



ENSEMBLE ALTERA

Christopher Lowrey, director

feminine voices

*featuring music by women composers &
Benjamin Britten's 'Ceremony of Carols'*

16 NOV 2024 | 7PM

*St. Paul's Parish
Cambridge, MA*

17 NOV 2024 | 3PM

*Blessed Sacrament Church
Providence, RI*

ENSEMBLEALTERA.COM



UPCOMING SEASON

JANUARY 2025

The Orchestra of St. Luke's presents **Mein Traum**

Christian Gerhaher, baritone

Ying Fang, soprano

Ensemble Altera

Raphaël Pichon, conductor

Featuring music by Schubert, Schumann, and Weber

Thu 23 January at 8:00 PM, Carnegie Hall, New York, NY

SEPTEMBER 2025

Ensemble Altera presents **The Four Elements**

Music inspired by Air, Earth, Fire, and Water.

Works by Hildegard, Monteverdi, Whitacre, Howells, & Lauridsen

DECEMBER 2025

Ensemble Altera presents Handel's **Messiah**

A boldly re-imagined chamber version of the timeless classic.

19 December 2025 | Bristol, RI | 7PM

20 December 2025 | Wickford, RI | 7PM

21 December 2025 | Newport, RI | 1PM & 3:30PM

To learn more about all our exciting artistic activities, both in-person and digital, be sure to sign up for our newsletter at:

WWW.ENSEMBLEALTERA.COM/SUBSCRIBE



A NOTE *from the* DIRECTOR

It is impossible to escape the feeling of uncertainty and instability at this moment in our history. After what felt like an interminable period of American stasis in the early part of the 21st century, the events of the last decade have accelerated with blinding fierceness. In the face of this tumult, our institutions are holding - just - but, they are fraying under the oppressive weight of distrust, resentment, mutual unintelligibility, and smoking empathy. Amid this maelstrom, the cultural arts, especially classical music, swirl and teeter. It is perhaps tempting, as during the panic of the pandemic, to retreat to our corners, lick our wounds, or stroke our whiskers, roll up the sidewalks, and batten down the hatches. I refuse to succumb to this resentment or cynicism. It is precisely at moments as fraught as these that I become ever *more* convinced that all of us - performers, audience, donors, critics, lovers of this vast treasure trove of music - must emerge from our camps, huddle together, and rebuild what has fallen and fortify what is crumbling of our common life.

However exasperated we may feel, music offers us rare and essential refuge. Where else can our loudest objections be hushed by the beauty of human voices teeming in unisonic purpose? We must take the long view, the human view, the American view. Ferocious argumentation about the future of our republic, for all its confrontational rawness, is nothing new to us, and is something we must practice and messily improve at. Our ideals, tarnished as they may be, will not cleanse themselves. And the possibility of consensus, as elusive as it may seem to us right now, lurks somewhere in our hidden hearts. I've been thinking intensely about the painful disputes of our national past, as Ensemble Altera embarks on our most ambitious project yet. For 2026, we are commissioning young composer Piers Connor Kennedy and a diverse group of librettists to write an extraordinary new piece called *Declarations*. On the occasion of its quarter-millennium anniversary, we will candidly examine the extraordinary text of the *Declaration of Independence*, its audacious assertion of human rights, its abiding influence on democracy at home and abroad, and the way its significant shortcomings have impacted the lives of Black Americans, Native Americans, and American immigrants. As the United States approaches its 250th birthday, I believe that the twin tasks of celebrating and critiquing ourselves are not at odds with each other; and are indeed essential for collective healing and growth.

Our mighty aspirations, artistic and social, would come to nothing without an excelsior team: our Board, led by Simon Holt, who took a chance on this dream; our Treasurer, Charlie Oliver, who always finds a way to make the impossible practical; our Production Manager, Tim Harbold, who enables the visits of our international artists; Michelle Caetano, who finds a comfortable home for everyone from far away; Donna Lowrey, who patiently transcribes all of our business; Michael Garrepy, who not only writes expert choral music, but absorbs my eccentricities each day we work together on this juggernaut; Olivia Kleyla, who designs our stylish digital media and our exquisite programs; and Rachel Garrepy, who liaises with our artists to ensure that our weeklong projects go off with astonishingly few hitches for an organization of our size.

I also want to acknowledge the hospitality of our many hosts who make Alterans feel at home here in New England, all those who volunteer as ushers, our donors who sustain our vision, and you, our loyal audience who turns up to events with enthusiasm, buys our CDs, chatters about us to your friends, and shares our content online. Our world revolves around you and nothing means more than hearing from you.

