



**Richmond Choral Society
2025-2026 Concert Series**

*Christmas
with the
Richmond
Choral
Society*

**December 7, 2025
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church**



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Markus Compton, *conductor*
with

Christopher Martin, *organ* • Keith Tan, *piano*
Luz Recinos *and* Melissa Jones, *violin* • Richard Haines, *viola*
Dana McComb, *cello* • Keith Willingham, *percussion*

Christmas with the Richmond Choral Society

PROGRAM

We thank you for silencing your mobile devices.

**If you wish, please join us in song! (Text appears on the following pages.)*

Berceuse

Keep Your Lamps!

My Song in the Night

Honor and Glory

***The First Nowell**

African Noel

Star of Bethlehem

O Magnum Mysterium

Alleluia

Comfort, Comfort Now My People

Carol of the Bells/God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

A Musicological Journey Through the Twelve Days of Christmas

Joy to the World *with* Toss the Feathers

***Hark! the Herald Angels Sing**

The Richmond Choral Society is supported in part by the
Virginia Commission for the Arts.

Email: rca.rva.chorus@gmail.com

Website: richmondchoralsociety.org

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Prophecy & Advent

BERCEUSE, a lullaby from *Petite Suite pour Noël*, composed by Jean-Michel Vaccaro (1938-98), opens our program. A deeply introspective work, the interplay of the cello and piano conveys the sense of heartfelt longing characterized by the Advent season. Markus Compton is the arranger.



KEEP YOUR LAMPS! is a traditional spiritual based on Matthew 25:1–13, Jesus’s parable of ten virgins who went with lamps to meet the bridegroom. Five did not bring enough oil for the vigil and left to get more. Only the five who had prepared well were present to escort the bridegroom into the wedding banquet. Jesus’s message to us from Matthew 25:13 (NIV): “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” that the prophecy will be fulfilled. Says arranger André J. Thomas (b. 1952), “One can only imagine the song stirring from the soul of one slave listener. Jesus was indeed a deliverer and a hope for the slave.”

**Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, the time is drawing nigh.
Children, don’t get weary ‘til your work is done.
Christian, journey soon be over, the time is drawing nigh.**



Elaine Hagenberg (b. 1979) has rapidly become a favorite composer among RCS concertgoers, as represented by the rapturous reaction to our 2024 and 2025 presentations of her five-movement work *Illuminare*. Today we present two shorter Hagenberg pieces. The first, a captivating arrangement of **MY SONG IN THE NIGHT**, highlights the elegant sensitivity of this traditional American folk hymn. As the tender melody gently drifts through each vocal part, a newly-composed refrain gracefully soars over a lush piano accompaniment. Finally, a shimmering tapestry of descending lines gently brings the piece to a restful conclusion. (Source: elainehagenberg.com)

**O Jesus my Savior, my song in the night,
Come to us with Thy tender love, my soul’s delight.
Unto Thee, O Lord, in affliction I call,
My comfort by day, and my song in the night.

O why should I wander, a stranger from Thee,
Or cry in the desert, Thy face to see?
My comfort and joy, my soul’s delight,
O Jesus my Savior, my song in the night.**



The setting of **HONOR AND GLORY** is comprised from the fugue section of BWV 243 (Magnificat) by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Mary’s timeless song of praise to God. The Latin words of the composition were initially derived from Luke 1:55. Walter Ehret (1918-2009), who enjoyed a long career as an arranger of choral music during the mid-twentieth century, significantly changed the text to a universal song of praise to God.

Honor and glory be to God in the highest, Hallelujah. Sing praises to his name!

Program Notes and Text

Like so many traditional carols, the origins of **THE FIRST NOWELL** are steeped in mystery. Scholars believe it to be from the 16th or 17th century, but possibly it dates from as early as the 13th century. This combination of tune and lyrics first appeared in the early 1800s. (Source: hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com). There are at least nine known verses for the tune; we are presenting three today. If you wish, please join us in song!

