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Sacred and the secular on program for North Shore Choral Society concert

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By **DOROTHY ANDRIES** Contributing Columnist

Sacred and secular songs by Jewish and Christian composers will be on the North Shore Choral Society's program Sunday afternoon. According to conductor Julia Davids, the songs will explore the theme of peace through works by a variety of composers from both faith traditions. The program will be accompanied by pianist Sharon R. Peterson of Chicago, who has been pianist for the Chicago Symphony Chorus since 1978.

"I fell in love with the music of Canadian composer Srul Irving Glick, who died in 2002," said Davids, when reached by phone in her home in Skokie. "I am from Canada and I was working with a conductor who had worked with him. Glick's music is just beautiful."

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North Shore Choral Society Director Julia Davids.

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Pianist Sharon Peterson.

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The chorus will sing the composer's "Avinu Malkeinu," a setting of Psalm 96 "Sing Unto the Lord a New Song."

Davids was also interested in "Five Hebrew Love Songs" by the 40-year-old American composer Eric Whitacre, a Juilliard graduate who studied composition with John Corigliano and David Diamond. The songs are settings of a poem written by his wife, soprano Hila Plitmann. The director's husband, violinist Martin Davids, founder and director of the Callipygian Players and a member of the Baroque Band, will pianist Peterson in accompanying "Love Songs."

The program by the 120-voice community ensemble opens with the Israeli folk melody "Hashivenu," sung as a round, plus "Sim Shalom" by American composer Michael Isaacson, and excerpts from "The Peaceable Kingdom" written in 1936 by esteemed American choral composer Randall Thompson. Its text is from Isaiah and the music was inspired by the 1826 painting of the same name by American folk artist Edward Hicks.

The beautiful "When there is Light in the Soul" by contemporary American composer Elizabeth Alexander conveys sentiments that are close to the choral director's heart. The text is from a Chinese proverb and reads: "Where there is light in the soul there will be beauty in the person. Where there is beauty in the person there will be harmony in the home. Where there is harmony in the home there will be honor in the nation. Where there is honor in the nation there will be peace."

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Violinist Martin Davids.

"The program also includes an instrumental number," Davids said. "Sharon and my husband are doing a piano/violin arrangement of the theme from 'Schindler's List' by John Williams." The arrangement of the haunting violin melody from the 1993 film, which won an Oscar for best musical score, has become a popular and moving encore number for recitalists.

This is Julia Davids' first season as artistic director of the North Shore Choral Society. She was chosen during a two-year search, which drew more than 20 applicants. She holds a doctorate in choral conducting from Northwestern University. Davids grew up in Canada and her college, the University of Western Ontario, had a relationship with the University of Michigan, where she subsequently earned a master's degree in choral conducting and voice performance and met her American husband.

She is also a soprano soloist and has appeared with numerous chamber ensembles in the United States and Canada, often with her husband.

The second concert of the season is the first in which Davids selected new works for the chorus to learn. The third concert will be May 2 at Pick-Staiger Concert Hall on Northwestern University's Evanston campus, when the Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra and the North Shore Choral Society will present Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 ("Choral").

North Shore Choral Society

"A Song of Peace -- Sim Shalom," at 3 p.m. March 14 at Ezra Habonim Synagogue, 4500 Dempster St., Skokie. Single tickets at the door \$25, \$22 seniors, \$15 students. www.northshorechoral.org or (773) 956-8400.

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