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A BOSTON CHRISTMAS

Friday, December 20 • 7:30 pm
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From the Music Director

Welcome to *A Boston Christmas* presented by the Back Bay Chorale. This is my first season with the Back Bay Chorale, but my introduction to music-making with these musicians happened one year ago—as guest director for the BBC’s Christmas concerts in the winter of 2023. It was then that I discovered an organization steeped in musical excellence, community, and artistic bravery. What an honor it is to return to *A Boston Christmas* as the Music Director of this organization.



As a professional choral musician, I wear my biases on my sleeve. Choral music is miraculous. Since the beginning of recorded history, communities have gathered in song. Choral singing helps us to learn, to forge communal bonds, to experience and employ empathy, to think critically, and—through the marriage of text and music—to tell stories past and present from around the world.

Tonight, in addition to the familiar carols we know and love, you will hear the work of a teenage Benjamin Britten. A carol by the influential and under-represented composer Julia Perry, who would have turned 100 this year, will come alive again. You will be transported to the Hollywood Golden Age via the music of Alfred Burt. Burt wrote Christmas carols in lieu of Christmas cards and sent them to his musical family, and his granddaughter, Abbie Burt Betinis, keeps the family tradition alive to this day. You will fall in love with Margaret Bonds’ arrangement of the Native American-influenced Spiritual *Sing Aho*, heard here in a yet unpublished choral version created by the composer in the 1960s. Choral music allows us to travel through time and space, and to experience a childlike wonder that keeps imagination alive in all of us.

For much of the year, popular and instrumental genres take center stage. This is not so during the holidays. Choral music floods the airwaves and streams in hotel lobbies and supermarkets. Major venues all over the world are playing host to choral concerts this month as our busy world hopes to find the “Holiday Spirit.” Tonight, we at the Back Bay Chorale hope that you will fall under choral music’s familiar spell. For us and for our audiences, the majesty of choral music is a year-round affair. The warmth, sounds, stories, and community created by this organization keep us all coming to rehearsal after week, and it will be our honor to perform for you again in the new year. In the meantime, settle in, sing heartily, and enjoy the show!

– Dr. Stephen Spinelli



Thank You!

Back Bay Chorale's mission is to share the power of voice, advancing the spirit of community. We are grateful for your presence with us at this performance. Thank you also to our generous individual and corporate donors for your financial support, and to our program advertisers. Please offer them your patronage and mention Back Bay Chorale. The Back Bay Chorale is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your donation is tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

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The Back Bay Chorale gratefully acknowledges the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, and The Boston Foundation, for their support.



CARD TO CULTURE



From the President of the Board

Welcome, friends of the BBC, to our Christmas concert, as a new season and chapter of growth for the Back Bay Chorale continues!

We are delighted you are here. A choral organization is at its heart a community, one that doesn't stop in the front row of the singers, the orchestra or the conductor. It is inseparable from you, our audience, our friends, our family.

We're so glad that our community has been joined by our sixth Music Director, Stephen Spinelli. Steve brings energy, enthusiasm and a great deal of talent to the chorale; we're looking forward to a period of reinvigorated musical growth for our 100-strong community of volunteer singers—we hope you are, too.

Our season opening concert told a story about how we got to J. S. Bach, which composers influenced him, and who in turn influenced those composers; music is always built on the shoulders of others. The rest of this season continues the journey and includes sparkling work by Florence Price (who had a strong connection to Boston), contemporary composer Kile Smith and great works by Brahms and Carissimi.

We continue our engagement with the community at large—our ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Chorus, part of our Bridges community engagement initiative, has considerably grown and was recently awarded a significant grant by the Boston Foundation. In partnership with the Boston Public Library, our program brings people together to learn English through singing and building community. The program is thriving, now with 50+ members, many of whom will be joining us today to add their voices to the chorale. We become stronger together.

Our community engagement includes other music organizations in Greater Boston; we joined Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) in November, when Back Bay Chorale combined with BLO's professional chorus to sing in the legendary second act of Verdi's *Aida*. It was a spectacular success with a sold out audience and wonderful reviews. We're so happy to have made new friends and brought our choral music to a new audience.

As you can see, we're busy, as usual. We also need you. We need your presence at our concerts and we'd love your support as a donor or a concert sponsor. You can reach out to our Executive Director, Susanne Powers for more information on how to help us, or simply contribute online.