Yours in Music,
Christopher Lowrey
Founder & Artistic Director

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Michelle Caetano, Cumberland, RI
Michael Garrepy, Warwick, RI, *Artistic Advisor*
Tim Harbold, Boston, MA
Simon Holt, Stonington, CT, *Chair*
Phyllis Hoffman, Boston, MA
Terence Karaniuk, Pawtucket, RI
Gregory J. King, Baltimore, MD
Jared Kornblatt, Boston, MA

Christopher Lowrey, Johnston, RI, *Artistic Director*
Donna Lowrey, Johnston, RI, *Secretary*
Mark Meyer, Dallas, TX
Trevor S. Neal, Newport, RI
Reverend Janet Cooper Nelson, Providence, RI
Charles Oliver, Attleboro, MA, *Treasurer*
Dwight E. Porter, Stoneham, MA
Camilla de Rochambeau, North Kingstown, RI
Reverend Benjamin Straley, Providence, RI

2024 DONORS

Ensemble Altera gratefully recognizes the support of our friends and donors who have made this program possible. Donor listings are current as of November 13, 2024.

Cherubim, \$5,000+

Lyle Confrey
Scot & Sue Jones
Mary Phillips
Epp Sonin

Angels, \$1,000-\$4,999

Terence Karaniuk
Mark Meyer
Jeffrey and Alisa Steadman
Simon & Alison Holt
Charles & Wendy Oliver
Joel Goloskie
Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
Richard & Mary Kenny
Julian Bullitt
Donna & Michael Lowrey
Harishabd Khalsa
Gregory King
Stephan Lane
Jim Seymour
Rhode Island Foundation
Michelle Caetano
Michael Touloumtzis & Paula Foresman
Rockland Trust Company

Conductor, \$500-\$999

Jillian Siqueland
Timothy Harbold
Austin Fleming
Heidi Halbur
Daniel Ludden

Conductor, cont.

Paul Baker
Peter Laarman
Jan Tullis
RI Philharmonic Orchestra &
Music School
Carla M. Stebbins

Soloist, \$250-\$499

Robert Nolan
Camilla de Rochambeau
Martha Parks
Sarah McCormack
Pierre Masse
Brad Swing
Rich Bourgeois
Sue Moore
Fr Spencer Reece
Martin Cowley
Janet Cooper Nelson
Eugenie West

Ensemble, \$100-\$249

Linda Berg
Paula Fontes
Peter & Paula Fahlman
Lonice Thomas
Susan Maycock
Phyllis Hoffman
Benjamin Heasley
Justin Meyer
Jolle Greenleaf

Ensemble, cont.

Elaine Killough
Patricia M. Shippee
Thou Yang
Hazel Lowrey
John Maloney
Robert Frenzel-Berra
Matthew Whitman
Mary Brodeur
Madeline Grimo
Elizabeth Ehrhardt
Sisters of Faithful Companions
of Jesus

Artist, \$75-\$99

Betty Shea
Robert Utter
Mary Cantone
Nancy Brown
Rebecca Rudy
Anna Berman
Peter Berton
Wendy Schnur
Walter Galloway
Tom Williams
Anonymous
Diane Walker
Christopher Garrepy
Susan Hall
Katie Kleyla
Josiah Carroll
Daphne Burt
David Raines
Betsey Rice
Michael Grillo

FRIENDS of ALTERA



Christine Noel
Artistic Director

PROVIDENCESINGERS



2024-25 Season

December 15, 2024 - *Messiah*
with the RI Philharmonic
Christine Noel conducting

May 9-10, 2025 - *Brahms, Requiem*
with the RI Philharmonic
Robert Spano conducting

March 30, 2025 - *Annelies*
libretto based on
The Diary of Anne Frank
WaterFire Arts Center

June 24, 2025 - *Carmina Burana*
Community Sing
Kenneth Griffith conducting
Carter Center

ProvidenceSingers.org



Christopher Lowrey, *director* Lishan Tan, *harp* Michael Garrepy, *organ*

SOPRANO 1

Hannah Ely
Rachel Garrepy
Rebecca Myers
Sarah Vitale

SOPRANO 2

Clare Brussel
Eleonore Cockerham
Katelyn Grace Jackson
Elijah McCormack

ALTO

Kristen Dubenion-Smith
Olivia Kleyla
Kim Leeds
Christopher Lowrey
Jenna Hernandez-McLean

feminine voices

CONCERT PROGRAM

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| O viridissima, virga | Hildegard von Bingen (c. 1098-1179) |
| Welcome Joy and Welcome Sorrow I. 'Welcome Joy and welcome sorrow' IV. 'Shed no tear' | Imogen Holst (1907-1984) |
| 'Hymn to the Dawn' from <i>Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, 3rd Group</i> | Gustav Holst (1874-1934) |
| Magnificat from <i>St. Paul's Service</i> | Joanna Marsh (b. 1970) |
| Ave Maria from <i>Three Latin Motets</i> | Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951) |
| There is no rose | Adrian Peacock (b. 1962) |
| I sing of a Maiden | Ian Shaw (b. 1960) |
| 'O Maria quam pulchra es' from <i>Sacri Musicali Affetti</i> | Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677) |
| Coventry Carol | Kerensa Briggs (b. 1990) |
| Jesus Christ the Apple Tree | Elizabeth Poston (1905-1987) |

interval

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 'Lento' from <i>Sonate pour harpe</i> | Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983) |
| Ceremony of Carols i. Procession ii. Wolcum Yole! iii. There is no Rose iv a. That Yongë Child iv b. Balulalow v. As Dew in Aprille vi. This Little Babe vii. Interlude viii. In Freezing Winter Night ix. Spring Carol x. Adam lay i-bounden xi. Recession | Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) |
| Dancing Day No. 1. Prelude No. 8. 'Tomorrow shall be my dancing day' | trad., arr. by John Rutter |

