



SACRA/PROFANA
presents

WHERE THE
SEA
MEETS THE
SKY

with Guest Conductor

SAUNDER CHOI

Saturday, April 25, 2026 7PM
San Dieguito United Methodist Church

WELCOME!

This program is close to my heart: a collection of my own works and other carefully chosen pieces woven together under the theme of "Horizons" — exploring identity, heritage, and the personal journeys that define us.

We open with my setting of the Bahá'í prayer *Blessed Is the Spot and the House*, reflecting my own evolving sense of what is "sacred" — shaped by years as a Unitarian Universalist music director. This is followed by *Moon Boat*: a Taiwanese lullaby and, at 8 years old, one of the first songs in Mandarin I ever sang.

Three pieces on flight come next. Missy Mazzoli's *Vesper Sparrow* evokes the sounds of its namesake bird beneath a shimmering bed of Sardinian-style folks singing *cantu a tenore*, woven through with Farnoosh Fathi's poem "Homestate." *Campers at Kitty Hawk* is a delightful retelling of the invention of the airplane - the repeated notes in the embedded texture imitate morse code! *Lakbay ng Agila* (Eagle's Flight) is a riveting, joyful piece in Tagalog bursting with onomatopoeic sounds — setting poetry by Joey Vargas, it celebrates flight and journey while honoring the endangered Philippine eagle.

Horizons pull us forward, but they can also feel endless. Sometimes we need to pause, dwell in the in-between, and look back before moving ahead. Tracy Wong's *Antara* (Between) and *Mi Mancherai* (I'll Miss You) inhabit these liminal thresholds with beauty and longing. *Wide American Earth* was written as manifesto by Filipino-Americans and what it means to follow the horizon and chase the "American Dream." Featuring the poetry of Carlos Bulosan and Aileen Cassinetta, it holds both the momentum of the journey and the weight of what we've left behind.

We close with two pieces that are especially personal. *Message Out to Sea* (Dear Mom...) is a letter from me and poet Brian Sonia-Wallace to our mothers, who may not have fully understood what it meant for us to come out, or what it meant to have a gay son, but who continued to love and learn alongside us. *Our Streets, A Symphony Again* sets Brian's poem "Too Early to Celebrate," written during his tenure as West Hollywood Poet Laureate. The poem marks the city's reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was also written in the shadow of his father's sudden passing. It is a searching work that asks: *What does it mean to reopen in the aftermath of loss?*

Whatever horizons you carry into this room tonight, we hope you leave feeling a little less alone in them, and a little more ready to meet what lies ahead.

– Saunder Choi

WHERE THE SEA MEETS THE SKY

With Guest Conductor Saunder Choi
Saturday, April 25, 2026 7pm
San Dieguito United Methodist Church

BLESSED IS THE SPOT, AND THE HOUSE.....SAUNDER CHOI

MOON BOAT.....YANG HONG & ZHANG QUANFU
Arr. SAUNDER CHOI

VESPER SPARROW.....MISSY MAZZOLI

THE CAMPERS AT KITTY HAWK.....MICHAEL DELLAIRA

LAKBAY NG AGILA.....SAUNDER CHOI

INTERMISSION

ANTARA.....TRACY WONG

MI MANCHERAI.....LUIS BACALOV Arr. SAUNDER CHOI

WIDE AMERICAN EARTH.....SAUNDER CHOI

MESSAGE OUT TO SEA (DEAR MOM.....).....SAUNDER CHOI

OUR STREETS, A SYMPHONY AGAIN.....SAUNDER CHOI

TONIGHT'S PERFORMERS

SOPRANOS

Hannah Park
Jasper Sussman
Rebecca Ung
Libby Weber

ALTOS

Monika Bruckner
Sonja Brun
Lanett Grant
Ellie Mout
Meghan Rossi

TENORS

Andrew Bearden
Aaron Burgett
Jonathan Gonzales
Daniel Moyer
Sloan Quessenberry

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Aaron Bullard
Adam Davis
Thomas Lokensgard
Kevin Martin
Sean Smith

ACCOMPANIST

Adam Ferrara

CONDUCTOR



SAUNDER CHOI

Saunder Choi is a Los Angeles-based Filipino-Chinese composer and choral artist. Winner of the 2024 American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Raymond Brock Prize for professional composers, his works have been performed internationally by various groups including Conspirare, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Pacific Chorale, Pacific Symphony, World Youth Choir, Brightwork New Music, People Inside Electronics, and many others. As an arranger and orchestrator, Saunder has written for Tony-Award winner Lea Salonga, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Auburn Symphony, Orquestra Filarmónica Portuguesa, Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, and others.

As a choral artist, he sings with Pacific Chorale, L.A. Choral Lab, HEX Vocal Ensemble, as well as in film scores such as the soundtrack of Disney's The Lion King (2019), Mulan (2020), Turning Red (2022), Nope (2022), Avatar: The Way of the Water (2022).

Saunder believes in music as advocacy, using the media as a platform for diversity, equity, inclusion, justice. His compositions are focused on narratives and conversations surrounding immigration, racial justice, LGBTQ+ advocacy, climate justice, and representations of his identity and roots. He is currently Director of Music at Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica and a teaching artist with the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

TEXT & TRANSLATIONS

BLESSED IS THE SPOT, AND THE HOUSE

text by Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed is the spot, and the house,
and the place, and the city,
and the heart, and the mountain,
and the refuge, and the cave,
and the valley, and the land,
and the sea, and the island,
and the meadow where mention
of God hath been made,
and their praise glorified.

MOON BOAT

月亮船呀月亮船
载着妈妈的歌谣
飘进了我的摇篮
淡淡清辉滢滢照
好像妈妈望着我笑眼弯弯
月亮船呀月亮船
载着童年的神秘
飘进了我的梦乡
悄悄带走无忧夜
不知不觉靠近了青春岸
月亮船呀月亮船
载着一个小小心愿停泊在枕边
月亮船呀月亮船
载着一个小小心愿听泊在心头

*Moon boat, oh moon boat,
Carrying mother's lullabies
You drifted into my cradle
Your gentle radiance softly glows,
as if Mother were gazing down, her eyes
smiling like crescent moons.
Moon boat, oh moon boat,
Carrying the mysteries of childhood,
You drifted into my dreams
Quietly taking away those carefree nights
Before I knew it, you neared the shores of youth
Moon boat, oh moon boat,
Carrying a tiny, cherished wish,
You come to rest beside my pillow,
You come to rest deep within my heart.*

VESPER SPARROW

text by Farnoosh Fathi

What will come so soon
to my golden door
when asleep from all sides
I am a shattered horse asleep
in the glass pajamas of man

THE CAMPERS AT KITTY HAWK

On December seventeenth nineteen hundred and three Bishop Wright of the United Brethren received a telegram from his boys Wilbur and Orville, who'd gotten it into their heads to spend their vacation in a little camp out on the dunes of the North Carolina coast with a homemade glider they'd knocked together themselves. The telegram read: SUCCESS FOUR FLIGHTS THURSDAY MORNING AGAINST TWENTY ONE MILE WIND STARTED FROM ENGINE POWER ALONE.

The figures were a little wrong but the fact remains a couple of young bicycle mechanics from Dayton Ohio had designed and flown for the first time ever a practical airplane. In those days flying machines were the big laugh of all the crackerbarrel philosophers. They were practical mechanics; when they needed anything they built it themselves.

They hit on Kitty Hawk on the great dunes and sandy banks that stretched south to Hatteras seaward. Overhead the gulls and swooping terns, fishhawks, and cranes flapping across the salt marshes.

They were alone there and figured out the loose sand was as soft as anything they could find to fall in, taking off again and again from Kill Devil Hill they learned to fly. Aeronautics became the sport of the day, congratulated by the czar, crown prince, the King of Italy, King Edward for universal peace.

THE CAMPERS AT KITTY HAWK (cont.)

Taking off again and again they learned to fly. In the rush of new names the Brothers Wright passed from the headlines: Bleriot, Farman, Curtiss, Ferber, Esnault, Petrie, Delagrange can blur the memory of the chilly December day two shivering bicycle mechanics first felt their homemade contraption soar into the air, above the dunes of Kitty Hawk.

"I released the wire that held the machine to the track. The machine started forward into the wind. Wilbur ran at the side holding the wing. The machine started slowly facing twenty seven mile wind, it lifted from the track. Wilbur was able to stay with it until it lifted from the track after a forty foot run. The course of the flight up and down was erratic, the first flight in the history of the world. The machine carried a man by his own power into the air in full flight forward without reduction of speed landed at a point as high as that from which it started."

When these points had been firmly established we packed our goods and returned home, knowing that the age of the flying machine had come at last.

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LAKBAY NG AGILA

poetry by Joey Vargas

Ang Kagila-gilalas na Paglalakbay ng Agila

Simula sa pagkabata,
mahahanap ng agila
ang gamit ng kanyang paa
at huni ng kanyang kanta.

Matututunang tumayo
ulit-ulit mang mabigo
hanggang matutong tumalon
nang bahagya, may hinahon.

Susukatin nya ang lawak
Na kayang abutin ng pakpak
sa marahang pagpagaspas,
pag-aaral ng pag-alpas.

Ang simulang tangkang igkas,
balikwas bawat wasiwas,
bigwas bagwis, tila igtad,
igpaw nang igpaw hanggang makalipad.

Kikilitiin ang hangin,
sa matinis n'yang awitin.
Himpapawid, lalambingin,
aangkinin, aariin.

