

Conductor's Note



Steven Schick, Music Director
Photo: courtesy of San Diego UT

All lines eventually break. It's the deal we make when we are born. We live fully; we are as generous as we can be; we hold the people we love close to our hearts. As closely as possible. And if we are very lucky, our line will break some day, as Barbara Bush's just did, peacefully, surrounded by the love of family and with a valedictory glass of bourbon.

But some people aren't lucky. They leave the house one day, the bed unmade and the radio still playing, and they never return. Sandra Bland was arrested on July 10, 2013 after an altercation with a police officer at a routine traffic stop and died in custody three days later. We don't know what happened; yet, we do. It doesn't matter whether you support the police for doing a harrowing and necessary job—which I do—or you align yourselves with the Black Lives Matter crusaders for social justice—which I also do—in 2017, African-Americans accounted for 25% of police-related deaths and just 13% of the population. Those statistics should horrify everyone.

But what are we classical musicians supposed to do? Are we not powerless in the face of such a problem? In response, we offer this weekend's concert, neither to point the finger of blame nor to avert our eyes, but as an offering of light, amplifying Martin Luther King's axiom that, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that."

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At the center of everything is Courtney Bryan's remarkable work *Yet Unheard*, for orchestra and chorus, featuring a setting of Sharan Strange's searing poem in memory of Sandra Bland, with the incomparable Helga Davis as soloist. Helga, singing to us on behalf of Sandra Bland, exhorts us to relive the terrible scenario, one that is nearly unimaginable to someone of my position and privilege, yet an all-too-frequent reality for many of my fellow citizens. Through Helga's voice, Courtney Bryan brings us close to the tragedy, makes us feel the heat of it on our faces. The combined voices of the chorus prod us further by asking: "How do we imagine something different, that centers black people, that sees them in the future?" What a stark question! How shocking that it even has to be asked!

We pair Strange's agonizing question and Bryan's extraordinary music with Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*. Though it was written nearly 130 years ago, Fauré's music still feels fresh and relevant to the question of how we see the future. Fauré's is a "gentle requiem," nearly completely absent of images of fire and fury. Unlike Verdi and Berlioz, he asks for no titanic bass drum strokes to mark the fateful Day of Judgment of the "Dies Irae," nor antiphonal brass bands as the dead are called forth in the "Tuba Mirum." Fauré does indeed set the Dies Irae but it is merely a passing cloud of murky tonality, a transitory problem rather than a final judgment. Instead his *Requiem* is suffused with musical light—through omnipresent organ sounds and luminous writing for chorus and solo voices. Fauré employs an ingenious sleight-of-hand here. By centering the ensemble on the duskiest sounds of violas and lower strings—the violins play relatively rarely in *Requiem*—the women's voices sound even brighter and higher than they otherwise would.

Courtney Bryan and Gabriel Fauré would barely recognize each other's worlds. The former has a website, the latter the conservative musical training of 19th century France. Courtney lives in 21st century New Orleans; Fauré flourished in the *belle époque*. Some might say that Fauré's music sanctifies the old world and Bryan's critiques the new world. But that's wrong; these works are not opposites. Each strives to see the invisible and to touch the ineffable. And in the end, they share a message: the goal of living and dying is to transcend darkness, or in Dante's words at the end of the "Divine Comedy" to "*riverde le stelle*," to see the stars again.

Rounding out our concert is another pairing of light and dark. Rand Steiger's lustrous *Template* for the improvising trumpeter Peter Evans is a study in brilliance. There are Steiger's ingenious musical textures, enhanced by real-time computer modifications of the instrumental sounds. You'll hear things you've never even imagined! And, speaking of the unimaginable, never at the end of the many dozens of Peter Evans performances I've heard has my mouth ever been closed. I dare you to try it! His playing is nothing less than jaw dropping.

In offering a companion to the incandescent music of Rand and Peter, we close the season as we began it, with an invitation to the polymath composer and arranger Asher Tobin Chodos to create an orchestral environment based on an important work of 20th century jazz. Here Tobin offers his view of Ornette Coleman's masterpiece *Lonely Woman*, with the La Jolla Symphony and an all-star cast of soloists, including Helga Davis, Peter Evans and UC San Diego luminaries, bassist Kyle Motl and drummer Kjell Nordeson. *Lonely Woman* isn't exactly dark, but it surely is discomfiting. Coleman spoke about working in a department store before he became the free jazz giant we know. On a break, he saw a rich woman who seemed to have all the material possessions one could hope for in life, yet had the most solitary expression on her face. This is the lonely woman, the one who had everything except life itself.

