



**Cantilena**  
A WOMEN'S CHORALE

**Elinor A. Armsby**  
Artistic Director

PRESENTS

# FIRED UP!

*A call  
for equality  
and activism*

**SUNDAY**  
**MAY 7**  
**2023 at 4pm**

FEATURING

*Lifting As We Climb*  
by Joan Szymko

PREMIERING

*Handmade*  
by Kelvyn Koning



**First Parish Unitarian  
Universalist of Arlington**  
630 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington MA 02476

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from the Mass Cultural Council and the Arlington  
Commission for Arts and Culture (ACAC) Grants  
Committee, a local agency which is supported by  
the Mass Cultural Council (MCC), a state agency.*

**MCC** Mass  
Cultural  
Council



ARLINGTON COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

## About Us

Cantilena, a women's chorale, is an ensemble dedicated to performing music written for the treble voice. Our challenging and diverse repertoire spans the fifteenth to twenty-first centuries and includes works in many different languages and musical forms. We strive to introduce both our members and our audience to works they are unlikely to encounter in other forums, with an emphasis on music composed specifically for women's voices. Cantilena was founded in 1968 as the Cambridge Chorale, an ensemble of mixed (SATB) voices. In 1980, the group became a women's chorus and, in 2000, we changed our name to Cantilena.

**Elinor A. Armsby** *Director*

**Kelvyn Koning** *Collaborative Pianist*

## Cantilena Singers

### Sopranos

Erdmute Benoit

Ashley Brueske

Angela Carroll

Jaime Church\*\*

Isabella Feierberg

Lindsay Garrard

Jennifer

Joslyn-Siemiatoski

Chris Lull

Erin Maloney

Kristin Palace

EB Saunter

### Altos

Janice Darling

Vera Ryen Gregg

Beverly Hjorth

Mara Moldwin\*\*

Karen Nichols

Patricia Pepper

JoyEllen Snellgrove

Gina Sonder

Sunny Tom

Anna Watson

*Section leaders \*\**

## Voices Rising Guest Singers

Samantha Wathugala Alto1

Adina Karantza Alto 2

Elizabeth Ryan Soprano 1

## Director Emeritus

Kenneth Seitz

## More Information at:

[www.cantilena.org](http://www.cantilena.org)

[Facebook.com: CantilenaWomensVoices](https://www.facebook.com/CantilenaWomensVoices)

[Twitter: CantilenaVoices](https://twitter.com/CantilenaVoices)

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*Cantilena is a member of the  
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*In memory of Ali Paddock*

*(Allison Ruth Paddock Shoemaker)*

*The women of Cantilena remember fondly the life and joy that Allison Ruth Paddock Shoemaker brought to singing with Cantilena. Ali passed away in February 2023 and she is remembered for the gracious friend she was to many.*

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# FIRE UP!

*A call for equality and activism*

PROGRAM May 7, 2023

## **The March of the Women**

*Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)*  
*ed. Amelia Nagoski*  
*Text by Cecily Hamilton*

## **Harriet Tubman**

*Walter Robinson*  
*arr. Kathleen McGuire*

## **Handmade**

*Kelvyn Koning (b. 1994)*  
*Commissioned by Cantilena*

## **When Thunder Comes**

*Mari Esabel Valverde (b. 1987)*  
*text by J. Patrick Lewis*

*soloists:*

*Ashley Brueske,*  
*Jaime Church,*  
*Jennifer Joslyn-Siemsaktoski,*  
*Angela Carroll,*  
*Beverly Hjorth,*  
*JoyEllen Snellgrove*

## **Bread and Roses**

*Mimi and Richard Farina*  
*Arr. E. Peach*  
*Text by James Oppenheim*

## **Lifting As We Climb**

*Joan Szymko (b. 1957)*  
*Text by Ellen Hagan and*  
*Joan Szymko*

## **Various texts**

*I. What We Do Now*  
*II. Organize, Agitate, Educate!*  
*We are all Bound Up Together*  
*III. We Shake, We Shine*

*Kelvyn Koning, piano*  
*Stephanie A. Muñoz, saxophone*  
*Kari Paisley-Flango, drums*

