

PROTESTRA



Songs of Resilience

Benefit Concert for Immigrant Aid & Defense

*Featuring the world premiere of
a new song cycle by Sheila Silver*

World Refugee Day

Saturday, June 20, 2026 | 7 PM

St. George's Episcopal Church

550 Ridgewood Rd, Maplewood, NJ

Melissa Citro, soprano

Teresa Castillo, soprano

Francesco Barfoed, piano

Juan Carlos Narváez, flute

Ticket proceeds will be donated to

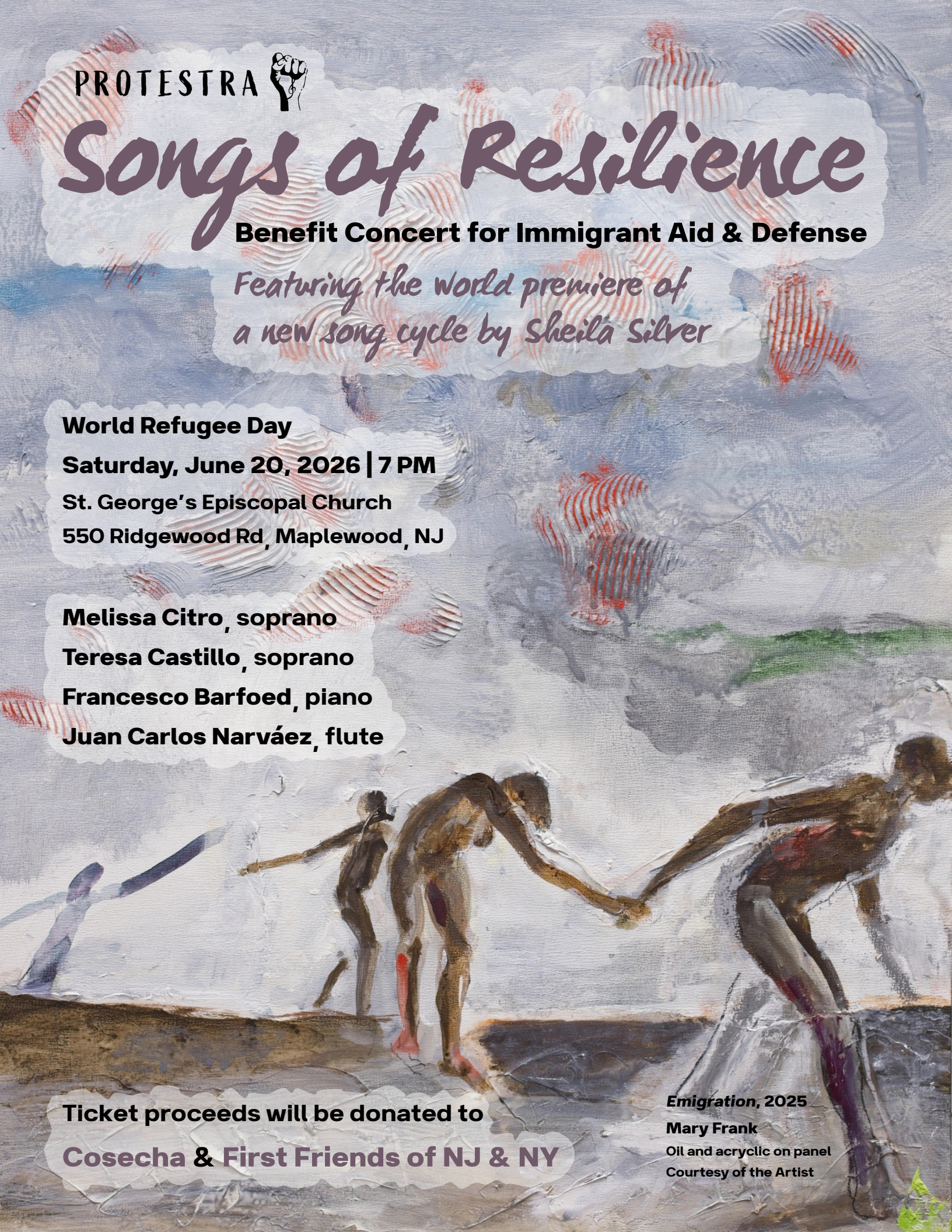
Cosecha & First Friends of NJ & NY

Emigration, 2025

Mary Frank

Oil and acrylic on panel

Courtesy of the Artist



Thank you for coming!

This concert was conceptualized and organized by soprano, **Melissa Citro** and composer **Sheila Silver** with support from **PROTESTRA** as co-producers. The goal of this concert is to raise funds for **Cosecha** and **First Friends of NJ and NY**, two non-profit organizations that have mobilized their efforts for immigrant aid at Delaney Hall in Newark, NJ. All proceeds from Songs of Resilience will be divided equally and donated to **Cosecha** and **First Friends of NJ and NY**.

Sheila Silver's new song cycle, which the concert is named after, has been described as a "powerful new song cycle [which] gives voice to individuals confronting urgent social, political, and humanitarian crises..."

The songs embody a plea for sanity, empathy, healing, and renewal and speak to courage, conscience, and the weight of moral reckoning. Each is penned by a different author: **Nicholas Kristof**, **Sara Abou Rashed**, **Ann Ellsworth**, **Victor Feldman**, **Stephen Kitsakos**, **Rob Lewis**, and **Lucile Lichtblau**.

