are enriched by our earnest efforts and what we love to do most together: Sing!!

Enjoy the concert!

Joe D'Eugenio
Artistic Director/Executive Director
GMChorale

Concert Program

Illuminare ~ Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979)

1. Splendor

2. Caritas

3. Nox

Sing On! ~ Thomas Brand (b. 1973)

World premiere performance in honor of GMChorale's 50th season
in loving memory of Barbara L. Budd

PART I: EARTHLY VOICES

I. Theme, "Source of Life" and Overture
II. Chorale Fantasia: "Humanity"
III. Ricercar and Fugue: "Solitude"
IV. Lyrical Meditation: "The Individual"
V. Quodlibet: "Nature"

PART II: TRANSCENDENT VOICES

VI. Prelude: "Wisdom"
Bridget Nixon soloist
VII. Hymn: "Love"
VIII. Double Canon: "Time"
IX. March: "Eternity"
X. Finale: "Spirit"

Please hold applause until the conclusion of Sing On!

Intermission

Saint Nicolas, Op. 42 ~ Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)

Dann Coakwell, tenor

I. Introduction
II. The Birth of Nicolas
III. Nicolas Devotes Himself to God
IV. He Journeys to Palestine
V. Nicolas Comes to Myra and is chosen Bishop
VI. Nicolas from Prison
VII. Nicolas and the Pickled Boys
VIII. His Piety and Marvellous Works
IX. The Death of Nicolas

The audience is invited to stand and sing the two hymns (following Movement V, and during Movement IX);
Please hold applause until the conclusion of all movements.

Text & translations

Splendor ~ Elaine Hagenberg

(movement No. 1 from Illuminare)
Saint Ambrose (340-397) translation

Splendor paternae gloriae,
de luce lucem proferens,
lux lucis et fons luminis,
diem dies illuminans.

Splendor of God's glory,
brings forth light from light,
light of light, light's living spring,
Day, all days illuminates.

Caritas ~ Elaine Hagenberg

(movement No. 2 from Illuminare)
Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Caritas abundat in omnia,
de imis excellentissima
super sidera,
atque amantissima in omnia,
Quia summo regi
osculum pacis dedit.

Love abounds in all,
from the depths most excellent
to beyond the stars,
and loving toward all,
she has given the highest king
the kiss of peace.

Nox ~ Elaine Hagenberg

(movement No. 3 from Illuminare)
Kyrie from traditional Greek
Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348-413)

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.

Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy.

Nox et tenebrae et nubila,
confusa mundi et turbida
Caligo terrae scinditur
percussa solis spiculo

Night and darkness and fog,
confused world and turmoil
Earth's gloom torn apart,
struck by the sun's piercing ray.

Sing On! ~ Thomas Brand (b. 1973)

PART I: EARTHLY VOICES

Movement I. THEME, "SOURCE OF LIFE," and OVERTURE
Tom Brand, after Genesis 1:2

Upon the waters long ago
A gentle wind began to blow.
O Breath which hailed creation's dawn,
Sing on forevermore, sing on!
with Alleluia! and Alpha and Omega hailed the dawn

Text & translations

Movement II. CHORALE FANTASIA: "HUMANITY"
Isaac Watts (1674–1748), from Psalm 117, alt.

From all that dwell below the sky
May loud refrains be lifted high;
Let songs of peace and love be sung
Through every land, by every tongue.

Movement III. RICERCAR and FUGUE: "SOLITUDE"
William Wordsworth (1770–1850), from "The Solitary Reaper"

I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Movement IV. LYRICAL MEDITATION: "THE INDIVIDUAL"
Tom Brand; "How Can I Keep from Singing?," attr. "Pauline T." (1868), alt.

[MIXED CHORUS]
My life flows on in endless song,
Creation's hymn is loud and strong!
No storm can shake my inmost calm,
O echo in my soul, sing on!

[TREBLE CHORUS]
My life flows on in endless song
Above earth's lamentation;
I hear the real though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.
No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that rock I'm clinging;
It sounds an echo in my soul—
How can I keep from singing?

Movement V. QUODLIBET: "NATURE"
Tom Brand;
William Henry Draper (1855–1933), after St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1181–1226), alt.

[TREBLE CHORUS]
O moaning whale below the sea,
O croaking frog and buzzing bee,
O bird that greets the rising sun,
And wolf that woos the moon, sing on!

[MIXED CHORUS]
All creatures of the earth, now sing!
Lift up your voices, let them ring!
Sing for joy now! Alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,
O silver moon with softer gleam,
Sing for joy now! Alleluia!

Text & translations

PART II: TRANSCENDENT VOICES

Movement VI. PRELUDE: "WISDOM"
John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), from "The Brewing of Soma," alt.; Tom Brand

[CHORUS]
Drop Thy still dews of quietness
Till all our fears and strivings cease,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire;
Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy healing balm;
Sing on, O Still Small Voice of Calm.

