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ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK PERFORMS U.S. PREMIERE OF A NEW CRITICAL EDITION OF BRAHMS'S *A GERMAN REQUIEM* MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020, AT CARNEGIE HALL



Susanna Phillips, Takaaki Onishi, Kent Tritle

On Monday, March 2, 2020, at Carnegie Hall, the Oratorio Society of New York performs the U.S. premiere of a new critical edition of one of the masterpieces of choral music, Brahms's *A German Requiem* (*Ein deutsches Requiem*) – a work that the organization gave its very first U.S. performance, more than 140 years ago. OSNY Music Director Kent Tritle conducts, and the featured soloists are Susanna Phillips, soprano, and Takaaki Onishi, baritone.

A German Requiem (*Ein deutsches Requiem*), completed in 1868, was inspired by the deaths of Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms's own mother. Rather than using the Latin Mass for the Dead, Brahms, who referred to this as a "human requiem," 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. In 2017, James Oestreich [wrote in The New York Times](#) that the work "has become something of an anthem for our time, with grand social and political reverberations."

The new critical edition being given its U.S. premiere performance on this program is by an international team led by the noted scholars Michael Musgrave and Michael Struck. Michael Musgrave is the author of, among other books, *The Music of Brahms* and *Brahms: A German Requiem*. The new edition is being published by G. Henle Verlag in collaboration with Breitkopf & Härtel. It is part of the new collected works of Brahms published by G. Henle Verlag.

“Brahms authorities Michael Musgrave and Michael Struck have restored Brahms’s original intentions for his choral masterpiece, letting the work shine with new light,” said Dr. Norbert Gertsch of G. Henle Verlag.

“The new critical edition will correct layers of historic errors that have crept into the performing editions in the last 150 years,” writes Michael Musgrave. “Thus the score is restored to Brahms’s final intentions for the work based on the best available scholarly judgments, which include the examination of letters, manuscripts, first editions, and scores Brahms personally annotated. The choral writing remains largely unchanged, but there are changes to details of the orchestration.”

Kent Tritle observes, “There are some amendments to crescendi and diminuendi for the chorus, correcting misinterpretations that had to do with orientation of spacing on the original printing plates. We look forward to restoring these in our performance. Of course, as ever, there will also be some interpretive elements from my own imagination, but the print from Brahms will receive priority!”

When the OSNY performed the U.S. premiere of the work in 1877 – in its fourth season – it was the first premiere the fledgling group had presented; it was joined on the program by a Bach cantata and an excerpt from Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

The Oratorio Society’s Carnegie Hall season concludes with the world premiere of an OSNY commission:

- ***A Nation of Others* by Paul Moravec & Mark Campbell, World Premiere of an OSNY Commission – Wednesday, May 6, 2020, at Carnegie Hall** - The world premiere of *A Nation of Others*, a new oratorio for soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, bass soloists, chorus, and orchestra by composer Paul Moravec and librettist Mark Campbell about immigrants’ arrival at Ellis Island, headlines this program, that also features Robert Paterson’s 2016 work for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus, and orchestra, *Whitman’s America*, settings of poems from Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*. The Moravec/Campbell work is an OSNY commission, as was the pair’s 2018 oratorio *Sanctuary Road* (see below). The program’s soloists are **Jennifer Zetlan** and **Maeve Höglund**, sopranos; **Raehann Bryce-Davis**, mezzo-soprano; **Isaiah Bell**, tenor; **Steven Eddy**, baritone; and **Joseph Beutel**, bass-baritone.

***Sanctuary Road*, by Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell, a new Naxos Records release**

Naxos Records has released a recording of the world premiere performance of the Paul Moravec/Mark Campbell oratorio *Sanctuary Road*, which took place at Carnegie Hall on May 7, 2018. Kent Tritle conducted the Oratorio Society of New York, and the performance featured soloists Laquita Mitchell, Raehann Bryce-Davis, Joshua Blue, Malcolm J. Merriweather, and Dashon Burton. *Sanctuary Road* is based upon the writings of William Still, a conductor for the Underground Railroad. Praising the premiere, Opera News called the work “extraordinary ... an astonishing illumination of multiple slaves and their escape experiences,” and said, “Kent Tritle showed magnificent command of [this] challenging new work and his massive musical forces.” About the recording, [NPR Music observed](#), “Kent Tritle deftly leads the Oratorio Society of New York Orchestra, Chorus and a dynamic cast of African American soloists,” https://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item_code=8.559884

Alabama-born soprano **Susanna Phillips**, recipient of The Metropolitan Opera’s 2010 Beverly Sills Artist Award, continues to establish herself as one of today’s most sought-after singing actors and recitalists. She returns to the Metropolitan Opera for a twelfth consecutive season and makes her role debut in the

title role of *Kát’a Kabanová* in May. Additionally, she will return to Opera Theatre of St. Louis to make her role debut in the title role of Floyd’s *Susannah*. www.susannaphillips.com

Baritone **Takaoki Onishi** is quickly gaining recognition as one of the most talented singers of his generation. He recently made his successful debut as the title role in *Eugene Onegin* at the Seiji Ozawa Festival, under the baton of Fabio Luisi. This season’s engagements include Don Fernando in *Fidelio* with NHK Symphony Orchestra, a role debut as Silvio in *I pagliacci* at North Carolina Opera, and his company debut in *Madame Butterfly* at Opera Philadelphia. www.takaokionishi.com

Kent Tritle, OSNY Music Director

The Oratorio Society’s Music Director since the 2005-6 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 Space*. Mr. Tritle is Director of Choral Activities 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

Since its founding in 1873, the Oratorio Society of New York has become the city’s standard for grand choral performance. It has given world, U.S., 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 *Requiem* (2015), Moravec’s *Blizzard Voices* (2013) and *Sanctuary Road* (2018), and Ranjbaran’s *We Are One* (2018). 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.

[Monday, March 2, 2020, at 8:00 pm](#)

Carnegie Hall

[ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK](#)

Kent Tritle, conductor

Susanna Phillips, soprano

Takaoki Onishi, baritone

JOHANNES BRAHMS *A German Requiem (Ein deutsches Requiem)* – U.S. premiere of new critical edition

Tickets: \$25 - \$90

January 30, 2020