TRUENORTH
CULTURAL ARTS

The Songs We Carry

An American Journey in Music

Presented by

The TrueNorth Chorale and Chamber Orchestra

Rick Fortney, Conductor / Artistic Director
Diane Spence / Concertmaster

Saturday, November 7, 2026 @ 7:30 PM

Avon Lake Presbyterian Church
32340 Electric Blvd

Free-Will Offering

Some songs entertain us.
Some songs remind us where we came from.
And some songs stay with us for a lifetime.

WITH SPECIAL GUEST NARRATORS

Greg Violand and
Maryann Nagel Violand

Join us for an evening of music that travels through the American landscape, from the energy of the dance floor and the traditions of Appalachia to the longing for home, the promise of a new morning, and the simple wonder of being alive.



THE MUSIC

Hoe-Down
Aaron Copland

Let the River Run
Craig Hella Johnson, arr.

Blackberry Blossom
Traditional

Light of a Clear Blue Morning
Dolly Parton / Craig Hella Johnson, arr.

Appalachia Waltz
Mark O'Connor

The Water is Wide
Traditional / Craig Hella Johnson, arr.

Deep River
Traditional / Mark Hayes, arr.

"American" Quartet
Antonin Dvorak

I love you /
What a Wonderful World
Craig Hella Johnson, arr.

Come listen for the songs that have been waiting for you.

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Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chamber Orchestra:

Hoe-down from ***"Rodeo"*** — Aaron Copland

Aaron Copland's ballet ***Rodeo*** is a celebration of the American West and reflects an important image we have of ourselves. The commission for Rodeo came, surprisingly enough, from the classically-oriented Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, with the music by Copland and the choreography and scenario by Agnes de Mille.

Hoe-down begins with dynamism and verve, signaling the Cowgirl's rebirth: she has suddenly put aside her cowpoke duds and reappeared as the prettiest girl in the room. Copland borrows two square dance tunes - "*Bonyparte*" and "*McLeod's Reel*" - to aid in this romp, a fanciful and uplifting take on the American square dance. We have a typical, stand-up-and-cheer Hollywood Western ending, too, as the girl gets the right guy for her, not the aloof and snooty Head Wrangler at all, but Another Cowboy who has shown her respect, kindness, and honor.

I Hear America Singing

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chorale:

Let the River Run Carly Simon
arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Drew Postel, String Bass; Clarence Barber and Jill Cornell, percussionists;
Ruth Williams, piano

Let the River Run is the award-winning theme from the 1988 film *Working Girl*, composed and recorded by singer-songwriter Carly Simon. Simon drew inspiration from the works of Walt Whitman to construct this musical love letter to the urban landscape. Johnson's arrangement captures a profound sense of communal joy, hope, and transformation.

The Porch

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chamber Orchestra Strings:

Blackberry Blossom Traditional American Fiddle Tune
arr. Gary Gackstatter

Diane Spence, violin soloist

Blackberry Blossom captures the spirit and infectious energy of traditional American fiddle music, deeply rooted in the musical traditions of Appalachia and the American South.

Hope

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chorale:

Light of a Clear Blue Morning Dolly Parton
arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Emily Qiu, flute; Janine Porter, soprano soloist

Dolly Parton – maintaining an extraordinarily active work schedule in her 60s and 70s, right up until her death this summer – became a true American icon in every sense. As a singer, her 49 studio albums amassed over 100 million record and CD sales, making her one of the most successful recording artists ever. And she didn't just sit on that money, but immersed herself in charity work and philanthropy. Her Dollywood Foundation sponsors education programs (the Buddy Program and Imagination Library helps teach reading and literacy), wildlife sanctuaries (partnering with both the American Eagle Foundation to sponsor a park for bald eagles and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), local economic and job support, and major disaster relief (her telethon helped raise $9 million for the 2016 Smoky Mountains Wildfires assistance).

As a songwriter the "Queen of Country Music!" Dolly Parton wrote over 3,000 songs. Her 1973 song *I Will Always Love You* became an international hit for Whitney Houston – the highest selling recording ever by a female singer.
Written by Dolly Parton in 1976 and released in 1977, ***Light of a Clear Blue Morning*** emerged from a deeply personal season of change in her life. As she prepared to leave her longtime musical and business partnership with Porter Wagoner and pursue a new direction, Parton found herself searching for freedom, renewal, and hope. She described this song as her 'song of deliverance' and 'song of freedom'.

At its heart, this is a song about emerging from darkness, finding the courage to embrace a new beginning, and trusting the brighter days lie ahead. Its message is both deeply personal and wonderfully universal: after the longest night, morning comes!

