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CLASSICS



Eric Whitacre | The Sacred Veil
Los Angeles Master Chorale

The Sacred Veil

Eric Whitacre

Text by Charles Anthony Silvestri,
Julia Lawrence Silvestri & Eric Whitacre



Los Angeles Master Chorale

Grant Gershon Artistic Director

Lisa Edwards Piano

Jeffrey Zeigler Cello

Eric Whitacre Conductor

The Sacred Veil was commissioned and recorded by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, co-commissioned by Monash Academy of Performing Arts MLIVE and NTR ZaterdagMatinee for Netherlands Radio Choir.

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2	In a Dark and Distant Year	2.19
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9	One Last Breath	1.40
10	Dear Friends	3.17
11	You Rise, I Fall	10.00
12	Child of Wonder	4.44
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Foreword

Grant Gershon

Los Angeles Master Chorale, Artistic Director

As I write these words in early April of 2020, hospitals across large parts of the world are in the midst of enormous tragedy and heartbreak. There are countless stories in the news of families confronting loss and dealing with the fragility of life. Of course for so many of us, the reality of losing cherished ones to the slow and sometimes lurching process of disease has been a part of our lives. The veil that separates us from those we love is both sacred and inevitable.

For the artists who gave voice to Eric and Tony's (Charles Anthony Silvestri) creation on this recording, the experience of sharing *The Sacred Veil* has been cathartic and heart-wrenching. We as musicians are rarely called upon to

engage in material that is this "close to the bone" emotionally, and I'm in awe of everyone involved in this project. Just as Eric and Tony wrote music and poetry of uncompromising honesty, so too did the singers of the LA Master Chorale, pianist Lisa Edwards and cellist Jeffrey Zeigler bare their souls in these sessions. To all of them, and to everyone behind the scenes, I am profoundly grateful. I hope that their empathy, humanity and artistry will reach every listener and give comfort and clarity in times of distress.





Introduction

Charles Anthony Silvestri

What if our departed loved ones are not truly gone, but are closer than we think? How can we mourn those we have lost while still moving forward? We have all experienced the loss, in one way or another, of someone or something we have loved deeply. How do we know when it's time to move forward?

The Sacred Veil represents a journey toward the answers to these questions. Many journeys, really. Working with Eric to create *The Sacred Veil* has become a significant part of my journey toward healing and wholeness after great loss.

My wife, Julie (Julia Lawrence Silvestri), died in May 2005 after a long battle with ovarian cancer, just a few days shy of her 36th birthday, leaving me and our two small children to navigate the world without her,

our guiding star. Julie was a gentle soul, but with a tenacious and stubborn spirit, and she approached her diagnosis with grit and determination to survive. She had always wanted to be a mother; and now with the fulfillment of that dream all around her, she faced the anguish of leaving her babies and resolved to beat this disease.

But in spite of all her efforts and prayers, cancer touched our family like it does to so many, and took her away. Understandably I was angry for a long time—at myself, for not doing more to save her; at Julie for leaving me to raise our kids without her; at God, for His cruel silence in the face of all our prayers. I grieved, and mourned her loss, to be sure. But I had children to raise, and a demanding job. I couldn't touch the deepest places of my grief. At least not yet. And I certainly could not write poetry about it.

After a long while, ten years or so, I was finally in a place where I could process what I had experienced, what Julie's death had meant to me, and what I had learned after all this time. My friends had encouraged me to write poetry about it, poetry that was authentic, that came from a deep, personal place. And so, with their support I began to experiment with writing about my grief, gingerly touching that place in my heart, still tender after all this time, and exploring the deeper caverns of my emotions.

One of the earliest poems I wrote was a reflection about birth, death, and eternity, which was the product of all the reflection, all the processing, all the spiritual struggle to find my way back to a solid place to stand in a universe with God in it. I began to understand things differently, contemplating what Julie might be experiencing now, having crossed the veil into eternity. It was comforting to realize that from her perspective, where time and space have no meaning, she and I and our children are already together, and have always been. That veil between here and there is always very close, and we are not

as separated as I had felt. Our loved ones who have died stand so close to us.

I brought this poem with me to Los Angeles to share at a family funeral, and I stayed in the home of my friend Eric Whitacre. I don't know what possessed me to leave a copy of the poem on Eric's piano as I left for the cemetery, but I did so. Perhaps I just wanted to share with my friend the little bit of catharsis I had found in it; perhaps I secretly wanted him to consider setting it. Eric quickly found the music beneath the words, and the journey toward this recording began.