[SEMICHORUS and SOLOISTS]
O Breath of Calm, O healing balm,
O gentle Breath of Calm.
Alpha and Omega.

[ARIA, TO REPTON]
Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O Still, Small Voice of Calm.
Sing on, O Voice of Calm.

Movement VII. HYMN: "LOVE"
Tom Brand, after Prudentius (348–c. 413), trans. J. M. Neale and H. W. Baker; Horatius Bonar (1808–1889), alt.

Love was born before the mountains;
Love was born before the sea;
Love is Alpha and Omega,
Rolling on eternally.
Seed of truth in all that ever has been
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore.

O wide-embracing song of love,
We hear Thee in the sky above;
We hear Thee in the earth below,
In seas that swell and streams that flow.

Movement VIII. DOUBLE CANON: "TIME"
Tom Brand

The song of time shall onward go,
As to the ocean rivers flow;
Likewise the sun shall rise each day,
Till time itself shall fade away.

Movement IX. MARCH: "ETERNITY"
F. R. Warren (1867), alt.; Tom Brand, after Shakespeare; African-American spiritual

Hark, I hear the harps eternal
Ringing on the farther shore,
As I near those swollen waters
With their deep and solemn roar;
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Harps eternal, O play on!
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Souls eternal, O sing on!
Souls o'er yonder, O sing on!

Play on, O harp, on the farther shore,
Play on, O harp, forevermore!
I hear the harps!
If music be the food of love,
Sing on forevermore, sing on!
For all eternity sing on!
Little David, play on your harp,
Hallelu, hallelu!

Movement X. FINALE: "SPIRIT"
Tom Brand, after Shakespeare; with lines from IV, VII, and IX

Sing on in endless realms above,
For music is the food of love,
And never from our hearts be gone—
Sing on forevermore, sing on

Saint Nicolas, Op. 42 ~ Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)

Text by Eric Crozier. [Libretto reprinted by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.]

Movement I: Introduction

[CHORUS]
Our eyes are blinded by the holiness you bear
The bishop's robe, the mitre and the cross of gold
obscure the simple man within the Saint.
Strip off your glory, Nicolas, Nicolas, and speak!

[CHORUS]
Help us, Lord, to find the hidden road
that leads from love to greater love
from faith to greater faith.
Strengthen us, O Lord!
Screw up our strength to serve Thee with simplicity

[NICOLAS]
Across the tremendous bridge of sixteen hundred years
I come to stand in worship with you as I stood
among my faithful congregation long ago
All who knelt beside me then are gone
Their name is dust, their tombs are grass and clay
yet still their shining seed of faith survives in you!
It weathers time, it springs again in you!

With you it stands like forest oak
or withers with the grasses underfoot
Preserve the living faith for which your fathers fought!
For faith was won by centuries of sacrifice
and many martyrs died that you might worship God.

Movement II: The Birth of Nicolas

[CHORUS]
Nicolas was born in answer to prayer
and leaping from his mother's womb he cried:

[NICOLAS]
God be glorified!

[CHORUS]
Swaddling-bands and crib awaited him there
but Nicolas clapped both his hands and cried:

[NICOLAS]
God be glorified!

[CHORUS]
Innocent and joyful, naked and fair
he came in pride on earth to abide

[NICOLAS]
God be glorified!

[CHORUS]
Water rippled Welcome in the bath-tub by his side
he dived in open-eyed, he swam, he cried:

[NICOLAS]
God be glorified!

[CHORUS]
When he went to church at Christmastide
he climbed up to the font to be baptized

[NICOLAS]
God be glorified!

[CHORUS]
Pilgrims came to kneel and pray by his side
he grew in grace, his name was sanctified

[NICOLAS]
God be glorified!

[CHORUS]
Nicolas grew in innocence and pride
His glory spread in rainbow round the countryside
"Nicolas will be a Saint!" the neighbours cried

[NICOLAS]
God be glorified!

Movement III: Nicolas Devotes Himself to God

[NICOLAS]
My parents died all too soon
I left the tranquil beauty of their home
and knew the wider world of man
Poor Man! I found him solitary, racked by doubt:
born, bred, doomed to die
in everlasting fear of everlasting death:
the foolish toy of time, the darling of decay –
hopeless, faithless, defying God
Heartsick, in hope to mask the twisted face of poverty
I sold my lands to feed the poor
I gave my goods to charity but love demanded more
Heartsick, I cast away
all things that could distract my mind
from full devotion to His will
I thrust my happiness behind but love desired more still
Heartsick, I called on God
to purge my angry soul
to be my only master, friend and guide
I begged for sweet humility and love was satisfied

Movement IV: He Journeys to Palestine

[CHORUS]

Nicolas sailed for Palestine
across the sunlit seas
The South West wind blew soft and fair
seagulls hovered through the air
and spices scented the breeze