The concert also features flutist Juan Carlos Narváez and pianist Francesco Barfoed performing a new work titled *Borderless Dreams* by Arturo Rodriguez. This passionate work explores the interior narrative many immigrants experience when contemplating emigration, spanning from hope to trepidation, and from home toward the unknown.

Program

Borderless Dreams

Arturo Rodriguez (b. 1985)

Juan Carlos Narváez, flute

Francesco Barfoed, piano

Songs of Resilience
(world premiere)

Sheila Silver (b. 1946)

1. Rümeyssa (text by Victor Feldman)
2. The Reporter (text by Nicholas Kristof)
3. Don't Comply (text by Ann Ellsworth)
4. From the Sky (poem by Sara About Rashed)
5. Judy Blume's Bookstore (text by Stephen Kitsakos)
6. Free Speech ("scene" by Lucile Lichtblau)
7. May We... (poem by Rob Lewis)

Melissa Citro, soprano

Teresa Castillo, soprano

Francesco Barfoed, piano

Program Notes

Songs of Resilience - Sheila Silver

In the early months of 2025, I began to think about composing a set of songs — based on news events of the day — that would reflect resistance, resilience, and courage. While I found two of the texts, for the others I asked writers to contribute and discussed with each of them what they might like to do. It was exciting to have texts written specifically for this work. Conceived and composed between April 2025 and February 2026, the songs celebrate human ingenuity, kindness, and passion in the midst of tyranny, chaos and cruelty. I am deeply indebted to my authors for giving me such powerful and diverse material to set to music.

-Sheila Silver

Program Notes

Borderless Dreams - Arturo Rodriguez

Borderless Dreams was commissioned by Juan Carlos Narváez for the benefit concert, ¿Quiénes Somos?. This composition explores an interior narrative many immigrants face when thinking about emigrating, spanning from hope to uncertainty and home to destination. This is done through mixed meters, harmonic diversity and evocative melodies.

Rodriguez has infused his composition with a variety of inspiration spanning from movie motifs, to Strauss' Dance of the Seven Veils to quotes from West Side Story. The combination of diverse influences represents the way many cultures mix and evolve through immigration to create something new and beautiful.

Composers

Acclaimed composer Sheila Silver has written in a wide range of mediums, from solo instrumental to large orchestral works, from opera to feature film scores. "Only a few composers in any generation enliven the art form with their musical language and herald new directions in music. Sheila Silver is such a visionary." (Wetterauer Zeitung, Germany) Her opera, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, based on the international best-selling novel by Khaled Hosseini, was premiered by Seattle Opera in February 2023 and short-listed for "Best World Premiere" by International Opera Awards, 2023. "Silver's sweeping score is magnificent--dramatic, richly colored, and full of texture and melody" (Opera Wire).



Sheila Silver

Her honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Sackler Prize in Opera; numerous Opera America and National Endowment for the Arts awards; Bunting Institute Fellowship; Rome Prize; Prix de Paris, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Composer Award and numerous grants and commissions. Her music is performed internationally. Professor Emeritus at Stony Brook University, she lives in the Hudson Valley of New York.

Composers

Arturo Rodriguez is a distinguished Chicano flutist, composer, and educator based in the vibrant San Francisco Bay Area. Renowned for his dynamic and versatile flute and piccolo performances, Arturo has become a sought-after artist, gracing both pit orchestras and concert stages with his talent. His performances have illuminated productions for esteemed companies such as Mountain Play, YMTC, and Spindrift, as well as with celebrated ensembles including the San Francisco Philharmonic, Bay Area Rainbow Symphony, San Jose Symphonic Choir and more.



Arturo's compositional portfolio is extensive, featuring works for solo flute, chamber ensembles, and flute orchestras. His pieces have been showcased at prestigious events, including multiple premieres at the National Flute Association (NFA) Conventions, highlighting his innovation and mastery in the field.

Arturo Rodriguez

About Cosecha



Cosecha is a network of immigrant leaders, families, and workers running local and national campaigns. Across the country, they are organizing our communities to mobilize in the streets and fight for what we deserve: permanent protection, dignity, and respect for all undocumented immigrants

[LEARN MORE - CLICK HERE](#)

About First Friends of NJ and NY



First Friends of New Jersey and New York upholds the inherent dignity and humanity of immigrants who are impacted by the immigration enforcement system. We provide compassion and hope through connections with volunteers dedicated to helping them survive detention, gain freedom and rebuild their lives.

[LEARN MORE - CLICK HERE](#)

Further your impact

Add an additional contribution to our crowdfunding campaign for these two important charities!

[DONATE HERE](#)

PROTESTRA



About PROTESTRA

PROTESTRA (protest + orchestra) bridges the divide between advocacy and classical music. Since 2017, PROTESTRA has educated audiences about contemporary issues of social justice through music, donating a portion of ticket proceeds to mission- and policy-driven nonprofit organizations related to the concerts' themes. Since September 2020, PROTESTRA has held ten issue-centered benefit concerts that have reached several thousand in-person and online viewers, collectively raised \$38,000+ in audience donations for nonprofit beneficiaries, and provided \$40,000+ of paid work to 300+ musicians.

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