



Solaris
Vocal Ensemble



Blue
SKIES

with guest artists:

Nick Browne, double bass and Andy Gagnon, percussion

Saturday, April 11, 2026 at 7:30 pm

Waterbury Congregational Church - Waterbury, VT

and

Sunday, April 12, 2026 at 4:00 pm

College Street Congregational Church - Burlington, VT

Blue Skies

Dr. Dawn O. Willis, Artistic Director
Cameron Brownell, Assistant Conductor
Marne Lopez, Collaborative Pianist
Patricia Norton, Assistant Accompanist

Three Songs of Summer

Edvard Grieg (1843 – 1907)

Welcome the Day

adapt. Hawley Ades (1908 – 2008)

One Summer's Eve

Matt DeDiana, *tenor*

Water Lilies

The Blue Bird

Charles Villiers Stanford (1853 – 1924)

Molly Desrochers, Sadie Jones, Gail Whitehouse, *sopranos*

The Pasture

Z. Randall Stroope (b. 1953)

Cameron Brownell, *conductor*

For the Beauty of the Earth

John Rutter (b. 1945)

Cameron Brownell, *conductor*

Two Madrigals

Weep, O Mine Eyes

John Bennet (1575 – 1614)

Fyer, Fyer!

Thomas Morley (1557 – 1602)

Two Little Jazz Madrigals

Weep, O Mine Eyes

Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)

Fire, Fire!

Nick Browne, *double bass*
Andy Gagnon, *percussion*

Intermission



Nick Browne – Double Bass

Chanson Triste (Op. 2)

Serge Koussevitzky (1874 – 1951)

Valse Miniature (Op. 1, no. 2)

Someone to Watch Over Me

George Gershwin (1898 – 1937)

arr. James Stewart (b. 1979)

Let Peace and Love Shine Through

Rollo Dillworth (b. 1970)

Julia Stacom conductor

Moonlight in Vermont

arr. Damon Meader (b. 1961)

Myriam Bouti, alto and James Stewart, tenor

Blue Skies

Irving Berlin (1888 – 1989)

arr. James Stewart

Nick Browne, double bass

Andy Gagnon, percussion

James Stewart, piano



Large Print Programs Available



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The Bluebird

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The Pasture

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For the Beauty of the Earth

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Two Madrigals: Weep, O Mine Eyes and Fire Fire!

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Singers of Solaris

Program Notes

Solaris invites you into a spring landscape of open skies and expansive sound with music that flows from clarity to playfulness and from reflection to radiant joy. Whether in delicate musical brushstrokes or vibrant bursts of rhythm and harmony, these works trace the emotional arc of the season — and of the human spirit — as it opens toward beauty, light, and love.

The concert begins with a luminous set of songs by Edvard Grieg, the revered Norwegian composer best known for orchestral and piano works. These choral gems — *Welcome the Day*, *One Summer's Eve*, and *Water Lilies* — evoke idyllic scenes of nature. The musical textures shimmer like reflected light and the melodies of Norwegian folk songs play a prominent role in this set as they do in his much-beloved *Peer Gynt* suite. From here, we soar upward with *The Blue Bird* by Charles Villiers Stanford, a brief and ethereal tone-poem in which the sopranos float over gently shifting harmonies, conjuring the graceful movement of a bird gliding across a clear sky that sees its image in the lake below.

The next two pieces reflect on the earth's beauty. *The Pasture* by Z. Randall Stroope sets Robert Frost's iconic poem in music that is spacious, gently beckoning, and full of warmth. The choral music of John Rutter, one of the most prolific composers of English sacred music, is well-known throughout the U.S. *For the Beauty of the Earth*, is a cherished hymn anthem which expresses a joyful sense of gratitude through its lyrical melodies supported by a flowing piano accompaniment.

Music by English composers continues with the next four selections. Two of the most famous English madrigals from the 16th century are sung first in their original state and then as they have been reimagined by another English composer. *Weep, O Mine Eyes* by John Bennet and *Fyer, Fyer* by Thomas Morley, both exquisite examples of English Renaissance part-songs, are full of poetic longing, intricate rhythms, and expressive counterpoint. We follow them with *Two Little Jazz Madrigals* composed by Bob Chilcott, one of the original members of the world-renown King's Singers. His settings are witty and syncopated jazz renderings of those same two texts, complete with string bass, piano, and drums. The juxtaposition of old and new — restrained and rambunctious — is one of this season's most joyful musical pairings.