Ganto'ng lakbay ng agila
mula sa asam, pag-asa,
patungo sa ninanasa,
tuktok ng tagumpay, tuwa.

ANTARA

text by Mohamad Fairuz bin Mohamad Tauhid

Antara
Dari duduk oh berdiri
Cabar hati
Kuatkan jati
Dari pegun oh berlari

The Astonishing Journey of an Eagle

*While it is still young,
the eagle will sure to find
the use of its feet
and the tune of its songs.*

*It will learn to stand
no matter the times it fails
until it learns to jump
just a little, with patience.*

*It shall measure the length
its wings may reach
as it steadily wags them,
learning to be free.*

*The first attempt at sudden release,
flicking while flapping,
flinging wings, like a spring,
flailing til it flies.*

*It flirts with the winds,
with the sweetness of its hymns.
The air it caresses,
claims, conquers.*

*This is the eagle's journey
from longing, hoping
towards what it desires,
peak of success, joy.*

*Between
from sitting to standing
challenge your heart
strengthen your inner-self
from stillness to running*

MI MANCHERAI

text by Marco Marinangeli

Mi mancherai se te ne vai.
Mi mancherà la tua serenità.
Le tue parole come canzoni al vento.
E l'amore che ora porti via.

Mi mancherai se te ne vai.
Ora e per sempre non so come vivrei.
E l'allegria, amica mia va via conte.

Mi mancherai perché vai via?
Perché l'amore in te s'è spento?
Non cambierà niente lo so.
E dentro sento te.

Mi mancherà l'immensità.
Dei nostri giorni e notti insieme noi.
I tuoi sor risi quando si fa buio
La tua ingenuità da bambina tu.

Mi mancherai amore mio.
Mi guardo e trovo un vuoto dentro me.
E l'allegria, amica mia va via conte.

*I will miss you if you leave.
I will miss your serenity.
Your words, like songs upon the wind.
And the love you are now taking away.*

*I will miss you if you leave.
Now and forever—I don't know how I could go on living.
And joy—my dear friend—is leaving along with you.*

*I will miss you... why are you leaving?
Why has the love within you died out?
Nothing will change, I know.
And deep inside, I still feel you.*

*I will miss the immensity
Of our days and nights spent together.
Your smiles when darkness falls,
And your childlike innocence.*

*I will miss you, my love.
I look at myself and find a void within.
And joy—my dear friend—is leaving along with you.*

WIDE AMERICAN EARTH

text by Aileen Cassinetto after Carlos Bulosan

To want the wide American earth

In my mouth is a country of longing
The bittersweet of border crossings
Some words don't come easy—scarce, scars
English is a language of leaving
A lexicon of who invaded
And what they left behind
I taste what passes for shrimp paste
I crave spice, some sharpness and haste
I chased a life around shifts and routes
First train leaves before first light
Last train comes before midnight
Transport me with the sight of filtered light
In my mouth is a country of bittersweet crossings
The only space I will ever occupy
Is this expanse of longing

MESSAGE OUT TO SEA (DEAR MOM...)

text by Brian Sonia-Wallace

Mother's Day Card (in a Bottle out to Sea)

Dear mom, you were always my refuge
When I didn't know which way to turn
Now my ship has left those placid waters
There's still so much to do, to be, to learn –

Dear mom, you welcome me on each return.
Beyond understanding there lives laughter
A torch that does not flicker as it burns
There's still so much I lack the words to tell you,

A hopeful silence, staring at the sea
As memories of angry voices churn
Against the queer joy that's knocking at my door
You saw my worth before it could be earned

Dear mom, you made my heart your first concern
For every wave, you became my safe shore
Dear mom, you taught me what it means to yearn
And how an ocean lives in me.

Ruben Valenzuela, Artistic Director

BCSD music is
the message
SEASON 23

FAR BEYOND THE SKIES

*Music of comfort and consolation, as
expressed through two venerable traditions.*

G.P. TELEMANN

Du aber Daniel gehe hin TVWV 4:17

J.S. BACH

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit BWV 106

African American Spirituals

Reginald Mobley, countertenor

Margaret Carpenter Haigh, soprano

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The Conrad Performing Arts Center

Sunday, May 3, 2026, 4:00 p.m.
All Souls' Episcopal Church

Tickets/Info: bachcollegiumsd.org



MESSAGE OUT TO SEA (cont.)

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Refuge in a time of storm
Fix our hearts in humble dwelling;
In love's harbor, keep us warm.
Spirit, boundless with compassion,
Pure and endless love compart;
All across your vast creation;
Open every shielded heart.

OUR STREETS, A SYMPHONY AGAIN

poetry by Brian Sonia-Wallace

The sunset strip
echoes, jacarandas bloom bright
after barren months.
Our streets symphony again
wild beyond gardens,
blaze honey
disco
french horns
& orange sherbet glow.

You, dear, never stopped
being a proud march, a palm
frond in the ragged wind –
yes, you curled up
in last winter's hush.
This city threads us
lonely
a plastic oasis of skin
sweaty with starlight.

But now it's time for
gogo boots & guitar strings,
rooftop pools & history
between your lips
like a cold margarita
while the hot asphalt
dances.
Each of us a song:
equal parts party and protest.

Won't you walk with me?
My glam aunts, my ferocious uncles,
my frankest friends – my chosen family,
look at all we have lost.
All that survives.
We are a house
built
on bones. We are dancing.
Dancing on bones.

OUR PROGRAM PARTNER: BORDER ANGELS

Border Angels is a volunteer-driven nonprofit dedicated to advancing human rights, immigration reform, and social justice along the U.S.-Mexico border. Committed to preventing migrant deaths and supporting vulnerable communities, we combine education, advocacy, and direct humanitarian aid to serve individuals and families in San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico.

We take a holistic approach to our work. Our programs are designed to respond to the urgent and evolving needs of the communities we serve, while our Education Program addresses the root causes of migration, harmful policies, and misinformation that make our humanitarian efforts necessary. By pairing direct service with community education, we work not only to respond to crises, but to challenge the systems that create them.

Our Water Drop program sends trained volunteers into remote desert regions to place water and essential supplies along migrant routes, helping prevent avoidable deaths in extreme conditions. Through Caravan of Love, we deliver food, clothing, and hygiene items to asylum seekers in Tijuana shelters, restoring dignity during times of displacement. The Familias Reunidas Bond Fund reunites families by providing bond assistance to individuals who cannot afford release from immigration detention. Our Day Laborer Outreach offers food and resources to vulnerable workers, while Volviendo A Casa supports families facing the tragic loss of a loved one during migration by assisting with funeral and repatriation costs.

Together, these efforts reflect our belief that love has no borders and that every human life deserves compassion, protection, and respect..



BORDER ANGELS

Love Has No Borders

We are a volunteer-driven nonprofit dedicated to promoting human rights, immigration reform, and social justice along the U.S.-Mexico border. Border Angels works to prevent migrant deaths through education, advocacy, and direct humanitarian assistance on both sides of the border.

Our Programs:



Water Drops

Sends volunteers into areas along the U.S.-Mexico border to place water and essential supplies on migrant paths.



Caravan of Love

Supports migrant asylum seekers in Tijuana shelters. Volunteers collect and deliver essentials like food, clothing, and more



Day Laborer Outreach

Supports individuals seeking daily work by providing food, legal resources, and moral support.



Familias Reunidas Bond Fund

Provides bond assistance to help release migrants who can't afford it, and continue their immigration process outside detention.



Volviendo A Casa

Supports migrant families who've lost loved ones on their journey by helping cover funeral and repatriation costs.



Contact us: admin@borderangels.org



2258 Island Ave. San Diego, CA 92102



www.borderangels.org
(619) 487-0249

ABOUT SACRA/PROFANA

SACRA/PROFANA redefines choral music by combining technical mastery with a dedication to diversity and inclusion in choral repertoire, and an eye toward social justice. The ensemble is acclaimed for its musical diversity; merging pop, classical, and contemporary music with its commitment to amplify the artistic voices of women and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, alongside traditional works. As a nonprofit organization, SACRA/PROFANA is committed to innovative choral programming, renewed collaborations with local and regional artists/groups, and service to the surrounding community through unforgettable performances and education programs that change choral students' lives.

SACRA/PROFANA has accomplished remarkable things in 16 previous seasons, including numerous world and U.S. premieres and collaborations with leading regional arts organizations: San Diego Symphony, Art of Elan, San Diego Opera, California Ballet, and many more. SACRA/PROFANA has also performed with many artists of worldwide renown, including the legendary Irish band the Chieftains, Producer Carlton Cuse (of ABC's hit show Lost), composer Michael Giacchino (Star Trek), and composer Alan Menken and Lyricist Stephen Schwartz in the development of Disney Theatrical's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" at La Jolla Playhouse. Some recent highlights include performing the trailer for Amazon Pictures' "Lord of the Rings: Rings of Power" at Comic-Con 2022 and 2024, and presenting the world premiere performance of the complete song cycle of Amy Gordon's "Songs of Hope in Strange Times." SACRA/PROFANA was also honored to receive the 2023 Chorus America Education and Community Engagement Award. A debut album, "Elegies & Ecstasies," was released in 2012, and in 2014 SACRA/PROFANA produced the world premiere recording of "when we were children" by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang, available on the Cantaloupe Music record label. Their second album, "A Longing for Christmas" was released in 2021.

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