Everyone felt that land was near:
all dangers now were past:
except for one who knelt in prayer
fingers clasped and head quite bare
alone by mizzen-mast
The sailors jeered at Nicolas
who paid them no regard
until the hour of sunset came
and up he stood and stopped their game
of staking coins on cards

Nicolas spoke and prophesied
a tempest far ahead
The sailors scorned such words of fear
since sky and stars shone bright and clear
so "Nonsense!" they all said
Darkness was soon on top of them
but still the South wind blew
The captain went below to sleep
and left the helmsman there to keep
his course with one of the crew

Nicolas swore he'd punish them
for mocking at the Lord
The wind arose, the thunder roared
lightning split the waves that poured
in wild cascades on board

Waterspouts rose in majesty
until the ship was tossed
abaft, aback, astern, abeam
lit by the lightning's livid gleam
and all aboard cried, "Lost!"

Lightning hisses through the night
blinding sight with living light!
Ah! "Spare us!" – "Man the pumps!"
"Axes!" — "Save us, Savior!"

Winds and tempests howl their cry
of battle through the raging sky!
Ah! "Spare us!" – "Lifeboats!"
"Lower away!" – "Save us, Savior!"

Waves repeat their angry roar
Fall and Spring again once more!
Ah! "Let her run before the wind!"
"Shorten sail!" – "Reef her!" "Heave her to!"

Thunder rends the sky asunder
with its savage shouts of wonder!
Ah! "Pray to God. Kneel and pray!"
Lightning, thunder, tempest, ocean
praise their God with voice and motion

Nicolas waited patiently
till they were on their knees
then down he knelt in thankfulness
begging God their ship to bless
and make the storm to cease

[NICOLAS]

"O God! We are all weak, sinful, foolish men
We pray from fear and from necessity at death
in sickness or private loss
Without the prick of fear our conscience
sleeps, forgetful of Thy grace

Help us, O God, to see more clearly
Tame our stubborn hearts
Teach us to ask for less and offer more gratitude to Thee
Pity our simplicity
for we are truly pitiable in Thy sight Amen"

The winds and waves lay down to rest
the sky was clear and calm
The ship sailed onward without harm
and all creation sang a psalm
of loving thankfulness

Beneath the stars the sailors slept
exhausted by their fear, while I
knelt down for love of God on high
and saw his angels in the sky
smile down at me, and wept

Movement V: Nicolas Comes to Myra and is chosen Bishop

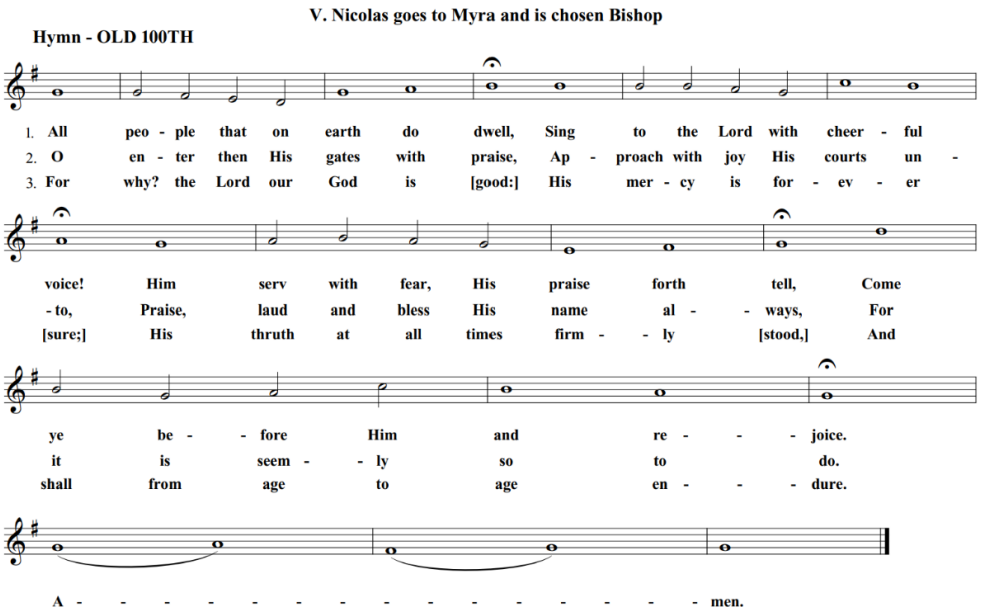
[CHORUS]
Come Stranger sent from God!
Come, man of God!
Stand foremost in our church
and serve this diocese as Bishop Nicolas
our shield, our strength, our peace!

[NICOLAS]
I, Nicolas, Bishop of Myra and its diocese
shall with the unfailing grace of God
defend his faithful servants
comfort the widow and fatherless
and fulfill his will for this most blessed church
Amen

[CHORUS]
Place the mitre on your head to show your mastery of men!
Amen
Take the golden robe that covers you with Christ's authority!
Amen
Wear the fine dalmatic woven with the cross of faith
Amen
Bear the crozier as a staff and comfort to your flock!
Amen
Set the ring upon your hand in sacramental sign of wedlock with thy God!
Amen
Serve the faith and spurn his enemies!

