

# Cantigas

women's choir

Joan Isaacs Litman, Director

November 21, 2017

**Dear Friends of Cantigas Women's Choir,**

As the holiday giving season begins, Cantigas Women's Choir would like to thank you for your enduring support. We hope your connection with us remains positive and joyful.

First, we have some news: This season marks the completion of 15 years since Cantigas was founded by our beloved director, Joan Litman. Joan is planning to retire by the start of next season. We have been honored with Joan's dedication, presence, and unflinching passion for pushing our musical boundaries far beyond the familiar. We are forever deeply indebted to our founder and the impact she has made on our musical sensibilities and our social consciousness. Without her, we must—and will—change. But our mission will remain: to bring the sounds of other cultures into our own neighborhood and to welcome all to enjoy and learn from what they hear.

Cantigas is an ensemble of singers between 13 and 75 years of age. Led by Joan, our choir has developed a commitment to social justice that is now deeply embedded in our singers and in the music we choose to sing. We often share stories of our diverse heritages, especially while learning about the languages and rich musical histories of the songs we perform.

Our focus on social justice is important: We make music not in a vacuum, but in a world that we wish was more connected and less contentious. During this past year in particular, people around the world bore witness to an exceptionally deep divisiveness and disturbing acts of disrespect. As we move into a new era, it is our continued mission to make music accessible to everyone we can reach. And when Cantigas creates joyful music that honors a cultural tradition beyond our own, we succeed in moving our audience into a more respectful and socially just world—if just for a brief moment.

This year, Cantigas has acknowledged and responded with compassion to these human needs:

- **Women across the country lifted up voices of solidarity**—and Cantigas informally coordinated a group to join the Women's March in NYC and inspired the crowd near the United Nations with spontaneous song. Cantigas also formally commissioned a teenage girl to set to music a poem written by an imprisoned mother. We will perform this song, "The Change in Me," for you in our December 16 concert at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Jersey City.
- **Refugees searched for acceptance in their new cities and new homes**—and Cantigas gave two emotional performances for Jersey City's Vigil for Refugees. We also embraced Arabic-speaking guest singers who joined us in last year's winter concert.
- **Our local community is in need**—and Cantigas gave free concert tickets to welcome our homeless neighbors, refugees, and students to our concerts. We also sang at a senior center to reach those who are unable to attend a concert.
- **Music education is beyond the means of many**—and Cantigas fully subsidizes the membership costs of our young members who are still in school.
- **We are one, united by our humanity**—and Cantigas makes an impact on our Hudson County community by presenting music from many nations, including inspirational songs from places like South Africa and Syria.

As we look toward the changes a new year will bring, we turn to you and ask for your support of our community choir so we can continue bringing diverse music to our communities. For a choir that is only 35 percent funded by its membership, we rely on your generosity for our operating costs and concert expenses. Every gift counts.

Thank you for your support, and we hope to see you at our upcoming concerts.

**Best wishes,**



Mandy Luk, President  
and the Board of Directors  
Cantigas Women's Choir

**PO BOX 7093 | Jersey City, NJ 07307 | [www.cantigas.net](http://www.cantigas.net)**

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