## **Readers:**

*Amy Tai: Narrator*  
*Rebecca Slisz: Lucretia Mott*  
*Patti Muldoon: Susan B. Anthony*  
*Michaiah Healy: Elizabeth*  
*Cady Stanton*  
*EB Saunter : Lucy Stone*  
*Pearl P. Morrison: Anna Julia Cooper*  
*Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Reader B*  
*Melanie Brown: Mary Church Terrell,*  
*Reader A*

**P A U S E**

## **Elinor A. Armsby: *Artistic Director***



**Elinor (Ellie) A. Armsby** comes to Cantilena with over twenty years of experience as a choral director in New England and beyond, working with choirs of varying ages and abilities, including college and high school students, church choirs, and community choruses. She holds a Bachelor's degree in music from Indiana University and a Master's

degree from Temple University. Ms. Armsby has also been involved in music publishing for many years, working for Theodore Presser Company from 1994 to 2005. Since 2007, Ellie has held the office of president of the Hildegard Publishing Company, expanding its catalogue of music by women composers. Ellie is a native of Newton, Massachusetts.

## **Kelvyn Koning: *Collaborative Pianist***



**Kelvyn Koning, our wonderful pianist,** has composed a new piece for Cantilena, *Handmade*.

He specializes in composing for choir and theatre and performing as a countertenor and pianist. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Composition from Calvin University in Grand Rapids, MI and a Master of Music in Composition from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Kelvyn has been commissioned to write pieces for Boston Latin School, Chandler MS, Zeeland HS, Batesville HS, Arlington HS, the Da Camera Singers, Northwest Hills United Methodist

Church, Quorum, and the Oriana Consort. His latest works include two full-length musicals, *The Glassblower's Daughter* at the Regent Theater and *The Prince and the Painter* with Moonbox

Productions. Kelvyn is a founding member of the Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, for whom he sings and composes music. He has also premiered several new vocal and piano works by his friends in Boston. Kelvyn accompanies voice lessons, choirs, and musical theatre at Boston Conservatory and plays piano as a soloist and accompanist around Boston.

## Guest Readers

**Melanie Brown** is a bi-racial Black woman who was born in Arlington, raised in Cambridge, and moved back to Arlington, 12 years ago. Raised in a family with a long history of activism, she's currently a Commissioner on the Arlington Human Rights Commission, and a Town Meeting Member.

### **Michaiah Healy**

I am looking forward to working with the talented folks on this year's Cantilena performance, remembering and advancing the story and messages of women's suffrage, deeper into the experience of women's story in this century. Though I have had various political and community organizing experiences, what really motivates me in coming together in this performance are the dear inspiring women here today, whose work I've witnessed in elevating and giving authority to woman's voice in this community. I am energized and inspired by these voices.

**Pearl P. Morrison**, a retired Elementary School Principal with two adult children, has been living in Arlington with her husband Garfield for 52 years. Pearl enjoys civic engagement and church ministries. Above all, she relishes the precious time shared with her ten Great-Grands.

*"It is an honor to join Cantilena for Lifting As We Climb. I was impressed with Ms. Szymko's talent to encapsulate the challenges, stamina and historical achievements of the featured suffragists. The heart and spirit of these outstanding women is acknowledged in just a few gloriously written lines. Thank you for*

*the opportunity to join in this celebration.*

*I hope the legacy of the women we have acknowledged will spur us on to interrupt the efforts of those who today want to diminish and or eradicate the voting rights of people of color, the eligibility of young voters and our brothers and sisters who have limited economic resources. The struggle is real. Did you hear it?"*

**Patti Muldoon** is a suffragist at heart, having been a facilitator and activist on the local, state and national levels with the League of Women Voters for many years. She also advocates for better end-of-life care, serving as the President of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts, a death doula, and the Aging Resources Coordinator for New England Quakers.

**Rebecca Slisz** became an advocate for women's issues after writing a high school history paper on the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. She recently returned from a Women's Soccer Tournament in South Africa and is a dedicated volunteer with the Network for Social Justice based in Winchester.

**Amy Tai** is a Suzuki violin teacher and Climate Justice activist. She also teaches peer counseling and serves as the president of the board of True Story Theater in Arlington.