*Congregational hymn **"All people that on earth do dwell"** Words: William Kethe, 1561. Tune: Old Hundredth, Genevan Psalter, 1551. Public domain*

[AUDIENCE and CHORUS]



Movement VI: Nicolas from Prison

[NICOLAS]
Persecution sprang upon our church
and stilled its voice
Eight barren years it stifled under Roman rule:
And I lay bound
condemned to celebrate my lonely sacrament with prison bread
while wolves ran loose among my flock. O man!
The world is set for you as for a king!
Paradise is yours in loveliness
The stars shine down for you
for you the angels sing
yet you prefer your wilderness
You hug the rack of self
embrace the lash of sin
pour your treasures out to bribe distress
You build your temples fair without and foul within:
You cultivate your wilderness
Yet Christ is yours, yours!
For you he lived and died
God in mercy gave his Son
to bless you all, to bring you life
and Him you crucified
to desecrate your wilderness
Turn, turn away from sin! Ah!
Bow down your hard and stubborn hearts!
Confess, confess yourselves to Him in penitence
and humbly vow your lives to Him, to holiness

Text & translations

Movement VII: Nicolas and the Pickled Boys

[CHORUS]

Famine tracks us down the lanes
hunger holds our horses' reins
winter heaps the roads with snow
O we have far to go!

Starving beggars howl their cry
snarl to see us spurring by
times are bad and travel slow
O we have far to go!

We mourn our boys, our missing ones!
We sorrow for three little ones!
Timothy, Mark and John are gone, are gone!

Landlord, take this piece of gold!
Bring us food before the cold
makes our pangs of hunger grow
O we have far to go!

Day by day we seek to find
some trace of them but oh! Unkind!
Timothy, Mark and John are gone, are gone!

Let us share this dish of meat
Come, my friends, sit down and eat!
Join us, Bishop, for we know
that you have far to go!

Mary meek and Mother mild
who lost thy Jesus as a child
our Timothy, Mark and John are gone, are gone!

Come, your Grace, don't eat so slow!
Take some meat!

[NICOLAS]

O do not taste! O do not feed on sin!
But haste to save three souls in need!

The mothers' cry is sad and weak
within these walls they lie
whom mothers sadly seek

Timothy, Mark and John
put your fleshly garments on!
Come from dark oblivion! Come!

[CHORUS]

See! Three boys spring back to life
who, slaughtered by the butcher's knife
lay salted down!
And entering, hand in hand they stand and sing
"Alleluia" to their King!

Movement VIII: His Piety and Marvellous Works

[CHORUS]
For forty years our Nicolas
our prince of men, our shepherd
and our gentle guide walked by our side

We turned to him at birth and death
in time of famine and distress
in all our grief to bring relief

He led us from the valleys
to the pleasant hills of grace
He fought to fold us in from mortal sin
O! He was prodigal of love!

A spendthrift in devotion to us all
and blessed as he caressed
We keep his memory alive
in legends that our children
and their children's children treasure still

A captive at the heathen court
wept sorely all alone
"O Nicolas is here, my son!
And he will bring you home!"

"Fill, fill my sack with corn!" he said
"We die from lack of food!"
And from that single sack he fed
a hungry multitude

Three daughters of a nobleman
were doomed to shameful sin
till our good Bishop ransomed them
by throwing purses in

The gates were barred, the black flag flew
three men knelt by the block
But Nicolas burst in like flame
and stayed the axe's shock

"O help us, good Nicolas!
Our ship is full of foam!"
He walked across the waves to them
and led them safely home

He sat among the bishops
who were summoned to Nicaea:
then rising with the wrath of God
boxed Arius's ear!

He threatened Constantine the Great
with bell and book and ban:
till Constantine confessed his sins
like any common man

Let the legends that we tell
praise him, with our prayers as well
We keep his memory alive
in legends that our children
and their children's children treasure still

Movement IX: The Death of Nicolas

[NICOLAS]

Death, I hear thy summons and I come
in haste, for my short life is done
And o! my soul is faint with love
for Him who waits for me above

Lord, I come to life, to final birth
I leave the misery of earth
for light, by Thy eternal grace
where I shall greet Thee face to face

Christ, receive my soul with tenderness
for in my last of life I bless
Thy name who lived and died for me
and dying, dying yield my soul to Thee.