So, please enjoy the concert and the sense of community and joy we hope this brings to you. We're looking forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary soon and being led into new music by Steve Spinelli. Onwards!

– Craig Hughes



A Boston Christmas

Friday, December 20, 2024 • 7:30 pm

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Old South Church

645 Boylston St., Boston 02116

Marc-Antoine CHARPENTIER Instrumental Prelude (from *Te Deum*)
(1643–1704)

arr. David WILLOCKS **Audience Carol:** Once in Royal David's City

Benjamin BRITTEN A Hymn to the Virgin
(1913–1976)

Welsh Carol Brass Interlude: Suo Gan
arr. Thomas QUIGLY

Will TODD My Lord Has Come
(b. 1970)

Jonathan DOVE The Three Kings
(b. 1959)

arr. WILLOCKS **Audience Carol:** Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Julia PERRY Carillon Heigh-Ho
(1924–1979)

Spiritual Sing Aho
arr. Margaret BONDS

Abbie Burt BETINIS Behind the Clouds
(b. 1980)

— *With the Bridges ESOL Chorus* —
Dr. Riikka Pietilainen Caffrey, director

Alfred BURT Caroling, Caroling
(1920–1954)

BURT We'll Dress This House

Daniel PINKHAM Christmas Cantata
(1923–2006)
I. Quem Vidistis Pastores
II. O Magnum Mysterium
III. Gloria in Excelsis Deo

Franz GRUBER **Audience Carol:** Silent Night
(1787–1863)

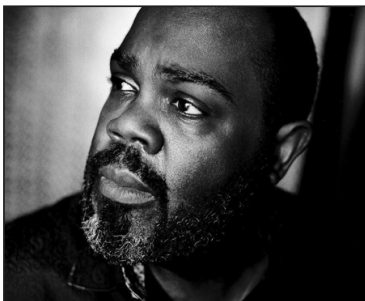
Morten LAURIDSEN O Magnum Mysterium
(b. 1943)

arr. WILLOCKS **Audience Carol:** O Come, All Ye Faithful

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Dr. Stephen Spinelli

MUSIC DIRECTOR

DR. STEPHEN SPINELLI WAS APPOINTED AS BACK BAY CHORALE'S SIXTH Music Director, effective July 1, 2024. He is Assistant Professor of Choral Studies at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, serving there since 2022. Spinelli previously served as the assistant director of choral programs at Cornell University, and held visiting appointments at Thomas Jefferson University, Moravian College, Villanova University, and Syracuse University.

Dr. Spinelli has sung with some of the country's leading vocal ensembles. As a tenor with The Crossing, his credits include the 2018 Grammy Award®-winning recording of Gavin Bryars' *The Fifth Century*. Spinelli also performed with the genre-bending vocal octet Roomful of Teeth. He assisted in the production of their Grammy Award-winning debut album, which yielded the Pulitzer Prize®-winning recording of Caroline Shaw's *Partita for Eight Voices*. As a frequently engaged guest conductor, he cherishes his experiences leading the Maui Chamber Orchestra and Chorus.



Spinelli is a proud co-founder of ONEcomposer a nonprofit organization dedicated to research, publication, performance, and recording in celebration of historically excluded musical voices. ONEcomposer's collaboration with the Philadelphia Orchestra to present the original orchestration of Florence Price's *Piano Concerto in One Movement* was hailed as "a knockout" by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. In July, ONEcomposer released *Beyond the Years*, the organization's inaugural commercial recording, featuring previously unpublished and unrecorded art songs of Florence Price as performed by soprano Karen Slack and pianist Michelle Cann. All editions, created by Dr. Spinelli from archival source material, will be published in the spring of 2025.

Spinelli was a Beinecke Library Research Fellow at Yale University from 2022–2023, where he investigated the creative partnership between Langston Hughes and Margaret Bonds. He was recently named an Ecker Fellow by the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, through which he will investigate the phenomena of public memory and amnesias as they relate to historical exclusion in the field of music. Spinelli holds degrees from Williams College, Temple University, and Northwestern University.



