

ST THOMAS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT SERIES PRESENTS



**CELESTIAL PROPHECY**

**BENJAMIN BELEW SAKAGCH AKEALA**

**CONCERT**

**MMXXIII 12/24 Sunday, December 24 4:00 pm(Doors 3:30 pm)**

# - PROGRAM -

**Prelude**  
Improvisation  
Benjamin Belew Sakagch Akeala  
Piano  
Benjamin Belew

**Rejoice Greatly**  
from the "Messiah"  
Handel  
Soprano  
Tina Paulson

**Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix**  
from "Samson et Dalila"  
Saint-Saens  
Mezzo Soprano  
Akane Ota

**Andante Cantabile ... 2nd Movement**  
from "Ensemble Sonata '22" (piano solo version)  
Benjamin Belew Sakagch Akeala  
Piano  
Benjamin Belew

## Celestial Prophecy

a Cantata

Benjamin Belew Sakagch Akeala

**Movement I** Prelude  
**Movement II** Redeemer Divine  
**Movement III** Floral Voices  
**Movement IV** Words Inferno  
**Movement V** Ashes Upon the World  
**Movement VI** Echoes of the Ghosts  
**Movement VII** Thy Voice, Thy Love  
**Movement VIII** Oh Light, Oh Light  
**Movement IX** Celestial Voices  
**Movement X** Chorale of the Stars

**Choir** St. Thomas Choir  
**Soprano** Tina Paulson  
**Alto** Akane Ota  
**Tenor** Finn G.  
**Bass** Gregory Smith

**Conductor** Clement Cano  
**Piano** Benjamin Belew

This concert is made possible by generous support from the community and friends of St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

Special thanks to Pastor Salying, Anne, Jim, Patricia, Linda.

Please do not make photographs, videos, or recordings of this performance that are not good. If you do, just make sure it's good.

## ST. THOMAS CHOIR

Hailed as the "Imperial Voices of Washington Park", ST. THOMAS CHOIR meets at the church's sanctuary for practice Thursday nights 7:30 to 9:00 pm, and Sundays at 9:45 am before the 10:30 am service under the leadership of Music Director Patricia Pietrzyk. The choir has been singing since the mid-1950s, and is always open for new members to join in. In fact for this concert, the choir has been expanded by additional outside members joining in for the rehearsals and performance. There are also opportunities for singing in smaller ensembles or solo, and often include other musical instruments as well. If you have a musical talent to share, ST. THOMAS CHOIR is delighted to hear from you.

### SOPRANO **TINA PAULSON**

The day is over as music teacher at San Jose's Notre Dame High School, Wonder Soprano Tina strolls amidst the Dorian gardens of d minor with a leading note in her hand; a formidable C sharp. Suddenly, one of the Agents of Sound, a Staccato Gazelle hops in front of her for a key change. Tina drops her C sharp as it blends in with the rest of the new key in the transition. "How dare you!"

She reacts with a sforzando that wakes up the entire garden. Now with every wild thing joining, the air is filled with an infinite chromatic chorus. Tina starts to pick the numerous soaring songs, collecting them neatly into her basket. As she did, Tina sighs and realizes that this was another typical day for a Wonder Soprano.

### **AKANE OTA** ALTO

A Japanese mezzo-soprano, Akane holds a B.A. in Vocal Performance and an artistic diploma. A top graduate, Akane performed at The 71st YOMIURI Young Artists Concert at Tokyo Bunkakaikan. In 2006, she debuted as Papagena in The Magic Flute and has since taken on various opera roles. In the US, Akane is a member of SF Symphony Chorus, 21V choir, Valti, and Convivium, serving as the alto section leader at the Universalist Unitarian Church in SF. Akane organized an earthquake relief concert at San Mateo Buddhist temple for a music University at her hometown Kumamoto. She is a Music at Kohl education committee member and NATS, focusing on music education. Besides singing, Akane enjoys learning cello with her daughters and cat Cocoa, teaching voice and piano in Burlingame.

### TENOR **FINN G.**

One of the wild things from the singing gardens, Finn springs out in his fox form hooting a melody wistfully with his snout. "To the terrains, mind you." He says to one of the daffodils asking him who he was singing to. "I'm singing to the terrains so they join us." However it didn't take too long for the surrounding forest, the brook, the mountains to add accompaniment to the chorus. The garden was already no longer Dorian, or Phrygian, or Lydian or Mixolydian or Aeolian. It was blooming in full potential. Finn too was transforming every second, every measure, every beat, his fur changing colors with the hues of the garden's ensemble.

