

## ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK OPENS ITS 2019-20 SEASON WITH TWO 20<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY CHORAL MASTERPIECES AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2019, AT 7:30 PM

### Two spiritual works resound: Rachmaninoff *Vespers* (Excerpts) and Duruflé *Requiem*



*Kent Tritle leading the Oratorio Society of New York and others in a performance of the Verdi Requiem at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in 2015.*

The Oratorio Society of New York begins its four-concert 2019-20 season on Tuesday, November 5, with a special program at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. New York's standard for grand choral performance will present two touchstone works of 20<sup>th</sup> century choral repertoire that shine in the cathedral's resonant acoustic: Excerpts from Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Vespers* (also known as *All-Night Vigil*), an *a cappella* work of remarkable spirituality, and the Requiem of Maurice Duruflé in the version for soloists, chorus, and organ.

Contralto **Kirsten Sollek** and tenor **John Riesen** are featured as soloists in the Rachmaninoff work, written in 1915 in a world riven by WWI and in the lead-up to the Russian Revolution of 1917. It is called by ClassicFM "a haunting cornerstone of the choral repertoire ... a quiet, reflective and deeply moving set of vespers." Duruflé's Requiem, written in 1947 and the composer's masterpiece, is heard here in

the version for soloists, chorus, and organ. Featured performers are Kirsten Sollek, contralto; **David Pike**, baritone; **Arthur Fiacco, Jr.**, cello; and **David Briggs**, organ. Of the piece, the composer said, “This Requiem is not an ethereal work which sings detached from worldly anxiety. It reflects, in the unchangeable form of the Christian prayer, the anguish of man facing the mystery of his last ending.”

The OSNY 2019-20 season continues with three concerts at Carnegie Hall featuring the chorus’s 146<sup>th</sup> annual performance of Handel’s *Messiah*; the U.S. premiere of a new critical edition of Brahms’s *A German Requiem*; and the world premiere of an OSNY commission – *A Nation of Others* by Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell:

- **Handel’s Messiah – Thursday, December 19, 2019, at Carnegie Hall** - To launch its Carnegie Hall concert season, the Oratorio Society continues its annual holiday tradition of presenting Handel’s beloved oratorio, as it has every December since 1874, and at Carnegie Hall every year that it has been open. This year’s soloists are OSNY favorite **Leslie Fagan**, soprano; **Heather Petrie**, contralto; **Brian Giebler**, tenor; and **Adam Lau**, bass.
- **Brahms’s A German Requiem, New Critical Edition U.S. Premiere – Monday, March 2, 2020, at Carnegie Hall** - *A German Requiem (Ein deutsches Requiem)*, one of the masterpieces of choral music. A new critical edition being given its U.S. premiere performance on this program is by an international team of scholars 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. The performance features soloists **Susanna Phillips**, soprano, and **Takaoki Onishi**, baritone.
- **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* (a recording of the OSNY’s performance is being released on the Naxos label in January 2020). 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.

Contralto **Kirsten Sollek** has been called “...an appealingly rich alto” and “...true contralto” by The New York Times. Concert appearances include Handel’s *Dixit Dominus* and Duruflé’s Requiem with Saint Thomas Fifth Avenue and Handel’s *Resurrezione* with the Helicon Foundation. Very active in contemporary music, she has worked extensively with composer John Zorn, premiering his music in the U.S., Europe, Australia, and Israel. [www.kirstensollek.com](http://www.kirstensollek.com)

Rising young tenor **John Riesen**’s recent performances have included Alfredo in *La Traviata* (Gulfshore Opera, Tri-Cities Opera), Younger Thompson in *Glory Denied* (Opera Birmingham, Des Moines Metro Opera), *Candide* in *Candide* (Chautauqua Opera), and his Lincoln Center debut as Tony in *West Side Story Suite* (New York City Ballet). [www.johnriesen.com](http://www.johnriesen.com)

Baritone **David Pike** has a widely varied repertoire covering early music, oratorio, symphonic, opera and commissioned works. In his native Canada, in the U.K., and across Europe, he has worked with leading ensembles including Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London Philharmonic and the Schweizerkammerchor under the direction of conductors including Dutoit, Jurowski, Koopman, Marriner, Mehta, Rattle, and Zinman. [www.davidjohnpike.com](http://www.davidjohnpike.com)

Proclaimed as a “distinguished chamber musician of impressive virtuosity” by Consort Magazine, **Arthur Fiacco, Jr.** is principal cellist for the Orchestra of the Oratorio Society of New York, the Musica Sacra Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Ignatius Loyola, and the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and St. Patrick’s Cathedral. He is also a member of the renowned Orchestra of St. Luke’s.

**David Briggs**, currently Artist-in-Residence at the Cathedral of St John the Divine, is an internationally renowned organist. With an extensive repertoire spanning five centuries, he is known across the globe for his brilliant organ transcriptions of symphonic music by composers such as Mahler, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Bruckner, Ravel, and Bach. Fascinated by the art of Improvisation since a child, David also frequently performs improvisations to silent films. [www.david-briggs.org](http://www.david-briggs.org)

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](http://www.kenttritle.com)

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](http://www.oratoriosocietyofny.org).

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**[Tuesday, November 5, 2019, at 7:30 pm](#)**

**Cathedral of St. John the Divine**

**[ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK](#)**

Kent Tritle, conductor

Kirsten Sollek, contralto

John Riesen, tenor

David Pike, baritone

Arthur Fiacco, Jr., cello

David Briggs, organ

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF *Vespers* (excerpts)

MAURICE DURUFLÉ *Requiem*

Tickets: \$30, \$60

October 4, 2019