

THE
Celebration
Singers



250

YEARS OF

America's Music

AMERICAN HISTORY TOLD THROUGH MUSIC

FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026 ★ 7:00 PM
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This project is supported in part by a grant from the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council and HeARTS for the ARTS.

The Celebration Singers present
250 Years of America's Music

This is My Country Ray, Jacobs

★ 1700s ★

Paul Revere's Ride Longfellow, Emerson
The Mixed Up Group
David Swearingen, Soloist

Yankee Doodle Schamburg
Shelly Smith, Fife

★ 1810s ★

The Star Spangled Banner Key
The Wise Guys

★ Folk Songs from the 1820s to 1870s ★

Skip to My Lou Creole Song
Buffalo Gals Minstrel Song
Sweet Betsy from Pike Parry
Camptown Races Foster
Polly Wolly Doodle Plantation Melody
Featuring The Celebration Kids

★ Spirituals & Gospel Songs ★

Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child Spiritual
Just a Little Talk with Jesus Derricks
Nathan Lafrenz, Violin

Wade in the Water Hayes
The Celebration Ladies
Robin Roberts, Soloist

Give Me Jesus Spiritual
Ride On, King Jesus Spiritual
Shalesia Brown, Soloist

★ Civil War ★

When Johnny Comes Marching Home Lambert
William Marshall, Trumpet

Battle Hymn of the Republic Howe, Steffe
William Marshall, Trumpet
Shelly Smith, Piccolo

★ 1880s & 1890s ★

Bring Him Home Schonberg, Kretzmer, Boubllil
Jan Bery, Soloist

Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears Graham
Aaron Shipp, Soloist

★ World War I ★

Over There Cohan
Paul Davis, Soloist

Toot Toot Tootsie, Goodbye! Khan, Erdman, Russo
The Wise Guys

★ World War II ★

Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy Raye, Prince
The Celebration Ladies
William Marshall, Trumpet

God Bless America Berlin
Twila Nowell, Soloist

★ 1950s & 1960s ★

No Man is an Island Whitney, Kramer
Morgan Shaner, ASL

The Impossible Dream Leigh, Darion
Jill D'Entremont, Dancer

★ Viet Nam War ★

What a Wonderful World Weiss, Thiele
Andy Ladyman, Soloist
Morgan Shaner, ASL

★ Enduring Patriotism ★

God of Our Fathers Roberts, Warren
William Marshall, Trumpet

The Land of Liberty Cottrell

Armed Forces Medley Gilpin
William Marshall, Trumpet
Morgan Shaner, ASL

Stars and Stripes Forever Sousa
Shelly Smith, Piccolo

The Celebration Singers

Lora Lynn Christensen, *Executive Director and Accompanist*

Jan Berny	Rainy Lee
Jamie Breed	Sharon Mize
Kerrin Browning	Ann Morris
Janet Cline	Twila Nowell
Lora Cottle	Mike Randolph
Paul Davis	Pam Rifenburg
Jill D'Entremont	Robin Roberts
Faye Dodson	Christianne Robertson
Diana Fish	Nora Beth Scholfield
Zachary Gage	Aaron Shipp
Gerald Gilkey	Shelly Smith
Manuel Granillo Chavez	David Swearingen
Diane Jamison	Karen Swearingen
Becky Kirkpatrick	Al Watkins
Andy Ladyman	Nicole Wiedemann
Nathan Lafrenz	

The Mixed Up Group

Jamie Breed	Twila Nowell
Lora Cottle	Robin Roberts
Paul Davis	Aaron Shipp
Jill D'Entremont	David Swearingen
Andy Ladyman	Karen Swearingen

The Celebration Ladies

Jamie Breed
Jill D'Entremont
Faye Dodson

Diane Jamison
Robin Roberts
Shelly Smith

The Wise Guys

Paul Davis
Gerald Gilkey
Andy Ladyman
Nathan Lafrenz

Mike Randolph
Aaron Shipp
David Swearingen
Al Watkins

The Celebration Kids

Ruby Canada
Tate Canada
Camille Mayfield
Carmen Reeves

Peyton Ritter
Leah Shaner
Christian Valenzuela
Seth Woods

Featuring...

Dr. Larry McGraw, *Emcee*
Alan Jones, *Conductor*
Shalesia Brown, *Mezzo-Soprano*
Jill D'Entremont, *Dancer*
Zachary Gage, *Uncle Sam*
Nathan Lafrenz, *Violin*
William Marshall, *Trumpet*
Jimmie Roberts, *Drums*
Morgan Shaner, *American Sign Language*
Shelly Smith, *Piccolo and Fife*
Boy Scout Troop 3, *Flag Bearers*
Don Christensen, *Scoutmaster*



Lora Lynn Christensen

Our Director & Accompanist

Lora Lynn Christensen is a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music and owner of an independent piano studio of more than 30 years in Abilene. She has been an adjunct faculty member at McMurry University since 2011, teaching piano and accompanying vocal students. She is the Past State President of Texas Federation of Music Clubs, has served on the board of Opera in the Ozarks and is a member of the Abilene Music Teachers Association (Texas Music Teachers Association and Music Teachers National Association) and the Harmony Club (TFMC). She is also a founding member of the Abilene Opera Association.