### **GREGORY SMITH** BASS

The last leg of my musical journey began in 2017 when I stumbled across a little "Brigadoon" village called Livermore. It was in the Tri-Valley and East Bay where I have continued since then teaching K12 Piano and Voice. Accompanying musical auditions as a reliable sightreader, playing church organ on Sundays in North Bay during the Pandemic Recovery, and serving as a seasonal chorister/soloist in South Bay and San Francisco as needed for special programs like Celestial Prophecy fulfill my desire to wish you all a Merry Christmas this year.

### CONDUCTOR **CLEMENT CANO**

The shepherd arrives to the garden hearing the joyous tune. Clem was an experienced shepherd, herding all beasts from west to east, but this was a garden filled with tunes he had never seen or heard before. Clem swiftly raises his torch in hand; the baton to guide the sounds. The songs start to purr and align themselves to chords, but always with a polyphonically capricious nature. After all, they were all wild entities from the garden. Echoes rang surrounding everything, and as Clem's footing, the earth he stood upon starts rising to pulse the bass line in the accompaniment, his trusty wyverns Halley and Astro fly above to prepare for the countless measures of music that was on its way.

### **BENJAMIN BELEW** PIANO

Full name, Sakagch Benjamin Akeala Belew. Composer, Painter and Visual Artist, Story and Script Writer. Other skills and experience include, Illustration, 2D Animation, Sculpting, Directing(music, musical theatre, theatre, opera, film), and Piano. [mephistoape.com](http://mephistoape.com)

## ABOUT THE WORK

Celestial Prophecy is a multi movement cantata composed and performed over several occasions. The earliest motifs date back to 2011 being part of a multi movement cantata written for a church Christmas concert setting. This work was in a state nowhere near its current maturity, and since its initial performance it was dismantled and its material used for other works yielding better artistic results. In 2014 the work was revisited for another Christmas church setting. This time some of the main themes were composed, but was finished as a single movement work. The title "Celestial Prophecy" was decided then, and some of the main text was written at this time. However, the performance for this version was a total failure. In 2021 a third opportunity arises. This time, the work was expanded into 11 movements written to fit into a Christmas Service. The majority of the work in its current form(2023) was composed during the weeks leading up to this 2021 performance date. The current movement VII(Thy Voice, Thy Love) was an aria written separately before, but was combined into the work. Instruments were added for this version, and most of its substantial musical contents and the text were written at this time. For today's 2023 version, the work is nearing its final stage. Materials from the 2021 version that were not satisfactory were omitted, and movements that seemed to work better in different contexts were taken out to become independent works of their own. Now with the most important components established, the work was able to go through polishing and a thorough editing process(including the unification between movements, their keys, texture, length, flow of the storyline of the text, etc). This version will be the second to last, with the final one to be the same as this version, but to be performed with choir, vocal soloists, and orchestra.



I ... Prelude  
Light Appears from the Depths of Eternal Darkness  
(instrumental)

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II ... Redeemer Divine  
The Lost Await and Call out for the Redeemer  
(Soloists and Choir 4 Parts, featuring Tenor Solo)

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Redeemer Divine.  
Cast thy torch of wisdom with light.

Ceasing, gone astray,  
Left in brims of time.

Seek thy light, seek thy light, led by truth.  
Come to us, to us! Our salvation!

Redeemer Divine.  
Truth anointed, gracious savior,  
One who shall reach us all!  
Lead us by truth. Cast thy light,  
Cast thy light on us!

Redeemer Divine. Redeem!

Cast thy torch of wisdom with light! Come to us,  
Our salvation!

Redeemer Divine.  
Truth anointed, gracious savior,  
One who shall reach us all, reach us all!  
Come to us, come to us.  
Cast thy light. Redeemer Divine.

Leading us by truth.  
Cast by thy light.  
Tides of bliss sweeps all,  
And ascend our toiled souls,  
With thy eternal stellar glory!

Redeem, Redeem, Redeem, us!

III ... Floral Voices  
Voices Appear as Colors  
(Soloists 4 Parts)

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Behold, voices of colors appear,  
Rendering shades of birthing stars.  
Senses surrender filling with wonder.  
Hour of floral golden glory,  
With our hearts ascend!

IV ... Words Inferno  
The Burning Words Light the Darkness  
(Soloists and Choir 4 Parts)

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Fire Breathing; light those who seek.  
Fallen, broken, mournful and meek.  
Fire breathing; shine those in need.  
Welded in flames; words of divine.

Fire; Words of inferno spoken from high.  
Words of divine.  
Fire; words of inferno spoken from high.  
Light us! Guide us!

Fire Breathing; light those who seek.  
Fire; Words of inferno, light us from high, high.

Fearful stands as young and old,  
As the flames rise high and bold.  
They will witness heaven's grace,  
First in fear till they can hear.

Now we stand to reach your hold.  
Words are lit, they shine in gold.

Light! Light! Light us now!  
Light! Light!

