

MUSICA SACRA

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Musica Sacra Presents “Classics for Christmas”: Excerpts from Handel’s *Messiah* and Festive Music by Bach, Corelli, Rachmaninoff, and Others, with Guest Soprano Kathryn Lewek, at Carnegie Hall on Wednesday, December 17, 7:30 pm



Kent Tritle leads Musica Sacra at Carnegie Hall Dec. 18, 2024. Photo by Brian Hatton

Musica Sacra, New York’s elite professional chorus led by Music Director Kent Tritle, presents “Classics for Christmas,” a concert of festive delights, for its annual holiday concert at Carnegie Hall on Wednesday, December 17, at 7:30 pm. This year’s program features excerpts from Handel’s *Messiah* along with a Handel harp concerto, choral selections from Bach’s Mass in B Minor and Rachmaninoff’s Vespers, and choral and orchestral works by Corelli, Poulenc, Helena Paish, and Randall Thompson.

Joining the chorus as soloist in “Rejoice greatly” from *Messiah* and Adolphe Adam’s *Cantique de Noël* is Metropolitan Opera star soprano Kathryn Lewek. Metropolitan Opera harpist Mariko Anraku is the soloist in the harp concerto. (The full program follows below.)



Kathryn Lewek, Mariko Anraku

Musica Sacra, founded in 1964, is New York’s longest continually performing professional chorus, and the 2025-26 season marks Kent Tritle’s 19th as Music Director. Musical America, in its coverage of the 2023 performances of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* with the New York 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.”

Musica Sacra concludes its season with **“Oquin and Shaw” with the world premiere of Wayne Oquin’s *On the Words of Walt Whitman*** on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 7:00 pm at St. Bartholomew’s Church. The world premiere of Wayne Oquin’s new work setting Whitman’s poetry for soloists, chorus, chamber orchestra, and organ, featuring soprano Susanna Phillips and baritone John Moore, centers the program, which also features Caroline Shaw’s *Entr’acte* for string orchestra and selections by Oquin for a cappella chorus: *O Magnum Mysterium*, *Alleluia*, and *Sure on this shining night*. This performance of Wayne Oquin’s works will be recorded for future commercial release.

In the 2025-26 season, **Kathryn Lewek** makes her debut in the title role of *Alcina* in concert performances in Paris, Barcelona, and Montpellier with the Ensemble Artaserse and maestro Philippe Jaroussky. Lewek also takes on the role of Elettra for the first time in Calixto Bieito’s new production of *Idomeneo* at La Monnaie. Later in the season, the soprano debuts in the title role of *Salome* at the Cincinnati Opera. Kathryn Lewek also revisits Mozart’s Queen of the Night in four productions of *The Magic Flute*: at the Royal Opera House in London, the Berlin State Opera, with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, and in Rolando Villazón’s new production with Roberto González-Monjas conducting at the Mozart Week Festival and the Santander Festival, where she also joins Piotr Beczala for a gala concert. www.kathrynlewek.com

As soloist, chamber, orchestral, and recording artist, **Mariko Anraku** has enchanted audiences with her “manifestation of grace and elegance” (Jerusalem Post) and as “a masterful artist of intelligence and wit” (The New York Times). Since her debut with the Toronto Symphony led by Sir Andrew Davis, she has

been guest soloist with numerous orchestras and given recitals at major concert halls around the world. Since 1995, Mariko has held the position of Associate Principal Harpist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Her list of awards include First Prize at the First Nippon Harp Competition, First Prize, the Channel Classics Recording Prize, and the ITT Corporation Prize at the Concert Artists Guild Competition in New York.

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. Notable commissions range from Alan Hovhaness’s *Revelations of St. Paul*, *The Death of Moses* by Ned Rorem, and Richard Danielpour’s *Prologue and Prayer* to works by Alessandro Cadario, Robert Convery, Michael Gilbertson, Ricky Ian Gordon, Wang Jie, Libby Larsen, Meredith Monk, Robert Moran, and Kim D. Sherman.

Recent highlights of Musica Sacra’s singular history of collaborations with other ensembles and organizations include the New York Philharmonic’s recent performances of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, Handel’s *Messiah*, and Mozart’s Requiem and live score performances of *Amadeus* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*; Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic led by Gustavo Dudamel; and the New York City Ballet’s performances of *Les Noces* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Musica Sacra has recorded on the RCA, BMG, MSR Classics and Deutsche Grammophon labels:

<https://musicasacrany.com/recording/>

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 centered around each of the season’s concerts:

<https://musicasacrany.com/education/>

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. <https://kenttritle.com>

Wednesday, December 17, 2025, at 7:30 pm

Carnegie Hall

MUSICA SACRA

"CLASSICS FOR CHRISTMAS"

Kent Tritle, conductor

Michael Sheetz, conductor*

Kathryn Lewek, soprano

Mariko Anraku, harp

J.S. BACH

"Gloria in excelsis" from Mass in B Minor

RANDALL THOMPSON

Alleluia

ARCANGELO CORELLI

Concerto Grosso No. 8 in G Minor

G.F. HANDEL

Excerpts from *Messiah*:

Pastoral Symphony

"Glory to God"

"Rejoice greatly"

FRANCIS POULENC

O Magnum Mysterium

HELENA PAISH

"While Mary Slept"

G.F. HANDEL

Concerto for Harp in B-flat Major, Op. 4, No. 6

ADOLPHE ADAM

*Cantique de Noël**

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

"Bogoroditse Dyevo" from Vespers

G.F. HANDEL

"Worthy is the Lamb" from *Messiah*

Tickets: \$21.50 - \$131

<https://musicasacrany.com/dec-17-classics-for-christmas/>

November 7, 2025