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Program Notes + Texts and Translations

A Hymn to the Virgin

In addition to his work as a conductor and a composer of opera and art song, Benjamin Britten made transformative contributions to choral music, blending modern techniques with a deep connection to British musical traditions. Born on St. Cecilia's Day (St. Cecilia was the patron saint of music, and sharing a birthday with the great Henry Purcell makes it seem as though his inheritance of British legacy was written in the stars.

Britten's most famous compositions include the monumental *War Requiem*, which juxtaposes traditional liturgical text with anti-war poetry, and *A Ceremony of Carols*. Britten also revitalized English choral traditions with pieces like *Rejoice in the Lamb* and *Hymn to St. Cecilia*. *Hymn to the Virgin*, written when the composer was just 17 years old, is scored for double choir and highlights the composer's sensitivity for illuminating ancient musical practices through a modern lens. The text is a Medieval macaronic poem penned by an anonymous author around the year 1300. Macaronic texts combine two languages: in this case, Middle English and Latin.

Of one that is so fair and bright,
Velut maris stella (*like the star of the sea*)
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella (*mother and maiden*):
I cry to thee, thou see to me,
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
Tam pia (*so pure*),
That I may come to thee.
Maria!

All this world was forlorn,
Eva peccatrice (*from Eve, the sinner*)
Till our Lord was y-born,
De te genetrix (*through you, the mother*)
With ave it went away
Darkest night, and comes the day
Salutis (*of salvation*)
The well springeth out of thee.
Virtutis (*of virtue*).

My Lord Has Come

The music of British composer Will Todd is unique in its fusion of classical, jazz, and modern styles. He was commissioned to write *The Call of Wisdom* for Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, which launched his music into the public eye. *My Lord Has Come* is a beautiful snapshot of Todd's characteristic blend of styles.

Shepherds, called by angels,
called by love and angels:
No place for them but a stable.

My Lord has come.

Sages, searching for stars,
searching for love in heaven;
No place for them but a stable.

My Lord has come.

His love will hold me,
his love will cherish me,
love will cradle me.
Lead me, lead me to see him,
sages and shepherds and angels;
No place for me but a stable.

My Lord has come.

The Three Kings

Jonathan Dove has made a career writing opera, choral music, and orchestral works, all of which are known for blending contemporary styles with traditional counterpoint. *The Three Kings*, commissioned in 1999 by the Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge, tells the journey of the three wise men: one young, one middle aged, and one older. The text, based on a poem by American writer and theologian W.H. Auden, highlights the mystery of each wise man's gift, while emphasizing the wisdom that comes with age.

The first king was very young.

O balow, balow la lay.

With doleful ballads on his tongue.

O balow, balow la lay.

He came bearing a branch of myrrh

Than which no gall is bitterer,



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O balow, balow la lay,
Gifts for a baby King, O.

The second king was a man in prime,
O balow, balow la lay.
The solemn priest of a solemn time,
O balow, balow la lay.
With eyes downcast and rev'rent feet
He brought his incense sad and sweet,
O balow, balow la lay,
Gifts for a baby King, O.

The third king was very old,
O balow, balow la lay.
Both his hands were full of gold.
O balow, balow la lay.
Many a gaud and a glittering toy
Baubles brave for a baby boy.

Carillon Heigh-Ho

Julia Perry overcame race and gender-related barriers to become a major force in American composition and conducting. Many of her works remain unpublished and, in fact, three short studies were recently rediscovered in an archival box of



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and
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Nadia Boulanger's students' works at the Harvard University Special Collections. Her most significant surviving works include the *Stabat Mater* for choir, soloist and orchestra, which was recently performed by the New York Philharmonic. Written for the Westminster College Choirs and John Finley Williamson, *Carillon Heigh-Ho* is a folk-style Christmas Carol that evokes the chimes of a bell tower.

O'er the country wild bells ringing,
Pealing out the joyful lay
Telling all that peace and good will reign,
For this is Christmas day!

Joyful bells bring cheer and tidings,
Telling of child Jesus birth,
Of how all people gathered,
Praising Him who came to earth!

The house-tops white with snow,
The Christmas trees shine bright,
The whole world rights with joy!
Heigh Ho Hey Ho, Hey Heigh Ho!

Bells are ringing, Hear their roundelay,
"This is Christmas day!"