Words and Music: Traditional English carol
Arranged by David Willcocks (1919-2015)

**The first Nowell the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep:**

Refrain:

**Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel!**

**They looked up and saw a star,
Shining in the east, beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night:**

Refrain

**Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heav'nly Lord,
That hath made heav'n and earth of naught,
And with his blood mankind hath bought:**

Refrain

At the Stable

Renowned composer and educator André J. Thomas is the retired Owen F. Sellers Professor of Music, Director of Choral Activities, and Professor of Choral Music Education at Florida State University. In March of 2017 the American Choral Directors Association presented Thomas with its highest honor, The Robert Shaw Award, and in November of 2017 the National Collegiate Choral Organization presented Thomas with its Lifetime Achievement Award. In January 2019 he was inducted into the Florida Music Educator's Hall of Fame. (Source: drandrethomas.com) Written for the world-renowned St. Olaf Choir, Dr. Thomas used a Liberian chant tune as the basis of **AFRICAN NOEL**.

**Sing Noel, sing Noel, Noel, Noel. Sing we all Noel.
O come, ye people, gather here to hear the news of good cheer.
The King of Kings, the Lamb of God is born today in Bethlehem.**



Program Notes and Text

Legendary film composer John Williams (b. 1932) by chance attended a screening of the 1990 film *Home Alone* that director Chris Columbus had provided to associates of Steven Spielberg. Williams' enthusiasm for the film caused him to actively seek the assignment of composing the score after the production's original composer had to bow out due to a scheduling conflict. It had been a while since Williams had composed a score specifically aimed at children, and after raving about the initial cut of the film to his own circle of colleagues, he tackled the new genre with so much zeal that the resulting fruitful friendship with Columbus would lead to several subsequent endeavors in that genre (including the Harry Potter films). Not only were the ramifications exciting for Williams' fans, but the composer approached the project with a refreshing new enthusiasm that carried over into the tone of his composition, providing what essentially amounts to the perfect comedic Christmas score. (Source: filmtracks.com)

Williams composed this part of the *Home Alone* score in a minor key which, along with the heartfelt lyrics of **STAR OF BETHLEHEM** by Leslie Bricusse (1931-2021), lends a deep poignancy to this song.

**Star of Bethlehem, shining bright
Bathing the world in heav'nly light,
Let the glow of your distant glory
Fill us with hope this Christmas night.**

**Star of innocence, star of goodness,
Gazing down since time began,
You who've lived through endless ages,
View with love the age of man.**

**Star of beauty, hear our plea,
Whisper your wisdom tenderly.
Star of Bethlehem, set us free,
Make us a world we long to see.**

**Star of Bethlehem, star on high,
Miracle of the midnight sky,
Let your luminous light from heaven
Enter our hearts and make us fly.**

**Star of happiness, star of wonder,
You see everything from afar,
Cast your eye upon the future,
Make us wiser than we are.**

**Star of gentleness, hear our plea,
Whisper your wisdom tenderly,
Star of Bethlehem, set us free,
Make us a world we long to see.**



Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943) is perhaps the best-known contemporary choral composer, with his works in perpetual performance around the world. He served as Composer-in-Residence of the Los Angeles Master Chorale from 1995-2001 and is currently the Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Composition at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music. An award-winning documentary by Michael Stillwater, *Shining Night – A Portrait of Composer Morten Lauridsen*, was released in 2012 (Source: songwithoutborders.net). In 2006, Lauridsen was named an “American Choral Master” by the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2007 he was awarded the National Medal of Arts, the highest artistic award in the United States, by President George W. Bush in a White House ceremony “for his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power, and spiritual depth.” (Source: mortenlauridsen.net) **O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM** is a text from the Holy Matins of Christmas, describing the wonderment of the animals as they gaze on Christ. (Source: classicfm.com)

Program Notes and Text

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum, ut animalia viderent Dominum natum, jacentem in praesepio! Beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Christum.
Alleluia!

