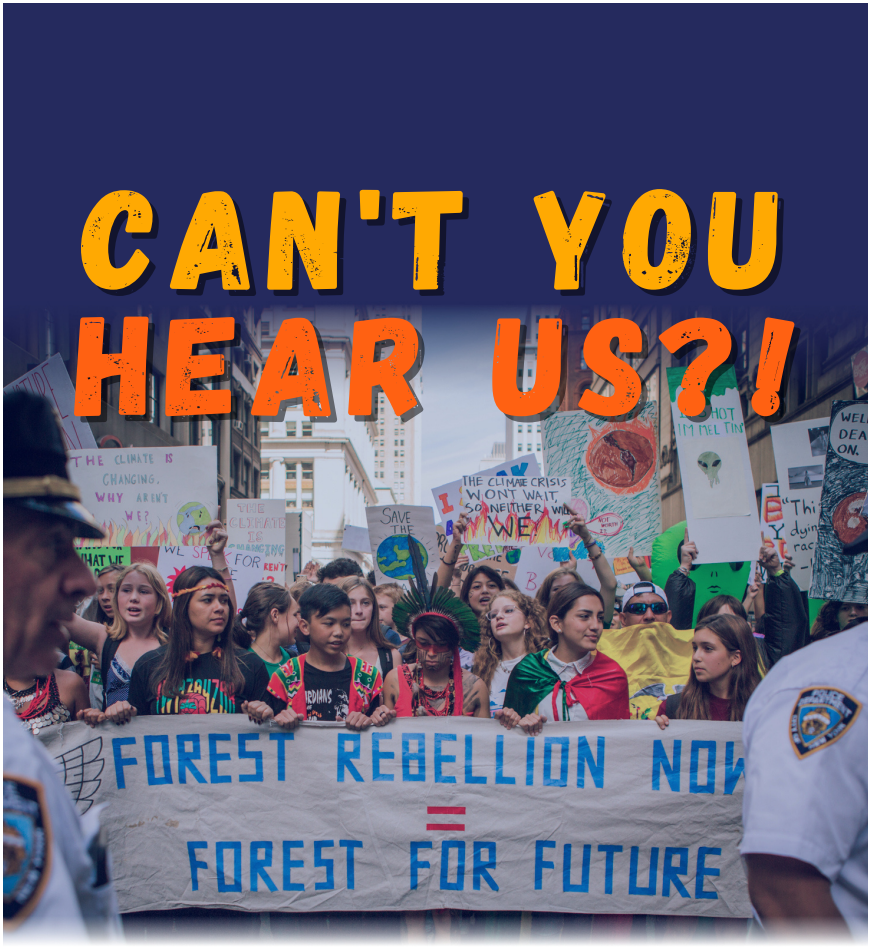

raising our voices in song to confront the climate crisis and inspire action

Saturday, May 13 2023
Metro Baptist Church
New York City

Welcome

It is with joy that we welcome you this evening. This program was conceived long ago, in pre-covid times, and we are delighted to finally see it come to fruition. While we are all a little bit older now, the urgent need for climate justice has not lessened. Our desire to live on a planet that is respected and where all life can flourish for generations to come is shared by the emerging poets who have collaborated with us. We honor their commitment to change and the gift of their words to inspire us all.

Our program is anchored by Katerina Gimon's *Elements*, sonic meditations on the traditional four elements, rooted in her Ukrainian musical heritage (both folk music and heavy metal) and vocal improv, exploring sounds beyond text to evoke visceral connection to the elements. We invite you to similarly hold space to reflect on your connection to the earth throughout the program, as we honor the planet that sustains us but cries out for urgent action to preserve it for future generations. ***Please scan the QR code on the facing page for more about the program, song texts, and our contributing artists' poetry.***

Inspire seeks to empower, inform, and enrich communities. Our hope is to foster an enduring spirit of community engagement uplifted through song; a goal that is impossible without generous supporters such as you. Thank you for becoming part of this vision.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that this concert is being performed on the traditional land of the Lenape people, whose continued presence enriches our community and our connection to the earth.

CAN'T YOU HEAR US?!

scan for song text & program notes

I Conquer the World with Words — Jonathan Woody (b. 1983), poetry by Nizar Qabbani (1923-1998)

EARTH

Elements: *Earth* — Katerina Gimon (b. 1993)

Earth, Teach Me — Rupert Lang (b. 1948), translation of a prayer from the Ute tribe

Mother Earth — poem by Jennifer Martinez (b. 2003)

AIR

Elements: *Air* — Katerina Gimon (b. 1993)

Map — Ari Messenger (b. 1993), poetry by Aryaana Khan (b. 2003)

FIRE

Elements: *Fire* — Katerina Gimon (b. 1993)

Earth Song — Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

The Day Is Done — Stephen Paulus (1949-2014), poetry by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

This Amazing Day — Mark Kilstofte(b. 1958), poetry by e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

WATER

Elements: Water — Katerina Gimon (b. 1993)

Hope Is A Verb from *A Passion for the Planet* — Geoffrey Hudson (b. 1967), inspired by a quote by David Orr (b. 1944)

the irony — poem by Nathaniel Valdivieso (b. 2003)

Cool Of The Day — Jean Ritchie (1922-2015), arr. John Ratledge (b. 1974)

All We Need — Dale Trumbore (b. 1987), poetry by Annie Finch (b. 1956)

Aryaana Khan is an environmental scientist, organizer, and poet — working to address the climate crisis. She was born and raised in Bangladesh, a country annually submerged underwater as a result of climate change. Shortly after emigrating to New York, she began doing climate advocacy and organizing with various non-profit organizations— and has been using spoken word poetry to shed light on issues she cares about. She competed at the renowned Apollo Theater, received a spot on the Urban Word slam team, and represented New York at the 2019 Brave New Voices International Poetry Festival. As a 2020 Federal Hall Fellow and Youth Poet Laureate Finalist, she also performed at the New York Historical Society — and started her journey as a teaching artist shortly after. Currently, she is completing her M.A in environmental science at St. John's University— while also joyously honing her creative voice!

