

MUSICA SACRA

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Musica Sacra, New York's Elite Professional Chorus, Announces Its 2022-23 Season

- **Music by Women Composers Comes to the Fore in Choral Programs Spanning Five Centuries.**
- **Handel's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall, a New York Tradition**
- **Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the New York Philharmonic Led by Jaap van Zweden**



Musica Sacra led by Kent Tritle at Carnegie Hall, photo by Richard Ten Dyke

The 2022-23 season of Musica Sacra, New York's elite professional chorus led by Music Director Kent Tritle, **brings music by women composers to the fore** in two programs at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine of repertoire spanning five centuries. The ensemble also offers its first performance in three years of **Handel's *Messiah***, the full work, at Carnegie Hall, an acclaimed interpretation that has been a New York tradition since 1964. And the group continues its distinguished tradition of collaborations with performances of **Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the New York Philharmonic** led by Jaap van Zweden.

The most recent Musica Sacra program of wide-ranging repertoire at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in March 2022, featured music by Brahms, Viktor Kalabis, Wang Jie, and Arvo Pärt, and led Opera News to dub Musica Sacra "one of NYC's best professional choruses."

The next such program is "**Music for a Gothic Space**" (**October 25, 2022**). Using the ancient form of the mass as a guiding structure, Kent Tritle has created an assembled whole from mass movements from

medieval repertoire; Gregorian chant mass specific to the date of October 25, which is St. Crispin's Day; and music by Janet Wheeler, Amy Summers, Olivia Sparkhall, and Sarah McDonald. "We have chosen marvelous choral settings by living women composers to function within the structure as would have the ancient motets," says Kent Tritle. "Thus, we have a structure which serves its own purpose for the presentation of this music, yet highlights these new compositions in a stimulating and freeing way."

Musica Sacra's annual holiday presentation of **Handel's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall (December 21, 2022)**, which is performed with Baroque bows and period instrument practices, this year features soloists Nola Richardson, soprano; Heather Petrie, contralto; Joshua Blue, tenor; and Enrico Lagasca, bass-baritone.

"Multitude of Voyces" (April 18, 2023) features Bach's motet *Jesu, meine Freude* alongside music by women composers of the past and present, from the Stabat Mater of Sister Sulpitia Cesis (c. 1600) to the New York premiere of Kerensa Briggs' "Hear my prayer," and works by contemporary New York composers Rani Arbo and Melanie DeMore. Multitude of Voyces is a British-based organization specializing in supporting underrepresented and marginalized communities, and the music on this program comes from its multi-volume Anthology of Sacred Music by Women Composers.

New York's longest continually-performing professional chorus, Musica Sacra has a unique history of collaborative performances in a wide range of repertoire with some of the city's most prominent organizations, including the New York Philharmonic, New York City Ballet, Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Lincoln Center and Mostly Mozart festivals, and The Juilliard School – more than any other such group. In the 2022-23 season, Musica Sacra joins the **New York Philharmonic** led by its music director, Jaap van Zweden, in three performances of **Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at David Geffen Hall (March 23, 24, 25, 2023)** with soloists Nicholas Phan, Davóne Tines, Amanda Forsythe, Tamara Mumford, Paul Appleby, and Philippe Sly.

Musica Sacra, the notable professional chorus and mainstay of the New York choral scene, has a strong reputation both for its interpretations of the classics, such as the annual performances of Handel's "Messiah," and for its commissioning of new works.

--The New York Times, 2015

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Since its founding in 1964 by conductor Richard Westenburg, the mission of Musica Sacra has been to create definitive, professional, choral performances of the highest caliber: profound statements made simply and elegantly. It does so with concerts, recording, the commissioning and performing of new choral works, and collaborating with other top tier performing arts organizations.

Musica Sacra is known for its interpretations of the masterpieces of choral music – Tallis's *Spem in Alium*, the choral oeuvre of J. S. Bach, the masses of Mozart and Haydn, the Requiems of Mozart, Brahms, and Fauré, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, Strauss's *Deutsche Motette*, Bruckner's motets, and Schönberg's *Friede auf Erden*, among others – and its involvement in contemporary repertoire; the group has given the world and New York premieres of choral works by composers including Benjamin Britten, Dave Brubeck, Anthony Davis, Aaron Copland, David Diamond, Aram Khachaturian, Duncan Patton, Vincent Persichetti, Daniel Pinkham, Bernard Rands, and Peter Schickele.

Musica Sacra commissions

Musica Sacra first commissioned a new work in 1982, when Alan Hovhaness's *Revelations of St. Paul* was composed for and premiered by the group at Lincoln Center. Subsequent commissions include McNeil

Robinson's *Missa Brevis*, and two works that are based upon biblical texts for which there is little or no music available for use by church and synagogue choirs: *The Death of Moses* by Ned Rorem and Richard Danielpour's *Prologue and Prayer*. Other commissions include works by Alessandro Cadario, Robert Convery, Michael Gilbertson, Ricky Ian Gordon, Wang Jie, Libby Larsen, Meredith Monk, Robert Moran, and Kim D. Sherman.

A tradition of collaborations

Recent highlights of Musica Sacra's singular history of collaborations with other ensembles and organizations include the New York Philharmonic's live score performances of *Amadeus*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (which the chorus also performed with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra); the New York City Ballet's performances of *Les Noces* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the Requiems of Brahms and Mozart and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Orchestra of St. Luke's; *Così fan tutte* at the Mostly Mozart Festival; the New York City Opera Renaissance production of *Tosca*.

Musica Sacra has recorded on the RCA, BMG, MSR Classics and Deutsche Grammophon labels, including the first digitally recorded performance of *Messiah*, released in 1982 by RCA and reissued on High Performance, BMG's audiophile label. Recent releases include *Messages to Myself*, the first Musica Sacra recording led by Kent Tritle, a disc of contemporary works including commissions by Daniel Brewbaker and Michael Gilbertson; and *Eternal Reflections*, recent choral compositions by Robert Paterson.

Musica Sacra educational outreach

Musica Sacra maintains a long-term partnership with the Newark Boys Chorus School through which the chorus of 4th- through 8th-graders receive workshops with Musica Sacra Assistant Music Director Michael Sheetz and Musica Sacra singers, and perform pre-concert recitals at Musica Sacra's concerts at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Musica Sacra partnered with the Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing & Visual Arts in Harlem to offer monthly virtual singing workshops. Recently, those workshops culminated in recordings of works composed by those students on themes of police brutality and Black Lives Matter, recorded by Michael Sheetz and Musica Sacra singer and board member Jamet Pittman.

In addition, each year Michael Sheetz, aided by Musica Sacra singers, works with students in Title 1 schools across New York City, giving workshops focusing on musical features of Handel's *Messiah*; the students are given tickets to the annual performance of the work at Carnegie Hall to hear the classroom concepts applied in a live performance. In March 2022, schools were invited to participate in a pre-concert workshop with composer Wang Jie about her work which was then premiered in performance.

www.musicasacrany.com

Kent Tritle has been Music Director of Musica Sacra since 2008. One of America's leading choral conductors, called "the brightest star in New York's choral music world" by The New York Times, he is also Director of Cathedral Music and Organist at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and Music Director of the Oratorio Society of New York. In addition, Kent is a member of the graduate faculty of The Juilliard School, serving its Vocal Arts Department. An acclaimed organ virtuoso, he is also the organist of the New York Philharmonic. www.kenttritle.com

MUSICA SACRA 2022-23 SEASON

Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at 7:30 pm
Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY
"MUSIC FOR A GOTHIC SPACE"

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Kent Tritle, conductor

A program shaped by the form of a mass: mass movements from from 14th century England and France; excerpts from Gregorian chant mass specific to the date of October 25, which is St. Crispin's Day, including *Missa de pluribus martyribus; extra tempus paschale*; and music by living composers Janet Wheeler, Amy Summers, Olivia Sparkhall, and Sarah McDonald.

Wednesday, December 21, 2022, at 7:30 pm
Carnegie Hall, New York, NY

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Kent Tritle, conductor

Nola Richardson, soprano

Heather Petrie, contralto

Joshua Blue, tenor

Enrico Lagasca, bass-baritone

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL *Messiah*

March 23, 24, 25, 2023

David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, NY

[NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC](#)

Jaap van Zweden, conductor

Nicholas Phan, tenor (Evangelist)

Davóne Tines, bass

Amanda Forsythe, soprano

Tamara Mumford, mezzo-soprano

Paul Appleby, tenor

Philippe Sly, bass-baritone

Musica Sacra

Kent Tritle, director

J. S. BACH *St. Matthew Passion*

Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 7:30 pm
Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY
"MULTITUDE OF VOYCES"*

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Kent Tritle, conductor

ISABELLA LEONARDA (1620-1704)	<i>Alma Redemptoris Mater</i>
KERENSA BRIGGS (b.1991)	<i>Hear my prayer</i> (New York premiere)
SISTER SULPITIA CESIS (1577-c.1619)	<i>Stabat Mater</i>
MARIA XAVERIA PERUCHONA (c.1652-p.1709)	<i>Cessate tympany, cessate praelia</i>
ETHYL SMYTH (1958-1944)	<i>Komm süsßer Tod</i>
AMY BEACH (1867-1944)	<i>Lord, now lettest thou (Nunc dimittis)</i>
MELANIE DEMORE (b. 1955)	<i>Blessed be!</i>
RANI ARBO (b. 1968)	<i>Crossing the Bar</i>
J. S. BACH (1685-1759)	<i>Jesu, meine Freude</i>
UNDINE SMITH MOORE (1904-1989)	<i>We shall walk through the valley</i>

*Presented in collaboration with Multitude of Voyces CIC, a British publisher of music by women composers

September 16, 2022