



URBAN INITIATIVES CHOIR FESTIVAL PROGRAM

Monday, October 12, 2026, 6:30 PM
Landmark Center, St. Paul

G. Phillip Shoultz, III, *Festival Director*

B.E. Boykin, *Composer in Residence - Guest Clinician*

Casey Rafn - *Collaborative Artist*

VOCALESSENCE SINGERS OF THIS AGE

Sing Change

Kyle Pederson (2022)

Blue Skies

Irving Berlin (1927)

I Sing Because I'm Happy

arr. Rollo Dilworth (1992)

Hlohonolofatsa

arr. Daniel Jackson (2016)

TWIN CITIES URBAN CHOIR FESTIVAL CHOIR

Music of Life

B.E. Boykin (2022)

We Wear the Mask

Kenney Potter (2023)

Stardust

B.E. Boykin (2021)

Go Down, Moses

B.E. Boykin (2014)

BIOGRAPHIES



B.E. BOYKIN

Composer in Residence-Guest Clinician

B.E. (Brittney Elizabeth) Boykin is a distinguished composer, conductor, and pianist, renowned for her dynamic artistry and profound contributions to the world of music. A proud alumna of Spelman College, Boykin first began honing her craft by pursuing a degree in piano performance and earning a Bachelor of Arts in Music. She continued her academic journey at Westminster Choir College, where she received her Master's of Music in Sacred Music, and later, earned her Doctor of Philosophy with an emphasis in Music Education from Georgia State University. In 2023, Boykin was invited by the Minnesota Opera to participate in a seven-year creative residency that supports the creation and premiering of new operatic works. In addition to her work in opera, she continues to leave a lasting impact on the choral world as a sought-after conductor and clinician who is celebrated for her unique artistic expressions and ability to connect with her ensembles. Her recent features include conducting the Atlanta Music Project Senior Youth Choir in a closing concert for the 2024 Chorus America Conference and leading them to emerge as the category winner at the 2024 World Choir Games, the largest international choral competition in the world.



G. PHILLIP SHOULTZ, III

Associate Artistic Director, VocalEssence

G. Phillip Shoultz, III, associate artistic director, uses the power of the voice, through spoken word and song, to foster community and inspire action among people of all ages and abilities. He is the Artistic Director of Sing Democracy 250, a national initiative of the Together In Hope Project, and the University of Minnesota Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute Concert. Phillip serves on the faculty of the University of St. Thomas, where he leads the Graduate Choral Conducting program, and guides the Ministries of Worship, Music, and the Arts at Westwood Lutheran Church. His most recent ventures as content creator for SonoVoice (the Fitbit for voice) and host with Minnesota Public Radio further expand his already diverse portfolio of projects, which also includes "Table for More", a conversation and consulting platform founded in the summer of 2020 to help organizations address issues related to innovation, equity, racial justice, and belonging in the arts. Phillip is regularly engaged across the U.S. and beyond as a conductor, workshop facilitator, and worship curator/leader. He is a published arranger and has a new choral series with National Music Publishers. The winner of numerous honors, including the ACDA Graduate Conducting Competition and multiple Teacher of the Year awards, Phillip lives in St. Louis Park with his wife, Michelle, and their two children (Malachi and Lydia Grace).

ABOUT VOCALESSENCE

For 58 years, VocalEssence has provided opportunities for singers from the Twin Cities area to create incredible music together and build connections as part of the vibrant arts community in Minnesota.

VocalEssence is known for introducing audiences to music and artists who are not yet known, often welcoming guest artists, composers, and conductors who are emerging, have unknown works, or represent a variety of cultures. Welcoming all members of the greater community, VocalEssence embodies the motto: *Together We Sing*.



VOCALESSENCE SINGERS OF THIS AGE

The VocalEssence Singers Of This Age (SOTA) is a community of Twin Cities teenagers engaged in expanding what it means to be a choir and encouraging a wider circle of participation in the artform. Under the visionary leadership of G. Phillip Shoultz, III, the singers present music ranging from classical to hip-hop that use creativity and collaboration to build an accepting community, equipped with the skills to lead social change in our society. SOTA is open to all teenage students upon successful completion of an interview process. There is no cost to participate. Upon making a year long commitment, singers receive free transportation to and from rehearsals and performances, performance uniforms, dinner and snacks, and complimentary concert tickets. Learn more about SOTA: <https://www.vocalescence.org/who-we-are/performing-ensembles/vocalescence-sota/>

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Avalon Charter School, Central High School, Cretin-Derham Hall High School, Harding High School, Hope Community Academy, Hopkins High School, Johnson Senior High School, Justice Page Middle School, Laura Jeffrey Academy, Maple Grove High School, Spring Lake Park High School, Open World Learning Community, PiM Arts High School, Roosevelt High School, Rosemount High School, South High School, Washburn High School

*Denotes VocalEssence Singers Of This Age member

SOPRANO

Riyan Ali
Mariella Ananou*
Juneau Atkins*
Ruby Atkins*
Isadora Blons*
Susanna Cowan*
Zsuzsa Gallo*
Luag Her
Gwen Heuckendorf
Em Kaplan*
Jullyssa Kelley
Shoua Kue
Josephine McComas
Amelia Meier
Amya Mercado
Ko Moo
Nylah Moore
Bailee Norman*
Leah Odegard-Dunning*
Cate Parks*
Aunika Penticoff*
Casper Rosbolt
Lue Say Say
June Scheuermann
Aurora Silpala*
Marius Steller
Nora Tacheny
Zuying Thao
Wren Tveitbakk
Emerald Vang
Athena Vue
Hsar Wah
Sunshine Xiong
Nkauhnhub Xiong