## Instrumentalists

**Stephanie A. Muñoz** is a Mexican-American saxophonist, performer and music educator born and raised in El Paso, Texas. She holds a Bachelors in Music Education from New Mexico State University (12') as well as a Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree in Saxophone Performance from The New England Conservatory of Music (15', 17). During the academic year, Stephanie is a full-time educator and serves as a band director and she teaches at The Margarita Muñoz Academy in Jamaica Plain - the only bilingual public high school in the entire New England area. She also runs her own private studio where she teaches all levels on saxophone, clarinet, flute and piano. Her performing styles include Classical, Jazz, Pop, and Latin and Ms. Muñoz recently had her orchestral debut performing Rachmaninoff's "Symphonic Dances op. 45" with Boston's own New England Philharmonic Orchestra. In the summer, Stephanie is on faculty as a jazz ensemble and music theory instructor for the female-founded and all-female-led El Paso Jazz Girls - a week-long, free music camp which welcomes and empowers any student that identifies as: female, trans, as well as genderqueer, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students through improvisation, songwriting, collaboration and performing.

From the time they could hold a pair of sticks, **Kari Raisley-Flango** has been playing drums and has never looked back. Growing-up in a musical household, Kari was fortunate to have the opportunity to explore different instruments, playing the violin for several years as well as dabbling in piano and trumpet, but ultimately took the path of their father and went all-in on percussion. Throughout their school years, Kari played drums in a wide variety of performing groups, everything from orchestra to jazz and concert bands, to choral groups, and marching bands. In college, while earning a degree in Biochemistry, Kari was very active in Penn State's marching Blue Band, where they played in a snare drum line of 10+ and had the opportunity to perform at the Rose Bowl game and parade. Since moving to the Boston-area, Kari kept the sticks moving, playing in a number of local original and cover bands, most notably the 70's era funk-disco cover band, Booty Vortex, and original world music band, Zili Misik. Currently, Kari regularly provides percussion accompaniment for the Boston-area women's choir, Voices Rising ([www.voicesrising.org](http://www.voicesrising.org)) and is the drummer/vocal harmonist for the rock band trio, Three at Home ([www.threathomeband.com](http://www.threathomeband.com)).

## From our Music Director Elinor A. Armsby

Cantilena is **Fired Up!** to be singing about social justice issues this afternoon. Many of the works on this program speak about the right to vote and especially about ensuring all voices are heard in our society and government. Other works honor important warriors in the fight for human rights. We open the program with Ethel Smyth's *March of the Women*, a song composed by Ethel Smyth in 1910, to words by Cecily Hamilton. It became the official anthem of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and more widely the anthem of the women's suffrage movement throughout the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Activists sang it not only at rallies but also in prison while they were on-hunger strike. Our first set concludes with the labor anthem, *Bread & Roses*. The text for this song originated in a speech by suffragist, Helen Todd. James Oppenheim incorporated Todd's words into a poem in 1911. The text has long been associated with the textile strike in Lawrence, Mass, often referred to as the "Bread and Roses strike." I invite you to read more about the other works on our program in the composers' own words.

Elinor A. Armsby

### **About Handmade:**

I wrote *Handmade* in November 2022 for Cantilena's **Fired Up** concert in May 2023, featuring works oriented toward social justice. While considering the many possible angles to take, some of my dear friends in both Massachusetts and Michigan talked to me about their experiences with homelessness as LGBTQ+ young adults. I thought about how I see homeless people almost

every day living in Boston, and in doing some research discovered that homelessness rates in Boston have actually been going steadily down, while they've been going up in West Michigan, where I have roots. I connected with the Y2Y homeless shelter for youth in Cambridge, MA as well as the AYA youth collective in Grand Rapids, MI to learn more and spent some time reflecting on various conversations to write the text for this piece.

One friend I spoke with about this topic shared a quote with me and granted permission to use it: "We so quickly forget where we were, not realizing how far we've come or how much we have. What a blessing it is to say 'now what?' or 'what next?'" Finally, I want to acknowledge the extensive use of hands as a metaphor in this piece, in thinking of people with disabilities. While the use of physical hands is not the reality for every person, I hope that the ideas that we have all had many people contributing to our lives and that we can contribute to the lives of others will ring true anyhow. I think all of us could emotionally or spiritually "lend a hand" or "take a hand" as the song implies, and it is my hope that these words will be used to heal, not harm.

