

PRESS RELEASE

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L O S A N G E L E S

MASTER CHORALE

History of Women's Rights Explored in an Original Oratorio, *Hear Our Voice: A Woman's Journey*, by Van Nuys High School Students



Sara Bard Field c. 1915



Malala Yousafzai in 2015

Students and Los Angeles Master Chorale singers to perform the new oratorio Friday, February 16 & Saturday, February 17 at Van Nuys High School Auditorium

(Los Angeles, CA) January 9, 2018 – *Hear Our Voice: A Woman's Journey*, a timely new oratorio written by Van Nuys High School students for the Los Angeles Master Chorale's Voices Within Oratorio Project, will be premiered by students and members of the Master



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Chorale on **Friday, February 16** and **Saturday, February 17** at the school's auditorium. The Friday performance will be for fellow students. The Saturday performance at 1 PM is presented as a free community concert and is open to the public.

Hear Our Voice: A Woman's Journey explores the history of women's rights in America through the story of suffragist Sara Bard Field's 1915 cross-country road trip to deliver a petition of 500,000 signatures to President Woodrow Wilson endorsing women's right to vote. In the oratorio, Field not only travels from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., but through time to encounter women's rights activists of the past and the present. Women featured include pioneering suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, African American abolitionist and women's rights activist Sojourner Truth, equal pay advocate Lilly Ledbetter, for whom the 2009 Fair Pay Act is named, and Nobel Prize laureate and girls' education activist Malala Yousafzai. Bard even has an encounter with Miss America during the pageant protests in 1968.

The topic of women's rights has gained a timely resonance following the emergence of the #MeToo movement. Last year's Oratorio Project, that was also a partnership with Van Nuys High School, saw the students create an oratorio called *In America* examining the topic of Japanese incarceration camps during World War II. The performances of *In America* also resonated strongly at a time of heightened focus on immigration issues and it received national press coverage in a [PBS NewsHour story](#).

"This year's subject of the history of women's rights and the oratorio's repeated refrain to 'hear our voice' truly could not be timelier," says LA Master Chorale President & CEO Jean Davidson. "It is a vivid example of how examining the actions of the past can inform the actions of the present, and music provides these young women and men with a creatively-rich way to have a voice and be part of a performance experience that is powerful and meaningful."



The performances of the 45-minute *Hear Our Voice: A Woman's Journey* are the culmination of the Los Angeles Master Chorale's 20-week Oratorio Project program. The program places three teaching artists, performer Alice Kirwan Murray, lyricist Doug Cooney, and composer David O, in the classroom to work with the students, alongside Van Nuys High School choir teacher Brianne Arevalo. The students, who range from 9th grade through 12th grade, write the libretto and create melodies for each movement of the oratorio. They are mentored by the artists on how to use musical techniques to capture the voice of the characters they create, propel the momentum of the plot, and paint the mood of the scene. After the oratorio has been written, the students audition for featured roles and are coached vocally to prepare for the performances. Eight LA Master Chorale singers perform the oratorio with the students, providing additional professional guidance.

Voices Within is an educational artists' residency program developed for the Los Angeles Master Chorale by Marnie Mosiman in collaboration with Bernardo Solano, Penka Kouneva, David O, and Doug Cooney.

The Oratorio Project and Voices Within are made possible through the generous support of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Thelma Pearl Howard Foundation, Rose Hills Foundation, Walter J. and Holly O. Thomson Foundation, Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, The Green Foundation, California Arts Council, John and Beverly Stauffer Foundation, William H. Hannon Foundation, Lon V. Smith Foundation, Employees Community Fund of Boeing California, The ASCAP Foundation, Sidney Stern Memorial Trust, and American Business Bank.

CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

Hear Our Voice: A Woman's Journey



An original oratorio by Van Nuys High School students created for the LA Master Chorale's Oratorio Project. Performed by Van Nuys High School students and members of the Master Chorale. Conducted by Brianne Arevelo.

WHEN & WHERE:

Friday, February 16, 1:00 PM

Van Nuys High School student performance

Saturday, February 17, 1:00 PM

Community performance – free and open to the public

Van Nuys High School Auditorium
6535 Cedros Ave, Van Nuys, CA 91411

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Members of the press are welcome to attend, photograph, and film the Oratorio Project performances. Please rsvp to jscott@lamasterchorale.org.

Photo of Sara Bard Field: Library of Congress

Photo of Malala Yousafzai: Simon David/DFID