O great mystery, and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the newborn Lord, lying in their manger! Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear the Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!



Composer Elaine Hagenberg describes her setting of **ALLELUIA**, from the beautiful text by St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430):

One evening in summer, I gathered this poem and a manuscript notebook, then visited our local rose gardens at dusk to sketch all the ways I could sing the word "Alleluia." A simple A B A form seemed to work, with the Alleluias creating the A sections, and the remaining text to create a contrasting B section. As the sunset filtered through the trees, I envisioned the light and beauty of eternity with expansive lines and lush harmonies propelling the music into exciting key changes and a climactic ending. (Source: elainehagenberg.com)

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.



Originally published in the 1551 edition of French Protestant pastor and reformer John Calvin's *Genevan Psalter*, the words to **COMFORT, COMFORT NOW MY PEOPLE** is a versification of Isaiah 40:1-5, the passage that opens the final large group of prophecies in Isaiah 40-66. Many of these prophecies express consolation and hope that Judah's exile in Babylon is almost over. (Source: hymnary.org) The tune *Freu dich sehr* is attributed to 16th century French composers Louis Bourgeois and Claude Goudimel. Church organist and composer Aaron Shows gives a modern-day spriteliness to this delightful arrangement.

Holiday Joy!

Our next offering is a dynamic, modern take on two old favorites, **CAROL OF THE BELLS/GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN** by Matthew Riley (b. 1982), presented by pianist Keith Tan and violinist Luz Recinos. An award-winning composer and arranger, Matt says about his music:

I want to move and inspire audiences and musicians alike with my music. My mission in life is to share things that I find beautiful, moving, awe-inspiring, euphoric, and sublime with the world. I am not a particularly eloquent person, so I choose to do this through the language of music.

Carol of the Bells: Words and music by Peter J. Wilhousky, 1936; adapted from the tune "Shchedryk" by Mykola Dmytrovich Leontovych, 1916.

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen: Traditional English carol.



Program Notes and Text

Based on the twelve festival days of Christmas between December 25 and the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6, the original tune and words for “The Twelve Days of Christmas” were conceived as a children’s forfeit game, in which each child would try to repeat which gifts attached to the correct day. We have our own parlor game set up for you, our audience: See if you can place the correct composer or style to the correct day! The answers appear at the end of the notes*. Many thanks to Craig Courtney for his ingenious arrangement, entitled **A MUSICOLOGICAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS**.

Words and Music: Traditional English, 18th century

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me a partridge in a pear tree.

On the second day of Christmas / two turtle doves

On the third day of Christmas / three French hens

On the fourth day of Christmas / four calling birds

On the fifth day of Christmas / five gold rings

On the sixth day of Christmas / six geese a-laying

On the seventh day of Christmas / seven swans a-swimming

On the eighth day of Christmas / eight maids a-milking

On the ninth day of Christmas / nine drummers drumming

On the tenth day of Christmas / ten pipers piping

On the eleventh day of Christmas / eleven ladies dancing

On the twelfth day of Christmas / twelve lords a-leaping



The Richmond Choral Society’s 2019 Christmas concert featured an original arrangement for solo piano by Keith Tan, a combination of the timeless traditional carol **JOY TO THE WORLD** with the exuberant Irish folk tune of celebration **TOSS THE FEATHERS** in a delightful interplay of themes. This year, Keith is letting the choristers in on the fun! This joyful reel dances and spins with driving rhythms, melding two pieces of celebration in a playful yet natural and seamless whole. As this Irish folk tune is in Dorian scale, the chord structures and progressions of the carol have been altered to suit the character of this Celtic reel.

