



C U S I N G S
**PEOPLE'S
CHORUS**

A New Dawn

featured at

**2025 Illinois Music
Education Conference**

Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025

A Note From the Director

The title *A New Dawn* encapsulates the transformative journey of the People's Chorus, a choir that has evolved from its modest beginnings as the Parkland College Chamber Singers into a thriving, independent ensemble with over 75 passionate singers. This title reflects the spirit of renewal and growth that defines both the choir's history and its future. Like the break of a new day, *A New Dawn* symbolizes the birth of something fresh and vibrant, filled with promise and possibilities. It signifies the journey of a community brought together through the power of music—an inclusive, non-auditioned group that welcomes all, yet reaches impressive levels of musical achievement.

This theme resonates throughout the concert program, where each piece carries its own message of rebirth, hope, and the dawning of beauty. Elaine Hagenberg's *Alleluia* is a powerful expression of joy and gratitude, its soaring melodies and lush harmonies embodying a sense of spiritual renewal and awakening. This same energy is echoed in B. E. Boykin's *Holding the Light*, a work that speaks of perseverance through darkness and the ability to emerge stronger, bathed in new light. Together, these two pieces represent the strength and spirit of the People's Chorus—a group that has transformed from a small choir into a major artistic force in Champaign Urbana, bringing light to those around it.

In Ola Gjeilo's *Ubi Caritas*, the audience is invited to experience a timeless message of love and compassion. Its serene, almost otherworldly tones connect the present to the past, linking the new with the ancient in a celebration of humanity's enduring ability to create beauty and foster unity. This timelessness is similarly reflected in Katerina Gimon's *Apple Tree*, a contemplative and evocative piece that draws upon natural imagery to explore ideas of growth, change, and renewal, much like the development of the People's Chorus itself.

Gwyneth Walker's *I Thank You God* brings this message of renewal to the forefront with its celebration of nature and divine gratitude. It recognizes the beauty of the earth and the blessings of existence, symbolizing a sense of spiritual and personal rebirth that mirrors the choir's journey. Each of these works comes together to form a cohesive narrative of new beginnings, awakening, and the transformative power of music.

A New Dawn not only reflects the fresh start of this concert season but also the hopeful future of the People's Chorus, as it continues to grow and shape the musical landscape of its community. The choir's expansion and achievements serve as a testament to the power of choral music to bring people together, to inspire, and to create something greater than the sum of its parts. With its inclusive spirit, high artistic standards, and commitment to community, the People's Chorus represents the dawning of a new era for choral music in Champaign Urbana, where everyone has a voice, and every voice contributes to the light.

Dr. Frank Gallo
Artistic Director
CU Sings: People's Chorus



C U S I N G S
**PEOPLE'S
CHORUS**

Dr. Frank Gallo, Director
Hannah Freeman-Choi, Accompanist

Alleluia

(EH-1007)

Music by Elaine Hagenberg
Text by Saint Augustine

Ubi Caritas

(WW-1386)

Music by Ola Gjeilo
Text by Paulinus of Aquileia

Apple Tree

(HL-01167727)

Words & Music by Aurora Aksnes, Odd Martin
Skaalnse and Magnus Skylstad
Arranged by Katerina Gimon

Holding the Light

(GP-B022)

Music B. E. Boykin
Text by Stuart Kestenbaum

I Thank You God

(ECS- 5977)

Music by Gwyneth Walker
Text by E.E. Cummings

CHOIR MEMBERS

Sopranos

Drea Abbas
Natalie Allison
Linda Blaschek
Natalie Brown
Cynthia Carroll
Suzanne D'Andria
Mariah Davis
Dezarae Dowers
Rosalie Dowers
Amy Fahey
Bailey Ford
Megan Fry ++
Jody Hanger
Conny Hauf
Anna Kasten
Chris Kunka
Hailey Miller
Amy Rice
Janice Rutherford
Deb Sederwall
Claire Stelter
Lake Stewart
Pamela Van Wyk