Lora Lynn currently serves on the boards of Harmony Family Services and the Celebration Singers. She is a member of the Kiwanis Club of Abilene, is an SAI patroness, and is the pianist at St. James United Methodist Church. She also serves as the State President of the Texas Federation of Music Clubs. Fun facts: she also plays the accordion, the McMurry Carillon and the Kiwanis Club of Abilene historic McMurry calliope.

Lora Lynn has served as the accompanist for the Celebration Singers since 1999, and she became the Director of the Celebration Singers in the fall of 2024.

Director's Notes

Semiquincentennial—say that three times really fast.

When planning this Celebration Singers patriotic program, I realized we had to do 250 years of American music. I also realized an audience would not sit through a four-hour program. When researching music, I seemed to be going from war to war to see what was popular during that era. So, the choosing and culling began and I broadened the search to include popular music in happier times. Of course, our nation was founded on a new concept of inalienable rights bestowed upon mankind by God, thus, the National Hymn must be sung.

This milestone in America's history reminded me that a mere 50 years ago we celebrated the American Bicentennial in a big way. The Abilene Community Band was formed for a July 4th celebration and it was so much fun they are still giving concerts throughout the year. A musicale covering eras of music was produced by Martha Pender with the performance being held at the newly renovated Paramount Theater. Everything was celebrated from a cowboy scene around a campfire to a bit of an operetta. This grew into the Abilene Opera Association which produced 11 operas in 13 years with Martha Pender as producer, and me, as her assistant.

Celebration Singers is still a youngster of fewer than 30 years. With support from you, our faithful audience, we continue to offer programs twice a year by an all-voluntary organization of people who love vocal music. Sit back and enjoy, tap your toes, get up and dance if you must, and we don't mind you singing along. Oh, yes...keep practicing saying semiquincentennial.

Lora Lynn Christensen, Director of Celebration Singers



Dr. Larry McGraw

Our Master of Ceremonies

Dr. Larry McGraw serves as the Associate Dean of the Logsdon Seminary at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. As professor of Bible, Dr. McGraw has taught at Hardin-Simmons for 42 years. As a preacher/teacher, he has spoken at numerous churches, Bible Conferences, and special events in several states. He has written numerous articles for publications, including the "Bible Illustrator" and "Southwest Journal of Theology". On the local level, he teaches adult Sunday school classes and has written teacher guides for Baptist Way Press in connection with the Texas Baptist General Convention. He previously published devotional books on Isaiah and Matthew in "The Bible Says" series. He has been a radio personality in Abilene and the public address announcer for HSU home football, basketball, and volleyball games.

Married for 51 years, he and his wife, Sandy, have 2 adult sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, and four fabulous grandchildren: Braylen, Ainsley, Reed, and Jaxon. Dr. McGraw was honored by HSU with the first "Golden Microphone" award for his days announcing sporting events. He has been our Celebration Singers Master of Ceremonies for 20 years where his wit and wisdom have charmed performers and patrons for many successful shows.



Alan Jones

Our Guest Director

A native of Albany, Texas, Alan Jones graduated from Hardin-Simmons University (1990) and Logsdon Seminary (HSU, 2014). A Music Educator for 23 years, Alan currently teaches K-5 Music at Dyess Elementary, has taught in an adjunct capacity at McMurry University, and is the Choir Director at St. James UMC. Alan is married to Shari, they have one son and daughter-in-law, Griffin and Maddie, and just welcomed a new grandbaby.



Music Notes

Paul Revere's Ride

Paul Revere's Ride is a poem written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow about the historic April 18, 1775 midnight ride of Paul Revere, a silversmith, whose duty as a rebel was to warn the Colonists in Concord whether the British were coming by land or sea. The poem was published in the January 1861 issue of *The Atlantic*. This musical setting adds to the urgency of the ride and "the shot heard 'round the world."

Yankee Doodle

Yankee Doodle was sung in America as early as 1767 in a ballad opera called *The Disappointment*. The British troops sang the words deriding the ragged Colonial Army. By 1777 the new Americans were singing it in derision of the British. Doodle means a simpleton. There are at least two poems with multiple verses sung to this tune: *Father and I Went Down to Camp*, (we are singing four of the nine verses) and *The Battle of the Kegs* which has 22 verses telling the story of the Americans floating kegs loaded with explosives down the Delaware River to harass the British ships during the occupation of Philadelphia in 1778.