Throughout the entire process Eric was more than a creative collaborator. He was my friend, my brother, my confidant, my confessor, my advocate, my voice when I could not speak. I don't think I could have explored those deepest places in my soul without his guidance and gentle encouragement. The music he created cradles and embraces the text in the most loving and respectful way.

The process took several years and demanded that I read for the first time



since her death Julie's journals, her email blog, her medical records, and other writing. I discovered (or, rediscovered) what a deep and thoughtful writer she was, how much she cared for me and the kids, and how frightened her illness made her, in spite of her powerful faith. Reading these relics of her inner life was the most challenging part of the process for me, reopening all the old wounds and encouraging a new, deeper catharsis. I am very proud that her voice is included in this work.

Encountering her voice again also reminded me what a deep honor it is to have loved, to have become so intimate with someone that theirs is the hand you hold when you experience the most intense and sacred moments of your life: birth and death, those moments when the two sides of eternity mingle. Those moments are all here in this work: love, life, loss, anguish and, eventually, acceptance, peace, and welcoming home. *The Sacred Veil* represents the deepest, most personal of all the lyric poetry I have written, and the most intense of all the

creative journeys I have attempted. We all have pain. We all have experienced loss. We all long for catharsis and closure, even as we grieve. What I have found is that through hard work and time the old wounds do close; but they leave scars behind. Those scars are powerful talismans, evidence that we loved—and still love—those we have lost. Oh, but they are not lost; their journey continues. The Veil is thin. They stand so close, just there, just on the other side of eternity.



On the Music

Eric Whitacre

1 The Veil Opens

Whenever there is birth or death,
 The sacred veil between the worlds
 Grows thin and opens slightly up,
 Just long enough for Love to slip,
 Silent, either in or out
 Of this our fragile, fleeting world,
 Whence or whither a new home waits.
 And our beloved ones draw near,
 In rapt anticipation, or
 In weary gratitude, they stand;
 Our loved ones stand so close, right here,
 Just on the other side
 Of Eternity.

— Charles Anthony Silvestri

These are the very first words Tony showed me.

He had been staying with me in Los Angeles for a few days, visiting, and had left early in the morning for his Aunt's funeral. He left this poem sitting on my piano, so first thing upon waking I saw it. I sat down at the piano and immediately began composing. If I recall correctly, I had set about half of this by the time he returned that afternoon.

I remember reading the poem for the first time and repeating the first phrase over and over, savoring it. After a moment I was already seeing the grand structures built deep into Tony's poetry.

Try saying these three identical lines out loud, one after the other:

Whenever there is birth or death,
 Whenever there is birth or death,
 Whenever there is birth or death.

I think when you say the line the first time, "Whenever birth or death", there is a sense of anticipation created in the word-machine of the mind. What is the next line? How will this idea unfold?

If the line is repeated again, the mind instantly recognizes it as a pattern. So, the sense of anticipation shifts, and now there is a more alert, more curious part of the mind that looks for the pattern to be confirmed.

When spoken a third time, the pattern is confirmed, and I think we then feel a sense of completion of the idea — there is no reason to go on, because the pattern, and thus the idea, is complete.

I knew then that this was my 'golden brick' — my essential idea that would hold the entire piece together. So, I began to build.

I knew that I would repeat texts and phrases three times every time I wanted to meditate on an idea, to 'formalize' the poetry and to create a sense of stasis in the music.

I decided early on that the 'veil' would be represented by a middle C (the third letter of the alphabet), and that moments or even

entire movements would 'cross' the veil, often times up a third or down a third.

And I knew that Julie's theme would be based on three notes starting on middle C, up a third to E flat, then back down again to C.

Thus, the very first sound we hear is the solo piano playing Julie's theme, middle C (the veil) up a minor third, and a minor third down. We hear that little motive three times in a row; after that the cello gently enters on a middle C, marking the formal introduction of the 'veil'. The cello 'leaves' the 'veil' middle C three times, each time a higher note (further and further from the veil, but each time being pulled back into it).

Then the choir enters with "Whenever there is birth or death", repeated three times. The final repetition is voiced slightly differently at the end, designed to complete the 'island' but to also create anticipation for the next line. This pattern continues throughout the movement, always pulling the musical material back to the 'veil note' of middle C.