Apple Tree Instrumentalists

+ Muted Low Drum
++ Cajon
Sticks
Electric Bass
Claps - Hannah Freeman-Choi

Altos

Linda Bailey
Kelly Boeger
Julie Bumpus
Stephanie Craft
Ellen de Waard
Lisa Diaz
Cathy Dunafin
Miranda Ecker
Becky Forsythe
Amy Frasca
Kimberly Freemon
Rhonda Gordon
Tanja Hodges
Sarah Jacobson
Janelle Jorgensen
Lisa Kinderman
Katriena Knights
Amber LaBau
Jessica Lagios
Emily McKown
Lora McLaughlin
Margaret Miller
Olivia Moline
Zayda Reyes
Teresa Rupsch
Kristy Stoker
Jennifer Sutton
Jael Thorp
Katie Voss

Tenors

Orev Bartov
Hans Blaschek
Jim Bready
Bobbi Jo Dannenfeldt +
Brian Ford
Jorge Garcia
Joseph Hincliffe
Kelsey McClurg-Pyle
Excellence Onalundula
Shelbee Owens
Pam Splitstoesser
James Stelter

Basses

Jedediah Alvey
Jerry Carden
Felix Chan
Scott Drone-Silvers
Anthony Fanelli
Chris Fosnot #
Samuel Gilbert
Samuel Grayson
Nate Harroun
Cam Hurley
Jacob Johnston ##
Justin Lee
Chaz Pyle
Timothy S Thorp
Ryan True
Gavin Ward

LYRICS

Alleluia

Music by Elaine Hagenberg
Text by Saint Augustine

All shall be Amen and Alleluia.
We shall rest and we shall see.
We shall see and we shall know.
We shall know and we shall love.
Behold our end which is no end.

Ubi Caritas

Music by Ola Gjeilo
Text by Paulinus of Aquileia

Where charity and love are,
God is there.
The love of Christ has gathered us
together.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Let us revere and love the living God.
And from a sincere heart let us love
one another.
Amen

Apple Tree

Words & Music by Aurora Aksnes, Odd
Martin Skaalnse and Magnus Skjelstad
Arranged by Katerina Gimon

All of my life I've been hunting.
I've been a girl, I've been a boy.
Digging my feet into the ground like an apple tree.
Wanting to live with a purpose.
Skin is a word, love is not a sin.
People are bad, people are good.
Just like the moon is a stone.
But it's a star when it's dark and how she's hiding.
If you've seen what a heart is, you've seen its color.
If I ever knew how we could guide it,
I would take care of its children, become their mother.
If I ever knew how we could hide it, hide it.

Let her save the world, she is just a girl.
Let him save them all, he is just a boy.
Let her save the world, she is just a girl.
Let him save them all, he is just a boy.

Hunger is quiet if you do it right.
Hunter is loud and predictable,
Scaring away every prey so they are gone
Before the hunter arrives.
Would you be kind and put away your sword?
You cannot cut away what we got.
You cannot kill what we are.
We are not here in physical form.
You've seen where the knife is, its dark location.
If I ever knew how we could fight it,
I would cut into our anger, make pure emotion
If I ever knew how we could hide it, hide it.

Can you carry the weight of mortality?
The explosions around you are your symphony.

LYRICS

Holding the Light

Music by Gwyneth Walker

Text by E.E. Cummings

Gather up whatever is
glittering in the gutter,
whatever has tumbled
in the waves or fallen
in fames out of the sky,

for it's not only our
hearts that are broken,
but the heart
of the world as well.
Stitch it back together.

Make a place where
the day speaks to the night
and the earth speaks to the sky.
Whether we created God
or God created us

it all comes down to this:
In our imperfect world
we are meant to repair
and stitch together
what beauty there is, stitch it

with compassion and wire.
See how everything
we have made gathers
the light inside itself
and overflows? A blessing.