PROGRAM NOTES

'Feminine Voices' have long possessed the power to enchant, seduce, ennoble, and overpower. From the Sirens to Scheherezade to Salome, witches to Wollstonecraft, the feminine voice, spoken, sung, or written, has, for millennia, been coded both as subordinate to the masculine, but also as threatening to male power. In a captivating song, an entrancing poem, a compelling story, or, most dangerously of all, in sustained rhetorical argument, long thought to be the exclusive province of educated men, women could wrest back their agency, at first haltingly and temporarily, and in recent years with sustained and surprising force. And, yet, relics of this ancient and defining dialectic remain with us, passed down from the Medievals through the Moderns. Nowhere can this heritage be observed as vividly as in classical music, where the feminine voice has been both enduringly disempowered - see the astonishing lack, until recently, of female conductors, composers, and stage directors - and inversely, continually fetishized. It's no coincidence that the 'divo' has never stirred our cultural imagination quite like the diva, or that the unbroken voices of boys and *castrati* (as well as their spiritual heirs, countertenors) activate and excite some ancient recesses of our collective unconscious. The theme for our program coalesces around this pockmarked, though perfectable, inheritance, tracing a map of historical exceptions that prove the rule, and exploring the terrain of emerging feminine voices of today. I have interspersed works by no fewer than eight women with music - such as *Ceremony of Carols* - perhaps better known to us, entirely for treble choir, but initially conceived for women's choir, with the hope of embracing the many enthralling possibilities of the feminine voice.

When we think of exceptional feminine voices in the history of music, no composer cuts a greater figure than Saint Hildegard of Bingen (c.1098-1179). A German Benedictine abbess who became Mother Superior of her order, Hildegard was so ahead of her time she ought to be considered the forerunner of the archetypal renaissance man: the medieval woman. A writer, philosopher, dramatist, mystic, visionary, medical theorist and practitioner during the High Middle Ages, she was also a prolific composer of sacred plainchant, and uniquely wrote both the melodies of these chants as well as their texts. More of her music survives than of any other composer from the Middle Ages, and she is the most-recorded known composer of the entire medieval period. Hildegard's seventy-odd musical compositions, published as the 'Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations', are all monophonic sacred vocal works, but they are chants with a twist. Brimming with brilliant poetic images, they feature wide-ranging and ornamented melodies with surprising intervals, conjuring a mood referred to by scholars as the 'ecstatic'. **O viridissima, Virga** is a salutation to the Virgin Mary and is one of the few surviving chants by Hildegard in the mixolydian mode. Its alluring poetry paints the Virgin Mother in familiar tropes of natural viridity: the fresh green branch, from which the Christ Child blossoms, lavished by windy gusts (*ventoso flabro*) and sunlight's warmth (*calor solis*).

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) is perhaps regarded as the most important British composer of the 20th century, but less appreciated is his reputation as a mentor to younger musicians and composers. One such fascinating partnership emerged between Britten and Gustav Holst's daughter, Imogen Holst (1907-1984). The pair had the good fortune to meet at Dartington Hall in Devonshire, England, where Holst served as Director of Music during Britten's and his partner Peter Pear's many trips to give recitals there. Their collaboration yielded several commissions from Holst for Britten's own Aldeburgh Festival, including, in 1951, **Welcome Joy & Welcome Sorrow**, a setting of six poems by John Keats, self-consciously modeled on Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*; and, a year later, an invitation to orchestrate Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*. The cycle evokes the rhythms and renewal of the natural world; and the first and last movements mark the turning of the calendar so intimately associated with this season.

Joanna Marsh (b. 1970), who divides her time between England and Dubai, was among the first of the University of Cambridge's female organ scholars (at Sidney Sussex College). It was during her time in post that she cultivated an enduring fascination with the music of Elizabethan composers such as Weelkes and Byrd. The canticles of the *St Paul's Service*, premiered in 2007 by Nova Aurora under countertenor Patrick Craig, are peppered with the idioms of church and court music of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, recalling the keyboard figurations, dance rhythms, and gestures of the viol consort, all prominent hallmarks of the Tudor musical lexicon. The **Magnificat**, traditionally the first of the two canticles sung in the Anglican service of Evensong, the Vespers service in Catholic and Lutheran practice, and Matins in the Eastern Orthodox Church ('Ode of the Theotokos'), is known colloquially as the "Song of Mary". The text is derived from a scene in the Gospel of Luke, during the visitation of Mary to her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth (the child who will become John the Baptist). Upon hearing Mary's greeting, the child stirs in her womb, to which Elizabeth responds with much of what will form the second half of the *Ave Maria*. Mary responds in kind with the text of what develops into what we recognize as the *Magnificat*.

