



BOB JONES UNIVERSITY  
Division of Music

presents

**UNIVERSITY SINGERS**

Pattye Casarow, director  
Kenon Renfrow, piano

***SONGS OF THE AMERICAN SPIRIT:  
MUSIC THAT REFLECTS THE  
HEART OF A NATION***

Stratton Hall  
Friday, April 17, 2026  
7:00 P.M.

The Star-Spangled Banner ..... arr. Chris Gilliam

## American Folk Songs and Ballads

The Nightingale ..... arr. Dan Forrest

The Girl I Left Behind Me

from *Two Colonial Folksongs*

Eric Probus, violin

**The Nightingale** and **The Girl I Left Behind Me**, arranged by BJU's award-winning alumnus, Dan Forrest, offer two complementary perspectives on life in the American colonial era. *The Nightingale* is an intimate folk ballad centered on love and longing. Dating to the 17th or 18th century, it uses nature imagery, particularly the song of the nightingale, as a symbol of reflection and courtship. Rather than addressing public or historical events, it captures private emotion and personal connection. In colonial America, songs like this were often sung in homes and small gatherings, expressing the quieter side of life.

In contrast, *The Girl I Left Behind Me* is a traditional American folk song closely associated with military departure. The tune was widely known by the time of the American Revolutionary War and was used by both British and American troops as a marching and leave-taking song. Its text does not dwell on battle but instead highlights the emotional cost of duty and the personal sacrifice of leaving a loved one behind. The song's continued use in later conflicts, even into the Civil War, underscores its enduring resonance.

Nelly Bly.....Stephen Foster

(b. 1826–1864)

arr. Jack Halloran

Some Folks.....Stephen Foster

arr. Mark Hayes

*Nelly Bly* and *Some Folks* are lively American folk-style songs by Stephen Foster, written at the height of his popularity in the mid-19th century. Published in 1850, *Nelly Bly* celebrates a spirited young woman whose charm and vitality capture the affection of those around her. Its buoyant character and immediate appeal reflect Foster's ability to convey everyday emotion through engaging music.

Published a year earlier in 1849, *Some Folks* showcases Foster's talent for social observation and gentle humor. Rather than telling a single story, the song playfully contrasts different kinds of people, poking fun at human quirks through a jaunty rhythm and memorable refrain. Both songs were written for popular entertainment and were widely sung in parlors and public gatherings where their simplicity and charm made them easy to learn and share.

Home on the Range..... arr. Mark Hayes

Sam Stephens, harmonica

*Home on the Range* is one of the best-known American folk songs, closely associated with life on the western frontier. The song originated as a poem titled “My Western Home,” written in the early 1870s by a physician who had settled in Kansas. The poem expressed longing for the open plains, celebrating the freedom, beauty, and simplicity of life in the American West. The text was later set to music, and, over time, became widely sung by settlers, cowboys, and families moving westward. Its imagery of wide skies, roaming wildlife, and peaceful living helped describe the frontier as a place of refuge and promise, even amid its hardships.

John Henry .....arr. John D. Miller

Michael McMillin, anvil

*John Henry* is a traditional American folk ballad rooted in the work songs of African American laborers in the late 19th century. The song tells the story of John Henry, a steel-driving man who competes against a steam-powered drill during the construction of a railroad tunnel. According to the ballad, John Henry defeats the machine but dies from the physical strain of the contest, hammer in hand. Beyond its narrative, John Henry became a powerful symbol of both the cost of progress and the resilience of the human spirit.

### African American Spirituals

Great Day .....arr. Howard Helvey

Megan Stapleton, soprano

Witness..... arr. Jack Halloran

*Great Day* and *Witness* are African American spirituals that emerged from the worship life of enslaved Black communities in the 19th century and were preserved through oral tradition. Though their exact origins are unknown, both songs draw deeply from biblical language. *Great Day* looks forward to a promised day of judgment and deliverance, using imagery from the New Testament to proclaim confidence in Christ’s return and the final triumph of righteousness. For those who first sang it, the song carried a powerful assurance that injustice and suffering would not have the final word. *Witness* centers on the biblical call to testify to God’s power and saving work. Together, these spirituals bear witness to a faith that looks ahead with hope and speaks boldly in the present, offering a profound expression of perseverance, belief, and communal worship.

## Appalachian Shape Note



I'm Going Home ..... traditional Sacred Harp Tune  
adapt. Michael McMillin

Michael McMillin, director

*I'm Going Home* comes from the shape note singing tradition rooted in early American worship and music education, especially strong in the Appalachian South. The practice developed in the late 18th and 19th centuries as a way to teach congregations to sing without formal training. Instead of round noteheads, the music uses distinct shapes that correspond to solfège syllables. This system made sight singing accessible to everyday people and supported strong congregational participation. Much of the repertoire comes from early American hymnody and folk melodies preserved in tune books such as *The Sacred Harp*. Today, Appalachian shape note singing continues both within the region and beyond, and is valued for its deep sense of community, historical continuity, and participatory worship.

