



Greetings friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to a very special concert. “Many Voices, One World” was conceived as a program of inclusion, honoring the ties that bind us together. Today, we will travel the globe as we encounter melodies, harmonies, and rhythms that might be different from our norm, but are all inspired by encounters, prayers, relationships, and thoughts that all humans share.

Today, we celebrate all that *unites* us. I recently read an article about human genetics, in which it was said that we are around 99% THE SAME in our make up. Yes, that remaining percent can have differences influencing our skin color, hair color, eye color, and many other factors, but the fact remains, we are more similar in our SHARED HUMANITY than we are different. It is this connection that serves as the underlying factor in our performance today.

Together, we will share music from a variety of faiths from around the world (Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism). While most of the faiths we will explore come from monotheistic traditions, I think it is noteworthy to ponder a variety of native traditions, as well as Hinduism, in which people seek higher awareness and understanding through polytheism. If one prays to one god, many gods, or no god, there is still a uniting force in our human desire to connect to a higher consciousness, what some would call divine, and to make ourselves better as we experience our time on this planet.

Speaking of time on Earth, we will also traverse a wide range of secular music. Frank Tichelli’s “Earth Song” is a passionate plea in which the planet cries against humanity’s ongoing warring against one another. Written in response to the Iraq war, the piece is still as timely, and necessary, today. “Ukuthula,” a South African freedom song, sings themes of peace, redemption, faith, and comfort, among others...ideas that we all experience as we negotiate life’s many paths.

Secular folk music from around the world will also be shared and celebrated as we honor our worldwide connection. Music from Brazil, China, New Zealand, Scotland, Canada, and Spain capture elements of community, celebration, longing, and love that all humans can relate to. Of course, we will also include music from the US, in our Native American tradition (“Beauty Is Before Me”) and heritage of African American spirituals (“Let Me Fly”)—both significant contributors to our musical tapestry.

In the words of our opening piece, it is my hope that we will consider the experience of people around the world (“but other lands have sunlight too, and clover”) not only during today’s concert, but as we re-enter the outside world and in the coming days and months. Beyond that, the final line of “This Is My Song” is at the heart of our time together:

*A song of peace for their land and for mine.*

I thank you for sharing your time with us. It is only because of you that we continue to build community through music making in our wonderful city. I look forward to seeing you after the concert, and at future events!

We are, indeed, brothers and sisters in one world.

In Harmony,

Ryan Heller  
Artistic Director and Conductor,  
Chorus Austin