Treble-rich settings of the *Ave Maria* itself abound (along with other Marian texts such as *Ave Regina Caelorum*, *Ave Maris Stella*, *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, *Salve Regina* and *Tota Pulchra es Maria*), with hundreds of examples from the late Middle Ages through to today. One 21st-century example is the plaintive upper-voices setting by Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951). Vocal writing has occupied a central position in McDowall's compositional catalog, music that has been described as constantly tweaking the ear with a "range of spicy rhythms and colours" (Gramophone Magazine). Her setting of the ***Ave Maria***, a haunting and humble supplication to the Virgin, harkens back to Renaissance exemplars with its embellished chant-like lines, chains of unfurling suspensions, and modal harmonies, with a spiky, modernist twist.

The *Trinity Carol Roll* is a parchment scroll dating from early fifteenth-century East Anglia, England, which, when unfurled, measures as tall as a human. It is the earliest-known collection of English polyphonic carols; and contains thirteen carols in Middle English and Latin, set to texts such as the well-known ***There is no rose***. Our world-premiere setting is by Adrian Peacock (b. 1962), one of the world's most sought-after recording producers of choral music today - who, incidentally, produced the world-premiere recording of this piece for treble voices with Ensemble Altera, due out in November of next year (watch this space) - and for many years was a low bass in illustrious choirs including at Westminster Cathedral in London. His harmonic language recalls the late Medieval period through the use of *fauxbourdon*. The word, from the French for 'false drone', is a technique of musical harmonization used in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. With each verse, the texture thickens, until the climactic, clarion fanfare at "the angels sungen".

The influence of the aforementioned *Ceremony of Carols* cannot be overstated. It is a work so cherished and revered, it single-handedly sprouted a cottage industry of music for treble choir and harp, a practice that echoes down to our time. Another such example in this lineage is ***I Sing of a Maiden*** by Ian Shaw (b. 1960), which sets the same text as the fifth movement of *Ceremony*, and serves as a kind of loving commentary on or extension of Britten's own musical ideas. Unlike Britten's setting, the choral scoring is reduced to a single soprano line; but that melody is spun out in fascinating directions, full of whimsical intervallic leaps and cheeky harmonic kinks.

The reputation enjoyed by Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677) in dramatic music (secular cantatas, madrigals, etc.) is well established, but her credentials as a composer of sacred music were long neglected. It was only with the relatively recent rediscovery of a single volume of her sacred music, *Sacri Musicali Affetti*, that her bona fides in this terrain have latterly been burnished. Without the essential patronage of the church, Strozzi was forced to scrape together her own means to publish eight volumes – rumors persist that her gainful employment took the form of the oldest profession – and, from under the weight of these prejudices, it has taken centuries for her reputation to be justly restored. **O Maria quam pulchra es** is baroque prosody and vocalism at its transcendent apogee. Strozzi paints the textual references by turns with billowing rapture and rollicking piety.

Kerensa Briggs is an award-winning composer specializing in choral music. Her writing has been described in the *New York Times* as “poignant, ambivalent, quietly devastating music.” Her love of choral music emanates from her choral background, having sung in the Gloucester Cathedral Youth Choir and the Choir of King’s College London, where she held a choral scholarship and undertook a Master’s in Composition. In her enchanting setting written for Ensemble Altera of the sixteenth-century **Coventry Carol** – a lullaby depicting the story of the Massacre of the Innocents, in which Herod ordered all male infants under the age of two in Bethlehem to be killed – Briggs more closely evokes the atmosphere of a lullaby than the traditional melody, and by beginning the text at the second verse, emphasizes the sisterhood of mothers who mourn their slain sons. The effect is all the more devastating in its quiet, effortless beauty.

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree is the best known of a relatively short list of compositions by Elizabeth Poston (1905–1987). It started life in her *Children’s Song Book*, and burst off the page to prominence at the 1967 *Carols for Kings* service (the annual truncated television version of the *Nine Lessons & Carols* service broadcast on radio around the world). Inspired by the words of a New England poem that she happened upon while traveling there, she set the text to an arresting melody in what could be described as a spare and sincere style inflected by American folk tradition, notably shape-note singing. Of the composition she wrote “the Spirit bloweth where it listeth. I wrote it down immediately and inevitably, almost without thinking, on the nearest scrap to hand at the time, which happened to be a garage bill.” Our upper-voices version condenses the affecting harmonies into the treble octave; and makes use of her suggested, but seldom performed, canon in its concluding verse.

Germaine Tailleferre was a French composer and the only female member of the celebrated group of composers known as Les Six, though during her own lifetime she was perhaps more celebrated as a friend of these composers than one of them in her own right. Much of her music, tragically, was burned by the Nazis to heat her house, which was commandeered during the occupation of World War II; and of the remainder, only some was published during her lifetime. Her music was neglected, not only because of her gender, but also perhaps because it was largely light and joyful. In her own words, “I have had a very difficult life, you know. Only I do not like to talk about it, because I write happy music as a release.” The *Lento* movement of her **Sonate Pour Harpe** initially seems to share a kinship with the introverted, undulating harmonies of another French composer, Erik Satie; but it soon asserts a more joyful expressionism.