2 In a Dark and Distant Year

In a dark and distant year,
A wand'rer ancient and austere,
He surrounds himself with books he's
never read.
He was a child then, the world inside
his head.

He would often wonder, "Who
Could love a dreamer such as you?"
And so he trusted no one's shadow
but his own.
He was a fool then, and he was all alone.

Then quite to his surprise,
Passing there before his eyes,
A girl unlikely, gently laughing
by the shore.
She had unlocked his heart and
let his spirit soar!

And on that golden, hopeful day
The boy was bold enough to say,
"Come, hold my deepest secrets here
among the foam;
You are the world to me, and you...
you feel like home."

— Charles Anthony Silvestri

In 2008 — the same year Julie died — Tony celebrated his 40th birthday. I wrote him a poem for the occasion and read it to him over dinner. (I think I also gave him a bottle of wine from 1965, the year he was born). Amazingly, neither of us can find the poem I wrote for him, but I was able to remember the first stanza:

*In a dark and distant year,
When I was young and full of fear,
I was called to fight a war that was not mine;
I was a child then,
And I was thirty-nine.*

As we began to build *The Sacred Veil*, movement by movement, I realized that we needed to hear Tony's story as well. And I knew that Tony, one of the most modest and humble men I know, would have a hard time writing about himself. So, I gave him the task of writing a new poem with the exact structure of my original stanza and asked him to write about himself in the third person, as if he were an ancient troubadour telling a love story to a king and his court. Tony came back to me with this beautiful poem, just perfect.

As I began to set the poem to music, his word "*wand'rer*" immediately resonated with me, so I constructed the music so that it 'wanders' from key to key to key. The men begin in unison and then blossom open to four parts, painting the idea of the wand'rer adventuring and growing. It finally ends with the women's voices (Julie) descending and the men ascending (Tony), merging on a middle C (back to our veil note) on the word "*home*."

3 Home

You feel like home.

— Charles Anthony Silvestri

This was the third movement we wrote. I asked Tony, very simply, to write about the moment he first knew he was in love. He sent me several pages of poetry, beautiful, delicate memories; but as with everything in this piece I wanted it to be as simple and compact as possible, hoping to illuminate all that emotional information with minimal, elegant gestures, both music and words.

We had a long phone conversation, and as we spoke, I asked him to tell me about the day itself. Tony told me how it was their second date, they were sitting having a daytime picnic, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. He said he remembered looking at her while she was talking and that a single thought filled his mind as he watched her speaking: "You feel like home." When he told me that I said, "That's it", knowing that was all the poetry we needed for this movement. (And, I think, all the poetry we could possibly wish for when someone else loves us).

The movement also quotes a piece I had written just a few years earlier, a setting of e.e. cummings' *i carry your heart*. I liked the idea of taking a musical motive from my idea of aspirational love (*i carry your heart*) and placing it in the context of real love (Tony and Julie's).

4 Magnetic Poetry

The enormous need

Egg-ache whispers urging

Moon wind chanting like sweet languid honey

Sleep-swimming through sweaty summer

Dream mists

The delirious girl

Woman goddess

Not yet a mother

But the spring life force is so near

What a bare symphony here

I recall our gorgeous moments together

Beneath my heaving peach skin

Essential you

Like some diamond gift incubating

In love

— **Julia Lawrence Silvestri**

As Tony and I got further into the creation of the piece we began to talk about how nice it would be to include Julie's voice in it. Julie was a terrific writer — smart, sharp — and she had left behind dozens of pages in the form of diary entries, journals and blog posts.

As Tony was sorting through a box of her pages, he found this 'poem', one that Julie

had made from those poetry magnets you buy and then stick on the refrigerator. At the time they were really trying to have their first child, and it wasn't going as easily as they had hoped. Julie had written the poem on the refrigerator and then later wrote it down in one of her journals.

When Tony sent it to me, I was thunderstruck by the poem. In fact, if I'm honest, this is one of my favorite pieces of poetry I've ever read. The imagery is so specific, from the "egg-ache" that Julie must have been feeling, to her own worries that she wasn't conceiving "what a bare symphony here", and her dream of finally getting pregnant "like some diamond gift incubating". More than that, I felt like I could hear Julie in those few words, her true character leaping off the page. "The delirious girl, woman goddess" is so Julie, at least the Julie I knew well.