[CHORUS]

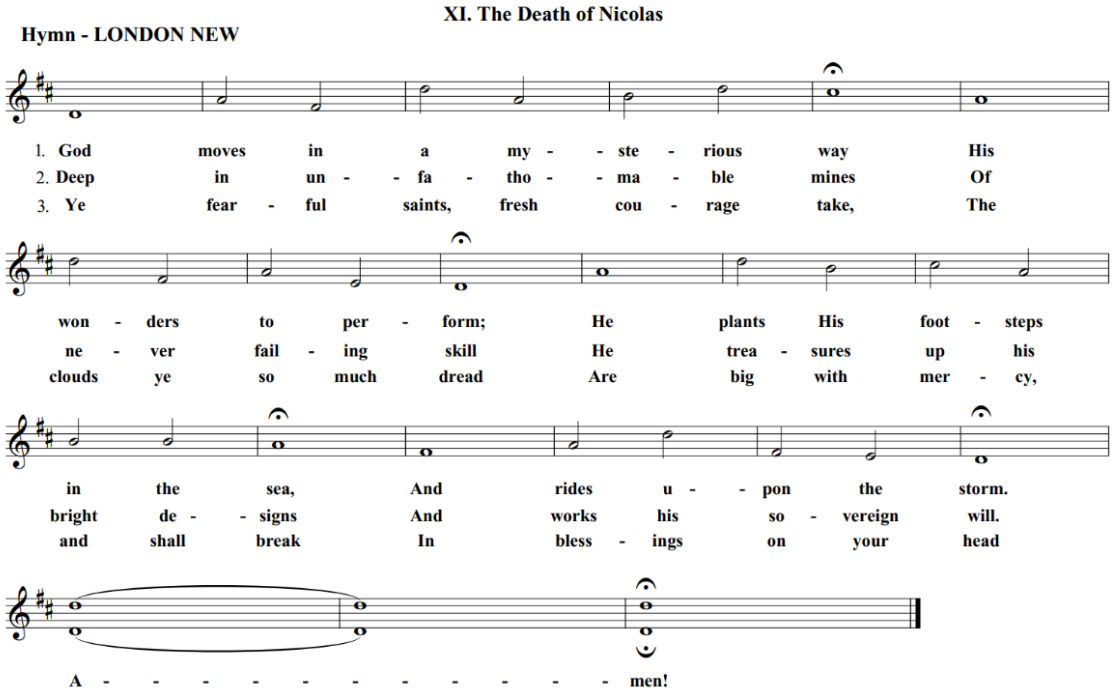
Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant
depart in peace, according to Thy word
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation
which Thou hast prepared
before the face of all people
to be a light to lighten the gentiles
and to be the glory of Thy people Israel

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning
is now and ever shall be world without end
Amen

Congregational hymn: ***"God moves in a mysterious way"*** *Words: William Cowper, 1774. Tune: London New, Scottish Psalter, 1635. Public domain*

[CHORUS]
God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants His footsteps in the sea
and rides upon the storm

[AUDIENCE and CHORUS **(Verses 2 and 3)**]



Program Notes

Welcome to GMChorale's 50th Anniversary Season!

Illuminare: Elaine Hagenberg, winner of the 2020 ACDA Brock Competition for Professional Composers, is known for her flowing melodies, rich in harmony. Her five-movement Illuminare burst upon the world of choral music in 2021 and quickly won the hearts of performers and audiences across five continents. GMChorale's mixed chorus and chamber orchestra (Harmonia) are thrilled to perform the first three movements.

"Splendor" erupts with a startling stroke on the timpani and an energetic surge by the strings, giving way to the chorus's declaration of "Splendor paternae gloriae." Borrowing verses from 4th-century Saint Ambrose, this movement rejoices in the splendor of God's glory, bringing forth light from light.

The second movement, "Caritas," begins with a sweet violin solo that threads its way through the movement, alternating with the chorus. Gentle melodies caress the listener, delivering the message that "love abounds in all," as expressed by Hildegard von Bingen, a 12th-century abbess and scholar.

In "Nox," sopranos and altos lull the listener with plaintive expressions of "Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison," before the timpani raise the alarm that night (Nox) and darkness have arrived, bringing confusion and turmoil in their wake. Be prepared for the basses and tenors to get the last word with one deeply intoned "Nox," following a full measure of silence.

SING ON! GMChorale, Saecula Singers, Elm City Girls' Choir and Harmonia perform today the world premiere of Thomas Brand's Sing On! This cantata for mixed chorus, treble chorus, soloists, and chamber orchestra was commissioned by GMChorale in celebration of the Chorale's 50th Season. It captures the exuberant spirit of the organization, its commitment to intergenerational collaboration, and its appreciation for the passion with which its choristers, directors, and audiences engage in the choral arts.

Thomas Brand, choral composer, arranger, and conductor, is a long-time artistic collaborator with GMChorale. Along with Rebecca Rosenbaum, Brand directs Elm City Girls' Choir and Saecula Singers, who have appeared regularly in GMChorale concerts in recent years.