Despite his palpable fondness for the timbre of the boy soprano, the **Ceremony of Carols** by Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) was initially conceived, in his own words, as “7 Christmas Carols for women’s voices and Harp! Very sweet and chockfull of charm!” Few might know that the original core of the work was premiered by the women of the Choir of Fleet Street, at Norwich Castle in East Anglia; and it featured the soprano, Margaret Ritchie, and harpist, Gwendolen Mason. The genesis and evolution of *Ceremony*

was a winding one. While touring the United States with his partner, Peter Pears, Britten was marooned there as Great Britain entered the war in September 1939. Despite his ardent pacifism and conscientious objection to Britain's war footing, he nevertheless remained homesick throughout his American stay until he was finally able to make the return journey by boat to Europe in March, 1942. Having had many of his manuscripts confiscated by customs officials prior to the crossing, he furiously sketched out from memory several half-completed and finished works including the famous *Hymn to St. Cecilia* (patron saint of music, with whom Britten shared a birthday); his *Clarinet Concerto* for Benny Goodman (eventually lost!); and a setting of several medieval and Renaissance texts from an anthology of poems he had acquired in Halifax, Nova Scotia (clearly a theme for traveling composers) for treble voices and harp, the first draft of what would become *Ceremony of Carols*. Following the premiere of the initial seven movements, Britten framed the piece by a processional and recessional, with optional harp accompaniment, of the Vespers antiphon for Christmas Day, *Hodie Christus natus est* ("Today Christ is born") to which he affixed a stylistically convincing *Alleluia*. A year after the premiere, the haunting mezzo solo *That yongë child* was appended along with the *Interlude* for the harp, which quotes and develops on the antiphon. By this stage, several performances of *Ceremony* had been given by boy choirs and it is evident in Britten's letters - and the fact that the Welsh boys of Morrision School were chosen to record the work on Decca - that it might have become his preferred sound: "I think the little boys were enchanting - the occasional roughness was easily outweighed by their freshness and naivety - something very special." Whether *Ceremony of Carols* is performed by women, boys, or even mixed choir, as in Julius Harrison's celebrated SATB arrangement, it continues to delight, enchant, lull, awaken, and transport the listener. From the youthful exuberance of *Welcome yole* to the soporific delicateness of the *Balulalow*; from the martial muscularity of *This little babe* to the hypnotic reverie of *In Freezing Winter Night*; from the effervescent dance of the *Spring Carol* to the machined angularity of *Adam lay i-bounden*; the cycle is a kaleidoscope of hues, textures, rhythms, language, and harmonic and melodic invention. Above all, it is the rare piece of music overflowing with evergreen exuberance, appealing equally to performer and audience alike. Now, as then, a "pleasure it is to hear, i-wis" (surely).

Dancing Day, from which we've drawn the *Prelude* and the eponymous carol, is a suite for trebles and harp containing a selection of beloved carols such as *Angelus ad virginem*, *A virgin most pure*, *Personent hodie*, and, his own settings of *There is no rose* and the *Coventry Carol*, by the king of Yule himself, John Rutter (b. 1945). If there is a composer, living or dead, who has written and arranged more Christmas music for choirs, from original compositions like *What Sweeter Music* and *There is a Flower* to tasteful arrangements of classics like *O Holy Night*, *I Wonder as I Wander*, and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, they are unknown to me. *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* likely has its origins in the late Middle Ages, as it references the mystery, miracle, and morality plays that occupied such a central part in medieval community life. First published in William B. Sandys's *Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern* in 1833, the carol tells the life story of Jesus in his own voice. The "true love" with whom Jesus dances is usually understood to be the Church, often depicted as his bride. In this device, known as *vox christi*, Christ declares all that he has done for the church and the faithful.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

1.

O viridissima virga, ave, que in ventoso flabro sciscitationis sanctorum prodisti. Cum venit tempus quod tu floruisti in ramis tuis, ave, ave fuit tibi, quia calor solis in te sudavit sicut odor balsami. Nam in te floruit pulcher flos qui odorem dedit omnibus aromatibus que arida erant. Et illa apparuerunt omnia in viriditate plena.

O branch of freshest green, O hail! Within the windy gusts of saints upon a quest you swayed and sprouted forth. When it was time, you blossomed in your boughs – “Hail, hail!” you heard, for in you seeped the sunlight’s warmth like balsam’s sweet perfume. For in you bloomed so beautiful a flow’r, whose fragrance wakened all the spices from their dried-out stupor. They all appeared in full viridity.

2a.

Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow, Lethe’s weed and Hermes’ feather; come to-day, and come to-morrow, I do love you both together!
Nightshade with the woodbine kissing; serpents in red roses hissing; Cleopatra regal-dress’d with the aspic at her breast;
dancing music, music sad, both together, sane and mad; muses bright and muses pale;
sombre Saturn, Momus hale; laugh and sigh, and laugh again.