Finding "life itself" is our ultimate goal. And as elusive as that may feel in real life, it is a quest that music captures beautifully. Music is the natural medium for life-force. We hear life-force in the virtuosic acrobatics of Peter Evans as he plays Rand Steiger's music, and we hear it when Tobin Chodos translates Ornette Coleman's mid-century jazz tone poem to the orchestral medium. We hear it as Fauré guides us through his requiem towards the apotheosis of "In Paradisum," his last movement and our ultimate goal. And we can hear it most clearly of all if we dare to look unflinchingly at Courtney Bryan's tragic tableau. Finding life always means driving out darkness.

Steven Schick

News from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we wind down the 2017-18 season, there is much to celebrate, much to reflect upon, and a spirit of moving forward. The year has certainly had its challenges, but also tremendous successes. We are ending the season with our financial house in order, the Endowment campaign completed, strong attendance figures, and the satisfaction of a season of music well-performed and equally well-received. Congratulations to all of our musicians for putting not only your talent, but your heart and soul into every concert. It shows, and makes us all proud to be a part of this organization. *Thank you!*

Diane Salisbury



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Meet Mezzo Soprano Rebecca Ramirez



Rebecca “Becky” Ramirez is a Nuyorican (New York City-born Puerto Rican) who found her way to California and eventually Escondido in the North County via the Midwest.

She first took voice lessons as a student at Palomar College. It was a fortuitous decision for the budding mezzo because she landed a starring role in Palomar’s production (and U.S. premiere) of *Jack the Ripper, the Musical*. On a proverbial musical roll, Becky continued to be cast in San Diego musical productions all over the county, most notably with the Coronado Playhouse, Lawrence Welk Dinner Theatre, Starlight Bowl and San Diego Rep’s annual production of *A Christmas Carol*.

In 2008 she returned to Palomar to sing the role of Orpheus in the opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* and also served as the Music Director for their production of *Esperanza Rising*.

Becky is a long-time member of the La Jolla Symphony Chorus and has been a featured soloist in several concerts at home and on tour. She says one of her favorite pieces for LJS&C was Argentine composer Osvaldo Golijov’s *Oceana*. “The sound images were

mesmerizing,” she enthuses. “Stravinsky’s *Les Noces* was the most challenging, but I enjoy challenges and love all types of music,” she says. (A friend once marveled that she loves “all the weird stuff.”)

Becky has been, well, instrumental in bringing choral music to underserved audiences, both locally and in Los Angeles. An original member of the LJS&C outreach program, she recorded the Spanish language version of the first *Images Through Music* CD for distribution to schools in the San Diego/Tijuana area. Her outreach activities also included working with well-known actress Carmen Zapata at the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts in Los Angeles, bringing music and theatre experiences to inner-city schools there.

Becky describes herself as having “a passion for music and its capacity to reach across boundaries to all people” as well as someone who is “committed to peace and justice through the arts.”

Pat Finn

Remembering Chuck Carver

Chuck Carver sang with the LJS&C for over 40 years. He died in his sleep, May 19, 2018. He was a gentle man, whose personal dedication provided for our basic needs.

There are two utterly non-musical things that continually dog a chorus: rehearsal snacks and risers for off-site performances. For years and years, we had those worries completely alleviated by one man: Charles Carver.

Chuck would say in his southern drawl, “Now, Doctor Chase, don’t worry about it. I’ll get that equipment there,” and he’d provide a truck and organize a few strong guys who’d do the work. Somehow – often, it seemed, by a miracle – the risers always appeared at a church in time for our rehearsal.

What’s more, *every week*, Chuck and his helper, Pasqual, would show up with refreshments for the break. Cheese and oranges and vegetables with dips, chips, sweets and treats, all planned to give the singers a lift at that critical time of the long evening. What he liked was the “fellowship” provided by the feast.