I Thank You God

Music by Gwyneth Walker

Text by E.E. Cummings

I thank You God for most this amazing day:
for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and the blue true dream of sky;
and for everything which is natural
which is infinite
which is yes,
I thank You God, I thank You God,
I thank You God, I thank you God
for most this amazing day.
I who have died am alive again today.
And this is the sun's birthday;
this is the birthday of life and love and wings:
and of the gay great happening illimitably earth.
I who have died am alive again today
I thank You God.
How should any human being doubt You?
How should tasting touching any human merely
being doubt You?
How should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any human merely being doubt You?
doubt unimaginable You?
lifted from the no of all nothing, doubt You?
Now the ears of my ears awake.
now the eyes of my eyes are opened.
I thank You God, I thank You God,
I thank you God, I thank You
I who have died am alive again today.
I thank You God, I thank You God,
I thank You God, I thank you God
for most this amazing day.
I thank You God!

STAFF



Dr. Frank Gallo, DMA

Artistic Director

Dr. Frank Gallo's musical journey began with early immersion in classical piano, voice, and trumpet. Fueled by his passion for music, he embarked on advanced studies in choral conducting, guided by mentors like Robert Shafer, Péter Erdei, and Edward Bolkovac.

Gallo's exceptional talent has led to frequent

invitations as a guest conductor, presenter, and composer. Highlights include leading ILMEA district choirs and the Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE) National Chamber Choir. He was recently an invited clinician at the European Music Educators Winter Conference in Stuttgart, Germany.

Dr. Gallo currently serves as the Chair of Graduate Music at Lakeland University's Summer Kodály Graduate Music Program in Wisconsin and Adjunct Music Faculty at Parkland College in Champaign. Concurrently, he holds the role of Artistic Director of the CU Sings: People's Chorus in Urbana.

The past recipient of OAKE's Ruth Boshkoff Composition Prize, Dr. Gallo's works are published by Boosey & Hawkes, Colla Voce, and Hal Leonard. Expanding his educational repertoire, Gallo has embraced a new role as Lecturer and Assistant Director of Public Speaking Instruction at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign. He finds joy in bridging the worlds of choral music performance and public speaking, highlighting their complementary nature, and sharing his passion for both disciplines.

STAFF



Hannah Freeman-Choi

Accompanist

Hannah Freeman-Choi is the collaborative pianist for CU Sings: People's Chorus. She focused her studies on piano performance before expanding her expertise into piano pedagogy, earning a second master's degree in the field. With a strong passion for collaboration, Hannah is an active collaborative pianist,

frequently performing with musicians across various genres. She is dedicated to fostering musical connections and enriching the performance experience through her work in both solo and ensemble settings.



Emily McKown

Operations Director

Emily serves as the Operations Director for CU Sings, managing the behind-the-scenes work that keeps the organization running smoothly—filing paperwork, paying bills, and handling logistics. With a passion for bringing people together through music, Emily brings that same dedication to the nuts and bolts of our operations.

Outside of CU Sings, Emily is pursuing two master's degrees: a Master of Divinity in Interreligious Chaplaincy and a Master of Arts in Theology. A lifelong singer-songwriter, Emily loves music of all varieties, performing in folk, country and pop ensembles across Champaign-Urbana.



C U S I N G S
PEOPLE'S
CHORUS

MISSION

CU Sings unites people through the power of singing together, creating inclusive, accessible, and high-quality musical programming. We affirm the belonging of all people and connect diverse groups within Champaign-Urbana by fostering a safe, collaborative choral community.

VISION

We aim to empower individuals from all backgrounds to grow, both as musicians and active members of their community, through accessible music education, meaningful cultural collaboration, diverse programming, and sustainable organizational growth.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chris Fosnot - President

Amber LaBau - Vice President

Amy Frasca - Secretary

Kelsey McClurg-Pyle - Treasurer