In 10 short movements, Sing On! develops variations on Thomas Tallis' famous mid-16th-century canon setting of Psalm 67. These variations are intertwined with Brand's original themes and well-known European and American melodies. Be listening to hear strains of the 17th-century German hymn, "Lasst uns erfreuen," the medieval plainchant hymn "Divinum Mysterium," the shape-note song "Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal," the African-American spiritual, "Little David, Play on Your Harp," and "How Can I Keep from Singing," popularized in a folk version by Pete Seeger.

Sing On! is a celebration of the power of song to express facets of the human experience, including love, solitude, wisdom, nature, time, spirituality, life, and death. The work's through-line is the mantra "Sing On," echoing the Chorale's guiding principle of "Singing for a Lifetime."

SAINT NICOLAS, Op. 42. Originally written for the 1948 centenary celebrations of Lancing College in Sussex, England, Benjamin Britten's Saint Nicolas cantata (text by Eric Crozier) has delighted audiences around the world for nearly 80 years. It pairs beautifully today with Brand's Sing On!, as it, too, is scored for mixed chorus, treble chorus, soloists, and chamber orchestra. Its inclusion of two hymns for the audience/congregation is an apt tie-in to the Chorale's recognition of the community's ongoing engagement in choral music and is reflective of the Chorale's philosophy of "Singing for a Lifetime."

Program Notes

Combining truth with legend, Saint Nicolas dramatically recounts the life of the beloved 4th-century bishop. Crozier's bold portrait of Nicolas is enhanced by Britten's striking contrasts in instrumentation, vocal style, and musical textures.

In the introductory movement, we hear the footsteps of Nicolas through the steady 1-2 beat on the timpani, while images of his spirit are evoked by ethereal wanderings on the violin line. The chorus is "blinded by the holiness" of the saint and implores him to speak. And he does, as the tenor soloist exhorts all to carry on the good works of those who came before.

In "The Birth of Nicolas," the treble chorus sings stories of Nicolas's birth and early life, in a lively 3/8 meter, reminiscent of a Viennese waltz. Each verse is punctuated by the child Nicolas announcing, "God be Glorified!" By the final verse, Nicolas has grown to manhood and the tenor enters to declare, "God be Glorified!"

In "Nicolas Devotes Himself to God," Nicolas encounters the suffering of the outside world following the death of his parents. His tortured search for a way to serve God is depicted in a meandering melody with ever-increasing dissonant harmonies, until Nicolas realizes that seeking "sweet humility" is the key.

"He Journeys to Palestine" is a description that understates the drama of this immensely exciting movement. One has only to glance at the score to see the rolling waves of the sea vividly depicted in the broken chords, undulating across page after page. Tenors and Basses tell the tale of a harrowing storm at sea. Interjections from the treble chorus intensify the sense of panic. As the sailors kneel to pray, Nicolas joins them, with prayers not only for safety but for the wisdom to be grateful. The storm abates, and we can imagine the sun glinting on calm waters as the tinkling keys of the piano bring this movement to a close.

"Nicolas Comes to Myra and is Chosen Bishop" triumphantly tells the story of Nicolas's installation as bishop, complete with conferral of mitre, robe, dalmatic, crozier, and ring. Britten made a decision, bold for the 20th century, to end the ceremony with a fugue ("serve the faith, and spurn his enemies") which leads seamlessly into the congregational hymn "All People that on Earth Do Dwell."

"Nicolas from Prison" finds our saintly hero a victim of persecution of the church under Roman rule. From his prison cell he despairs as mankind chooses wilderness over paradise. This movement features some of Eric Crozier's most evocative imagery – namely, hug the rack of self, embrace the lash of sin, build temples fair without and foul within.

For a change of pace, we have the fable of "Nicolas and the Pickled Boys." This movement is "pickled" with variety: the main chorus sings a jaunty, though also haunting, melody as they portray travelers seeking a place to eat amid a cold, inhospitable countryside. The treble chorus sings the lament of mothers whose children have gone missing. All, including Nicolas, converge at the inn where the missing boys have been slain and pickled. Nicolas restores the boys to life, leading to one of the most stirring scenes in the cantata, as the boys enter the space holding hands and singing a lilting Alleluia refrain, which is then picked up by the treble chorus, and ultimately by the mixed chorus.

In "His Piety and Marvellous Works," seven semi-choruses take turns relating some of Nicolas's great works, such as saving them from prison, famine, a life of prostitution, execution, shipwreck and oppression, culminating in a cascading canon of "Let the legends that we tell, praise him, with our prayers as well."

Program Notes

As Nicolas sings of his approaching death with eagerness and acceptance in "The Death of Nicolas," the chorus solemnly intones the Nunc dimittis (Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace…), followed by the Doxology ("Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost…"). To end the cantata, the audience again joins with the chorus to sing the moving congregational hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way His Wonders to Perform," with a message to take courage and be assured of the blessing of mercy.