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Sing Aho

The prodigious and precocious Margaret Bonds was a composer and pianist so revered in her time that Chicago Mayor Richard Daley declared January 31, 1967 Margaret Bonds Day. Born in 1913, Bonds enrolled at Northwestern University at the age of 16, and in short order she graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance. Early in her career, she became the first Black soloist to perform with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Shortly after her death, her *Credo* for orchestra, choir, and soloists was performed by Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Since her death in 1972, Bonds' legacy was woefully underrepresented on concert stages and in classroom curricula. In 2013, following the death of Bonds' only child, Djane Richardson, a large collection of Bonds' music and materials was recovered at an estate sale, sparking renewed interest in her remarkable life.

Sing Aho, originally written for voice and piano, is Bonds' arrangement of a lesser-known Spiritual that reflects the blending of Black and Native American cultures. The word "Aho" comes from the Kiowa language and broadly means "amen," or "I agree." This arrangement for choir, done by the composer for the Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers, is drawn from the manuscripts of Margaret Bonds housed at Yale's Beinecke Library and Special Collections.

Sing Aho that I had the wings of a dove,
I'd fly away and be at rest.

The Virgin Mary had one son,
(I'd fly away and be at rest)
The unbelievers had him hung.

Sing Aho that I had the wings of a dove,
I'd fly away and be at rest.

Zion's Daughters wept and moaned,
When their dying savior groaned.

Sing Aho that I had the wings of a dove,
I'd fly away and be at rest.

Sinner man see what a shame
(I'd fly away and be at rest),
to trample down your savior's name,
(I'd fly away and be at rest).

Sing Aho that I had the wings of a dove,
I'd fly away and be at rest.

Behind the Clouds

The works of Abbie Betinis have been performed across the United States and internationally. A native of Minnesota, Betinis holds degrees from St. Olaf College and the University of Minnesota, and she has served as Composer-in-Residence with the Rose Ensemble, Schubert Club, and Cantus. Her compositions have been commissioned by prominent ensembles and organizations, including the Dale Warland Singers, the American Choral Directors Association, and the Minnesota Orchestra. Beyond her work as a composer, Betinis is a co-founder of Justice Choir, a nationwide initiative promoting community singing for social change.

Betinis, whose middle name is Burt, is the granddaughter of Alfred Burt. Each year, she composes a Christmas carol to honor the tradition of her grandfather. *Behind the Clouds* honors

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the season of Advent, and sets the composer's adaptation of texts by Alfred Burt's father, the Reverend Bates G. Burt.

Behind the clouds that darken human life,
Forever shines the Light of God;
And whensoever those clouds may go,
Dispelling the shadows in which we so
 blindly grope,
Then is it, indeed,
 Hope.

With ears attuned to heaven's prophecies,
Our hearts await a Prince of Peace,
And whensoever that Prince appear,
And we in darkness, and we in fear
 find release,
Then is it, indeed,
 Peace.

Awake! Awake! Lift up your hearts downcast,
For sorrow shall transform at last,
And whensoever that Rose unfurl'd,
Invites Hosannas for all the world
 to employ,
Then is it, indeed,
 Joy.

O come, O come, come closer still tonight,
The pains of life remain, but Light...!
And whensoever that Light breaks through,
And we, in radiance, reflect a new
 world above,
Then is it, indeed,
 Love.

Two Carols by Alfred Burt

A jazz trumpeter by training, Alfred Burt combined his musical expertise with a family tradition started by his father, Rev. Bates Burt, who wrote carols as part of their annual Christmas cards. Alfred carried on the tradition, composing and arranging 15 carols between 1942 and 1954, which were sent to family and friends. Burt's carols blend accessible melodies with sophisticated harmonies, reflecting both his jazz background and his deep sense of faith and joy. Some of his most beloved works have become staples of the holiday repertoire. Though Burt's life was far too young, his carols continue to capture the spirit of Christmas with their warmth and timeless charm.

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Caroling, Caroling

Caroling, caroling, now we go
Christmas bells are ringing
Caroling, caroling thru the snow
Christmas bells are ringing
Joyous voices sweet and clear
Sing the sad of heart to cheer
Ding dong, ding dong
Christmas bells are ringing

Caroling, caroling, near and far
Christmas bells are ringing
Following, following yonder star
Christmas bells are ringing
Sing we all this happy morn
"Lo, the King of heav'n is born!"
Ding dong, ding dong
Christmas bells are ringing

Caroling, caroling thru the town
Christmas bells are ringing
Caroling, caroling up and down
Christmas bells are ringing
Mark ye well the song we sing
Gladsome tidings now we bring
Ding dong, ding dong
Christmas bells are ringing!