Home

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chamber Orchestra:
Americana Symphony, Variations on Appalachia Waltz, Movement III, 'Different Paths Towards Home' Mark O'Connor

Mark O'Connor's *Americana Symphony (Variations on Appalachia Waltz)* (2006) is a six-movement orchestral work structured around the historical expansion and westward journey of America.

Movement III: "Different Paths Towards Home" is structured as a strict **fugue**—employing centuries-old European counterpoint rules—yet results in a soundscape that feels deeply and distinctively American. The fugue utilizes two distinct phrases derived from O'Connor's famous *Appalachia Waltz* theme. O'Connor envisioned standing at the edge of the Eastern mountain ranges—the Appalachians, the Great Smoky Mountains, and the Alleghenies—looking westward across the continent. It reflects the historic displacement and movement of people (including European settlers and enslaved individuals) who pursued a new life and home, taking various northern, southern, and midwestern routes across the country. O'Connor weaves sound reminiscent of Asian musical traditions into American fiddling and folk idioms, suggesting deep historical and cultural roots connecting the Silk Road all the way to Appalachia. This movement mirrors the shared journey, and the diverse trails travelers took before concluding in a state of "quiet repose".

The Distance

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chorale:

The Water Is Wide Traditional Scottish Folk Song
arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Joan W. Fortney, cello; Janine Porter, soprano soloist; Ruth Williams, piano

The Water Is Wide (originally known as ***O Waly, Waly***) is a timeless 17th-century Scottish melody that serves as a poignant meditation on the fragility, challenges, and fading nature of romantic love. Rather than telling a linear story, the text relies on powerful nature-based metaphors to capture the profound emotional distance that can grow between two people. The vast, uncrossable water symbolizes an insurmountable interpersonal divide, while the plea for a boat built for two underscores the mutual commitment and shared effort required to sustain a relationship.

In this breathtaking arrangement by Grammy-winning conductor and composer Craig Hella Johnson, these melancholic themes are transformed into a rich, sonorous masterpiece. Originally featured on the PBS special and album *A Company of Voices* by his professional choral ensemble, Conspirare, Johnson pairs a shimmering choral texture with a soaring solo soprano. The expansive, shifting choral lines aurally evoke the vastness of the water, while the deep, soulful commentary of an obligato cello acts as a weeping, internal voice of grief. Supported by a delicate piano accompaniment, Johnson's setting provides a spacious, modern context that elevates a historical ballad of heartbreak into a sacred, universal acknowledgment of human longing and vulnerability.

A Gift that Carries Us Forward

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

Love Offering – Our thanks for your continued support providing the foundation for us to continue to offer our Concert Season as non-ticketed, as we continue to serve Northeast Ohio through the arts.

Piano Solo:

Deep River Traditional African-American Spiritual
Arranged by Mark Hayes

Ruth Williams, piano soloist

Deep River is widely considered one of the most revered, introspective, and beautifully melodic of all African-American spirituals. Mark Hayes' setting bridges the piece's profound historical weight with a rich, contemporary harmonic palette.

First appearing in print in 1876 via the historic tours of the **Fisk Jubilee Singers**, ***Deep River*** has been described as the quintessential expression of the spiritual genre—lauded for its deeply moving melody and profound emotional weight. Like many spirituals, the piece utilizes a dual layer of meaning. To the enslaved people who first sang it, the lyrics spoke of biblical deliverance and crossing the "Jordan River" into a heavenly "campground". In a practical sense, it was also a song of earthly survival and resistance; the river symbolized a physical barrier to freedom, representing the hazardous crossing of the Ohio River or the Mason-Dixon Line to reach the free states of the North.

Mark Hayes highlights the song's inherent message of hope, peace, and ultimate liberation ... lyrical storytelling at its best!

Many Voices

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chamber Orchestra Strings:

***American Quartet*, No. 12 in F major, Op. 96** Antonín Dvořák
Lento, Second movement

Antonín Dvořák's String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96 ("American"), reaches its emotional heart in the sublime second movement, marked *Lento*. Written in the melancholic key of D minor, this movement functions as a deeply expressive *lamento* or song without words.

The entire movement is underpinned by a simple, persistent pulsing figure in the inner voices, creating a hypnotic, ostinato accompaniment. This steady, undulating rhythm has been poetically described by listeners as evoking a repetitive, pastoral motion—such as the rhythmic stroke of oars against the water or the gentle rocking of a cradle. Against this atmospheric backdrop, a soulful, arching melody is introduced by the first violin and later echoed by the cello. The two voices eventually entwine in a poignant, operatic duet during the movement's impassioned, swelling climax.