Kelvyn Koning

### **About When Thunder Comes:**

*When Thunder Comes* is a celebration of American civil rights heroes: Sylvia Mendez, who challenged California's justice system in a fight for racial desegregation of schools; Helen Zia, Chinese-American lesbian feminist author, journalist, Fulbright scholar,

*Director's and composers' notes continued on next page*



and activist for peace;

Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in California's history, remembered as a vocal gay rights advocate; and Freedom Summer's "soldiers," who risked their lives in their movement to enfranchise black voters in Mississippi of the 1960's.

Calling attention to our history's systemic erasure of the stories of marginalized human beings in the United States, Lewis' sonnet presents a powerful model for patriotism. The drums, a figurative representation of a grass roots revolution, provide thunder, and the singing relays the message that, once unified, our individual voices can come together and "drown out fear."

Selected as the third place winner of the 2017-2018 American Prize in Composition-Music for Chorus in the professional division, this work was commissioned in 2015 by One Voice Mixed Chorus-Minnesota's LGBTQA Chorus for their concert *Queer Thunder* in collaboration with Mu Daiko taiko ensemble; the version for SSAA chorus was co-commissioned two years later by San Diego Women's Chorus and Seattle Women's Chorus for their concerts *Elements: Songs of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water* and *Fired Up*, respectively.

Mari Esabel Valverde

### **About *Lifting As We Climb*:**

I accepted the 2020 GALA Roma Commission commemorating the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment with the understanding that my composition would not only explore the historical fight for wom-

en's suffrage, but also speak to present day attacks on voting rights.

Suffragist Carrie Catt said that the vote is the "emblem of equality" and the "guarantee of liberty." As *Lifting As We Climb* looks back, just as importantly it views the present and a future that will require a diligent, informed public ready to fight for equality and democracy. This of course begins by protecting the right to vote.

When I first came across Ellen Hagan's poem, *What We Do-Now*, it leapt off the page! I immediately recognized that it would be the driving force behind the entire work. This work is being sung today to remember and praise the efforts and sacrifice of those who, for over three generations, fought for votes for women. But as I researched the history of American suffrage I was confronted over and over again by matters of race and privilege that have accompanied the America democracy experiment since its inception. And so we also protest: the burying of the historical role of African American women in the fight for the 19th amendment, and the ongoing forces that seek to suppress the vote today. In Hagan's poem, with her words, we shake / we shine - the whole of *Lifting As We Climb* coalesces. 19th Century women's rights advocate Lucretia Mott once said:

*Any great change must expect opposition, because it shakes the very foundation of privilege.*

Just like the early suffragists-- Black Lives Matter activists and voting rights activists like Stacey Abrams shake the "foundations of privilege." And today



"it is ever more important to heed the words of Ida B. Wells that the way to right wrongs is to shine the light of truth upon them.

*What We Do Now* sets the stage for this major work as its first choral movement. I created the libretto and lyrics for the remaining movements of *Lifting As We Climb* after doing a great deal of research over a period of several months. My biggest challenge was to cull all the information I had gathered into a coherent story arc. I wanted the suffragists to come alive in the music - and so much of the lyrics are crafted from quotes of key players like Susan B. Anthony, Frances E. W. Harper, Sojourner Truth and Carry Chapman Catt.

I encourage anyone singing or listening today to dive into the story of women's suffrage and to current reporting on voter suppression. Engrossing and shocking, celebratory and encouraging, this history and history-in-the-making alerts us to just how important it is to stay present and awake to the forces that endanger liberty and democracy.

As Coretta Scott King said, *"the struggle is never ending, freedom is never really won; you earn it and win it in each generation."*

Joan Szymko

## Texts and translations

### The March of the Women

Ethel Smyth (1858-1944)  
ed. Amelia Nagosky  
text by Cecily Hamilton

Shout, shout, up with your song!  
Cry with the wind for the dawn is breaking;  
March, march, swing you along,  
Wide blows our banner, and hope is waking.  
Song with its story, dreams, with their glory.

*Song texts continued on next page*

Lo! They call, and glad is their word!  
Loud and louder it swells,  
Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord.

Long, long, we in the past  
Cowered in dread from the light of heaven.  
Strong, strong, stand we at last,  
Fearless in faith and with sight new given.  
Strength with its beauty, life with its duty,  
Hear the voice, oh hear and obey!  
These, these beckon us on  
Open your eyes to the blaze of day.

Life, strife, these two are one,  
Nought can ye win but by faith and daring;  
On, on that ye have done  
But for the work of today preparing.  
Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,  
Laugh in hope, for sure is the end.  
March, march, many as one.

### Harriet Tubman

Walter Robinson  
arr. Kathleen McGuire

Come on up, ch! (repeated)  
One night I dreamed I was in slav'ry,  
'bout eighteen fifty was the time.  
Sorrow was the only sign;  
nothing around to ease my mind.  
Out of the night appeared a lady  
Leading a distant pilgrim band.  
"First mate," she yelled, pointing her hand,  
"make room aboard for this young man"  
an' sayin', "Come on up, puh, huh, huh,  
I got a lifeline, come on up to this train  
o' mine."  
Onward and upward,  
She said her name was Harriet Tubman,  
And she drove for the underground railroad  
Hundreds of miles we traveled onward,  
Gathering slaves from town to town.  
Seeking every lost and found,  
setting those free that once were bound.  
Somehow my heart was growing weaker,  
fell by the wayside's sinking sand.  
Firmly did this lady stand, lifted me up, and  
took my hand, an' sayin', "Come on up, puh,  
huh, huh,  
I got a lifeline, come on up to this train  
o' mine."  
She said her name was Harriet Tubman,  
And she drove for the underground railroad.  
Who are these children dressed in red?  
They must be the ones that Moses led.  
Who are these children dressed in red?  
They must be the ones that Moses led,  
an'sayin  
Come on up, ch! (repeated)

## Handmade

*Kelvyn Koning*

Where are the hands that guide you  
and guard you?

Where are the limbs to build you a home?  
Where are the hands that bring food to the table?  
Where are the arms saying you're not alone?  
Where are the hands that teach you to play?  
Where are the hands that push you to grow?  
Where are the thumbs that wipe your tears away?  
Where are the ones that want you to know?

I am here,  
I understand,  
When you fall down,  
I will lend you a hand,

So take my hand when you are weary,  
Take my hand when you're in need,  
Take my hand when you're discouraged,  
Let me tend your wounds that bleed,  
Take my hand when you are hungry,  
Take my hand when you're afraid,  
Take my hand and we'll discover  
You and I are both handmade.

Thanks to the hands that guide me  
and guard me,  
Thanks to the limbs that built me a home,  
Thanks to the hands that bring food  
to the table,  
Thanks to the arms that show me  
I'm not alone,  
Thanks to the hands that teach me to play,  
Thanks to the hands that push me to grow,  
Thanks to the thumbs that wipe my  
tears away,  
Thanks to the ones that I'll never know.

I am here,  
I understand...

So take my hand when you are laughing,  
Take my hand when you can't breathe,  
Take my hand when you're distracted,  
Take my hand when you don't  
want to leave,  
Take my hand when you are crying,  
Take my hand when you feel betrayed,  
Take my hand and we'll recover;  
You and I are both handmade.

And we are connected,  
Though seemingly apart.  
Love is rarely expected,  
That's how it heals the heart.  
So I'll care for you  
Just as you've cared for me  
In more ways Than we could ever dream.

## When Thunder Comes

*Mari Esabel Valverde (b. 1987)*

*text by J. Patrick Lewis*

The poor and dispossessed take up the drums  
For civil rights - freedoms to think and speak,  
Petition, pray, and vote. When thunder  
comes, the civil righteous are finished  
being meek.

Why Sylvia Mendez bet against long odds,  
How Harvey Milk turned hatred on its head,  
Why Helen Zia railed against tin gods,  
How Freedom Summer's soldiers faced  
the dread

Are tales of thunder that I hope to tell  
From my thin bag of verse for you to hear  
In miniature, like ringing a small bell,  
And know a million bells can drown out fear.

## Bread & Roses

*Mimi and Richard Farina*

*Arr. E. Peach*

*lyrics by James Oppenheim*

As we come marching,  
marching in the beauty of the day

A million darkened kitchens,  
a thousand mill lofts grey  
Are touched with all the radiance that a  
sudden sun discloses  
For the people hear us crying "Bread and  
Roses! Bread and Roses!"

As we come marching, marching we battle  
too for men,

For they are women's comrades and we  
fight as one with them.

Our lives shall now be sweated from birth  
until life closes;

Hearts starve as well as bodies, give us  
bread but give us roses!

As we come marching, marching  
unnumbered women dead go crying  
Through our singing their ancient cry  
for bread,

small art and love and beauty their  
drudging spirits knew,  
yes, it is our bread we fight for, but we fight  
for roses too.