The construction musically is fairly simple — literally two chords slowly alternating back and forth. The first chord is a variation on the fate theme. The second chord is the chord we will hear much later on in movement 11, 'You Rise, I Fall' on the



words “you rise”. The cello plays a version of the notes from movement three, ‘Home’, symbolizing their future child, dreamed about and made in a union of pure love.

5 Wherever There is Birth

This movement was meant to convey the tender wonder of childbirth. The cello playing the theme to the musical setting of the first words “whenever there is birth or death”. And now we hear the progression of those bending chords that will later be heard in “laughter” in movement 8, ‘Delicious Times’, and finally the last breaths in movement 11 ‘You Rise, I Fall’.

In the middle section the cello quotes another piece I wrote, *When David Heard*, playing the theme “O my son, O Absalom my son.” It is quoted not as a sorrowful moment, as it is in *When David Heard*, but rather the sound of deepest love from parent to child.

6 I’m Afraid

I’m afraid we found something...
[Fifteen centimeter retroperitoneal cystic mass with complex internal septation...
The patient is a twenty-eight-year-old white female, primagravida, in the third trimester of pregnancy.]

I’m afraid we found something...
[Pathology confirms grades I, II, and III mucinous cystic adenocarcinoma with focal carcinosarcoma consistent with ovarian primary.
Recommend six cycles Taxol and Carboplatin...]

I’m afraid we’ve found something...
[...Two left adnexal cysts and a septated right adnexal cyst...]

I’m afraid we’ve found something...
[...Exploratory laparotomy and excision of bilateral ovarian dermoids...]

I’m afraid we’ve found something...
[...Uterus, tubes, sacral pain... ovaries... recurrent, recurrent, recurrent...]

[Exploratory laparotomy,
total abdominal hysterectomy,

bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy,
paraortic lymphadenectomy
Bone scans in sacrum, left ilium, right acetabulum
metastasis...
metastasis...
metastasis...]

I’m afraid we found something...
I’m afraid we found something...
I’m afraid.

— Charles Anthony Silvestri

I remember talking to Tony about that moment the doctor walks in and says, “I’m afraid we found something.” Tony told me there is your entire life before that moment, and your entire life afterwards. The moment of learning you have cancer becomes a central dividing pillar in all of your memories.

Over the years I have heard people talk about their cancer journey and they would often say that once they received the diagnosis of cancer it was ‘always with them’. Every moment of the day, whether happy, sad, banal, sleepy, just waking up —

the awareness of your cancer was always there, buzzing just below the surface of every conscious thought.

I imagined that from the moment you learned of the cancer an internal clock would begin to tick, a race against time, a countdown of remaining minutes, an ever-present wheel of anxiety turning and turning and turning. To musically represent this, I simply took Julie’s three note theme (the C up to the E flat and back down to the C) and repeated it over and over, a sort of humming motor of anxiety.

Each time we hear the words “I’m afraid we found something”, the women’s choir is divided into three notes, with the first three syllables (“I’m afraid”) sung as a triplet.

The introduction of the cancer theme is portrayed by the mutation of the third: a minor third against a major third.

I was struck when Tony sent me the diagnosis how much of the medical language is still in Greek and Latin. To me it gave it a kind of sacredness, an almost liturgical quality. And much the way a liturgical text in Latin is perceived

by the listener — in this case Julie and Tony receiving the diagnosis — it sounds monolithic, dreadful, and unintelligible.

I have been told that every patient eventually becomes an expert in their own cancer treatment. But I imagine that when you are first told in stark medical terms what you have, and what the treatment will be, the words come at you like a wall of sound, unintelligible and dreadful. And I imagined that sitting in that small room, hearing the diagnosis, the only word that every single person would recognize would be “metastasis”, and the force of that would shatter around you like shards of broken glass.

Imagining all of this I constructed the entire movement so that as the diagnosis unfolds there is a slowly dawning realization, the sheer horror of the information becoming more and more clear. As the movement finally ends, I shortened the phrase “I’m afraid we found something” to reveal the simple truth of the moment: “I’m afraid.”

7 I Am Here

This movement was meant to be the sound of the moments after Julie was diagnosed. As the three-note chord of “I’m afraid” hangs over, the piano enters on an E major chord. (E major because of the mutated third of the cancer theme, a third above the veil).

Then the cello plays the “Whenever there is birth or death” theme three times, the third time rising to a cry of anger and despair. Then we hear Julie’s theme three times, slowly picking up the pieces of her life and finding her feet.

8 Delicious Times

My hair started to fall out at precisely 1:00 on my birthday.

By Thursday it was making a terrible mess, so the kids helped me shave off whatever was left. They’d pick up my hair from the ground and slap it on my head and say, “You need more hair!” and they would laugh and laugh. Then at bath time I wore my wig, and they would beg me to take it off and put it back on again – they howled with laughter.



At bedtime, when my little one plays with my hair, she just stroked my head and said, "It's so soft and clean!" She says, "Mommy, your hair went bye-bye but it'll be back soon!" I was most worried about her because she loves my hair so much, but she is just fine!

Today I visited my oldest at school and he shouted, "Hey everybody! My mom has a wig!" He was the star of the class as all the kindergarten stared, open-mouthed, in wonderment. It's been a very funny week. The kids have been amazing, and we've had some really delicious times together.

— **Julia Lawrence Silvestri**

In the last year of her life, Julie wrote updates to a growing number of followers. By the time she died she had several thousand people on her email list and reading her blog.

On the surface you can hear Julie being light as a feather, trying to dance through the madness of her condition and making it fun and memorable for her kids. Anyone who has children of their own can imagine what it would be like trying to navigate

these moments with them — the fear, the uncertainty, for yourself, for them, for your family.

In the middle of the moment, the cello again quotes *When David Heard*, only this time I add Julie's three note theme to the end of it. It is meant to musically symbolize the love a parent has for their child, the deepest possible love. As a parent myself, I believe there really ought to be another word than 'love' for the way we feel about children. 'Love' really isn't enough.

9 One Last Breath

*In a dark and distant year
The wand'rer weary, full of fear,
Confronts a fated force more powerful
than life —
A carriage made of sea
Has come to take his wife.*

*The waves too dark and deep to swim,
He hears his love cry out to him,
Her piercing anguish rising high above
the foam.
"Please don't let go of me
For you, you are my home!"*

*From the shore he sees his bride
As she fights hard against the tide.
He swears a sacred vow that every
loved one keeps.
He steels himself,
Takes one last breath, and leaps.*

— **Eric Whitacre**

I really struggled with whether or not to insert my own poetry — my 'voice' — into the narrative of the piece. Ultimately, I decided to do it, because having known Tony for nearly thirty years I knew that he would never be able to write himself as a hero. And I very much see him as a hero.

In my poetry I quoted Tony's poetry twice, both times from pieces he and I have written together. "Dark and deep" comes from *Sleep*, which we wrote in 2000; and "He steels itself, takes one last breath, and leaps" from *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine*, which we wrote in 2001.

10 Dear Friends

Dear friends: tonight I feel that I must ask you to pray.

I just got out of the hospital tonight and I received some bad news. The scan showed that I had numerous liver and peritoneal metastases. My doctor said this meant I most likely had about two months to live.

I am now asking you to pray as you have never prayed before. Please don't pray that I will have a peaceful death. Please don't feel pity for me. Just pray hard. Pray that I will be healed in a miraculous, supernatural way. Pray that God will give me wisdom as to what to do next. Fight with me, don't give up on me.

— **Julia Lawrence Silvestri**

This was far and away the most difficult text for me to set. I knew Julie well, knew her spirit. She was always the last person to put someone out, the last to ask for help. Reading these words, hearing her pleading to her friends to do something, anything — I could hear in her words the moment she was staring into the abyss,





resolute, desperate. Several times as I was working through the movement I would suddenly start sobbing.

The movement begins musically by bringing back the ‘ticking clock’ motive from movement 6, ‘I’m Afraid’, the minor thirds repeating over and over. Then, beginning with “*I just got out of the hospital tonight*” the three sentences (always threes) echo the ‘fate theme’ introduced by the cello at the very beginning of the piece. Each sentence is a tone higher, reaching, aspirational, only to get pulled back down into the reality of the veil.

Then, at the lyric “*I am now asking you to pray as you have never prayed before*”, the music turns major. The sopranos and altos rise above the veil, three times striving, splitting into threes at the end of each phrase. The cello, on the other hand, starts well below the veil on a major third (the mutated cancer note from movement 6) and slowly rises up through the veil, finally catching the sopranos and altos and smearing them as they rise.