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Amy Eisen, *Operations Associate*
Rachel Abrams, *Marketing Associate*
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Lorie Martin, *Alchemy Manager*

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Harmonia Chamber Orchestra

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Christa Berezowskyj
Michael Duffett

Violin 2
Stephanie Ruddy
Jorhendi Esquivel

Viola
Devon Duarte
Kyle Davis

Cello
Jacob Nordlinger
Adam Willson

Bass
Scott Chaurette

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Olav van Hezewijk

Organ
James Barry

Piano
Eric Trudel
Blake Hansen

Percussion
Patrick Smith
Tim Keane

GMChorale

GMChorale strives to share the transformative power of choral music by fostering participation, education, and appreciation across all ages, enriching lives and building community through song.

Founded in 1977 as The Greater Middletown Chorale, GMChorale has evolved into one of New England's most respected and engaging classical choruses. The Chorale is celebrated for its compelling programming, stirring symphonic choral concerts, and collaborations with leading orchestras including New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Hartford Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra New England. Under the artistic leadership of Joseph D'Eugenio since 1998, GMChorale is now a choral arts organization consisting of a 90-member ensemble, Alchemy Vocal Chamber Ensemble, and Harmonia Chamber Orchestra. The Chorale performs a rich, diverse repertoire, ranging from beloved masterworks to newly commissioned works that reflect the vitality and relevance of choral music today.

Recent concerts have featured masterworks from the Baroque Era through the Romantic, including Handel's Te Deum, Bach's Cantata No. 4 (Christ lag in Todesbanden), Mozart's Requiem, Haydn's The Creation and Mass in Time of War, Beethoven's Choral Fantasy, Schubert's Mass in E flat major, and Brahms' Ein deutsches Requiem, as well as his complete Liebeslieder Waltzes. Verdi's monumental Messa da Requiem caps the Chorale's 50th Anniversary Season.

Joseph D'Eugenio (Artistic Director/Executive Director) is a passionate and versatile conductor, educator, pianist, and organist who has been producing music for audiences across Southern New England for more than three decades. He has been Artistic and Executive Director of GMChorale Choral Arts Organization since 1998. Under his leadership, the chorale is recognized as one of New England's finest choruses, awarded and celebrated for its creative choral presentations, commissioned works, and dynamic collaborations. D'Eugenio frequently conducts a broad range of choral music and choral-orchestral masterworks with leading ensembles including GMChorale, Alchemy, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Hartford Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestra New England. In demand as a guest conductor, D'Eugenio leads choral workshops and festivals, and often conducts choral groups in high schools, colleges, and universities across Connecticut. As Director of Music and organist at The First Congregational Church in Cheshire, Connecticut, D'Eugenio directs the church's vibrant music program and chancel choir. He earned the Bachelor of Music (cum laude) in piano performance from The Hartt School of Music, University of Hartford, and the Master of Music in choral conducting from the University of Connecticut.

Marcia Killian (Operations Manager) joined the GMChorale in January of 2025. She earned her BA in Mathematics/Computer Science from Providence College and an MBA from Quinnipiac University. Since 2014, Marcia has been the owner of The Foundry Music Company, a small independent sheet music shop that was located in the Audubon Arts district of New Haven from 1975 until its closure in November of 2020. While Foundry Music no longer has a brick-and-mortar presence, it continues to operate online, and serves choirs and individual musicians from all over the country. Marcia has worked with GMChorale for over 10 years, sourcing music for its performances and attending concerts as an enthusiastic fan.

Alchemy, the vocal chamber ensemble of The Greater Middletown Chorale, was established in 2016 as a company of musicians comprised of professional and avocational singers, professional soloists, and music educators. Alchemy's mission is to advance and support GMChorale's mission of "Singing for a Lifetime" through performances and collaborations (most often with university, high school, and youth choirs), musical mentorship, education, and community engagement. Alchemy is often featured on noted concert series, and has had the distinct honor of performing for the Connecticut Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. Led by founding Artistic Director Joseph D'Eugenio, the ensemble, known for its ability to adapt its sound to a broad variety of repertoire, took the name "Alchemy" in recognition of the ancient, mystical art of creating gold through a process of transformation and refinement.

Harmonia Chamber Orchestra, the string chamber ensemble of GMChorale, was founded in 2020 during the quiet of the pandemic and takes its name from the Greek goddess of harmony and concord. Formed as a flexible core of musicians, the ensemble adapts in size to meet the needs of GMChorale's diverse repertoire, performing both as collaborator with the Chorale and as an independent chamber group. Harmonia made its debut in November 2021 in GMChorale's fall mainstage production and continues to bring depth, color, and artistry to the ensemble's performances.