We'll Dress This House

We'll dress the house with holly bright and sprigs of mistletoe
We'll trim the Christmas tree tonight and set the lights aglow
We'll wrap our gifts with ribbons gay and give them out on Christmas Day
By everything we do and say, our gladness we will show.

And ye who would the Christ child greet, your heart also adorn
That it may be a dwelling meet for Him who now is born
Let all unlovely things give place to souls bedecked with heavenly grace,
That ye may view His holy face with joy on Christmas morn.

We'll dress the table daintily, our finest treasures use
That all a-sparkle it may be and bright with lovely hews
Then for the feasting we'll prepare a kitchen full of wondrous fare
That each from all the dishes rare, his fav'rite one may choose

Christmas Cantata

Daniel Pinkham was an influential American composer, organist, and educator whose career spanned much of the 20th century. Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, Pinkham studied composition with notable figures including Walter Piston, Aaron Copland, and Nadia Boulanger, as well as harpsichord with Wanda Landowska. He became a central figure in Boston's musical community, serving as the longtime organist and music director at King's Chapel. In addition to his compositional and sacred music careers, Pinkham was a dedicated educator, teaching at institutions such as the New England Conservatory of Music.

Scored for chorus, brass, and organ, the cantata is structured in three movements, drawing its text from traditional Latin liturgical sources. *The Christmas Cantata* exemplifies Pinkham's mastery in combining ancient and modern elements, making it a beloved addition to the holiday repertoire.

I. Quem vidistis pastores? Dicite:
Anuntiate nobis in terris
Quis apparuit.
Natum vidimus natum
Et choros angelorum
Collaudantes Dominum
Alleluia.

*I. Whom did you see, shepherds? Tell us:
Announce to us,
who has appeared on earth.
We saw the newborn child,
And the choirs of angels
Praising the Lord.
Alleluia.*



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II. O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum.
Ut animalia viderent Dominum natum.
Jacentem in praeseptio
Beata virgo cujus viscera
Meruerunt portare Dominum, Christum.

*II. Oh great mystery
Oh wondrous sacrament,
That animals should see the newborn Lord
Lying in a manger.
Blessed is the Virgin, whose womb
Was worthy to bear the Lord, Christ.*

III. Gloria in excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae
voluntatis.
Jubilate Deo omnis terra,
Servite Dominum in laetitia.
Introite in conspectu ejus,
In exultatione.
Scitote quoniam Dominus ipse est Deus
Ipse fecit nos et non ipsi nos.
Alleluia.

*III. Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace to people of
good will.
Rejoice in God, all the earth,
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come into His presence,
With exultation.
Know that the Lord is God;
It is He who made us, and we are His.
Alleluia.*

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O Magnum Mysterium

Morten Lauridsen is one of the most widely performed choral composers of our time. A native of Portland, Oregon, Lauridsen studied at the University of Southern California, where he later became a professor and composer-in-residence. He has received numerous accolades, including the National Medal of Arts in 2007, awarded by President George W. Bush in recognition of his contributions to American music. Lauridsen has also been the recipient of numerous other honors, including the American Choral Directors Association's highest honor, the Robert Shaw Choral Award. Among his most famous compositions is *O Magnum Mysterium* (1994), which has become a staple of the choral repertoire.

Do you want to make a difference?

Back Bay Chorale is looking for New Board members.

We are looking for people who want to be part of a dedicated and engaged Board of Directors for our dynamic and forward-thinking organization at a pivotal time in our 50-year history.

It's an exciting time at Back Bay Chorale, as we reach greater musical heights with our new Music Director Dr. Stephen Spinelli.

If you are passionate about choral music and would like to lend your experience and talents to helping us continue to advance the spirit of community through the power of voice, please contact:

Abby Reichlin

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Areichlin01@gmail.com

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HENRY WEINBERGER

REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST

HENRY WEINBERGER HAS ACCOMPANIED musicians in the Boston area for many years. Former positions include accompanying the MIT Chorus under the direction of Bill Cutter, and working with Betsy Burleigh and the Master Singers of Lexington. Weinberger received a Master of Music in Piano Performance at the New England Conservatory, where he studied with Leonard Shure and Lorna Cooke DeVaron.