The movement is really the culmination

of several themes: the fate theme; the rising cello theme from movement 1’s “in rapt anticipation or in weary gratitude they stand”, signaling her standing on the very edge of the abyss; and finally, her last cry as the sopranos sing “don’t give up on me”, with the word “me” on Julie’s minor third motive.

11 You Rise, I Fall

Listening to your labored breath,
Your struggle ends as mine begins.
You rise; I fall.

Fading, yet already gone;
What calls you I cannot provide.
You rise; I fall.

Broken, with a heavy hand
I reach to you, and close your eyes.
You rise; I fall.

— Charles Anthony Silvestri

This was actually the second movement Tony and I wrote together, just after I had set ‘Whenever There is Birth or Death’. Before I had a note of music written I jotted down the words “You rise, I fall”,

thinking that it perfectly encapsulated the culmination of Tony and Julie's journey together — just as Julie was finally released from all the suffering, Tony began his spiral downward.

Taking the melody from the first movement's line "Silent, either in or out of this our fragile, fleeting world," I recorded it and sent it to Tony, asking him to write three stanzas (always three) about the final moments of Julie's life. What he sent me back was so direct, so honest, I remember tearing up as I read his words.

Musically, we now hear the 'full bloom' of the breathing motive, first introduced in movement number 5.

For the "you rise" section, I wanted to find music that felt healing, like a soft embrace. The first two iterations of that motive are just like that; but at the third iteration, the world turns dark as we move to Tony's journey of grief and horror. For the falling motive, I imagined the chords slowly melting and collapsing.

12 Child of Wonder

Child of wonder
Child of sky
Time to end your voyage
Time to die.

Silent slumber calls you
Dark and deep
Child of soft surrender
Child of sleep.

Child of sorrow
Child of rain
There is no tomorrow
No more pain.

Turn your silvered sail
Toward the light
Child of mourning
Child of night.

Child of iridescence
Child of dream
Stars and moons will guide you
Down the stream.

Stretched on ocean waves
Of endless foam
Welcome home my child
Welcome home.

— Eric Whitacre

I decided to write the poetry for 'Child of Wonder' myself, with the hope that it would serve as a kind of benediction, not only for Julie, but for my best friend Tony.

Again, I quoted Tony's poetry from *Sleep* twice: "Dark and deep", and "surrender/ sleep". And I quoted another poet, Octavio Paz, who wrote the poetry to Tony's favorite piece of mine, *A Boy and a Girl*: "Stretched... exchanging foam."

The piece ends as it began, three wordless iterations of the musical material for "Whenever there is birth or death". In the final moments, the men drop out, and the women join the cello in unison on a middle C, our veil note.



Biographies



Los Angeles Master Chorale

Eric Whitacre Conductor

Charles Anthony Silvestri

Lisa Edwards Piano

Jeffrey Zeigler Cello

Los Angeles Master Chorale

Grant Gershon Artistic Director

Soprano

Tamara Bevard
Christina Bristow
Emma-Grace Dunbar
Claire Fedoruk
Kelci Hahn
Karen Hogle Brown
Caroline McKenzie
Suzanne Waters
Elyse Willis
Andrea Zomorodian

Alto

Garineh Avakian
Sharmila G. Lash
Sarah Lynch
Eleni Pantages
Laura Smith Roethe
Jessie Shulman
Leslie Inman Sobol
Niké St. Clair
Ilana Summers
Kristen Toedtman

Tenor

Adam Faruqi
Jon Lee Keenan
Dermot Kiernan
Charlie Kim
Michael Lichtenauer
Robert Norman
Anthony Ray
Matthew Thomas
Matthew Tresler
Nate Widelitz

Bass

Derrell Acon
Michael Bannett
John Buffett
Dylan Gentile
David Dong-Geun Kim
Luc Kleiner
Ben Lin
Brett McDermid
Adrien Redford
Mark Edward Smith

The singers of the Los Angeles Master Chorale are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO, Elyse Willis, AGMA Delegate.



The Los Angeles Master Chorale is widely recognized as the country's leading professional choir and one of Southern California's most vibrant cultural treasures. Hailed for its powerful performances, technical precision, and artistic daring, the Master Chorale is led by Grant Gershon, Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director, and Jean Davidson, President & CEO. Created by legendary conductor Roger Wagner in 1964,

it is a founding resident company of The Music Center and choir-in-residence at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Chorister positions are highly sought after and the fully professional choir is a diverse and vocally dynamic group showcasing the many voices of L.A. The Los Angeles Master Chorale has performed in more than 500 concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at both Disney Hall and the Hollywood Bowl, and has toured with

the orchestra to Europe and throughout the United States. Since the 2018-19 season, the Master Chorale has been touring its production of *Lagrime di San Pietro*, directed by Peter Sellars, with performances in London and Paris, and at the Salzburg Festival.

