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Scottsdale Arts Presents

PHOENIX CHORALE TRANSCENDENCE

Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026, 2 p.m.

Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts
Virginia G. Piper Theater

PROGRAM

Arvo Pärt
(b. 1935)

Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten 1977

Anna Thorvaldsdottir
(b. 1977)

Ad genua (To the knees)* 2016
Holly Sheppard, Alto

Ola Gjeilo
(b. 1978)

The Road 2023
1. Hallingskarvet I
2. Hallingskarvet II
3. Hardangervidda I
4. Hardangervidda II
5. Hardangerfjorden
6. Husedalen

Rebecca Dale
(b. 1985)

The Cloths of Heaven 2024
Nina Cole Garguilo, Soprano
Ryan Murphy, Violoncello

Rebecca Dale
(b. 1985)

US Premiere: *When Music Sounds* 2018
1. Prelude: To The Wild
2. Song's Flight
3. Out Of The Water
4. Strange Dreams
5. I'll Sing
6. The Earth I Know
Madalyn Kiewiet, Soprano
Ryan Murphy, Violoncello

**Ad genua* by Anna Thorvaldsdottir presented under license from G. Schirmer Inc. and Associated Music Publishers, copyright owners.

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PROGRAM NOTES

from Artistic Director Christopher Gabbitas

Transcendence brings together a first half of Nordic music—hailing from Iceland, Estonia, and Norway—and a second half of British music, each piece linked by its evocative nature, whether in relation to feelings, sense, or place. Beginning with loss and suffering with the music of Arvo Pärt and Anna Thorvaldsdottir, we consider the human emotions of grief and penitence and, ultimately, grace and forgiveness. Hypnotic and energizing in turn, the music seeks to embody these feelings and provide release.

Ola Gjeilo's *The Road* is an homage to the composer's homeland, with texts written by Charles Anthony Silvestri. The physical journey personifies the passage of time throughout life and the accompanying emotions, including comfort and protection, spiritual enlightenment, and the endless possibility of new discoveries in our future.

Ending the first half is a taste of what's to come in the form of Rebecca Dale's beautiful miniature *Cloths of Heaven*. Setting text by William Butler Yeats and contrasting poverty and love, the speaker wishes to give his beloved the ethereal "cloths of heaven" but can offer only his fragile dreams, prone to be trodden on and destroyed.

Dale's majestic, symphonic work *When Music Sounds* forms the backbone of the second half. Each of these movements conjures brief but intense emotional journeys, almost like scenes from a movie, and the composing language draws the listener into ever-shifting sound spaces and moments of breathtaking joy.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

As the only internationally recognized professional choral ensemble in the Valley, the Grammy-winning Phoenix Chorale showcases the expert talents of Arizona's highly trained and versatile singers in performances celebrated for their technical agility and emotional impact.

Founded in 1958 and professionalized in 1994, Phoenix Chorale is regarded as one of the finest choral ensembles in North America of the western classical tradition and has been led since 2019 by British Artistic Director Christopher Gabbitas.

Phoenix Chorale continues to earn international recognition through its acclaimed recordings. Recent releases since 2024 on Signum Records have been described by *Gramophone* as "expertly blended," "enviably smooth and sumptuous" by *BBC Music* and "imaginatively programmed and meticulously sung" by *The Arts Desk*. To learn more, visit PhoenixChorale.org.

Christopher Gabbitas, Artistic Director

Christopher Gabbitas is now in his seventh season as artistic director of Phoenix Chorale and continues to feel honored to work with such incredible Arizona musicians, at the helm of one of America's longest-standing choral traditions.

Taking piano lessons from the age of 3, and singing as a boy chorister from the age of 8, it was perhaps inevitable that Gabbitas would gravitate toward a career in music—but in fact he read law at university alongside membership of the Chapel Choir at St John's College, Cambridge University, and attended Law School at Oxford whilst singing as a lay clerk at Christ Church College, Oxford University. It looked as though a fairly standard career as an attorney would follow.

This changed in 2004 when Gabbitas was auditioned and selected to join British a cappella ensemble The King's Singers, where he spent 15 years recording and touring around the world. Their recordings were recognized with two Grammy Awards, and in 2013 The King's Singers were inducted into the inaugural Gramophone Hall of Fame.

On leaving the touring life, Gabbitas set up an innovative creative commercial legal practice under the Keystone Law platform in London, recognized as a leading English Law practice, and he continues to lead this alongside his work with Phoenix Chorale. Gabbitas is a trustee of both the Voces8 Foundation and Kent Music and is a member of the Royal Society of Musicians.

Much though he loves to make music, more than anything Gabbitas enjoys returning home to his wife Stephanie—who hails from the great Commonwealth of Kentucky—and their three girls Bella, Lyra, and Ariana, each of whom loves to sing.

Rebecca Dale, Composer

After her self-release for choir and orchestra, "I'll Sing", reached No.1 in the iTunes Classical Single Charts, British composer Rebecca Dale made history in 2018 when she became the first female composer to sign to Universal Music's Decca Classics label and the first woman to sign to Decca Publishing. Her debut album, *Requiem For My Mother*, featuring her requiem and symphony, went to No.1 in the specialist Classical charts.

As a concert composer her work has been performed by ensembles including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Philharmonia, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester, the London Mozart Players, the Scottish Festival Orchestra, Voces8, Tenebrae, soloists Steven Isserlis, Raphaela Gromes, Mari & Hakon Samuelson, Angele Dubeau, Guy Johnston, Alexej Gerassimez, Joby Burgess, Richard Harwood and Louise Alder, as well as musicians of the London Symphony Orchestra and British opera houses. Her requiem was premiered by the Welsh National Opera's community chorus; she writes regularly for choirs and orchestras with premieres widely across the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia. As 2023 composer in residence for the Opus Foundation, a series of dedicated concerts of her work for choir and orchestra across the Netherlands culminated at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. In 2021, she was commissioned to write the Church of England and Classic FM's first Christmas single, and in 2023 her orchestral reimagining of a Scottish folk melody was selected by HRH King Charles to be performed by violinist Nicola Benedetti at the Scottish service for his coronation. Dale is a fellow of the famous MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, and her music is broadcast regularly on classical radio.

PHOENIX CHORALE ARTISTS



Use this QR code to read biographies of our artists.

Christopher Gabbitas, Artistic Director

Tom Peterson, Assistant Conductor

Phoenix Chorale Staff:

Nicole Belmont, Executive Director

Grace Rhyne, Patron Services &
Communications Manager

Lexi Schneider, Operations Manager

Hannah Graham, Administrative Intern

Melissa Smallwood

(Sim Consultants), bookkeeping

Laura Schairer

(Audience Magnets), publicity

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Follow us at PhoenixChorale.org and @PhoenixChorale on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Contact us: Info@PhoenixChorale.org or 602-253-2224

The next engagement of the Phoenix Chorale: *Chant and Polyphony*

An intimate a cappella encounter with the sacred roots of choral music.

March 21–22, 2026 | Trinity Episcopal Cathedral

In collaboration with Floriani. Tickets: PhoenixChorale.org