Following intermission, our guest artist, Nick Browne, will perform solo pieces by Serge Koussevitzky, the famed Russian-born composer, conductor, and virtuoso double bassist who served as the Music Director of the Boston Symphony

Program Notes

Orchestra from 1924 – 1949. *Chanson Triste* and *Valse Miniature* showcase the lyrical and expressive range of the string bass.

Solaris is delighted to premiere two pieces by our Composer-in-Residence James Stewart in these concerts! *Someone to Watch Over Me*, composed by George Gershwin in 1926 for the Broadway musical *Oh Kay!* is one of the composer's most enduring songs. In this arrangement, the voices begin on a single unison note that expands into dramatic chords that set the scene for the story of person searching for a very special someone to love. Stewart's evocative setting of this beloved song captures the heartache and hope that make this song so timeless.

Rollo Dilworth's *Let Peace and Love Shine Through* is a gospel-inspired song full of warmth and conviction. A significant portion of the lyrics for this piece were written in collaboration with high school students from Doylestown, Pennsylvania. In the composer's notes Dilworth says this song describes "how love, peace and our common humanity can play a powerful role in building and sustaining an inclusive community."

Moonlight in Vermont, considered by many to be the unofficial state song of Vermont, was composed in 1944. The lyrics, written by John Blackburn who attended Bennington College in the 1930s, have the unusual rhyming pattern of a haiku where 5 syllables are followed by 7 syllables and then by 5 syllables. The song had wide appeal especially for soldiers stationed away from home during World War II. Throughout his arrangement, Darmon Meader uses lush jazzy harmonies that paint a warm and inviting picture of this very special place we live.

The concert closes with James Stewart's exuberant arrangement of *Blue Skies*, a song written in 1936 by young Irving Berlin as a last-minute substitution for a struggling Rodgers and Hart Broadway musical named *Betsy*. To everyone's

Stewart's stirring arrangement of this iconic song reflects a spirit of hope that is at the heart of Solaris' mission.

surprise the audience adored *Blue Skies* and demanded 24 encores of the song at the end of that first performance. Stewart's stirring arrangement of this iconic song reflects a spirit of hope that is at the heart of

Solaris' mission. We offer it and all these pieces with heartfelt gratitude for your presence and your support. May there be beautiful blue skies ahead for us all!

– Dawn Willis

Solaris Vocal Ensemble is dedicated to the belief that choral music – the powerful combination of music and language – can energize and inspire the human spirit. Our mission is to bring light and meaning to great choral works that span the ages, through compelling performances imbued with passion and musical artistry.



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Song Texts

Three Songs of Summer

Welcome the Day

Welcome the day with spirit so bright!
Darkness is flying, gone with the night!

Over the meadows gliding, high the sun is riding.

“Up, away! Now greet the day!”

Birds in chorus seem to say!

“Waken to morning sunlight!”

One Summer’s Eve

I wander’d one lovely summer’s eve
into a shady vale.

How bright the fields in sunlight
stood, how blue the lake, and green
the wood!

The south wind singing, sweet fra-
grance bringing across the land!

A shepherd girl with ribbons gay,
and braids of golden hair,
sat knitting in the sunset there, a
flock of sheep her tender care.
She sits so still by whisp’ring rill, a
picture fair.

What does she dream, the shepherd
girl, in summer twilight cool?

Alone she sits in the sun’s last rays,
across the field casts a longing gaze;
A horn replies! Afar it flies, and in
echo dies!



Water Lilies

See, my love, what I am bringing, lilies
white with dew drops clinging.

On the quiet stream they were gently
swaying, sweet and pure as children
playing.

But these blossoms you are holding,
close within your arms enfolding,
they among the leaves so shyly hiding,
in your gaze so fair abiding.

They are not just what they seem.
Home of danger is their stream!
Lilies play above the deep. Water
sprites but feign to sleep!



The Blue Bird

The lake lay blue
below the hill
O'er it, as I looked, there flew
Across the waters, cold and still
A bird whose wings were palest blue

The sky above was blue at last
The sky beneath me blue in blue
A moment, ere the bird had passed
It caught his image as he flew

Mary E. Coleridge (1861 - 1907)

Song Texts

The Pasture

I'm going out to clean the pasture
spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I
may):
I shan't be gone long. — You come
too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's
so young,
It totters when she licks it with her
tongue.
I shan't be gone long. — You come
too.