Joy to the world! the Lord is come:

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare him room,

And heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns;

Let us our songs employ,

While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,

Repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,

Nor thorns infest the ground;

**He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love.**



Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47) wrote a cantata in 1840 to commemorate Johann Gutenberg and the invention of printing. The words to **HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING** were written more than a century before by Methodist leader and prolific hymnodist Charles Wesley (1707-88). After Mendelssohn and Wesley were both dead, English tenor and organist William Cummings put the words and music together, even though Mendelssohn had made it clear his music was for secular use, and Wesley preferred slow, solemn music for his lyrics. Nevertheless, the carol has become so revered that it has the distinction of being one of only two carols that are played each year during the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge. (Source: hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com) If you wish, please join us in song! This timeless arrangement is by David Willcocks.

**Hark! The herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled:
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With th' angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark! The herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King.**

**Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings;
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King.**



**A Musicological Journey references:*

1. A Partridge - 6th Century Rome (Gregorian Chant)
2. Two Turtle Doves - 15th Century France (Josquin des Prez)
3. Three French Hens - 16th Century Italy (Palestrina)
4. Four Calling Birds - 17th Century Italy (Vivaldi)
5. Five Gold Rings - 18th Century Germany (Handel)
6. Six Geese a-Laying - 18th Century Austria (Mozart)
7. Seven Swans a-Swimming - 19th Century France (Saint-Saëns)
8. Eight Maids a-Milking - 19th Century Germany (Wagner)
9. Nine Ladies Dancing - 19th Century Austria (Johann Strauss)
10. Ten Lords a-Leaping - 19th Century France (Offenbach)
11. Eleven Pipers Piping - 19th Century Russia (Tchaikovsky)
12. Twelve Drummers Drumming - 19th Century America (Sousa)

Markus J. Compton • *Conductor*



Markus J. Compton has been associated with the Richmond Choral Society since 2004. This is his seventeenth season as Artistic Director after serving as rehearsal accompanist for the previous five years.

Holding degrees in Music Education and Piano Accompanying from George Mason University, Mr. Compton is no stranger to the music scene in metropolitan Washington, D.C. and Richmond. Before beginning his tenure with the Richmond Choral Society, Mr. Compton served as the Assistant Conductor and Pianist for the Fairfax Choral Society and Pianist for the National Men's Chorus. He also worked as staff accompanist, vocal coach and lecturer at

George Mason University. Mr. Compton has assisted such distinguished conductors as Anton Armstrong, Thomas Beveridge, Jerry Blackstone, Kevin Fenton, Joseph Martin, Don Neuen, Doreen Rao and Andre Thomas. He has performed at the National Gallery of Art, the White House and in a collaborative recital with Peter Schikele (PDQ Bach).

Currently, Mr. Compton is the Director of Music and Pianist at Hebron Presbyterian Church, in Manakin-Sabot, Virginia. He oversees the Sanctuary and Youth choirs, as well as the 'Music in the Countryside' recital series. Mr. Compton also serves on the staff at Collegiate School where he teaches private piano.

Christopher Martin • *Organ*

A native of Richmond, Va., Christopher Martin has been the Director of Music and Organist at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Richmond since May 2000. As Director of Music he leads the church's music ministry which includes three singing choirs, a handbell choir, and an annual concert series. As a certified MusikGarten instructor, he teaches music to over forty children in the church's Child Development Center.

Christopher holds a Master of Sacred Music degree in organ performance from Boston University where he studied organ and improvisation with Max Miller. He also holds a Bachelor of Music degree (*magna cum laude*) from Virginia Commonwealth University where he studied with Ardyth Lohuis.



Meet the Artists

Christopher has been a recitalist for numerous venues throughout the East Coast. In 2015 he was a featured artist in San Sebastián, Spain, and in 2022 he performed in a recital in the Bordeaux region of France. His solo performances have also been featured on the radio broadcast, Pipedreams.

He is in demand as an organist for numerous choral ensembles throughout the Richmond area, including the Richmond Choral Society where he has served as organist since 2002. In 2014, he was the organist in residence for one week at Canterbury Cathedral (Kent), playing Evensong services and the Sunday Choral Eucharist with the choir from River Road Church, Baptist (Richmond).