As his melanoma advanced, he often looked pretty bad, and I’d ask him “How are you feeling?” and “Do you need to take a break? Should we get someone else to bring this stuff?” Repeatedly, he’d say, “No, I’m fine. These folks work hard and they need good refreshments!”

He also cornered me from time to time to give his opinion on our music. “God speaks through you,” he’d say, “He is here with us and you’re making His music.” As Chuck lay in his hospital bed last week, Bill Ziefle visited and reported that Chuck said, “I’ve got a lot of Fauré in me.”

We will be remembering him as we sing the *Requiem*.



David Chase



Chuck dancing with Tour Leader Brenda Montiel at The International Choral Kathaumixw, 1992.

Member Spotlight Chuck Carver, Chorus

Excerpts from Carver Profile by Barbara Peisch originally published in February 2006 Tutti Newsletter.

Tenor Charles (Chuck) Carver, a second generation Texan, grew up in Amarillo near the Texas panhandle. The third of five children, he was taught to serve others at an early age by his father, a church elder whose mother was a Mennonite. Chuck's early musical experiences included singing with his family in a weekly religious radio program.

Chuck had the enviable experience of growing up in a small city, while having dozens of relatives living on or near farms where he could spend his summers and vacations. It was still rural enough that his parents kept a cow to provide milk for their five children. As an adult he could still remember his "pet" ducks becoming feather pillows for his bed.

For a while, Chuck entertained the vision of himself as a farmer, and he began college in Abilene, with that goal in mind. Chuck continued his musical training at Abilene, and joined the college choir. After graduation he was hired by the Department of Agriculture to plot soil types in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in northern Montana. He subsequently joined the US Navy where he found the challenging, exciting job he craved--he trained as a hard-hat (deep sea) diver. During his diving training, Chuck attended church in Washington, D.C., where his brother-in-law was the minister. It was there that he met his future wife, Shari, a member of that congregation.

They were married just three months later, a few weeks before he finished his training, and afterwards were stationed in Honolulu. Chuck began work on the salvage ship that would be his station for the next two years, retrieving from the seabed whatever sank--bombs, airplanes, etc. His experiences in Hawaii included a Westpac cruise and a tour of Viet Nam

After the Navy, Chuck worked for Parke Davis and Company. He was sent first to Roanoke, Virginia and then to Morgantown, West Virginia. Chuck and Shari had their first child, a son, in 1969. Eight months later, a San Diego stockbroker who also had worked for Parke Davis, invited him to work as a broker for the firm of Shearson Hammill, in San Diego. Chuck took the offer, and moved to California to begin training. Six months later, he passed the exam, and began his career as a stockbroker.

Chuck and Shari's second child, a daughter, was born in 1971, and a house with more space for children was needed. At this time, Chuck was assisting a dying client in finding a buyer for

the client's business; Chuck decided to buy the company himself. Thus began Auto Beauty Products and an introduction to the stresses of being his own employer.

It was during this time that he first began singing with the La Jolla Civic Chorus, and, a few years later, the San Diego Master Chorale. At first, he was content to just sing, but eventually began to want to know the chorus members better. He decided that hungry singers would linger and chat if they found food present, and decided to provide refreshments to encourage the singers to get to know one another.

Church activities always played an important role in Chuck's life. He served as deacon at in his church in La Mesa, and co-chaired the San Diego Christian School Foundation in its first year. He helped to institute a children's worship service, where he later started a puppet ministry. Eventually, he became the song leader for the church Praise Team.



Article Watch

From David Chase

Courtney Bryan is serving as composer in residence with the Jacksonville Symphony for the next year

By Charlie Patton - The Florida Times-Union

<https://goo.gl/Rdhuo6>

Courtney Bryan: Creativity, Collaboration, and Completing the Picture

by Lucy Caplan - National Sawdust

An article that came out of National Sawdust, which is the latest and great new music presentation venue in NYC. It speaks directly to the origin of "Yet Unheard"

<https://goo.gl/4kD1Bq>

Interview with Helga Davis, discussing "Yet Unheard":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJAmSNwkogY>

From Meryl Gross

Sameer Patel Leads La Jolla Symphony on a Modernist Field Day

by Ken Herman - San Diego Story

<https://goo.gl/g2ASG9>

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