— Robert Frost (1874 - 1963)

For the Beauty of the Earth

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies.

Refrain

Lord of all, to thee we raise,
this, our joyful hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light.

Refrain

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild.

Refrain

For each perfect gift of thine,
to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n.

Refrain



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Song Texts

Two Madrigals

Weep, O Mine Eyes

Weep, o mine eyes, and cease not,
alas, these your spring tides,
methinks, increase not.
O when begin you to swell so high
that I may drown me in you?

Fyer, Fyer!

Fyer, fyer!
My heart! My heart!
Fa la la la la la.

O help! Alas! O help!
Ay me! I sit and cry me,
and call for help,
alas, but none comes nigh me.
Fa la la la la la.

Fire, Fire!

Fire, fire!
My heart! My heart!
Fa la la la la la.

O help! Alas! O help!
Ay me! I sit and cry me,
and call for help,
alas, but none comes nigh me.
Fa la la la la la.

I burn! Alas! I burn!
Ay me! Will none come quench me?
O cast water on,
alas, and drench me.
Fa la la la la la.

Song Texts

Someone to Watch Over Me

There's a saying old, says that love is blind. Still we're often told, seek and ye shall find. So I'm going to seek a certain lad I've had in mind.

Looking everywhere, haven't found him yet. He's the big affair I cannot forget. Only man I ever think of with regret.

I'd like to add his initial to my monogram. Tell me, where is the shepherd for this lost lamb?

There's a somebody I'm longing to see, I hope that he turns out to be someone who'll watch over me.

I'm a little lamb who's lost in the wood, I know I could always be good to one who'll watch over me.

Although he may not be the man some girls think of as handsome, to my heart, he carries the key.

Won't you tell him please to put on some speed, follow my lead, oh, how I need someone to watch over me.



Let Peace and Love Shine Through

Look up past the clouds skimming the azure sky.

Look down at the joy reflected in a child's eyes.

See glimmers of light hidden in the depths of the sea.

See the stars align for you and me.

Refrain

We stand together side by side.

To the ends of the earth, we are unified.

Even when there is no sun in sight, let peace and love shine through.

Watch rosy beams dance on the crashing waves.

Watch the light kindle a fire that humanity saves.

A heart in every person beats the same.

Hands of every color ignite the flame.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Through the howling wind and rain, through the hatred bred from pain, let peace and love shine through.

Refrain

Let your love shine through!



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Song Texts

Moonlight in Vermont

A snowy morn, a summer breeze,
a moonlit night filled with memories:

Pennies in a stream, falling leaves, a
sycamore, moonlight in Vermont. Icy
finger waves, ski trails on a mountain
side, snowlight in Vermont.

Refrain

Telegraph cables, they sing down
the highway and travel each bend
in the road.

People who meet in this romantic
setting are so hypnotized by the
lovely evening summer breeze,
warbling of a meadowlark, moon-
light in Vermont.

You and I and moonlight in Ver-
mont.

Even with the winter wind blowing,
I still feel the warmth in your eyes.
Feel that summer breeze through
the trees, these memories, an August
moon over a river filled with day-
dreams.

Feel the sun on your face in the
misty light, and every time I think of
you, I dream of our two hearts togeth-
er like the mountains meet the sky
and stars bathe in the moonlight,
leaves dancing on a river of gold, as
we sigh under the starlight, the fall-
ing snow under a sycamore tree, just
for you and me, such reverie.

Oh, whoa.

Refrain



Song Texts

Blue Skies

I was blue just as blue as I could be.
Every day was a cloudy day for me.
Then good luck came a knocking at
my door.
Skies were gray but they're not gray
any more.

Blue skies smilin' at me,
nothing but blue skies do I see.
Blue bird singin' a song,
nothing but blue birds all day long.

Never seen the sun shinin' so bright,
never seen things goin' so right.
Noticin' the days hurry-in' by,
when you're in love, my how they fly.

Blue days, all of them gone.
Nothing but blue skies from now on!

In the air, nothing but blue skies.
Look around, nothing but blue skies.
I can see nothing but blue skies!

Blue skies smilin' at me...

Never seen the sun shinin' so
bright...

Blue days, all of them gone.
Nothing but blue skies from now on!