Gone from sorrow, we find our morrow.  
Fire; Words of inferno, light us from high. High!

Fire breathing; light those seeking.  
Hear our cries as eager carols  
Sung from yonder's night and shadows.

Light us the way to thee.  
Thy words will set us free.

Light us now!

V ... Ashes Upon the World  
The Ashes of Darkness Cover the World  
(Alto and Bass Soloists Duet)

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Why are the ashes upon the world?  
Everywhere I now see grey, white in bold.  
Covered in landscape like snow,  
Darkness burnt, Darkness burnt,  
With golden words.

Colors of Love! Birth of Light!  
Everywhere, everywhere,  
Now I see.

VI ... Echoes of the Ghosts  
Souls from the Past Seek the Words  
(Soloists and Choir 4 Parts)

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Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Oo- Oo- Oo-

We, ghosts from past times;  
May we hear the word,  
May we hear and rest.

Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Oo- Oo- Oo-

We, ghosts from past times;  
May we hear the word,  
May we hear and rest.

Echoes we are now.  
Cradled in time; bound.

Ah- Ah- Ah-  
Ah- Ah- Ah-

Echoes we are now.  
Cradled in time; bound.

Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Oo- Oo- Oo-

VII ... Thy Voice, Thy Love  
Words of Salvation Now Become in Form Of Love  
(Soprano Solo)

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Thy voice for crying peace,  
Thy voice for showing grace,  
Thy voice for casting glory, I hear.

In dire propection we seek,  
The skies and earth and speak  
Our prayers of eager defined,  
Await for answers divine.  
Behold our savior cometh!

Thy voice for crying peace,  
Thy voice for showing grace,  
Thy voice for casting glory, Thy voice I hear.  
Thy voice for casting glory, Thy voice I hear.

Thy love for lasting peace,  
Thy love for granting grace,  
Thy love for casting glory, I feel.

In dire propection we seek,  
The skies and earth and speak  
Our prayers of eager defined,  
Await for answers divine.  
Behold our savior cometh!

Thy love for lasting peace,  
Thy love for granting grace,  
Thy love for casting glory, Thy love I feel.  
Thy love for casting glory, Thy love I feel.

VIII ... Oh Light, Oh Light  
Now Light Shines as Stars  
(Soloists and Choir 4 Parts, featuring Tenor Solo)

---

Oh Light, Oh Light fill darkness with ocean of stars.  
Fill with stars. Fill with stars.

Seek thy light, seek thy light, led by truth.  
Come to us, to us!  
To us, to us.

Redeemer! Redeemer! Redeemer!  
Cast thy torch of wisdom with light!

Redeem, Redeem, Redeem us!

IX ... Celestial Voices  
Voices Appear as Singing Stars  
(Soloists 4 Parts)

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Behold, voices of stars can be heard,  
Singing songs of birthing stars.  
Senses surrender filling with wonder.  
Hour of floral golden glory;  
With our hearts ascend!

X ... Finale - Chorale of the Stars  
Stars are Born, Now to Shed Light to All  
(Soloists and Choir 4 Parts, featuring all 4 Soloists)

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Oo- Oo- Oo-  
And the Light strokes to wake the garden,  
Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Tending soil, made of darkness.  
Ah- Ah- Ah-  
Deafening cries of life unlocked,  
Ah- Ah-  
Those who swim, crawl, fly, and walk.  
Ah- Ah-  
Frozen no more, our sorrow flows.

Falls as tears gathering below,  
A stream in eternal meadow.  
Falls as tears gathering below,  
A stream melodic than before.

Death must die, Death must die,  
With Love!

And the planets behold, constellations thrive.  
Mortals released from the earthly bounds as they witness,  
Blessed will be who waits, with love's own embrace.  
Lead us through morrow. Prime. Alpha. Omega.  
Celestial guidance, Almighty wonder. With love's grace.

Oo- Oo- Oo-

Lovers gather 'round songs by ocean's tides,  
Old and Young.  
Birth of Light!  
Abode creations' sign,  
Everywhere, everywhere!  
Everywhere, everywhere!  
Now I see!

And the planets behold, constellations thrive.  
Mortals released from the earthly bounds as they witness,  
Blessed will be who waits, with love's own embrace.

Freed. Nightmares now betrayed.  
Hearts joined, souls be wed.  
United now, one in golden womb.  
Children of love. Be born, be born as stars!

Oh Light, oh Light fill the darkness with oceans of stars.  
Fill with stars. Fill with stars.

Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Awaken we are, we are.

Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Oo- Oo- Oo-  
Awaken by love To be free,  
Lighting night.

We are the stars.  
We are the stars.  
We are the stars.  
We are the stars!



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**Benjamin Belew**  
**Sakagch Akeala**  
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