2b.

Shed no tear! oh, shed no tear! The flower will bloom another year. Weep no more! oh, weep no more! Young buds sleep in the root’s white core. Dry your eyes! oh, dry your eyes! For I was taught in Paradise to ease my breast of melodies,— shed no tear.

3.

Hear our hymn, O Goddess, rich in wealth and wisdom, ever young yet ancient, true to law eternal. Wak’ner of the songbirds, ensign of the eternal, draw thou near, o fair one in thy radiant chariot. Bring to her your off’ring; humbly bow before her: raise your songs of welcome as she comes in splendour.

4.

My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations. He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scatter’d the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away. He rememb’ring his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel: As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son; and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be; world without end, Amen.

5.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus. Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and in the hour of our death. Amen.*

6.

There is no rose of such virtue as is the rose that bare Jesu. *Alleluia*. For in this rose containèd was Heaven and earth in little space, res miranda; *Res miranda*. By that rose we may well see there be one God in persons three, *Pares forma*. The angels sungen the shepherds to: *Gloria in excelsis Deo: Gaudeamus*. Now leave we all this worldly mirth, and follow we this joyful birth; *Transeamus*.

7.

I sing of a maiden that is makeless;¹ King of all kings
to her son she ches.² He came all so still where his
mother was, As dew in April that falleth on the grass.
He came all so still to his mother's bower, As dew in
April that falleth on the flower. He came all so still
where his mother lay, As dew in April that falleth on
the spray. Mother and maiden was never none but
she; Well may such a lady Godës mother be.

8.

O Maria, quam pulchra es, quam suavis, quam
decora. Tegit terram sicut nebula, lumen ortum
indeficiens, flamma ignis, Arca federis,
inter spinas ortum lilium, tronum Siion in Altissimis
in columna nubis positum. O Maria..

*O Mary, how beautiful you are, how sweet, how
comely. She enfolds earth as a cloud, a light risen that
never fails, a flame, a fire, the Ark of the Covenant, a
lily grown among the thorns, the throne of Zion placed
on high in a pillar of cloud. O Maria...*

9.

O sisters too, how may we do for to preserve this
day. This poor youngling for whom we sing,
"Bye bye, lully, lullay"? O sisters too, how may we do
for to preserve this day. This poor youngling for
whom we sing, "Bye bye, lully, lullay"? Herod the
king, in his raging, chargèd he hath this day. His men
of might in his own sight all young children to slay.
That woe is me, poor child, for thee, and ever mourn
and may. For thy parting neither say nor sing, "Bye
bye, lully, lullay."

10.

The tree of life my soul hath seen, laden with fruit
and always green; The trees of nature fruitless be,
Compared with Christ the Apple Tree. His beauty
doth all things excel, By faith I know but ne'er can
tell the glory which I now can see, In Jesus Christ the
Appletree. For happiness I long have sought, and
pleasure dearly I have bought; I missed of all but now
I see 'Tis found in Christ the appletree. I'm weary
with my former toil - here I will sit and rest awhile,
Under the shadow I will be, Of Jesus Christ the
Appletree. This fruit doth make my soul to thrive, It
keeps my dying faith alive; Which makes my soul in
haste to be with Jesus Christ the Appletree.

¹ matchless

² chose

12.

i.

Hodie Christus natus est, hodie Salvator apparuit:
hodie in terra canunt Angeli,
laetantur Archangeli: hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Alleluia!

*Today is Christ born; today the Savior has appeared;
today the Angels sing, the Archangels rejoice; today the
righteous rejoice, saying: Glory to God in the highest.
Alleluia!*

ii.

Wolcum, Wolcum, Wolcum be thou hevenè king,
Wolcum Yole! Wolcum, born in one morning,
Wolcum for whom we sall sing! Wolcum be ye,
Stevene and Jon, Wolcum, Innocentes every one,
Wolcum, Thomas marter one, Wolcum be ye, good
Newe Yere, Wolcum, Twelfth³ Day both in fere,
Wolcum, seintes lefe and dare, Wolcum Yole,
Wolcum Yole, Wolcum! Candelmesse, Quene of Bliss,
Wolcum bothe to more and lesse. Wolcum, Wolcum,
Wolcum be ye that are here, Wolcum Yole, Wolcum
alle and make good cheer. Wolcum alle another yere,
Wolcum Yole. Wolcum!

iii.

There is no rose of such vertu as is the rose that bare
Jesu. Alleluia, Alleluia, for in this rose containèd was
Heaven and earth in litel space, res miranda,⁴ res
miranda. By that rose we may well see there be one
God in persons three, pares forma,⁵ pares forma. The
aungels sungen the shepherds to: Gloria in excelsis,
gloria in excelsis Deo! Gaudeamus,⁶ gaudeamus. Leave
we all this werldly mirth, and follow we this joyful
birth. Transeamus,⁷ transeamus, transeamus. Alleluia,
res miranda, pares forma, gaudeamus, transeamus.

iv a.

That yongè child when it gan weep with song she
lulled him asleep: That was so sweet a melody it
passèd alle minstrelsy. The nightingalè sang also: Her
song is hoarse and nought thereto: Whoso attendeth
to her song and leaveth the first then doth he wrong.

³ saints left and dear

⁴ miraculous thing

⁵ in the parent's image

⁶ we rejoice

⁷ we follow

⁸ began to weep

iv b.

O my deare hert, young Jesu sweit, prepare thy
creddil in my spreit, and I sall rock thee to my hert,
and never mair from thee depart. But I sall praise
thee evermoir⁹ with sangës sweit unto thy gloir; The
knees of my hert sall I bow, And sing that richt¹⁰
Balulalow!¹¹

v. See 7

vi.

This little Babe so few days old, is come to rifle¹²
Satan's fold; all hell doth at his presence quake,
though he himself for cold do shake; For in this weak
unarmèd wise¹⁵ the gates of hell he will surprise. With
tears he fights and wins the field, his naked breast
stands for a shield; his battering shot are babish
cries, his arrows looks of weeping eyes, his martial
ensigns Cold and Need, and feeble Flesh his warrior's
steed. His camp is pitchèd in a stall, his bulwark but a
broken wall; the crib his trench, haystalks his stakes;
of shepherds he his muster¹⁶ makes; And thus, as sure
his foe to wound, the angels' trumps alarum sound.
My soul, with Christ join thou in fight; stick to the
tents that he hath pight¹⁷ within his crib is surest
ward;¹⁸ this little Babe will be thy guard. If thou wilt
foil thy foes with joy; then flit not from this heavenly
Boy!

viii.

Behold, a silly tender babe, in freezing winter night,
in homely manger trembling lies. Alas, a piteous
sight! The inns are full; no man will yield this little
pilgrim bed. But forced he is with silly beasts in crib
to shroud his head. This stable is a Prince's court,
this crib his chair of State; the beasts are parcel of
his pomp, the wooden dish his plate. The persons in
that poor attire his royal liveries wear; the Prince
himself is come from heav'n; this pomp is prizèd
there. With joy approach, O Christian wight,²⁰ do
homage to thy King, and highly praise his humble
pomp, wich he from Heav'n doth bring.

⁹ evermore

¹⁰ right

¹¹ lullaby

¹² plunder

¹³ realm

¹⁴ in cold

¹⁵ manner

¹⁶ troops

¹⁷ set

¹⁸ protection

¹⁹ humble

²⁰ creature

²¹ truly

ix.

Pleasure it is to hear iwis²¹ the Birdès sing,
the deer in the dale, the sheep in the vale,
the corn springing. God's purvayance For
sustenance. It is for man. Then we always to him give
praise, and thank him than.

x.

Deo gracias! Deo gracias! Adam lay i-bounden,
bounden in a bond; four thousand winter thought he
not too long. Deo gracias! Deo gracias! And all was
for an appil, an appil that he tok, As clerkès finden
written in their book. Deo gracias! Deo gracias! Ne
had the appil takè ben, the appil takè ben Ne haddè
never our lady a ben hevenè quene. Blessèd be the
time that appil takè was. Therefore we moun singen.
Deo gracias!

xi. See 12, i.

13.

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day; I would my true
love did so chance to see the legend of my play, to
call my true love to my dance;

Chorus (sung after each verse)

Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love, This
have I done for my true love.

Then was I born of a virgin pure, of her I took fleshly
substance. Thus was I knit to man's nature to call my
true love to my dance.

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was, so very poor,
this was my chance betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass
to call my true love to my dance.



ENSEMBLE ALTERA has been described as "something extraordinary" (*BBC Record Review*) and "a leading ensemble on the American choral scene" (*Scherzo Magazine*). Led by internationally celebrated countertenor Christopher Lowrey, the group has quickly become known for thoughtful programming, passionate performances, and tireless advocacy for the importance of ensemble singing in the broader music culture. *BBC Music Magazine* called Ensemble Altera's debut album, *The Lamb's Journey*, "clean as a whistle and confident". *Europadisc* proclaimed the performances "wonderfully refined and expertly blended, with that combination of radiance, power and transparency that comes with the best chamber choirs". In the words of the *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik* (German Record Critics' Award), which awarded the disc its coveted prize, "no recent recording debut in this field has been as spectacular."

Recent programs include *A New Song: Psalms for the Soul*, an exploration of the Biblical Psalm texts in all their dizzying variety, and *A Christmas Present*, a sumptuous collection of seasonal music written in the new millennium. Ensemble Altera is now beginning to undertake tours throughout the USA, including repeat visits to Carnegie Hall, and expands this work over the coming season. Upcoming projects include *The Four Elements*, a celebration of the awesome beauty and terrifying power of the sky, earth, fire, and water. Additionally, Altera teams up with celebrated conductor Raphaël Pichon, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, in a program entitled *Mein Traum*, starring soprano Ying Fang and baritone Christian Gerhaher. Later in 2025, the group offers new performances of its acclaimed chamber version of Handel's *Messiah* in its native home of Rhode Island.

Deeply committed to championing new works and lifting up new voices from around the globe, over the past few seasons, Altera has premiered works by Ian Gabriel Corpuz, Motshwane Pege, Toby Young, Joanna Marsh, Daniel Gledhill, Zuzanna Koziej, and Michael Garrepy; and is currently collaborating with young composer Piers Connor Kennedy, in a major work, *Declarations*, to mark the 250th anniversary of the *Declaration of Independence* in 2026. Alongside its busy performing and recording schedule, Ensemble Altera undertakes an extensive education and outreach program. Such activities include clinics and interactive presentations with school students in a variety of settings, with a particular focus on opening musical horizons to those from underserved backgrounds. Additionally, Altera has a profound faith in the healing power of music, both in and out of the concert hall, and is proud to offer its complete recorded music library free of charge in collaboration with select partners in music therapy.



Director **Christopher Lowrey** was born and raised in Johnston, RI, and trained at Brown University, the University of Cambridge, where he sang under Stephen Layton with Trinity College Choir, and the Royal College of Music. In addition to conducting, he enjoys a dynamic international solo career as a countertenor, working at some of the world's leading opera houses and concert platforms, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, the Philharmonie de Paris, as well as with many of the world's leading baroque orchestras. This season he makes his debut at Opéra de Lausanne, Royal Danish Opéra, and Bachfest Leipzig, and sings Ottone in Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* on a North American tour with Cappella Mediterranea. More info at christopherlowrey.com.

Singaporean harpist **Lishan Tan** enjoys a multifaceted career as a performer, arranger, writer and teacher, with an aim to push the boundaries of her instrument through her arrangements and workshops. Her music videos ranging from Metallica to Debussy have garnered millions of views online. Most recently, she was the winner of the VI Mexico International Harp Competition and appeared as a soloist alongside cellist Yo-Yo Ma with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the 2024 Tanglewood Music Festival. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts at the New England Conservatory with BSO Harpist Jessica Zhou. For more information, visit: lishantheharpist.com



A lifelong resident of Rhode Island, **Michael Garrepy** is active throughout New England as an organist, accompanist, and vocalist. He is the music director of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St Mary's Parishes, both located in historic Bristol. Michael is the artistic advisor and composer in residence for Ensemble Altera. He has arranged a number of works for the group, ranging from classics like "Amazing Grace" and "O Holy Night" to modern pop tunes. Michael is a graduate of Rhode Island College, where he studied organ and improvisation with Stephen Martorella. He received a Master of Music degree from Boston University, studying organ and continuo with Peter Sykes. He maintains a private voice studio in Rhode Island.

FRIENDS of ALTERA



Members of Providence Baroque

Maximilian St. George, *flute* ♦ Laura Gulley, *violin*
Daniel Rowe, *cello* ♦ Frederick Jodry, *harpsichord*

PRESENT

Bach: Trio Sonata, from the Musical Offering
Bach: Italian Concerto ♦ Works of Telemann and Loeillet

Friday, November 22, 7:30 pm
Saint Stephen's Church, Lady Chapel, Providence
suggested donation \$20



Schola Cantorum—A French Christmas

This acclaimed Renaissance vocal ensemble, directed by Frederick Jodry, is joined by two treble viols and theorbo in presenting music of Marc Antoine Charpentier, the premier French 17th-century composer of sacred music.

Sunday, December 15, 3:30 pm
St. Martin's Church, Providence
also in Boston, Saturday, December 14, at 7:30 pm
at First Lutheran Church



THANK YOU

Deepest thanks to The Reverend Spencer Reece, Father Charles R. Grondin, and Father William T. Kelly, and the entire staff and community of St Paul's Wickford, Blessed Sacrament Church, Providence, and St Paul's Parish, Cambridge, for welcoming us into their spaces. It is always an honor and privilege to be servants of this music in such glorious buildings. Heartfelt thanks also to Evan Chapman and Kevin Eikenberg of four/ten media for their videography, Olivia Kleyla for marketing and front of house help, Brad Kleyla for his audio engineering, the support of producer Adrian Peacock, and program copy editing assistance from Diane Slader.

Looking for other ways to support our ensemble? Be part of the music offstage – **host an artist**, and we'll thank you with VIP access! Contact us at admin@ensemblealtera.com if you are interested in opening up your home to visiting artists.

DON'T MISS A NOTE!

Stay up to date with Ensemble Altera's upcoming concerts and recording releases. Don't miss a note by becoming a subscriber today! Visit www.ensemblealtera.com/subscribe or scan the QR code here:



SCAN TO SUBSCRIBE

SUPPORT



SCAN TO SUPPORT

Please consider making a gift in support of Ensemble Altera. Ticket sales only cover about 10% of our costs, and our donors make it possible to bring this incredible music to audiences here in New England and around the world. To make a gift today, please visit ensemblealtera.com/donate or scan the QR code here: