

MUSICA SACRA

Contact: Jennifer Wada Communications
718-855-7101

jennifer@wadacommunications.com
www.wadacommunications.com

Musica Sacra Announces 2024-25 Season:

Fall opener of Schnittke, Górecki, and Saariaho; a Carnegie Hall holiday program of Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach; and the return of “SurRound,” an immersive concert experience at St. John the Divine

Four performances of Handel’s *Messiah* with the New York Philharmonic



Kent Tritle leads Musica Sacra in *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall, December 2023. Photo by Brian Hatton

The 2024-25 concert season presented by Musica Sacra, New York’s elite professional chorus led by Music Director Kent Tritle, encompasses a compelling array of music performed in three of New York’s storied venues. Beginning with a program of music by Alfred Schnittke, Henryk Górecki, and Kaija Saariaho at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, the season continues with a December concert at Carnegie Hall featuring guest artists Susanna Phillips and Simone Dinnerstein and featuring Mozart’s *Exsultate, Jubilate*, Beethoven’s *Choral Fantasy* and selections from Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio*; and the return of “SurRound,” an immersive concert in 360° in the candlelit Cathedral of St. John the Divine (details and full programs below).

In addition, Musica Sacra continues its tradition of collaborations with other top-tier organizations: after acclaimed performances with the New York Philharmonic of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* in 2023 and Mozart’s *Requiem* and *Ave Verum Corpus* in May 2024, the chorus will be featured in the Philharmonic’s annual presentation of Handel’s *Messiah* in four performances in December 2024. Musica Sacra also

returns to the New York City Ballet for that company's signature production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Musica Sacra, founded in 1964, is New York's longest continually performing professional chorus, and the 2024-25 season marks Kent Tritle's 18th as Music Director. Created with the mission to create choral performances of the highest caliber, profound statements made simply and elegantly, Musica Sacra was recently described as one of "the great choruses of the world" by conductor Pablo Heras-Casado after a collaboration with the Orchestra of St Luke's. In its review of the New York Philharmonic's presentation of the Mozart works, *The New York Times* praised "the excellent singers of Musica Sacra," and *Musical America*, in its coverage of the April 2023 performances of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Philharmonic, praised the chorus's "stunning transparency," saying the group "achieved ravishing homogeneity in the frequent chorales while triumphing in the complex and moving 'Wir setzen uns mit Tränen' that closes the work."

"The Seasons" – Wednesday, October 16, 2024, at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola

Musica Sacra's season begins with "The Seasons," a collaboration with the ICCM (International Centre for Contemporary Music) and its *Coming of Age* festival of 20th- and 21st-century works that have matured into contemporary classics. Headlining this concert is Alfred Schnittke's *Concerto for Choir* (1984-5) – one of the 20th century's most challenging, and masterful, choral works, a setting of *The Book of Lamentations* by the Armenian mystic and poet Grigor Narekatsi (951-1003). This performance will mark the work's 40th anniversary year. Joining it on the program are Henryk Górecki's *Lobgesang (Hymn of Praise)* (2000) for chorus and glockenspiel and Kaija Saariaho's *Tag des Jahrs (The Seasons)* (2002), a setting of poetry by Friedrich Hölderlin for chorus and electronics.

ICCM is an international center for performance, production, and promotion of contemporary music with offices in London and New York; this collaboration marks Musica Sacra's first with this esteemed musical organization.

Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach – Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at Carnegie Hall

This year, Musica Sacra's annual holiday season concert at Carnegie Hall will feature two stellar guest artists and three classic favorites: Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with pianist Simone Dinnerstein; Mozart's solo motet *Exsultate, Jubilate*, featuring soprano Susanna Phillips; and selections from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, as well as Christmas motets by Poulenc, Lauridsen, Bassi, and Biebl (full program below).

"SurRound II" – Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine

Returning after a sold-out debut in October 2023 is "SurRound II," an immersive concert in 360° in the candlelit Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The audience, seated in the Great Choir stalls and floor, will experience a program of medieval, Renaissance, and contemporary works as the singers move throughout the cathedral. The program includes Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere* and John Tavener's *Lament of the Mother of God* as well as music by Adolphus Hailstork, Sarah McDonald, William Dawson, Perotin, Joanna Forbes L'Estrange, Heinrich Schütz, and Morton Lauridsen.

About the 2023 "SurRound" event, *Classics Today* said, "As the chorus moved we got to hear individual voices, inner harmonies, and, in a way, the manner in which great choral music works. By placing the chorus above, behind, and mixed in with the choir stalls for different works, the never ending panoply of tone and color put us in the middle of the creative process. A remarkable evening."

MUSICA SACRA

Since its founding in 1964, the mission of Musica Sacra has been to create definitive, professional, choral performances of the highest caliber. 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's tradition of notable commissions includes Alan Hovhaness's *Revelations of St. Paul*, composed for and premiered by the group in 1982 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 and recordings

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 New York Philharmonic and 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*, led by Musica Sacra founder Richard Westenburg, 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.

Educational Engagement

Each year Assistant Music Director 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*. This year, Musica Sacra will expand its educational engagement to include workshops centered around each of the season's concerts. 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.musicasacra.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. <https://kenttritle.com>

Musica Sacra 2024-25 Season

Wednesday, October 16, 2024, at 7:30pm
Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, New York, NY
[MUSICA SACRA: "The Seasons"](#)

Kent Tritle, conductor

KAIJA SAARIAHO	<i>Tag des Jahrs (The Seasons)</i> (2001) for chamber chorus & electronics
HENRYK GÓRECKI	<i>Lobgesang (Hymn of Praise)</i> (2000) for chorus & glockenspiel
ALFRED SCHNITTKE	Concerto for Choir (1984-5) for mixed chorus a cappella

Presented in collaboration with ICCM

December 11-14, 2024
David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, NY
[NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC](#)
Ton Koopman, conductor
Maya Kherani, soprano
Maarten Engeltjes, countertenor
Kieran White, tenor
Klaus Mertens, bass-baritone
Musica Sacra, Kent Tritle, director

G. F. HANDEL	<i>Messiah</i>
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Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 7:30pm

Carnegie Hall, New York, NY

[MUSICA SACRA: Beethoven, Mozart, Bach](#)

Kent Tritle, conductor

Susanna Phillips, soprano

Simone Dinnerstein, piano

FRANCIS POULENC

Hodie Christus natus est

MORTON LAURIDSEN

O magnum mysterium

J. S. BACH

Christmas Oratorio selections:

“Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset die Tage”

“Bricht an, o schönes Morgenlicht”

“Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein”

FRANZ BIEBL

Ave Maria

W. A. MOZART

Exsultate, Jubilate

JAMES BASSI

Quem pastores laudavere

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Choral Fantasy

Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 7:30 pm

Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, NY

[MUSICA SACRA: “SurRound II”](#)

Kent Tritle, conductor

“SurRound II” is an immersive concert in 360° in the candlelit Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The audience, seated in the Great Choir stalls and floor, will experience a program of medieval, Renaissance, and contemporary works as the singers move throughout the cathedral. The program includes Gregorio Allegri’s *Miserere* and John Tavener’s *Lament of the Mother of God* as well as music by Adolphus Hailstork, Sarah McDonald, William Dawson, Perotin, Joanna Forbes L’Estrange, Heinrich Schütz, and Morton Lauridsen.

May 27 – June 1, 2025

David H. Koch Theater, Lincoln Center, New York, NY

[NEW YORK CITY BALLET](#)

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Musica Sacra, Kent Tritle, director, is featured in performances of Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

July 18, 2024