Keith T. Tan • *Concert and Rehearsal Accompanist (piano)*

Keith is a dedicated accompanist, music minister, and educator based in Richmond, Virginia. He has been an accompanist for the Richmond Choral Society since 2009, the James River Singers since 2011, and the Richmond Ballet since 2016, showcasing his exceptional piano skills and collaborative spirit in various musical arenas.

Keith teaches private piano at The Center of Creative Arts and has provided instruction at the University of Richmond from 1998 to 2007. In addition, he has served as a vocal coach since 2010, helping singers develop their talents. Serving as an adjudicator for the Virginia Music Education Association, Keith has participated in choral assessments and auditions, demonstrating his commitment to music education.

With over two decades of music ministry experience, Keith has made a significant impact on the musical community at Christ Church Episcopal, where he has nurtured a thriving music and arts program, producing seven music albums. His contributions to contemporary and traditional church music have been recognized in publications, including his essay in *Ponder Anew* (2022), and he was a panelist at the Virginia Theological Seminary symposium, "The Once and Future Hymnal," in 2017.

As a composer and arranger, Keith's works have been performed by the Richmond Choral Society, the James River Singers, and the Richmond Symphony. His piece "Sanctus" was commissioned by the Association of Anglican Musicians for their 2020 Annual Conference, reflecting his dedication to nurturing the intersection of worship and the arts.

Keith is married to Lara and they have three children – Rachel, Jordan, and Caedmon.



Members

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Chloe Coates
Linda Crabbs
Sharon Ferranti
Nancy Hall
Alice Henderson
Katherine Karn
Sarah Long
Brianna Lovell
Gina McKenzie
Betsy Mead
Sara Peters
Andrea Publow
+Mary Beth Schutte
Nina Setaro
Kate Simonds
Cara Smith
Jayne Sneed
Heidi Spence

Altos

Rachel Alberti
Lois Badey
Joyce Berghuis
Cynthia Cave
*Sylvia Compton
Kelly Desclos-Estes
+Kristin Eye
Caroline Finke
Beth Hammer
Sara Hillgrove
Karen Holyer
Marty Kump
Terri Laundon
Robin Liesfeld
Eleanor Lynch
Leigh Miller
Elaine Ragland
Leslie Reeks
Lauren Roseman
Vickie Tito
Elaine Wittel

Tenors

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James Cullen
Jonathan Ford
Joel Lubben
Jonathan Orcutt
Scott Reeks
+Philip Sledd

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Blanton Bradley
Michael Girard
Anthony Godfrey
Chris Hartnett
+Gene Hawkins
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Tom Lucy
Leo Radakovich
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in the “Meet the Artists” section of the program.**

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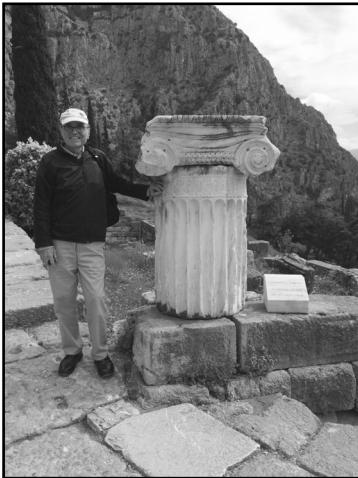
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*The Richmond Choral Society
Celebrates the life of
David Speidell*



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A great companion, and a
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*We will miss you, David!
With much love from RCS
And Hortense*