Praised for its definitive performances, the Los Angeles Master Chorale is also committed to recording the choral repertoire. Its esteemed discography includes seven recordings under Gershon, the most recent being the *national anthems / the little match girl passion* by David Lang on Cantaloupe Records. Albums released under former music director Paul Salamunovich on RCM include the Grammy® Award-nominated *Lauridsen: Lux Aeterna*, a recording that helped to secure the work's place as a modern masterpiece. The Master Chorale is featured with Gershon on the soundtracks of many major motion pictures, including *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* and is further heard beyond the concert hall via broadcasts by Southern California's Classical KUSC.

Committed to community engagement and fostering music education in schools, the Los Angeles Master Chorale's education programs include Voices Within residencies that encourage students to write and perform their own songs, and an expansive Oratorio Project for high school students. The Master Chorale also presents an annual High School Choir Festival, which brings teenagers from around the Southland to perform in Walt Disney Concert Hall. In May 2019 the High School Choir Festival celebrated 30 years as one of the longest-running and wide-reaching arts education programs in Southern California. In July 2018 the Master Chorale presented Big Sing California, the largest group singing event in state history, encompassing a concert in Disney Hall that was broadcast live to venues in five other cities in California and livestreamed online.

Eric Whitacre

Grammy® Award-winning composer and conductor Eric Whitacre is one of the world's most performed living composers. His works have been programmed worldwide by millions of amateur and professional performers, while his groundbreaking Virtual Choirs have united singers from over 120 different countries. Eric, a graduate of the prestigious Juilliard School of Music, is presently Artist in Residence with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, following five years as Composer in Residence at the University of Cambridge, UK. As conductor of the Eric Whitacre Singers, he has released such chart-topping albums including *Light and Gold* and *Water Night*. In high demand as guest conductor, he has drawn capacity audiences to concerts with the Netherlands Radio Choir, London Symphony Orchestra, Flemish Radio Choir, and Minnesota Orchestra. His creative versatility shines through collaborations with legendary Hollywood composer



Hans Zimmer and British pop icons Laura Mvula, Imogen Heap and Annie Lennox, and major classical commissions for the BBC Proms, Minnesota Orchestra, Rundfunkchor Berlin, The Tallis Scholars, Chanticleer, Los Angeles Master Chorale and The King's Singers.

A charismatic speaker, Eric Whitacre has given keynote addresses for many Fortune 500 companies and global institutions, from Apple and Google to the World Economic Forum in Davos and the United Nations Speaker's Programme. His two mainstage talks at the hugely influential TED

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conference in Long Beach CA received standing ovations. Eric's symphonic work, *Deep Field*, became the foundation for a pioneering audiovisual collaboration with NASA, the Space Telescope Science Institute, Music Productions and 59 Productions. First seen at Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral (Florida), the film, *Deep Field – The Impossible Magnitude of our Universe*, has since been seen in concert halls and music festivals around the world, at the World Science Festival and in multiple museums and planetariums.

Charles Anthony Silvestri

Poet, author, composer, and speaker Charles Anthony Silvestri has worked with other artists from all over the world to create texts tailor-made for their commissions and specific artistic needs. He enjoys the challenge of solving these creative problems and has provided custom choral texts, opera libretti, program notes and other writing for composers including Eric Whitacre, Ola Gjeilo, Kim Arnesen, and Dan Forrest, and for ensembles ranging from high schools to the Houston Grand Opera, from the King's Singers to the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, from Westminster Choir College to Westminster Abbey.

As a clinician, Silvestri speaks to choirs, classes, and concert audiences about his works, the creative process, the marriage of words and music, and about his collaborative relationships with composers. He is the author of three books, including *A Silver Thread* (GIA 2019), a retrospective of almost 20 years



of his lyric poetry. He teaches Ancient and Medieval History at Washburn University and lives in Lawrence, KS.

Lisa Edwards

Lisa Edwards is a widely sought after pianist, keyboard collaborator and teacher, based in Los Angeles. She is currently in her 19th season as pianist/music assistant with Los Angeles Master Chorale, under the direction of Grant Gershon, the Kiki and David Gindler Musical Director. As a project collaborator, Ms. Edwards is frequently involved with preparing productions with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Such projects include John Adams' operas, *El Niño*, *Nixon in China*, *A Flowering Tree*, and *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, as well as Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*, Stravinsky's *Persephone*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, Shostakovich's Prologue to *Orango*, and Bernstein's *Mass*, among others. Performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Green Umbrella series include, *War of the Worlds* by Annie Gosfield, and Lou Harrison's opera, *Young Caesar*. Other performances include, Steve Reich's *You Are (Variations)* at Alice Tully Hall, Stravinsky's *Les Noces* at Walt Disney

Concert Hall, and Ian Krouse's *Lorca, Child of the Moon* at the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts.

Ms. Edwards is in demand appearing with Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, as well as other national professional orchestras and choruses. Currently, she holds positions as Faculty Artist at Idyllwild Summer Arts, pianist for Vox Femina Los Angeles, organist/pianist at San Marino Community Church, organist/pianist at Stephen Wise Temple in Bel Air, and pianist at Congregation Kol Ami in West Hollywood. Previously, she also held a faculty position at California State University Long Beach, where she taught song repertoire, worked as vocal coach with undergraduate and graduate students, and collaborated on vocal and



chamber music recitals with faculty and students. Additionally, Ms. Edwards has held faculty positions at Glendale Community College and Pasadena City College. On disc, she can be heard on two Nonesuch recordings of Steve Reich's music, *You Are (Variations)* and *Daniel Variations*. Obtaining her Master of Music Degree from the University of Southern California in Keyboard Collaborative Arts, Ms. Edwards graduated with honors, and received her undergraduate degree in Piano Performance from University of North Texas.



Jeffrey Zeigler

Jeffrey Zeigler is one of the most innovative and versatile cellists of our time. He has been described as “fiery”, and a player who performs “with unforced simplicity and beauty of tone” by the New York Times. Acclaimed for his independent streak, Zeigler has commissioned dozens of works, and is admired as a potent collaborator and unique improviser. Zeigler is the recipient of the Avery Fisher Prize, the Polar Music Prize, the President’s Merit Award from the National Academy of Recorded Arts (Grammy’s), the Chamber Music America National Service Award and The Asia Society’s Cultural Achievement Award.

Zeigler’s multifaceted career has led to collaborations and tours with a wide array of artists from Yo-Yo Ma and Roomful of Teeth to Tanya Tagaq and Hauschka, and from Philip Glass and John Corigliano to Laurie Anderson and John Zorn. He has also performed as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Royal Danish

Radio Symphony and the Ulster Orchestra under the batons of JoAnn Falletta, Dennis Russell Davies, Peter Oundjian and Dmitry Sitkovetsky.



Mr. Zeigler has released dozens of recordings for Nonesuch Records, Deutsche Grammophon, Cantaloupe and Smithsonian Folkways and has appeared with Norah Jones on her album *Not Too Late* on Blue Note Records. Zeigler can also be heard on the film soundtrack for Paolo Sorrentino’s Academy Award winning film, *La Grande Bellezza*, as well as Clint Mansell’s Golden Globe nominated soundtrack to the Darren Aronofsky film, *The Fountain*. Zeigler can also be seen making an on screen cameo performing the music of Paola Prestini in Season 4 of the Amazon Prime’s Golden Globe Award winning series *Mozart in the Jungle*.

As a champion of interdisciplinary collaboration, Zeigler is the cellist of the vocal punk band (*M*)iyamoto is *Black Enough* alongside slam poetry champion Roger Bonair-Agard, Rome Prize recipient Andy Akiho and drummer Sean Dixon. Zeigler is also featured in a new cello opera entitled *Old Man and the Sea* directed by Karmina Silec with music by Paola Prestini and libretto by Royce Vavrek.

Jeffrey Zeigler was the cellist of the internationally renowned Kronos Quartet for eight seasons. During his tenure, Zeigler had the opportunity to collaborate with a wide range of luminaries from Henryk Gorecki and Steve Reich to Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn and Tom Waits.





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Los Angeles Master Chorale

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Eric Whitacre

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And finally, to poet and lyricist Charles Anthony Silvestri: There are no words, my brother. I cherish our friendship and our work together more than I could ever express.

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