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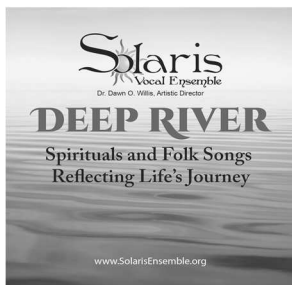
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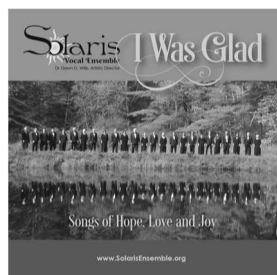
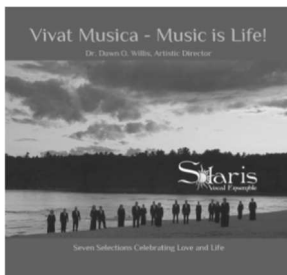
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Dr. Dawn O. Willis, Artistic Director



Dr. Dawn O. Willis is the Artistic Director and founding conductor of Solaris Vocal Ensemble. Under her leadership, Solaris has developed a reputation for vibrant, compelling performances and imaginative programming. The ensemble has performed throughout the region, including a featured appearance at the ACDA "Gather at the River" conference in New Hampshire, concert tours to Quebec City, Ottawa, Portland, and Cape Cod, and invited performances at the Vermont Statehouse. Solaris has also released four professionally produced CD recordings.

A Vermont reviewer described Solaris under Dr. Willis's direction as "an excellent vocal ensemble that delivers compelling musical performances," noting that she brings "musical depth and understanding" to each program. She has shaped Solaris into a group where experienced musicians, including several music educators and conductors, come together to pursue expressive, high-level ensemble singing. Praised as "one of Vermont's foremost choral conductors," at the heart of her work is a belief in the power of choral music to build connections—between singers and audiences, tradition and innovation, the local and the global. Through Solaris, she has created a space where high-level artistry and genuine community intersect, offering performances that are as intellectually engaging as they are emotionally resonant.

Her artistic leadership also includes Bella Voce Women's Chorus which she founded in 2004. Since moving to Vermont, she has also served as Chorus Director for the Green Mountain Opera Festival and Assistant Director of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra Chorus.

Dr. Willis holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Choral Music from Arizona State University and Master's degrees in Sacred Music and Choral Conducting from Southern Methodist University. She served as Director of Choral Activities at McMurry University and Iowa Wesleyan College, and held conducting appointments at the University of Vermont, Arizona State University, and Iowa State University. She has conducted performances with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, the New England Symphonic Ensemble, and the Southeast Iowa Symphony Orchestra, and has prepared choruses for regional orchestras throughout Iowa and Texas. In addition to positions in music ministry across various denominations, Dr. Willis has directed festivals, clinics, workshops, musicals, operas, and madrigal dinners across the Midwest, Texas, and New England.



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1. Could you share a specific story or moment that made your concert experience unique?
2. What is the one thing you would tell someone considering attending a future concert by Solaris?



Cameron Brownell, Assistant Conductor



Cameron is excited to be in his fourth season as Solaris' Assistant Conductor. He is the Chorus Teacher at Champlain Valley Union High School, teaches K-1 General Music at Shelburne Community School, serves as Music Director at Charlotte Congregational Church, teaches voice lessons at UVM, and is in his first year as Artistic Director of Aurora Chamber Singers. Cameron has a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education and Vocal Performance from SUNY Potsdam, The Crane School of Music, and a Master's Degree in Sacred

Music from the University of Notre Dame. He lives in Williston with his husband, Chance Hicks.

Marne Lopez, Collaborative Pianist



Marne Hover Lopez is a native Vermonter with a lifetime of experience on the piano. Her love of the piano was nurtured by her musically gifted mother at an early age, beginning with piano lessons, leading soon to becoming an accompanist for her mother's church choir at the age of 12. Continuing in the family business, Marne accompanies the Colchester High School choir, and she has played for the Chittenden County District Choral Festival. Outside of music, Marne works remotely as a Sr. Account Director at

Epsilon, a global advertising and marketing technology company. She has a BA in History from Eastern Nazarene College. Marne and her husband, Rich, have two college-age children and reside in Colchester.

Patricia Norton, Assistant Accompanist



After moving to Burlington from eastern Vermont in April of 2022, Patricia joined Solaris that fall. She has accompanied choral groups and vocalists since age 11, a habit which expanded into choral directing in the 2000s. Patricia uses the voice to help navigate life, which has led to A Breath of Song, a podcast that helps people sing, and an innovative and ancient presence practice called Flow Singing. She co-hosts the Kindred Voices singing retreat. Patricia is delighted to live close to her daughter's family, with a little extra time for composing, discovery walks, and reading.





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Dr. James Stewart, Composer-in-Residence



As a composer, James is interested in ALL genres of music, writing for musical theater, rock bands, symphony orchestras, church choirs and ensembles of all shapes and sizes. James holds a Master's of Music from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from the Hartt School at the University of Hartford. He is an active member of the local music community, serving as the music director of the Montpelier Community Gospel Choir, collaborating with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and composing and arranging pieces for local high schools and choirs. You can find out more about James' music on his artist website jamesstewartcomposer.com.



Solaris Vocal Artists

Gary Barton, baritone
Jenny Berschling, alto
Myriam Bouti, alto
Cameron Brownell, tenor
John Buck, baritone
Mike Casarico, baritone
Karen Chickering, soprano
Matt DeDiana, tenor
Molly Desrochers, soprano
Sam Gusick, bass
Sadie Jones, soprano
Brianna Keith-Trackey, soprano
Dean King, tenor
Henry Lang, baritone
Meg McCormack, soprano
Kathleen Messier, soprano
Molly Moerdyk, alto

Patricia Norton, alto
Nan O'Leary, alto
Aimee O'Meara, alto
Steve Olson, bass
Becky Peterson, alto
Toby Rockwood, alto
Caleb Roman, baritone
Sean Santry, tenor
Geoffrey Skelley, tenor
Julia Stacom, soprano
James Stewart, tenor
John Trackey, bass
Katherine Wayman, alto
Linda Wheeler, soprano
Gail Whitehouse, soprano
Stuart Williams, bass



Guest Artists

Nick Browne, Double Bass



Bassist Nick Browne is a freelance musician in northern New England, appearing with various ensembles including Juno Orchestra, Vermont Symphony, Springfield Symphony, Opera Company of Middlebury, and TURNmusic.

Nick regularly performs with The Philadelphia Orchestra, with whom he has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, toured China, and performed at Carnegie Hall. He has also appeared with the Pittsburgh, Houston, and Grand Rapids Symphonies, and the Rochester Philharmonic. A former member of the bass section of the San Antonio Symphony (2014-2020), he also served as guest Principal Bass with the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra in the spring of 2018 and 2019 and was a member of the Breckenridge Music Festival from 2015 to 2021.

A passionate and devoted educator, Nick is lecturer of Double Bass and Bass Guitar at Dartmouth College where he also enjoys coaching chamber music.

A native of Pittsburgh PA, Nick earned a Bachelor of Music from Duquesne University and a Master of Music at Rice University, studying with Jeffrey Turner and Timothy Pitts respectively. As a student, he enjoyed summers at Brevard Music Center, Chautauqua Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, and Tanglewood Music Center.

Nick lives in Montpelier, VT with his wife, Esther Erbe, and their beloved dog, Wilbur.



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Guest Artists

Andy Gagnon, Percussion



A native of Hardwick, Vermont, Andy Gagnon has dedicated his life to music. He has worked across the world as a percussionist, composer, and educator.

As a performer, Andy has played for a wide variety of artists and groups, including Ray Vega, Noah Young, Eugene Uman, The East Coast Inspirational Singers, Birdcode, Anna Laura Quinn, Dennis McNeil, APEX Ensemble, Bruce Sklar, Eric Lindberg, Elizabeth!, Joe Davidian, Justin

Levinson, Dan Liptak, Collin Craig and Matt Davide. He regularly performs with and often composes/arranges for Lovecraft, The Vermont Jazz Ensemble, The Myschievists, The Tom Cleary Trio, Girls Girls Girls, The Renegade Groove, and PURPLE: A Tribute to Prince featuring Craig Mitchell.

Andy is the instrumental music director at Stowe Elementary, Middle, and High schools, the manager of the Vermont All State Music Festival band, the personnel manager for The Vermont Jazz Ensemble, a faculty member of the Vermont Governor's Institute on the Arts, a board member of Music-COMP, a founding board member of The Vermont Jazz Foundation, and the founding director of the VMEA District II Jazz Festival. He lives in Morrisville with his wife Leah, their dogs Spock and Kiwi, Minerva the cat, and Poppy Seed the chinchilla.



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Please visit the Solaris website for audition information.

www.SolarisEnsemble.org



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Ann and John Owen
Becky and Tom Peterson
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Trackey
Stuart Williams
Susan and Steven Wood

Andante

Anonymous
Karen and Dana Baron
Jackie Burke and Ed Carroll
Lynne and Dick Dickinson
Maureen and Rob Evans
Gary and Bev Barton
David and Diana Hall
Bob and Donna Hamill
Brienne Keith and Jake Trackey
Erin King
Deborah Lang and Robert Jones
Laura Nassau
Sylvia Robison
Andrea Sharp
Donald and Jackie Swartz
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Trackey
Sarah and Maarten Van Ryckevorsel
Frank Whitcomb and Jean Chute
Gail Whitehouse

Adagio

Frances A. & Jerome B. Allyn
Diane Boccanfuso in honor of
Katherine Wayman
John Bossange and Lynne Poteau
Kevin Boyle in honor of Barbara Boyle
Linda Green

Adagio, *continued*

Gary and Terry Griffith
Art and Barb Harris
Janet Hewitt
Marty and Sue Johansen
Mary Koen and Marie-Andree
Gervais
Carla Lawrence and Polly Sabin
Mary Beth and Neil LeBlond
Lauren McAfee
Michael Marchand
Barry and Laura McVey
Mary Miller
Erin Mooney and Peter Plagge
Marleen Moore
Karl Naden
Nancy B. Portnow
Bette Reuter
David Royer
Glenn and Marga Sproul

Suzanne Stimik in memory of Lillian
and George
Martha Tanner and David Seachrist

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James Stewart, Chair
Molly Moerdyk, Vice Chair
Linda Wheeler, Treasurer
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Dean King
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Mikail Stein

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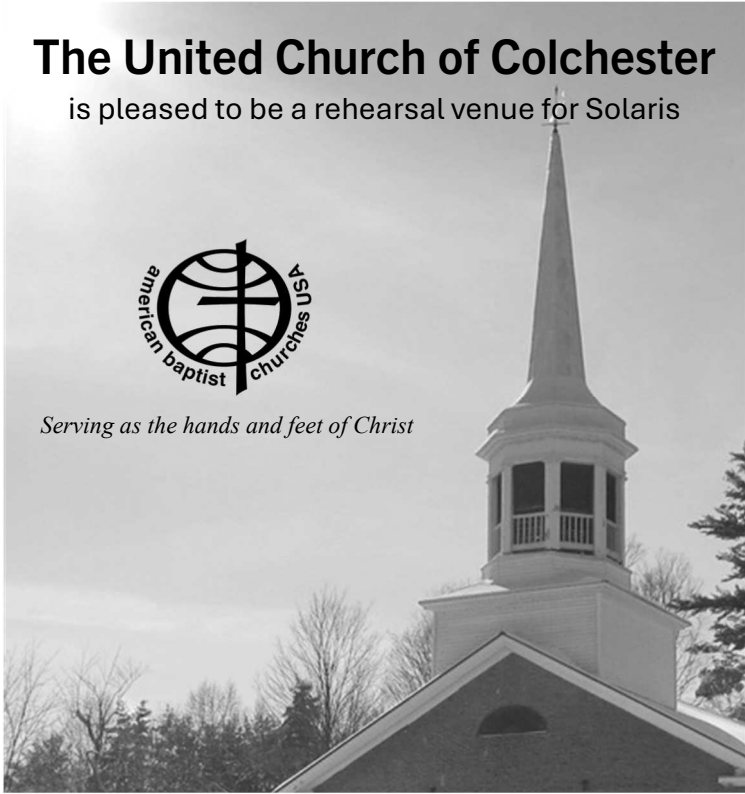
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is pleased to be a rehearsal venue for Solaris



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Since 1804, sharing the message of the love of Jesus Christ with all who will listen!

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In Person and Live-streamed on YouTube



Space Available for

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- *Community & Family Events*
- *Concerts*



Our 19th-century sanctuary (a warm and inviting acoustical space with a grand piano and air-conditioning) and comfortable parish hall and modern kitchen are available to rent. Contact churchofcolchester@gmail.com for details and rates.



Our Sincere Thanks

For rehearsal and performance facilities

College Street Congregational Church
Rev. Jessica Derise

United Church of Colchester
Rev. Dr. Russell Willis

Waterbury Congregational Church
Rev. Peter Plagge

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Join Solaris for our
2026 December Concerts!



Season
of
Light

Saturday, December 19, 7:30 p.m.
Waterbury Congregational Church
and

Sunday, December 20, 4 p.m.
College Street Congregational Church
Burlington

SolarisEnsemble.org



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