Jennifer Martinez is a 20 year old Bronx based poet, actress, and songwriter. A member of the 2022 Urban Word NYC Slam Team, a two time New York City Youth Poet Laureate Ambassador, and a former teaching artist and alumna of Developing Artists Theater Company, She has performed in spaces such as Lincoln Center, the Apollo Theater, Barclays Center, and more. She currently works as a copywriting co-op at the world-renowned audio company Bose, and her poetry can be found in Bronx Native's upcoming anthology BX Writers Anthology Volume 2.

Ari Messenger is a New York City born-and-raised baritone, violinist, arranger, and composer. He completed a dual degree in Jazz Violin Performance at Peabody Conservatory and Mechanical Engineering at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore before returning to New York City, where he now works as a Senior Engineer in BioTech and performs, composes, and arranges whenever he has a free moment. Ari sings in Choral Chameleon's Ensemble and Chorus, as well as in Inspire, with which he has been since its inception. While in Baltimore, Ari directed and arranged for an a cappella group, The AllNighters. During his time with The AllNighters he completed nearly 50 arrangements across all genres and co-produced an EP entitled Night Shift. Ari won "Best Arrangement" in the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella (ICCA), was nominated for "Best Male Collegiate Arrangement" in the Contemporary A cappella Awards (CARA), and has been praised by the Recorded A Cappella Review Board (RARB) for his arrangements of "'Round Midnight" and "Break Free". Ari is excited to continue to collaborate with excellent artists and work towards a better world with Inspire.

Nathaniel Valdivieso is a Musician, Actor and Writer hailing from the Bronx NY. He is a proud member of organizations such as Developing Artists Theatre Company and works full time as a freelance audio engineer and producer here in New York. With his art, he aims to break down boundaries between mediums and create freely and honestly, often pulling from slam poetry, music, and theatre.

Inspire a choir for unity

Artists

Josh Giles Alexander
Graham Bobby
Nadia Bovy
Laura Childers
Jonathan Dunchie
Erin Halpin
Ben Keiper
Eleanor Killiam
Christa Masson
Claire McConnell
Ari Messenger
Cindy Miranda
David Orama
Carrie Quarquesso
Dan Rubins
Amber Fort Salladin
James Knox Sutterfield

Board of Directors

Troy Messenger, Chair
Andrea Stagg
Petra Thombs
Claudia Boynton
Laura Bergquist

Our Team

James Knox Sutterfield - Co-Artistic Director
Amber Fort Salladin - Co-Artistic Director
Carrie Quarquesso - Executive Director
Nadia Bovy - Director of Community Engagement
Josh Giles Alexander - Treasurer
Ari Messenger - Webmaster

Thank You!

To Monica Weiss, Lyna Hinkel, and our friends at 350NYC, for your continued partnership and teamwork since 2017!

To Shanelle Gabriel, Aryaana Khan, Jennifer Martinez, Nathaniel Valdivieso, and all our friends at Urban Word for continuing to bring the wisdom of young poets to our work.

To Pastor Tiffany Henkel, and Jana Dye, and the congregation at Metro Baptist Church, for being immensely welcoming and supportive.

Troy Messenger, for managing our tech and livestream with patience and artistry.

Special Thanks to:

Oliver and *Clementine Bakery,* for supplying the delicious baked goods for our reception!
clementinebakery.com

Elizabeth van Os, photographer, for capturing tonight's event.
elizabethvanos.com

Carmela Bobby, for helping out with front of house.

Visit our website and join our mailing list to stay updated!
www.choirforunity.org

Inspire: A Choir for Unity is a New York City-based chamber choir dedicated to cultivating compassion and action for diverse social issues through the power of song. In partnership with organizations seeking positive social change, we encourage individual and collective action on socially pressing issues. Since our founding in 2017 by Justin Jalea and Megan Chartrand, we have sought to inspire a spirit of unity among our artists, audiences, and wider community.

Urban Word NYC champions the voices of New York City youth by providing platforms for critical literacy, youth development and leadership through free and uncensored writing. Founded in 1999, Urban Word NYC is one of oldest and most comprehensive youth literary arts organizations in the United States, raising the voices of over 25,000 teenagers annually across the five boroughs of New York City.
www.urbanwordnyc.org

350NYC is a local affiliate of 350.org, a global grassroots network working in over 188 countries to prevent climate catastrophe. 350NYC focuses on campaigns in New York City and New York State, and also participates in global climate actions. We host and participate in events, meetings, rallies, and protests in coalition with allied organizations working to create a sustainable and just future for everyone.
www.350nyc.org

To learn more or to make a gift: