

VOX Femina Los Angeles

I, Too, Sing America

Program Notes

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, VOX Femina Los Angeles offers *I, Too, Sing America*—a program that both celebrates and questions the idea of America. Inspired by Langston Hughes’ powerful assertion of belonging, this concert amplifies voices often unheard and stories often untold.

Through music that spans traditions, cultures, and generations, we explore the promise of this country alongside its complexities—honoring the land itself, the people who shape it, and the ongoing work of building a more just and inclusive nation. This is not a single story of America, but a collective one. And in that spirit, we sing.

First Half: *This Land, These Voices*

The first half of our program is rooted in the land—its beauty, its histories, and its contradictions. From the redwoods of California to the rivers of the East, these works ask us to consider what it means to belong, and who has been included in that narrative.

We begin tonight by acknowledging the first peoples of this land and the many Native nations whose presence, history, and cultural knowledge continue to shape what we call America. **Mach Jchi**, written by Ulali, opens our program, inviting us into a shared sonic space in which we stand tall, sing, dance and never forget “who you are or where you come from.”

Composed as part of a commissioning consortium, *Songs for the People* is both invitation and declaration. Composer Reginal S. Wright draws on the long tradition of communal song as a source of strength and solidarity. Here, “the people” is expansive—calling us to recognize the dignity, resilience, and humanity in every voice.

The Redwood

Towering yet interconnected, redwoods remind us that strength is rarely solitary. Hazzard’s work reflects the quiet majesty of these ancient trees and the unseen networks that sustain them. It is a meditation on kindness, community, and the wisdom of the natural world.

In *Tierra y Pasión (Yo Soy América)*, land is inseparable from identity. Through rhythmic vitality and expressive depth, Cordero honors the cultural richness of Latin American heritage, offering a vision of America that is multilingual, multicultural, and deeply rooted in lived experience.

The beloved folk song, *Shenandoah*, carries a sense of longing—for connection, for home, for something just beyond reach. In this setting, its expansive lines evoke both the beauty of the American landscape and the emotional distances that have shaped its history.

Bold, affirming, and deeply personal, *My Anthem* is a declaration of self-worth and identity. Drawing from gospel traditions, Boykin's work celebrates the power of claiming one's voice—especially in spaces where that voice has not always been welcomed.

This Land Is Your Land

Reimagined for our time, this iconic song becomes a space for reflection as much as celebration. Courtney Politano's arrangement invites us to listen more closely—to the questions embedded within the text, and to the realities of whose land this has been, and whose it is becoming.

Second Half: *Voices that Rise*

The second half of our program centers on resilience, resistance, and hope. These are songs that have sustained movements, carried communities, and called generations to action.

How Can I Keep from Singing? At its heart, this song is an act of defiance. Even in the face of uncertainty, it insists on the necessity of song. Walker's setting reminds us that music is not a luxury—it is a lifeline.

Lean on Me with We Shall Overcome

By bringing together two anthems of support and justice, this arrangement bridges the personal and the collective. It speaks to the power of community care as the foundation for meaningful change.

I Am Willing

This song offers a quiet but profound commitment: to remain open, to remain present, to remain engaged. Holly Near's message is a reminder that transformation begins with a willingness to listen and to act.

In ***Signs*** we are asked to pay attention—to the signals around us, and to the truths we may prefer to overlook. It is a call to awareness, urging us to recognize our role in shaping what comes next. The texts in the piece are all taken from actual signs at the first Women's March.

An anthem of collective empowerment, ***We Rise*** affirms that progress is not made alone. It is built through shared purpose, mutual support, and the courage to imagine something better.

Keep Marching from Suff

Drawn from a musical about the suffrage movement, this work connects past and present struggles for equity. It reminds us that the rights we enjoy today were hard-won—and that the work for justice continues.

America the Beautiful

Kirchner's reimagining offers a vision of America that is expansive and evolving. Rather than a static ideal, this setting invites us to consider the country as a living, breathing work in progress—shaped by its people, its histories, and its hopes.