ALTO

Elena Acevedo*
Elanor Bialostosky
Irene Cain*
Jennifer Cooper
Stella Doran*
Kayla Evans
Iris Ferris*
Sydney Harlan
Carol Harvey
Hser Htoo*
Leo Johnson*
Sasha Jordan*
Olive Kirk*
Tah Ku
Alina Lee
Julip Levy
Akiro Lor
Mikka Miller
Claire Oberheide*
Freddy Onyango-Robshaw*
Cora Singer *
Leah Siskind
Za Zoua Thao*
Olivia Trobaugh*
Nola Turner
Adra Vang*
Houaci Vue
Maisee Vue
Lena Weiss
Nkaujhli Xiong

TENOR

Niko Feroe-Govardhan*
Brielle Howard*
Annah King*
Bay Lah
Tshaj Lij
Billy Lor
Joseph Massari
August Onyango-Robshaw*
Zvi Stein*
Avery Somdahl*
Moua Kong Thao*
Yawn Ye Thao*
Sweetie Vang
PengXu Vang
Daniel VanPelt
Ricky Yang
LJ Wildebuer*

BASS

Jayce Austin
Soren Johnson*
Muajmeem Her
Amos Lucken Hills*
Cay,ÃVion Kargbo
Sakadha Poe
Danny Shavor*

VOCAL ESSENCE  Singers Of This Age



SOTA is open to all teenage students upon successful completion of an interview process. There is no cost to participate. Upon making a year long commitment, singers receive free transportation to and from rehearsals and performances, performance uniforms, dinner and snacks, and complimentary concert tickets.

Join our community today! Scan the QR code to begin the interview process.



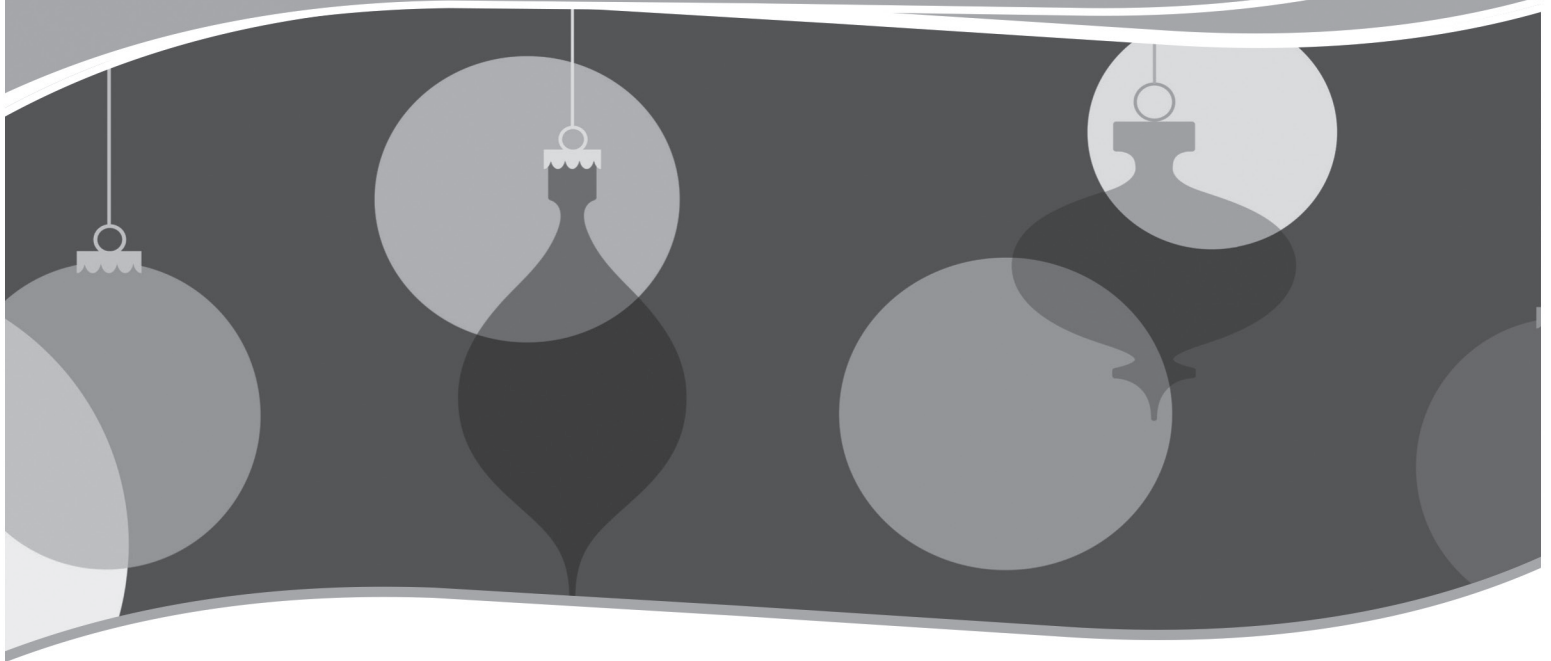
WELCOME CHRISTMAS

Friday, Dec. 11, 2026, 7:30 PM

Saturday, Dec. 12, 2026, 12-1 PM (Sensory & Kid Friendly)

Saturday, Dec. 12, 2026, 3 PM

Plymouth Congregational Church



Four choirs, harp, marimba, trumpet, guitar, organ, and YOU come together to welcome in the glorious sounds of the season.

PERFORMERS

VocalEssence Chorus
VocalEssence Ensemble Singers
VocalEssence Singers Of This Age
VocalEssence Vintage Voices

Samuel Holmberg, *organ*
Casey Rafn, *piano*
Philip Brunelle, *conductor*
G. Phillip Shoultz, III, *conductor*



VOCALESSENCE.ORG