



Oratorio Society of New York

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BRAHMS'S *EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM* AND WORLD PREMIERES OF WORKS BY MORAVEC AND RANJBARAN HIGHLIGHT THE ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK'S 2017-18 SEASON WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR KENT TRITLE

Carnegie Hall Series:

- **Nov. 6:** BRAHMS *Schicksalslied*
BRAHMS *Ein deutsches Requiem*
- **Dec. 18:** HANDEL *Messiah*
- **May 7:** MORAVEC *Sanctuary Road* (World premiere, commissioned by the OSNY)
RANJBARAN *We Are One* (World premiere)

Also During the OSNY's 145th Season:

- **April 14:** Finals of Annual Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition



Oratorio Society of New York's performance of Messiah at Carnegie Hall, Dec. 21, 2016 – [photo](#) by Claude Huter

World premieres of works by Paul Moravec and Behzad Ranjbaran that speak to humanity's quest for freedom and peace highlight the Oratorio Society of New York's 2017-18 season, led by Music Director Kent Tritle.

The 200-voice Oratorio Society (OSNY), New York's standard for grand choral performance, opens its 145th season and its annual three-concert Carnegie Hall series on November 6 with an all-Brahms program of *Schicksalslied* and *Ein deutsches Requiem*, and on December 18, the OSNY will continue its string of annual performances of Handel's *Messiah*, unbroken since 1874.

The season's finale, on May 7, features the world premieres of Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Moravec's *Sanctuary Road*, commissioned by the OSNY and drawing from accounts of the Underground Railroad; and Juilliard faculty member Behzad Ranjbaran's *We Are One*, which calls for peace in multiple languages.

On April 14, the OSNY will present the finals of its annual Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition in Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. Many of the soloists appearing with the OSNY this season are previous winners or finalists of the Competition, including tenor Joshua Blue, winner of the 2017 Competition, who will make his Carnegie Hall and OSNY debuts on May 7; as well as mezzo-soprano Sara Murphy (Dec 18); tenor Lawrence Jones (Dec 18); and bass-baritone Dashon Barton (Dec 18 & May 7).

The season's soloists also include sopranos Kathryn Lewek, Laquita Mitchell and Susanna Phillips; mezzo-soprano Raehann Bryce-Davis; and baritones John Chest and Malcolm Merriweather.

Two Brahms Masterworks — November 6, 2017:

To open its 2017-18 season and Carnegie Hall series, the OSNY will pair two of Brahms's most famous choral works: *Schicksalslied (Song of Destiny)* and *Ein deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem)*. The Requiem was inspired by the deaths of Robert Schumann and Brahms's own mother. Rather than using the Latin Mass for the Dead, Brahms drew his libretto from Luther's translation of the Bible and the Apocrypha; it offers consolation for the living rather than prayers for the dead. The work opens and closes with the words, "Selig sind" ("Blessed are they"), and the work's musical and emotional core is the uplifting choral anthem "Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen" ("How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place"). After several partial performances, Brahms completed the work in 1868, and it was premiered in early 1869.

Soon after finishing the Requiem, Brahms was introduced to the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin. Drawing from classical antiquity, Hölderlin's "Hyperions Schicksalslied" contrasts the peace of the dead in Elysium with the despair of the people on earth, weighed down by destiny. While attracted to the text, Brahms was disturbed by its somber, despondent ending, so in his setting he added an orchestra postlude to offer hope for the living, and the work was premiered in 1871.

The soloists for the *Requiem* are soprano **Susanna Phillips** and baritone **John Chest**. Ms. Phillips has sung with the OSNY the past four years in works of Moravec, Haydn, Filas, and Britten; she will return to the Metropolitan Opera in February for her tenth consecutive season, singing Musetta in *La Bohème*. With this concert Mr. Chest makes his OSNY debut. The American baritone has won several international vocal competitions and has been a member of the Deutsche Oper. He opens next season at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich singing Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, and in October he will give an all-Brahms recital at the Festival d'Aix en Provence.

This concert is made possible in part by a grant from the Casement Fund.

Handel's Messiah — December 18, 2017:

The OSNY continues its annual holiday tradition of presenting Handel's beloved oratorio. The OSNY has the distinction of performing *Messiah* every Christmas season since 1874, and at Carnegie Hall every year that it has been open, offering New Yorkers *Messiah* on a grand choral scale. Commenting on a recent performance, Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim said in *The New York Times*, "when the entire chorus belted out the word 'wonderful' in 'For unto us a child is born,' the effect was exactly that."

Three of the four soloists have sung *Messiah* with OSNY and Mr. Tritle. Soprano **Kathryn Lewek**, who sang it in 2013 and 2016, has made *The Magic Flute's* Queen of the Night her signature role around the world; she will perform it at the Metropolitan Opera this fall under James Levine. Mezzo-soprano Sara Murphy won the OSNY's Oratorio-Solo Competition in 2013 and sang *Messiah* with the ensemble in 2014 and 2015. She will also

appear with Kent Tritle in October when he guest-conducts the Cathedral Choral Society of Washington, DC, in Mozart's Requiem at the National Cathedral.

Tenor **Lawrence Jones** was a Woodside Competition finalist and received rave reviews for his performance as Tom Rakewell in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. Bass-baritone **Dashon Burton** won the OSNY Competition in 2012 and sang *Messiah* in 2012 and 2013. He will return to OSNY for Moravec's *Sanctuary Road* on May 7.

Moravec & Ranjbaran World Premieres — May 7, 2018:

For the final concert of its season, the OSNY presents two world premieres that speak to humanity's struggle in its quest for freedom and peace. Commissioned by the OSNY, *Sanctuary Road* is an oratorio by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Paul Moravec**, with a libretto by **Mark Campbell**; the two most recently collaborated on the opera *The Shining*, which was premiered by the Minnesota Opera in May 2016. The work is based on African-American abolitionist William Still's accounts as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. "Writing an oratorio is the best way to honor the bravery of the people involved in this crucial chapter in American history," says Mr. Campbell. Mr. Moravec adds, "This work is the latest in a series of my American oratorios, including *The Blizzard Voices*, which Kent and OSNY brought to life so magnificently in 2013." This commission was made possible by a gift from Joanne Spellun.

Mr. Tritle will then lead the OSNY in **Behzad Ranjbaran's We Are One** for chorus and orchestra, a work commissioned by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Mr. Ranjbaran, who was born in Tehran and is currently on the faculty of The Juilliard School, has recomposed his 2008 *a cappella* song *We Are One*, a five-minute setting of poetry by the medieval Persian poet Sa'di, into a much longer work that supplements the Sa'di poem (sung in Farsi) with four additional texts (sung in Spanish, Hebrew, Arabic, and English). Each is a call for peace—including the civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome"—and whenever the word "peace" occurs, it is sung in more than a dozen different languages. Mr. Ranjbaran says, "the text is drawn from different time periods and different cultures, reflecting on the human desire for respect, love, tolerance and peace."

Three of the five soloists for Moravec's *Sanctuary Road* are making their OSNY debuts. Soprano **Laquita Mitchell** appeared as Violetta in *La Traviata* with the New York City Opera, and this summer she will sing Bess in *Porgy and Bess* at the Budapest Summer Festival. Mezzo-soprano **Raehann Bryce-Davis** has participated in the Merola Opera Program of the San Francisco Opera, and last season she was a member of the Opera Vlaanderen in Antwerp/Ghent. Tenor **Joshua Blue** is the 2017 winner of the OSNY Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition; this concert will mark his Carnegie Hall debut. Next year he will receive his master's degree from the Juilliard School and appear in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Austin Lyric Opera.

Returning artists are baritone **Malcolm Merriweather** and bass-baritone **Dashon Burton**. Mr. Merriweather is the new music director of The Dessoif Choirs and the former associate choirmaster at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. He has sung with the OSNY on tour in Germany and at the Cathedral. Mr. Burton makes his second OSNY appearance of the season; he recently released the recording *Songs of Struggle & Redemption: We Shall Overcome*.

Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition Finals — April 14, 2018:

On April 14, the OSNY will hold the finals of its annual Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition, which remains the only major competition to focus exclusively on oratorio singing, as a public event in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. The Competition receives applications from around the world; OSNY Associate Conductor David Rosenmeyer leads the process that identifies eight finalists. "Through the Competition we've been able to shine a bright spotlight on this repertoire and encourage singers, who would otherwise just prepare for opera, to consider the richness of oratorio music," says Kent Tritle.

Ticket Information:

All performances in the OSNY Carnegie Hall series will take place on the Perelman Stage of Stern Auditorium, Carnegie Hall. Subscriptions are available at www.oratoriosocietyofny.org:

- Three-concert subscriptions are \$252–\$70; two-concert subscriptions are \$171–\$47.
- November 6 and May 7 single tickets are \$90–\$25; December 18 single tickets are \$100–\$27.50; they will go on sale in September and may be purchased at the Carnegie Hall Box Office, at www.carnegiehall.org, and through CarnegieCharge at (212) 247-7800.
- Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition tickets are \$25. Tickets will go on sale in February and may be purchased at the Carnegie Hall Box Office or through CarnegieCharge at (212) 247-7800. They will also be available next spring at www.carnegiehall.org.

Since its founding in 1873, the Oratorio Society of New York, New York's 200-voice avocational chorus, has become the city's standard for grand choral performance, having performed world, US, and New York premieres of works as diverse as Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* (1877), Berlioz' *Roméo et Juliette* (1882), a full-concert production of Wagner's *Parsifal* at the Metropolitan Opera House (1886), Britten's *The World of the Spirit* (1998), Filas's *Song of Solomon* (2012), and Moravec's *Blizzard Voices* (2013). On its 100th anniversary the Oratorio Society received the Handel Medallion, New York City's highest cultural award, in recognition of these contributions. www.oratoriosocietyofny.org

The OSNY's Music Director since the 2005/06 season, **Kent Tritle** is also Music Director of the professional chorus Musica Sacra, and Director of Cathedral Music and Organist at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where he directs the concert series *Great Music in a Great Place*, which he reinstated in 2011. Mr. Tritle is Director of Choral Activities and Chair of the Organ Department at the Manhattan School of Music and a member of the graduate faculty of The Juilliard School. An acclaimed organ virtuoso, he is the organist of the New York Philharmonic and the American Symphony Orchestra. www.kenttritle.com

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

2017-18 Concert Season

145th Season

Kent Tritle, Music Director

Monday, November 6, 2017, at 8:00 pm

Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage, Carnegie Hall

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

Kent Tritle, conductor

Susanna Phillips, soprano

John Chest, baritone

Orchestra of the Society

BRAHMS *Schicksalslied (Song of Destiny)*, Op. 81

BRAHMS *Ein deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem)*, Op. 45

This concert is made possible in part by a grant from the Casement Fund.

Tickets: \$90–\$25; also available as part of a subscription

Monday, December 18, 2017, at 8:00 pm

Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage, Carnegie Hall

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

Kent Tritle, conductor

Kathryn Lewek, soprano

Sara Murphy, mezzo-soprano

Lawrence Jones, tenor

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone

Orchestra of the Society

HANDEL *Messiah*

Tickets: \$100–\$27.50; also available as part of a subscription

Saturday, April 14, 2018, at 1:30 pm

Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

LYNDON WOODSIDE ORATORIO-SOLO COMPETITION FINALS

Tickets: \$25

Monday, May 7, 2018, at 8:00 pm

Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage, Carnegie Hall

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

Kent Tritle, conductor

Laquita Mitchell, soprano

Raehann Bryce-Davis, mezzo-soprano

Joshua Blue, tenor

Malcolm Merriweather, baritone

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone

Orchestra of the Society

MORAVEC *Sanctuary Road* (World premiere, commissioned by the OSNY)

RANJBARAN *We Are One* (World premiere, commissioned by the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra)

Tickets: \$90–\$25; also available as part of a subscription

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August 3, 2017