Weinberger has played rehearsals under the batons of Seiji Ozawa, Arthur Fiedler, Kurt Masur, and John Williams. He has served on the faculty of the Longy School in Cambridge, where he was the music director of the opera department and taught classes in vocal repertoire and diction for singers. Weinberger made a career change in 1989, when he became a nurse. He worked at Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates for twenty-four years, where he specialized in the care of people with HIV, hepatitis C, and other infectious diseases.

DR. RIIKKA PIETILÄINEN CAFFREY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

DR. PIETILAINEN CAFFREY WAS BORN IN KEMI, Finland, and sang and toured with the acclaimed Finnish choir Philomela. She immigrated to the U.S. to pursue music studies. While in New York, she founded and conducted Las Sirenas, a women's chamber choir, at the City College of New York, premiering works by American and Finnish composers. She has held academic positions at American University in Beirut, Lebanon, Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA, and Bunker Hill Community College in Boston. She is Associate Professor of the Practice and Director of Choral and Vocal Performance at Boston College.



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Cynde Hartman
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Sarah Milt
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Brenda Ulrich

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Anna-Sophia Boguraev
Elly Cope
Elizabeth Driver
Deborah Dumaine
Judy Foreman
Nicole Furrier
Emily Goodberg
Betsy Groves
Shelby Holden
Wendy Horgan
Debbie James
Lucy Martindale
Jess Mason
Molly McCleary
Ludovica Mottura
Joan Regan
Sabrina Sarmiento
Polly Scannell
Ellen Scerbo
Mary-Margaret Segraves
Barb Siftar
Beverly St Clair
Sarah Stone
Rikki Tracy

Kathy Trogolo
Kaylee Wallace
Mary Wendell
Elizabeth Williams
Emily Young

TENOR

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Donald Di Salvo
Logan Grubb
Paul Kearney
John Kornet
Benjamin Kulas
Abe Laxague
Paul Lewis
Claye Metelmann
Paul Rabin
Joseph Reid
Alan Rothschild
Tyler Seegers
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Mike Trogolo
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If you are listed incorrectly, are mistakenly missing from this list,
or would like to be removed from this page, please let us know
at info@bbcboston.org, and we will make the appropriate corrections.

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To learn more, visit bbcboston.org/bridges

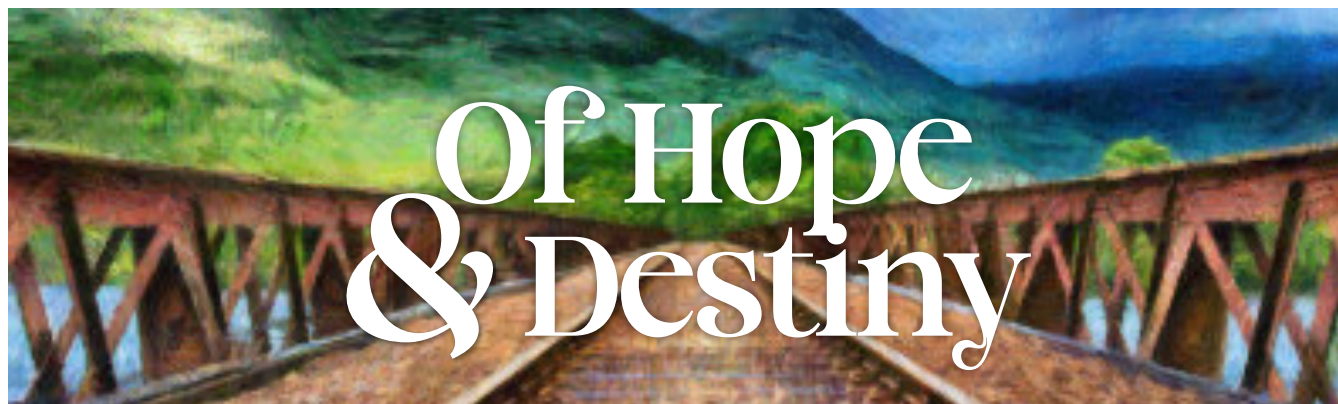
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