The Star-Spangled Banner

The Star-Spangled Banner is the National Anthem of the United States. The poem was written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key after he witnessed the bombardment of Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. Mr. Key awaited the sunrise after the lengthy night; he knew if he saw the stars and stripes still waving that would mean the Americans were victorious. It was officially adopted as the national anthem on March 3, 1931. The tune was composed by John Stafford Smith for the Anacreontic Society in the 1770's. Tonight the Wise Guys will read the poem so the audience may truly listen to the words.

Folk Songs Medley

Much of a people's history is written in poem and song to memorialize historic events, important people, societal changes, portray forms of amusement and diversions, changing fashions and everyday chores. The set of folk songs brings to mind the movement of the population to the west, the California Goldrush, the longing of slaves for freedom and their trials and tribulations trying to maintain that freedom.

Bring Him Home

Bring Him Home from the musical *Les Miserables* was not written in the 1880's but is written about the time of the French revolution and describes the anguish of every parent and every person left behind when a loved one is fighting a war.

Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears

Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears very much describes the anguish and doubts and hopes of the many millions who have migrated to the United States of America through the centuries. This song is about Annie Moore, the first Irish emigrant to the USA in 1892 who passed through Ellis Island. There is a statue of her on both sides of the Atlantic. The Isle of Hope is of course America, and the Isle of Tears is Ireland.

Inspirational Songs

No Man is an Island, The Impossible Dream (from *Man of La Mancha*) and *What a Wonderful World* were sung by many choirs and recorded by many artists. The songs were an attempt to heal the nation after the deep political divisions of the 1960's and the protests to the Viet Nam War. Songs of high ideals and high hopes were meant to uplift mankind as a whole and create a brighter future.

God of Our Fathers

God of Our Fathers is the National Hymn. [From Hymnary.org](http://FromHymnary.org): Scripture Reference: Psalms 46:1. Daniel C. Roberts of Long Island, New York, 1841-1907, wrote this patriotic hymn in 1876 for the July 4 centennial celebration in Brandon, Vermont, where he was rector at St. Thomas Episcopal Church. The text was later chosen as the theme for the centennial celebration of the adoption of the United States Constitution. It was first published in the Protestant Episcopal *Hymnal* of 1892. It is now published in over 460 hymnals. Many American patriotic hymns extol the beauty and worth of the United States first, and treat God almost as an afterthought, which makes it difficult for some Christians to be comfortable singing them in the context of a worship service. This hymn puts God first and is constantly addressed to Him as a prayer for the nation, without reference to American superiority. The second and third stanzas allude to a nation's need for God's law and guidance to maintain peace.

The Land of Liberty

The Land of Liberty is a choral work by Dr. Jeffrey Cottrell, currently at Hardin-Simmons University, commissioned by Celebration Singers. We are delighted to sing this again on this patriotic program looking back through history. The words are beautiful and the harmony is in a mode which harkens to our immigrant roots in tonality.

The Stars and Stripes Forever

The Stars and Stripes Forever was composed by John Philip Sousa, both words and music, on Christmas Day in 1896. In 1987 the U.S. Congress declared it the official National March of the United States of America. Most of the time it is performed by bands at a break-neck speed. We are including the wonderful lyrics this evening at a tempo we hope makes the words very understandable. They are noble and uplifting and leave no one feeling unpatriotic by the end.

“Hurrah for the flag of the free. May it wave as our standard forever, The gem of the land and the sea, The banner of the right. Let tyrants remember the day When our fathers with mighty endeavor Proclaimed as they marched to the fray, That by their might and by their right it waves forever.”

Happy 250 years of America!!!

Special Thanks

Music Notes Lora Lynn Christensen
Producer, Stage Design Nicole Wiedemann
Costumes Karen Swearingen
Choreography Jill D’Entremont
Production Assistant/Publicity David Swearingen
Art Director, Social Media Jill D’Entremont
Music Library Christianne Robertson, Jean Triche, Barry Triche

Thank you to McMurry University, Dawne Swearingen-Meeks & the ACU Theatre Department. Additional thanks to Craig Fisher, ACU Associate VP for Advancement and Alumni & to Makayla Kerrigan, ACU Events Coordinator.

The Celebration Singers is affiliated with the National Federation of Music Clubs and the Texas Federation of Music Clubs.

This project is supported in part by a grant from the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council and HeARTS for the ARTS.





HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO FRED JAMISON!
MAY 14
DIANE JAMISON





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and the Celebration Singers for an
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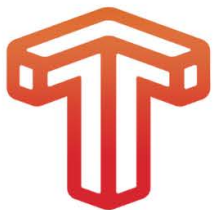
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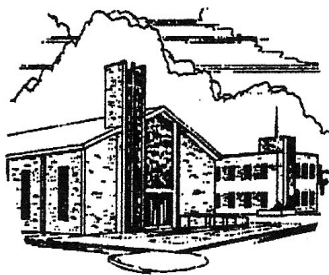
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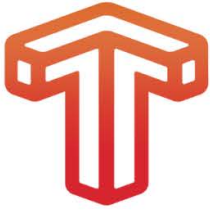
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