## Broadway and American Songbook Classics

Singin' in the Rain ..... arr. Mark Hayes

*Singin' in the Rain* was written in 1929, but its greatest recognition came in 1952, when it became the centerpiece of the musical film of the same name, performed memorably by Gene Kelly. Although written during a time of major transition in Hollywood from silent films to "talkies," the song's message is simple and timeless. It celebrates choosing joy despite circumstances, finding delight even when conditions are imperfect. Over time, *Singin' in the Rain* has become one of the most recognizable and beloved songs in American musical history, symbolizing exuberance, resilience, and the sheer pleasure of music and movement.

Over the Rainbow .....arr. Molly Ijames

Emily Tuttle, flute

*Over the Rainbow*, arranged by another BJU celebrated alumna, Molly Ijames, was written in 1939 for the film *The Wizard of Oz* and was introduced by Judy Garland in her role as Dorothy. The song expresses Dorothy's yearning for a place beyond hardship where dreams and hope still exist. Written during the Great Depression, its message resonated deeply with audiences, and the rainbow became a symbol of hope, imagination, and promise. *Over the Rainbow* endures as a timeless expression of longing and hope, bridging popular music, film, and cultural memory across generations.

## Patriotic

Battle Hymn of the Republic .....arr. Peter J. Wilhousky

Seth Watson, snare drum

*Audience, please join us on the last chorus.*

***Battle Hymn of the Republic*** has its origins in the American Civil War and reflects both the historical and spiritual tensions of that era. In November 1861, writer and abolitionist Julia Ward Howe visited a Union army camp near Washington, D.C., where she was inspired to write the new text for a well-known marching tune. She composed the poem in a single sitting, and it was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in February 1862 under the title *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The lyrics draw heavily on biblical imagery from Revelation and the prophetic books, presenting the Civil War as a moral struggle centered on justice and the abolition of slavery. Rather than celebrating military strength, the hymn proclaims trust in God’s righteous purposes, especially in the line “His truth is marching on.”

God Bless America .....arr. Joseph M. Martin

*Audience, please join us on the last chorus.*

***God Bless America*** is a patriotic song written by Irving Berlin, one of America’s most influential songwriters. Berlin originally wrote the song in 1918 while serving in the U.S. Army during World War I. Two decades later, Berlin revisited the song and decided it was time to introduce it publicly. Kate Smith sang it during a radio broadcast on Armistice Day in 1938. As tensions were rising in Europe and the world moved closer to another global conflict, the song made an immediate emotional impact, resonating with Americans seeking unity, peace, and reassurance. Rather than celebrating military strength or national power, *God Bless America* is framed as a prayer. Its text asks for divine guidance, protection, and peace, expressing gratitude for the nation while acknowledging dependence on God.

## UNIVERSITY SINGERS

Liza Aloisi, Caleb Aniol, Alyssa Autry, Madeline Ayers, Rachel Ayers, Kostandina Babuli, Teaghan Bair, Savanna Barker, Kameron Bond, Gwendolyn Brown, Curtis Burr, Rebecca Cain, Ariana Cao, Abigail Chapman, Kiersten Clepper, Emagene Cooper, Anna Field, Hezekiah Freeze, Dora Gagne, Liberty Gillen, Aaron Goff, Lydia Greenwood, Kate Griffith, Brianna Guenter, Trent Hedrick, Nathaniel Helman, Elissa Henson, Leah Hoffman, Elaine Hollis, Hannah Hoy, Matthew Huebscher, Zamar Hughes, Hugh Kane, Sophia Kane, Lydia Kershner, Yerin Kim, Joel King, Sophia Klink, Edward Labadorf, Joshua Lawson, Natalie Layton, Enbo Liu, Benaiah Marez, Noah McCleese, Mary McIntire, Danielle McKenzie, Christiana McMorris, Andres Melgar, Emmalein Merkle, Ariana Meyer, Elizabeth Millar, Judah Nash, Luke Ocampo, Zacchaeus Palus, Makenzie Prouse, Matthew Roberts, Meredith Rohrer, Gracie Romberger, Joelle Russell, Joy Russell, James Shelton, Mark Small, Emma Snyder, Timothy Speaks, Lillian Strange, Bethany Suttles, Rose Swillum, Emily Tuttle, Gunnar Vogriniec, Rebekah Waldock, Seth Watson, Peter Wilson, Mao Ye, Yutong Zheng

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## Upcoming Music Events

Ben Hyink Cello Recital, April 18, 1:00 p.m., War Memorial Chapel  
Micah Hyink Violin Recital, April 18, 3:00 p.m., War Memorial Chapel  
Derrick Hollis Organ Recital, April 18, 5:00 p.m., War Memorial Chapel

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