While the movement is deeply rooted in the nostalgic, bittersweet longings of Dvořák's native Bohemian style, it also reflects his immediate surroundings in Spillville, Iowa. Critics and biographers often point out how the melody's wide leaps and use of minor pentatonic shapes beautifully mirror the lonely, expansive landscapes of the American Midwest, bridging the musical traditions of the Old World with the emotional resonance of African American spirituals and Native American chants. Ultimately, after its passionate peak, the intensity gently recedes, allowing the music to dissolve back into the dark, muted, and atmospheric depths from which it first emerged.

The Ordinary

Storytellers: Maryann Nagel Violand and Greg Violand

TrueNorth Chorale:

I Love You / What a Wonderful World arr. Craig Hella Johnson

I Love You Larry Norman and Randy Stonehill

What a Wonderful World George David Weiss and Bob Thiele

Jeff Smith, tenor soloist; Ruth Williams, piano

Craig Hella Johnson weaves together a choral tapestry, two iconic melodies into an inspirational message of global unity, peace, and human connection. The piece juxtaposes the rhythmic, contemporary folk mantra *"People all over the world... are sayin' I love you"* with the sweeping, lyrical lines of the 1967 pop standard *"What a Wonderful World"* (made famous by Louis Armstrong). The two distinct songs seamlessly interlace, offering a radiant and hopeful celebration of human connection and the beauty of our shared world.

Words of Thanks … TrueNorth Concert Season, Looking ahead!

Artistic Director, Rick Fortney

Saturday, December 19th, TrueNorth Christmas Concert
Everlasting Joy, The Music and Wonder of Christmas!
(joined with the Avon Lake Presbyterian Church Chancel Choir)

Friday, March 26th, Good Friday Concert
***The Seven Last Words of Christ*, Théodore Dubois**
(joined with the Bay United Methodist Church
and Avon Lake Presbyterian Church Chancel Choirs)

Saturday, May 22nd, Spring Concert
***The World Beloved - A Bluegrass Mass*,** Carol Barnett

Friday, June 18th, **Patriotic Concert**
(Outdoor Concert at Avon Lake Veterans Park,
Community Juneteenth Celebration)

The Songs We Carry, 2026
TrueNorth Chorale

Rick Fortney, Director
Ruth Williams, Accompanist

Soprano
Jean Collins
Caron Collister
Cathy Harvey
Meghan McCarty
Judy Petricevic
Janine Porter
Jenni Walker-Noyes
Susan Wertenberger

Alto
Sandi Gerhan
Emily Qiu
Sybil Mundy
Diane Seith
Julie Spencer
Nancy Spencer
Adrienne Terleck
Ruth Williams
Barb Ziegler

Tenor
David Brunner
Lynn Rhoades
Jeff Smith
Brad Wakeman

Bass
Alex Truver
David Weaver
David Ziegler

Music Librarian / Chorale Manager: Nancy Spencer

The Songs We Carry, 2026
TrueNorth Chamber Orchestra

Rick Fortney, Conductor
Diane Spence, Concertmaster

Violin
Diane Spence, Concertmaster
Ingrid Askenbeck
Jan Schrag
Scott Schulz
Dena Warmuth

Viola
Marilyn Eble

Cello
Joan Wojcicki Fortney
(Bob and Mary Lou Fortney Chair)
Kim Taylor

String Bass
Drew Postel

Harp
Susan Wrbanek

Percussion
Clarence Barber
Jill Cornell

Piano
Ruth Williams

Orchestra Manager
Joan Wojcicki Fortney

Flute
Cathy Graves
Emily Qiu

Oboe
Kim Weaver

Clarinet
Fermin Quiñones-Villanueva

Bassoon
Sean Parks

French Horn
Melinda Kellerstrass
Lisa Muth
Walt Zacharias

Trumpets
Ron Kuntz
Michael Willard
John Wrbanek

Trombone
John Olsson

Orchestra Music Librarian
Diane Spence

TRUENORTH
CULTURAL ARTS

Transforming lives through engagement in the arts
Where art meets community

TrueNorth Cultural Arts Purpose Statement:

To transform lives through engagement in the arts… By:

- Encouraging multi-disciplinary art forms and their integration
- Educating, equipping, and empowering artists and audiences
- Celebrating the gifts of the novice through the professional
- Fostering mentoring relationships
- Developing new works, artists, and expressions
- Collaborating with other arts organizations
- Being a safe, respectful, faith-encouraging arts community
- Expecting excellence in all things

As a result: We enrich and strengthen our communities by our presence.

Thank you for coming to our concert!



To learn more visit www.TNCArts.org