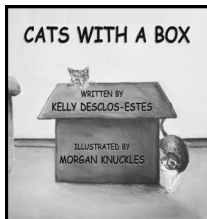


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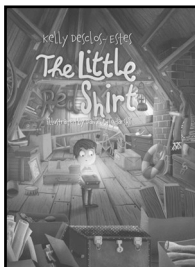
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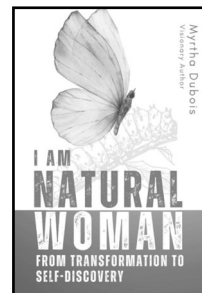
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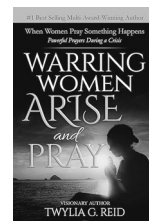
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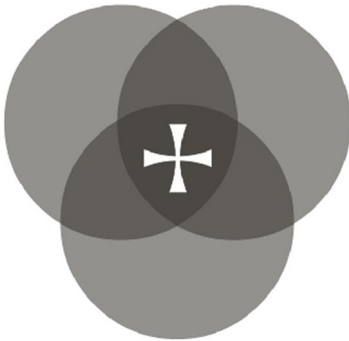
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Forever in our hearts



Thank you to my parents, **Blanton** and **Nancy Bradley**
and my aunt, **Carole Davenport**,
for inspiring me with their love of music,
which became my lifetime career.



Thank you to all of my Music Teachers, Choir,
Band, and Orchestra Directors from elementary school
through college to today, especially
Caroline Payne, Bill Mitchell, and Ronald LoPresti.

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Richmond Choral Society

A Brief History

Seventy-nine years ago, one hundred of Richmond's best singers gathered on Monday nights to rehearse selections from a spectrum of musical sources—the classical masters, hymns, spirituals, folk arrangements, novelty songs and contemporary works. On April 29, 1947, the singers, soon to be known as the Richmond Choral Society, premiered those nineteen pieces in a concert at the WRVA Theater on East Broad Street.

After launching the group to accolades from music critics, Dr. James Rawlings Sydnor passed the baton in 1949 to Alton L. Howell Sr., who served as director until his death in 1987. Anne Carr Regan then took over. Under the leadership of both, the Richmond Choral Society continued to develop, performing (alone and with other groups) many of the great choral works. Mrs. Regan expanded the group's repertoire to include theater and popular music.

Under the direction of Thomas A. Williams from 2002-2009, the Richmond Choral Society (RCS) continued to chart new territory. In 2004, RCS presented a landmark performance of Ernest Bloch's *Avodath Hakodesh* (Sacred Service), in collaboration with Congregation Beth Ahabah. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch's* Clarke Bustard wrote of the Bloch concert, "Thank goodness community groups like the Richmond Choral Society are willing to take on repertory that professional ensembles lack the initiative or imagination to perform."

The Richmond Choral Society's current artistic director, Markus Compton, continues the tradition of excellence in performance and programming that makes us unique in the Central Virginia area. In April 2011, RCS proudly presented the Richmond premiere of *Yizkor Requiem*, featuring world-renowned cantor Benjamin Warschawski. March 2013 saw the production of the Dvořák *Stabat Mater*, a rarely-performed but beautiful concert-length masterwork. June 2022 saw a celebration of 75 glorious years, with a gala celebration featuring a world premiere work by Gwyneth Walker. We appreciate your patronage and hope you will plan to join us for our concerts for many seasons to come!

We look forward to seeing you at our remaining concerts!

**THE MUSIC OF DOWNTON ABBEY II • March 22, 2026 • 4:00 p.m.
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Acknowledgements

The Richmond Choral Society thanks all who helped make this concert and our concert season possible, including:

- Kroger Community Fund, RaiseRight and our patrons for their ongoing generous support!
- Trinity Lutheran Church for providing space for rehearsals and performances.
- St. Matthew's Episcopal Church for hosting today's concert, and their staff for aiding in preparations.
- Annie Publow and Mary Beth Schutte for maintaining our music library.
- Cindy, Gene and Karen for proofreading today's program notes.
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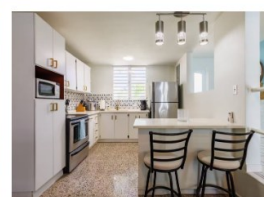
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