



**2024**

# **Concert for Youth**

Study Guide



## **About the Choir**

### **Mission**

VOX Femina Los Angeles gives women voice through the performance of quality choral literature. Diverse in culture, age, race, belief and sexual identity, we are a chorus committed to commissioning new works and raising awareness about issues that affect us as a family of women. Through music, we aim to create a world that affirms the worth and dignity of every person.

### **Biography**

Founded in January 1997, VOX Femina Los Angeles gives women voice through the performance of quality choral literature. Diverse in culture, age, race, belief, and sexual identity, we are dedicated to commissioning new works and raising awareness about issues that affect us as a family of women. Through our music, we seek to create a world which affirms the worth and dignity of every person.

Since our debut, VOX has performed a catalogue of music exemplifying diverse musical styles and repertoire. In keeping with our mission, VOX has commissioned over 50 new works for women's voices, and collaborated with over 35 contemporary composers. In addition to our season schedule, VOX has been active in community outreach, performing and participating in over 200 community events and collaborating with other arts organizations such as the LA Philharmonic, LA Master Chorale, Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, Trans Chorus of Los Angeles, and VOX Dance Theatre.

VOX Femina Los Angeles is honored to have received grants from the California Arts Council; the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs; the City of West Hollywood; the City of Culver City; the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture; the National Endowment for the Arts; AIDS Healthcare Foundation; the David Bohnett Foundation; California Community Foundation – Brody Arts Fund; the Colburn Foundation; the Confidence Foundation; the Ella Fitzgerald Foundation; GALA Choruses; the James Irvine Foundation; The Music Man Foundation; Open Meadows Foundation; the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation; and Pasadena Showcase for the Arts.

## Founding Artistic Director



Nationally recognized for her excellence in choral conducting, **Dr. Iris S. Levine** is founder and artistic director of VOX Femina, L.A.'s premier women's chorus. Through her extensive experience with women's choral literature, and innovative concert programming, Dr. Levine has charted VOX Femina on an impressive journey, building its prominence in the choral community by way of numerous appearances at ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) conventions and Chorus America conferences, and over 300 appearances throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Dr. Levine is faculty emerita at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona where she recently completed her service as the Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Dr. Levine previously served as Dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences, Interim Dean of the College of Education and Integrative Studies, and Department Chair and Professor of Music at Cal Poly Pomona. As faculty, she conducted the Kellogg Chamber Singers, taught Beginning Conducting, Choral Conducting and Music Education courses. Dr. Levine earned her Doctorate in Choral Music from the University of Southern California under the tutelage of Rod Eichenberger and James Vail, and she holds a Master's degree in Choral Conducting from Temple University in Philadelphia, where she studied with Alan Harler.

Dr. Levine is an active member of ACDA where she has served the organization in many leadership roles, including state, regional, and national R&S chairs for Women's Choruses. She has presented at numerous regional and national conferences. Dr. Levine is highly sought as guest clinician and adjudicator for choral festivals throughout the country.

## Associate Conductor



**Lori Marie Rios** is a highly accomplished conductor, soprano soloist, educator, adjudicator, clinician, and voice teacher. She currently serves as Professor of Music at College of the Canyons, in Valencia where she directs the Chamber Singers and Voices of the Canyons, teaches voice, and administrates the applied music program. She is also currently an adjunct faculty member at California State University, Fullerton, where she is a mentor teacher in the music education department. Prior to her appointment at COC, she directed the choral program at La Cañada High School/Middle School for 8 years and taught K-8 classroom and choral music.

Prof. Rios has presented workshops for CCDCA, Nevada Choral Directors Association, Rocky Mountain Choral Festival, conducted various Regional and All State honor choirs. She served as the Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Bach Festival and is a past president of the California ACDA, where she currently serves on the Regional and National Steering Committees for the association.

As a Soprano, Ms. Rios made her Walt Disney Concert Hall debut in 2008 as a soloist in the Mozart Requiem under the baton of Grant Gershon. She holds a Master of Music degree in conducting and vocal performance from the University of Nevada, Reno, where her master teachers were Dr. Bruce Mayhall-Rastrelli and Prof. Don Brinegar, and a Bachelor of Music in choral studies/vocal performance from CSULA.

## Facts about choral music:

### **What is a chorus?**

A chorus or choir is a musical ensemble of singers. Choruses may perform music from the classical music repertoire, which spans from the medieval era to the present, or popular music repertoire. Most choruses are led by a conductor, who leads the performances with arm and face gestures. Most often choruses consist of four sections intended to sing in four-part harmony.



### **What are the different singing parts of a mixed voice chorus vs. a women's chorus?**

A "mixed chorus" (with male and female voices) is perhaps the most common type, usually consisting of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices, often abbreviated as SATB. Often one or more voices is divided into two, e.g., SSAATTBB, where each voice is divided into two parts.

Traditionally, a "women's chorus" (like VOX Femina Los Angeles) is a chorus of adult women, high voices only, usually consisting of soprano and alto voices, two parts in each, or as soprano I, soprano II, and alto I, alto II, abbreviated SSAA. However, many choirs are now changing the way that they refer to themselves in order to promote inclusivity, so that an ensemble is referred to as a "treble choir" to emphasize the instrumentation or voice parts represented instead of the gender of the singers. VOX currently includes both nonbinary and transgender singers within its membership.

### **What is Harmony?**

The combination of different musical notes played or sung at the same time to produce a pleasing sound; a pleasing combination or arrangement of different things. Harmony is often said to refer to the "vertical" aspect of music, as distinguished from melodic line, or the "horizontal" aspect.

### **What is Rhythm?**

A strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound. The systematic arrangement of musical sounds, principally according to duration and periodic stress.

### **What are "dynamics" in music**

In music, the dynamics of a piece are the variation in loudness between notes or phrases. Dynamics give the music peaks and valleys. The quiet moments make the louder moments pop, which adds excitement to a song.

### **What is a music "commission"?**

To commission music is to pay a composer to write a particular composition for a specific purpose or event. Anyone can commission music, and any type of music can be commissioned. VOX has commissioned over 50 new works since its founding. Some composers who have written new works for us include Jocelyn Hagen, Saunder Choi, Rosephanye Powell, Zanaida Stewart Robles, and Andrea Ramsey. You can read more about our commissions on our website: [www.voxfemina.org/commissions](http://www.voxfemina.org/commissions)

## Program

Founding Artistic Director Dr. Iris S. Levine  
Collaborative Pianist Lisa Edwards

Sing About It

Moira Smiley

Moira Smiley, guest artist

Stardust

B.E. Boykin

Hear Me Roar

Liv Grace

Lisa Bell, Sumana Wolf, soloists

All My Trials

Traditional, arr. Gwyneth Walker

Brianna Estrada, soloist

Hymn to Freedom

Oscar Peterson, arr. Kirby Shaw

Desiree Balfour, soloist

Lean on Me/We Shall Overcome

arr. Mark Hayes

Moira Smiley, guest artist

Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing

J. Rosamund Johnson, arr. Zanaida Robles

Angelica Rowell, soloists

## Program Notes

The making of music goes hand-in-hand with addressing issues of social conflict, of systemic exclusion, and of justice. In America, political protest songs range back to the pre-Revolutionary war era, and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century a spate of protest songs – including abolitionist songs and music written for women’s suffrage – were sung in homes, at gatherings, and in acts of political defiance. African-American spirituals were songs that expressed resistance and radical remembrance and survival. The 1960s were an especially important era in the history of American music and protest, with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, the ascendance of the counterculture, and opposition to the Vietnam War. Musicians wrote songs that spoke to current issues, and adapted older ones to new circumstances. Music can be an active, immediate, in-the-moment act of protest or political resistance that is an expression of a community and a statement of solidarity, as you have with music that is sung in public rallies. Music can be an emotional restoration of voice, healing from an act of harm. And music making - as seen in today’s concert -- is an active way of telling history, of expressing histories of people in order to keep those memories current. This concert is a journey, from expressions of mourning and remembrance, through healing, and into taking action and rising up to fight for our future.

Moira Smiley inscribed the following on the cover of her 2015 composition “Sing About It”: *Reaching out of the echo chamber of our lives: Difficult. Necessary.* This is a piece about seeking community, sharing grief, and sharing responsibility. These actions require us to look outside of ourselves and reach for others, even if it causes us a moment of discomfort -- for the stakes are too high to ignore. The “soul” of the piece is in the lamenting melisma (a group of notes sung to one syllable of text) that anchors the first part; this lament eventually gives way to a driving rhythmic force on the word “gonna”, as a decision to take action is made.

Composer B.E. Boykin and poet Brittney Ray Crowell were commissioned to write “Stardust” by the Pershing Middle School Treble Chorale in 2021. Director Marcus J. Jauregui notes: “In “Stardust,” the singers call for “a home where we can run” in memory of Ahmaud Arbery, “a home where we can pray” in memory of the victims of the Mother Emanuel shooting, “a home where we can breathe” in memory of George Floyd, and a home to “sleep and dream without fear” in memory of Breonna Taylor. When we sing, we pray twice, and it is my prayer that this piece stirs all who hear it to call for justice for the people of color taken from this world before their time and without concern for their humanity.”

About her 2022 piece “Hear Me Roar,” composer Liv Grace writes: “This is a *protest* – a cry for justice and equality! In this piece, bring the rhythm and soul that has energized people of color throughout history...Every name in this score belongs to a son or daughter, a mother or father...a real person. I encourage you to choose one, or two, or three and read about them. Humanize them. Sing for them and for those who share their pain. Every time you perform this work, you are contributing to a movement. Through harmony, you are giving a voice to those who have been silenced...And know that there are many fighting alongside you, including me.”

“All My Trials” is a song of uncertain origin that became popular with American folk artists during the social movements of the 1960s. Gwyneth Walker’s arrangement leans into the poignancy of a woman saying farewell at the end of her life, thinking of the people that she must leave behind. About the composition, Walker writes: “The accompaniment of repeated 8th-note chords is marked *as if trembling or sobbing*. Although the harmonic language is tonal and consonant almost entirely throughout the song, a few dissonances appear near the end, reflecting the pain of parting.”

Pianist, composer, and bandleader Oscar Peterson first recorded “Hymn to Freedom” in 1962 and it was quickly embraced by people all over the world as one of the anthems of the Civil Rights movement. Inspired by the work that Martin Luther King Jr was doing, and drawing upon inspiration from the many renditions of

Spirituals he heard throughout his childhood in the Baptist Church, Peterson turned to Harriet Hamilton for help with the lyrics. According to Hamilton, “all the lyrics had to do was express in very simple language the hope for unity, peace and dignity for mankind. It was easy to write.” In 2000, the Deutsche Welle Choir of Fifty Voices performed the song when Peterson was awarded the UNESCO International Music Prize; In 2002, Oscar Peterson and his trio performed the piece at the Gala Tribute Concert to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her Golden Jubilee celebrations in Canada; and in 2009 the Boys and Girls Choir of San Francisco performed it on the steps of the Capitol at the inauguration of President Obama.

Next, we combine Bill Withers’s 1972 hit, “Lean on Me” and its call for community and support with gospel song and Civil Rights anthem “We Shall Overcome.” Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933) was a Methodist minister who fought for social justice for the people in his community. He published the songs he introduced in his sermons (including “I’ll Overcome Someday”, which was inspiration for “We Shall Overcome”), and many of these songs became staples in the gospel music repertory. The modern version of the song has origins in the 1940s, when it was sung by the Food and Tobacco Workers Union during a strike in Charleston that resulted in unprecedented biracial cooperation. Both songs are striking in their simplicity: they are easy to sing, easy to learn, and as such they have the capacity to engage people in large gatherings, to endlessly improvise verses, to pass time during long marches and galvanize courage to face opposition. Both pieces allude to the need for and strength in community, with lyrics from each referring to standing together in the face of difficulties. The tone of both also conveys great hope, with Withers musing that while we all have sadness in our lives, “if we are wise, we know that there’s always tomorrow,” but recognizing the importance of helping one another, offering the listener a shoulder to lean on and acknowledging that “it won’t be long till I’m going to need somebody to lean on.” Likewise, the lyrics of “We Shall Overcome” express a deep conviction that the singers will conquer their hardships together, making it a popular song for many diverse voices and causes, including the farm workers strike in the late 1960’s in California, where the lyrics were changed to Spanish, Senator Robert F. Kennedy who sang it to anti-Apartheid crowds in South Africa in 1966, and as part of Northern Ireland’s civil rights movement in the 1980’s.

Also known as the Black national anthem, “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing” was written by James Weldon Johnson in 1900 and set to music by J. Rosamond Johnson in 1905 as a hymn of thanksgiving and an expression of faith and freedom. Zanaida Robles’s arrangement builds in force and strength as it goes, starting with a soloist gently singing, the choir picking up her melody in unison at first, breaking into harmony as tension builds in the piano. The tension breaks in a cry against injustice, voices reaching a point of disunity that still retains hope for unification as they echo one another. The soloist leads the group into a final statement of truth, freedom, and belonging for all to partake: “Lift ev’ry voice!”

## Texts & Translations

### Sing About It – Moira Smiley

It's so sad  
It's so sad. We don't understand each other yet  
How can this be when we've been living together so  
long?  
So close to each other's beauty?  
It's so sad. It makes me feel so bad  
I can't stand by anymore

Gonna sing about it  
Gonna sing it when I feel like cryin'  
When I'm uncomfortable & don't know why yet  
When I am guilty of the laissez-faire  
My ignorance of you is laid bare  
I'll talk to you before I raise my hand  
So you can call on me to make a stand  
Make a stand  
Make a stand

Am I responsible? Are you responsible?  
What are we responsible for?

I'm gonna look up from my own concerns  
Reach across the chasm of what I never learned  
So wide, so full of burning, your eyes are turning to  
me now  
Sayin' It's time, it's way past time-to step outside the  
echo The echo chamber  
Stop pretending it's alright  
Stop pretending this is not our fight  
I'm gonna sing it when I feel like cryin'  
When I'm uncomfortable and don't know why yet  
When I am guilty of the laissez-faire  
My ignorance of you is laid bare  
I'll talk to you before I raise my hand  
So you can call on me to make a stand  
Make a stand  
Make a stand  
Am I responsible? Are you responsible?  
What are we responsible for?  
Am I responsible? Are you responsible?  
What are we responsible for?

Gonna sing about it.  
Gonna sing about it  
Gonna sing about it.

### Stardust – B.E. Boykin

If we are only stardust  
Let your names reach to the sky above us

Like petals wafting on a breeze  
We lift you up beyond our reach

“Kum Buba Yali, Kum Buba Tambe”  
Amen, Amen

”Kum Buba Yali, Kum Buba Tambe”  
We say your names

If we are only stardust  
May your blood never be in vain

Like petals wafting on a breeze  
We lift you up beyond our reach

“Kum Buba Yali, Kum Buba Tambe”  
Amen, Amen

”Kum Buba Yali, Kum Buba Tambe”  
We say your names

Each day we grieve another face  
Maybe all this stardust  
Will carry us home one day  
To a home where we can run  
A home where we can pray  
A home where we can breathe,  
To sleep and dream without fear—  
Is justice this far away?

We cry your names  
For the strength to keep on fighting  
With the hope that you are flying

“Kum Buba Yali, Kum Buba Tambe”  
Stardust



## Hear Me Roar – Liv Grace

I can't do this anymore  
See my brothers on the floor  
Pushed and shoved against the wall  
It's like we're not human at all  
I told my mother  
That I'm 'bout to go to war  
I grab my sisters and brothers and others  
Hand in hand we start the march

The enemy's pushing me down  
(Pushing me down)  
Down to the ground  
(Uh-huh)  
Yeah the enemy's guns on my crown  
(Got the guns on my crown)  
But bullet holes don't phase me  
I've seen the enemy kneel on my neck  
(Kneel on my neck)  
Face to the floor eyesight hazy

Might not be able to breathe, but believe  
Tonight you gonna hear me roar  
I said hear me roar  
Hear me roar  
I said hear me roar

Oh, I can't do this anymore  
See my brothers on the floor  
Pushed and shoved against the wall, yeah  
It's like we're not human at all

Oh, grab your mothers  
And fathers  
And sisters  
And brothers  
And others

Hand in hand  
We will stand  
Lift our voices  
Fend for one another  
We will not back down  
No, they cannot stop us now  
The battle's just begun  
We not gon' stop until we've won

Who cares if the enemy's pushing me down  
(Pushing me down)  
Down to the ground  
(Uh-huh)  
Said the enemy's guns on my crown  
(Guns on my crown)  
But bullet holes don't phase me  
I've seen the enemy kneel on my neck  
(Kneel on my neck)  
Teargas and my eyes get hazy

Might not be able to breathe, but believe  
Tonight you gonna hear me roar  
I said hear me roar  
Hear me roar  
I said hear me roar  
Hear us roar

Hear me roar

Say Their Names (2020):

1. ERIC GARNER
2. JOHN CRAWFORD III
3. MICHAEL BROWN
4. EZELL FORD
5. DANTE PARKER
6. MICHELLE CUSSEAU
7. LAQUAN MCDONALD
8. GEORGE MANN
9. TANISHA ANDERSON
10. AKAI GURLEY
11. TAMIR RICE
12. RUMAIN BRISBON
13. JERAME REID
14. MATTHEW AJIBADE
15. FRANK SMART
16. NATASHA MCKENNA
17. TONY ROBINSON
18. ANTHONY HILL
19. MYA HALL
20. PHILLIP WHITE
21. ERIC HARRIS
22. WALTER SCOTT
23. WILLIAM CHAPMAN
24. ALEXIA CHRISTIAN
25. BRENDON GLENN
26. VICTOR MANUEL LAROSA
27. JONATHAN SANDERS
28. FREDDIE BLUE
29. JOSEPH MANN
30. SALVADO ELLSWOOD
31. SANDRA BLAND
32. ALBERT JOSEPH DAVIS
33. DARRIUS STEWART
34. BILLY RAY DAVIS

35. SAMUEL DUBOSE  
36. MICHAEL SABBIE  
37. BRIAN KEITH DAY  
38. CHRISTIAN TAYLOR  
39. TROY ROBINSON  
40. ASSHAMS PHAROAH MANLEY  
41. FELIX KUMI  
42. KEITH HARRISON MCLEOD  
43. JUNIOR PROSPER  
44. LAMONTEZ JONES  
45. PATERSON BROWN  
46. DOMINIC HUTCHINSON  
47. ANTHONY ASHFORD  
48. ALONZO SMITH  
49. TYREE CRAWFORD  
50. INDIA KAGER  
51. LA'VANTE BIGGS  
52. MICHAEL LEE MARSHALL  
53. JAMAR CLARK  
54. RICHARD PERKINS  
55. NATHANIEL HARRIS PICKETT  
56. BENNI LEE TIGNOR  
57. MIGUEL ESPINAL  
58. MICHAEL NOEL  
59. KEVIN MATTHEWS  
60. BETTIE JONES  
61. QUINTONIO LEGRIER  
62. KEITH CHILDRESS JR.  
63. JANET WILSON  
64. RANDY NELSON  
65. ANTRONIE SCOTT  
66. WENDELL CELESTINE  
67. DAVID JOSEPH  
68. CALIN ROQUEMORE  
69. DYZHAWN PERKINS  
70. CHRISTOPHER DAVIS  
71. MARCO LOUD  
72. PETER GAINES  
73. TORREY ROBINSON  
74. DARIUS ROBINSON  
75. KEVIN HICKS  
76. MARY TRUXILLO  
77. DEMARCUS SEMER  
78. WILLIE TILLMAN  
79. TERRILL THOMAS  
80. SYLVILLE SMITH  
81. ALTON STERLING  
82. PHILANDO CASTILE  
83. TERENCE CRUTCHER  
84. PAUL O'NEAL  
85. ALTERIA WOODS  
86. JORDAN EDWARDS  
87. AARON BAILEY  
88. RONELL FOSTER  
89. STEPHON CLARK  
90. ANTWON ROSE II  
91. BOTHAM JEAN

92. PAMELA TURNER  
93. DOMINIQUE CLAYTON  
94. ATATIANA JEFFERSON  
95. CHRISTOPHER WHITFIELD  
96. CHRISTOPHER MCCORVEY  
97. ERIC REASON  
98. MICHAEL LORENZO DEAN  
99. BREONNA TAYLOR  
100. GEORGE FLOYD

## All My Trials

All my trials, Lord, soon be over.  
All my trials, Lord, soon be over.

If living were a thing that money could buy,  
you know the rich would live,  
and the poor would die.

All my trials, Lord, soon be over.  
All my trials, Lord, soon be over.

Hush, little baby, don't you cry,  
You know your mama was born to die.

All my trials, Lord,  
All my trials, Lord, .  
All my trials, Lord, soon be over.

Too late, my brothers,  
Too late, but never mind.  
I'm going home  
I must leave you here behind.

I'm going home  
O my brothers, I must leave you here behind  
All my trials, Lord,  
All my trials, Lord,  
All my trials, Lord, soon be over.

## Hymn to Freedom

When every heart joins every heart  
and together yearns for liberty,  
That's when we'll be free!  
When every hand joins every hand  
and together molds our destiny,  
That's when we'll be free.

Any hour, any day,  
the time soon will come  
when we will live in dignity,  
That's when we'll be free.

When everyone joins in our song  
and together singing harmony,  
That's when we'll be free.

When every heart joins  
every heart  
and together yearns for liberty,  
That's when we'll be free!  
When every hand joins  
every hand  
and together moulds our destiny,  
That's when we'll be free.

Any hour  
any day,  
the time soon will come when  
men will live in dignity,  
That's when we'll be free.  
When every man joins  
in our song  
and together singing harmony,

That's when we'll be free.

## Lean on Me/We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome.  
We shall overcome.  
We shall overcome some day.  
Oh, deep in my heart,  
I do believe,  
We shall overcome one day.

Sometimes in our lives we all have pain  
We all have sorrow

But if we are wise  
We know that there's always tomorrow

Lean on me, when you're not strong  
And I'll be your friend  
I'll help you carry on  
For it won't be long  
'Til I'm gonna need  
Somebody to lean on

Please swallow your pride  
If I have faith you need to borrow  
For no one can fill those of your needs  
That you won't let show

You just call on me sister, when you need a hand  
We all need somebody to lean on  
I just might have a problem that you'll understand  
We all need somebody to lean on

If there is a load you have to bear  
That you can't carry  
I'm right up the road  
I'll share your load  
If you just call me

If you need a friend, if you need somebody  
Just call me. Just lean on me.  
We can work it out.  
You got to lean on me.  
Yes, we can.  
Yes, we shall overcome some day.

## Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing

Lift every voice and sing,  
till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty  
Let our rejoicing rise  
high as the listening skies.  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song  
full of the faith  
that the dark past has taught us.  
Sing a song full of the hope  
that the present has brought us.  
Facing the rising sun

of our new day begun,  
Let us march on  
till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died.  
Yet with a steady beat,  
have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our parents sighed?

We have come, over a way that with tears has been  
watered  
We have come, treading our path through the blood  
of the slaughtered  
Out of the gloomy past, till now we stand at last

Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears  
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way.  
Thou who has by Thy might Led us into the light  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where  
we met Thee.

Lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we  
forget Thee.

Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
may we forever stand  
True to our God,  
true to our native land.

## About the Composers



### **Moira Smiley**

Singer / Composer Moira Smiley has toured and made records with a renowned variety of artists, including indie-pop stars Tune-Yards; Irish-American legends, Solas; early music pioneers, Theater Of Voices; choral composer, Eric Whitacre; Americana archivists, Jayme Stone's Lomax + Folklife Projects; multi-Grammy winning pianist Billy Childs; UK-based folk troubadours, Sam Amidon and Sam Lee, Rising Appalachia, The New World Symphony, KITKA as well as Smiley's own ensembles VOCO and VIDA.

She is regularly commissioned to write large-scale choral & chamber music works, with millions singing her choral music around the world. Moira has been featured in TED conferences, on BBC Radio and TV, NPR, ABC Australia, and live at countless venues from

Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall to Walt Disney Concert Hall and Royal Festival Hall. Smiley is known for enchanting audiences whether on stage, atop glaciers, inside ships or in cozy kitchens from Norway to Tasmania.

Moira's 2018 solo album 'Unzip The Horizon' premiered at the prestigious Savannah Music Festival in 2018, and she published its companion choral Songbook in 2019. In February of 2021, she released her vocal album In Our Voices featuring international VOCO collaborators. Moira recently appeared with Tune-Yards on [Jimmy Kimmel Live](#), [Live on KEXP](#) At Home, and [The Late Show with Stephen Colbert](#).



## **B.E. Boykin**

B.E. (Brittney Elizabeth) Boykin is a native of Alexandria, Virginia and comes from a musical family. At the age of 7, she began piano lessons and continued her studies through high school under the tutelage of Mrs. Alma Sanford. Mrs. Sanford guided her through various competitions, such as the NAACP’s ACT-SO competition where she garnered 1st place for 3 consecutive years in the local competition, as well as being awarded The Washington Post “Music and Dance Award” in the spring of 2007.

Boykin then pursued her classical piano studies at Spelman College under the leadership of Dr. Rachel Chung. After graduating Spelman College in 2011 with a B.A. in Music, Boykin continued her studies at Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, New Jersey. During her time at Westminster, she was awarded the R and R Young Composition Prize just a few months shy of graduating with her M.M. in Sacred Music with a concentration in choral studies in May, 2013.

Boykin’s choral piece, “We Sing as One,” was commissioned to celebrate Spelman College’s 133rd Anniversary of its founding at the 2014 Founders Day Convocation. She has also been featured as the conductor/composer-in-residence for the 2017 Harry T. Burleigh Commemorative Spiritual Festival at Tennessee State University. Boykin has been commissioned and collaborated with several organizations, including a number of ACDA divisions, the Minnesota Opera and the Kennedy Center. She obtained her Ph.D. from Georgia State University with an emphasis in Music Education and is currently an Assistant Professor of Music at the Georgia Institute of Technology.



## **Liv Grace**

Olivia Grace Brown (aka Liv Grace) is a composer, lyricist, and emerging recording artist from Dallas residing in the Washington, D.C. area. She is an English major with a minor in Music Composition at Oakwood University, and she is also a vocalist in the award-winning Aeolians college choir. Liv Grace began her music career writing, arranging, and performing the social justice anthem— Hear Me Roar— which she penned during her senior year in high school in

response to the devastating murder of George Floyd. Her work is gaining increased attention in social media, urban contemporary, and choral music spaces. Some of her accomplishments include being a National Concerts commissioned artist and guest performer at the ACDA\* Western Region Conference (2022) and being interviewed in the Washington Post following her Juneteenth performance (2022). She also had the pleasure of exhibiting as a featured artist at the D.C. Underground Arts Festival (2021), performing two of her pieces— Liberated and Melanin—on the Freedom Future Collectives album (2021), and releasing several singles on multiple digital platforms. Liv Grace remains active in the arts, where she most enjoys using her voice and rich harmonic arrangements to inspire freedom of thought, body, and spirit as an artistic advocate of social justice for all.

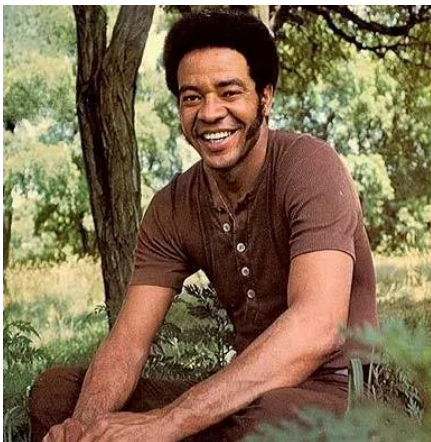


## Oscar Peterson

An eminent jazz pianist with technical mastery and limitless creativity, Oscar Peterson was a performer who could instantly inspire awe. He earned the nickname “Maharaja of the Keyboard” from Duke Ellington, and can count many of the greatest names in jazz among his devoted legion of fans.

Peterson was born August 15, 1925, in Montreal. His performance career began while he was still in high school, as pianist with the Johnny Holmes Orchestra. After a few years with the orchestra, he formed his own trio, the first in a format he maintained throughout his lifelong career. Peterson began composing while still a member of the Johnny Holmes Orchestra, and devoted more and more time to composition while still maintaining a vigorous performance schedule. His “Hymn To Freedom” became one of the crusade songs of the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is still performed by choirs worldwide.

Peterson has an extensive discography with his trio and quartet recordings, and his albums include appearances from Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Eldridge, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins and Joe Pass. During his life and career, Peterson received many awards and honors, including the Praemium Imperiale (the arts equivalent of the Nobel Prize, presented by the Japan Art Association), the UNESCO International Music Prize, eight Grammy Awards (including a Lifetime Achievement Grammy), the 1993 Glenn Gould Prize (of which he was the third recipient, the first chosen by unanimous decision and the first ever non-classical musician) and many honorary degrees.



## Bill Withers

Born in West Virginia, the youngest of six children in a small coal-mining town, his youthful musical experiences were mainly in gospel quartets in small churches. During a nine year term in the Navy, which carried him throughout the Far East, Withers was inspired to try his hand at singing. Songwriting came as a result of futile searches for original songs that expressed what he felt.

After his discharge from the Navy, he moved to Los Angeles and recorded demos of his tunes in hopes of landing a recording contract. In 1971, signed to Sussex Records, came such memorable hits as "Ain't No Sunshine," "Grandma's Hands" and in 1972, "Lean On Me" and "Use Me." Later would come the striking "Lovely Day," co-written with Skip Scarborough and "Just The Two Of Us," co-written with Ralph MacDonald and William Salter. He was awarded Grammy Awards as a songwriter for "Ain't No Sunshine" in 1971 and for "Just The Two Of Us" in 1981.

"Lean On Me" has become a staple in churches, children's choirs and even prison choirs. It is often the first song that children learn to play on the piano because of what Bill calls "complex simplicity." Bill's songs have been recorded by hundreds of artists including Barbra Streisand, Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Mick Jagger, and Diana Ross to name a few. Bill's music and unique voice continue to be used in television and radio commercials, motion pictures and television programs. His music has been sampled and covered by many hip-hop and rap artists of today, such as BlackStreet, Will Smith, Black Eyed Peas, and Twista.

For Bill it was quite simply stated, "I write and sing about whatever I am able to understand and feel. I feel that it is healthier to look out at the world through a window than through a mirror. Otherwise, all you see is yourself and whatever is behind you."



## J. Rosamund Johnson

John Rosamond Johnson was one of the more important figures in black music in the first part of the 20th century, usually in partnership with Bob Cole or with his brother James Weldon Johnson. While he is chiefly remembered today as the composer of the Black National Anthem, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," he had a varied career as a pianist, songwriter, producer, soldier, singer, and actor.

J. Rosamond Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida, on August 11, 1873. He began playing the piano at age four, studied at the New England Conservatory, and with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in London.

By the end of the 19th century, Johnson was teaching schoolchildren in the Jacksonville region. Around 1900 Johnson wrote and taught these schoolchildren "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing." Its popularity caused it to spread until it became the unofficial, then official, Black National Anthem.

Johnson moved to New York City in 1900 and plunged into its musical life. After contributing a song to Williams and Walker's *Sons of Ham* (1900), Johnson teamed up with Robert Cole with whom he began creating a vaudeville act and writing songs, occasionally assisted by his brother James Weldon Johnson. This partnership lasted until Cole's death in 1911..Musicologist Thomas Riis considers Johnson's harmonic language to be the richest of all the other black theater composers of his time save for Will Marion Cook.

When World War I broke out, Johnson received a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 15th Regiment. After the war, he toured with his own groups, and even sang and played the part of a lawyer in the original production of *Porgy and Bess* in 1935. J. Rosamond Johnson died in New York City on November 11, 1954.



## Zanaida Robles

Dr. Zanaida Stewart Robles is an award-winning Black American female composer, vocalist, and teacher. She is a fierce advocate for diversity and inclusion in music education and performance. Authentic interpersonal connection and relationship-building are core principles of her teaching and performance methods. Born, raised, and educated in Southern California on the occupied lands of the Gabrielino-Tongva people, she is in demand as a composer, vocalist, clinician and adjudicator for competitions, festivals, and conferences related to choral and solo vocal music.

Dr. Robles holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the USC Thornton School of Music, a Master of Music degree from CSU Northridge, a Bachelor of Music degree from CSU Long Beach, and she is a graduate of the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts.

## What is “Social Justice”?

Social justice is defined as "the objective of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest."

**Here are four essential goals of social justice:**

1. **Human rights** - a just society protects everyone's basic human rights.
2. **Access** - a just society provides access to essentials without restrictions based on factors like gender, race, class, etc.
3. **Participation** - a just society encourages everyone to have their voices heard.
4. **Equity** - a just society takes into account the effects of discrimination and aims for an equal outcome.

## Major Social Justice Issues Today

1. Income Equality and the Gender Pay Gap
2. Climate Change
3. Food Insecurity
4. The Refugee Crisis
5. Healthcare
6. LGBTQIA+ Rights and Safety
7. Gun Violence and Crime

## Sample Discussion Questions

- Can you think of a time when you stepped outside of your comfort zone to stand up for someone else? What made you do it and how did it feel?
- What do you hear in the accompaniment for “All My Trials” and what story do you think that is trying to tell? What techniques do the composers use to help tell their stories? (i.e., use of tempo, dynamics, repetition, etc.)
- Name one thing specifically in the music/text that touched you or that you connected with and why?
- How many different styles of music did you identify in this concert?
- What is social justice and how is music a tool for addressing issues of social justice?
- What are some important social justice issues today?

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