Eric Trudel (Accompanist) is a native of Quebec City, Canada, and received his primary training at the Conservatoire du Quebec, where he graduated with the highest honors in piano, harmony, counterpoint, fugue, and musical analysis. Upon graduating he entered and became the sole winner of the Prix d'Europe Competition. He subsequently perfected his skills in conducting and chamber music in Vienna. His teaching appointments include Yale School of Music, Western Connecticut State University, the Hartt School of Music, Southern Connecticut State University, and Showa University (Japan). He is the Director of Music at Congregation Mishkan Israel (Hamden, CT) and First Congregational Church (Watertown, CT), and spends his summers teaching and performing at the American Institute of Music Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria. Eric has been a practitioner of the Alexander Technique for the past twenty years, and credits his teacher Rachel Bernsen with life-changing discoveries.

Featured Artists

Dann Coakwell (tenor) has performed as a soloist across Europe, Japan, and throughout the Americas, under renowned conductors such as Helmuth Rilling, Masaaki Suzuki, Monica Huggett, William Christie, María Guinand, Nicholas McGegan, Matthew Halls, and Craig Hella Johnson. He can be heard as a soloist on the Grammy-winning album *The Sacred Spirit of Russia* (Harmonia Mundi 2014), as well as in multiple other Grammy-nominated and critically acclaimed albums, recent examples of which include *Mendelssohn and Bach: Matthäus-passion* (Analekta 2024), *James Richman and Dallas Bach Society: Messiah (1741 Original Version)* (Onyx Classics 2024), *Bruhns: Cantatas and Organ Works, Vol. 1* (BIS 2022), led by Masaaki Suzuki, and *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Harmonia Mundi 2016).

Dr. Coakwell has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully and David Geffen halls, as well as other prominent New York venues such as Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue and Trinity Church Wall Street. He has appeared as a soloist with organizations such as Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart in Germany, Bach Collegium Japan, Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela, Pacific Baroque Orchestra in Canada, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra in San Francisco, Oregon Bach Festival, Portland Baroque Orchestra and Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Dallas Bach Society, Conspirare, and the symphony/philharmonic orchestras of Orlando, Charlotte, Nashville, Indianapolis, Quad Cities, and Kansas City.

Specializing in the Evangelist and tenor roles of J.S. Bach, Coakwell has performed numerous productions of all of Bach's major oratorios — *St. Matthew Passion, St. John Passion, Christmas Oratorio*, and *Mass in B-Minor* — as well as many of Bach's cantatas. Also an enthusiast of Benjamin Britten, Coakwell has appeared in multiple productions of Britten's Canticles, *Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings*, and *St. Nicolas*. Among the most prominent solo and titular roles of other frequently performed composers include: Handel's *Samson*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Israel in Egypt*,

GMChorale & Featured Artists

Alexander's Feast, and *Messiah;* Haydn's *Creation*; Mozart's *Requiem* and *Mass in c* (Levin and Süssmayr completions); Mendelssohn's *Elijah*; and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*.

Dr. Coakwell served for more than two and a half decades as an educator at institutions that have included Yale, Cornell, Ithaca College, and Colgate University, and he has appeared around the US and internationally as a guest teaching artist. He holds an Artist Diploma in Vocal Performance from Yale University, a DMA and MM from Texas Tech University, and a BM from the University of Texas at Austin. https://danncoakwell.com

Thomas Brand (composer, Sing On!) is Artistic Director of Saecula Choir Foundation and United Choir School and serves as Music Director of St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington, CT. After receiving early training in New Haven's Trinity Boys Choir under Walden Moore and in the American Boychoir under James Litton, Tom studied choral conducting at Yale with Marguerite Brooks.

Rebecca Rosenbaum has conducted various ensembles of Elm City Girls' Choir, Saecula Singers, and United Girls' Choir, and also served as Director of Choral Activities at Vassar College, where she taught classes and conducted the Vassar Women's Choir. She also has taught at Yale University and Bay Path College, and has appeared as guest conductor and clinician for several regional choral festivals and music programs throughout the country. Rebecca earned a BA in music from Vassar College and her MM and DMA in choral conducting at Yale University.

Elm City Girls' Choir (ECGC) has earned a reputation as one of America's finest youth choirs. Founded in 1993, ECGC is an elite program, which provides unique performance opportunities and conservatory-level training in vocal technique, musicianship, and conducting for choristers of prodigious talent. ECGC has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Walt Disney World, and has recorded with artists including Yale Schola Cantorum, The Whiffenpoofs of Yale, Peter Eldridge, and the New Haven Symphony Orchestra. The group has appeared on live national television with Diana Ross and has completed concert tours of Italy, England, Canada, Mexico, and China.

Saecula Singers is a Connecticut-based all-gender youth choir that aims to cultivate leadership, musical literacy, and a conductor's mindset in every chorister. It is a program of Saecula Choir Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working to establish North America's first pre-college conservatory for choral conducting. Learn more: saecula.org

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GMChorale would like to thank Pastor Cheryl Larsen Lawing and the staff at Bethany Lutheran Church in Cromwell for providing their space as our musical home.

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