As we come marching, marching, we're  
standing proud and tall;

The rising of the women means the  
rising of us all

No more the drudge and idler, ten that toil  
where one reposes,  
But a sharing of life's glories, bread and  
roses, bread and roses!  
For history was mute witness when  
such crimes  
Discolored and discredited our times.

### **Lifting As We Climb**

*Joan Szymko (b. 1957)*

*poem by Ellen Hagan*

#### **No. 1 What We Do – Now**

We mourn, we bless,  
we blow, we wail, we  
wind-down, we sip,  
we spin, we blind, we  
bend, bow and hem. We  
hip, we blend, we bind,  
we shake, we shine,  
Shine. We lips and we  
teeth, we praise and protest.  
We document and we  
drama. We demand and  
we flow, fold and hang  
loose. We measure and  
we moan, mourn and whine  
low. And we live, and we  
breathe. And some of the time,  
we don't.  
Tonight, I am here. Here  
and tired. Here and awake,  
sure, and alive. Yes here and  
still, still here, still and here  
and still awake and still, still alive.

#### **No. 2 Organize, Agitate, Educate!**

I ask no favors, I ask no favors for my sex;  
all I ask of my brethren is that they will  
take their feet from off our necks!  
Organize, agitate, educate!  
We'll have our rights;  
see if we don't;  
and you can't stop us from them;  
see if you can; You may hiss as much as  
you like,  
but it's coming'  
Organize, agitate, educate!  
We'll win the vote; see if we don't.  
It is the emblem of equality,  
the guarantee of liberty.

*(Spoken)*

We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask  
that all civil  
and political rights that belong to  
citizens of the  
United States be guaranteed to us and  
our daughters  
forever.

*(Spoken)*

We take our stand on the solidarity of  
humanity,  
the oneness of life, and the injustice  
of all special favoritism, whether of sex,  
race, country, or condition.  
If one link of the chain is broken, the chain  
is broken.

*(Sung)*

Organize, agitate, educate!  
Roll up your sleeves, set your mind to  
making history,  
and wage such a fight as the whole world  
will respect our sex.  
To the wrongs that need resistance,

#### **No. 3 We Shake We Shine**

The struggle is never ending.  
Freedom is never really won.  
You earn it and win it in each generation.  
You earn it and win it for all of us,  
very one of us, for all of us – for the people.  
We the people – Shake the foundations of  
privilege  
We the people – Shine the light of truth  
Right the wrongs!  
Press on! Hold on for the common good.  
We shake, we shake  
We shine, we shine  
Onward and upward,  
Upward and onward –  
Lifting as we climb.  
The struggle is never ending.  
Keep your hands on the plow –  
Upending hypocrisy,  
Defending democracy  
Demanding equality  
It's our turn, it's our time –  
Our turn, our time is now!  
We shake, we shake  
We shine, we shine  
Onward and upward,  
Upward and onward –  
Lifting as we climb!

## **Cantilena appreciates your support**

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*Cantilena is pleased to participate in the Card to Culture program, offering EBT, WIC, and ConnectorCare discounts to cardholders to broaden accessibility to cultural programming. The program is a partnership between participating arts organizations, the Mass Cultural Council, the Department of Transitional Assistance, Massachusetts Health Connector, and the Women, Infants & Children Nutrition Program.*

The Women of Cantilena wish to recognize **Senator Cindy F. Friedman** (D-Arlington) for her leadership in protecting the individual rights of everyone without exception. Sen. Friedman is a lifelong activist and champion of civil rights; women's rights; protecting our most vulnerable citizens, LGBTQ+ individuals, and immigrant communities from discrimination: promoting healthcare access for all, and the stewardship and protection of our environment. We thank Sen. Friedman for her leadership in the crafting and recent passage of *An Act expanding protections for reproductive and gender-affirming care*.

"I believe that all people should be given equal opportunities in our Commonwealth regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or religious identity. At a time when many people's rights are under attack by our federal government, we need to band together, stand up against hate, and protect our neighbors." -Senator Cindy F. Friedman

Through her years of civil engagement and advocacy, Sen. Friedman is a local example of the activist women Cantilena highlights in this concert program, those who are not afraid to stand up and fight discrimination while acting to gain and protect our equal rights.