



February 2014

Editor: Bernardica Sculac Stern

#### Concert Details

**Canticum Calamitatis Maritimae: The Consolation of Beautiful Music**

Introducing Rakia Clark - Our new NAS Manager

"A Midwinter Night's Dream" Benefit

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### **Calamity and Consolation: From Darkness to Light**

A timeless requiem and a new classic  
from Finland

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#### Concert Details

### **Calamity and Consolation: From Darkness to Light**

Friday, March 7, 2014 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, March 9, 2014 at 4 p.m.

#### **The Church of the Holy Trinity**

316 East 88th Street (between First and Second Avenues)

Heinrich Schütz - Musicalische Exequien

Howard Skempton - We Who with Songs

Ola Gjeilo - Ubi Caritas

Johannes Brahms - Warum ist das Licht gegeben

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi - Canticum calamitatis maritimae

Tickets: \$20 (\$25 at the door)

(Seniors and Students discounts are available at the door)

### **Canticum Calamitatis Maritimae: The Consolation of Beautiful Music**



### By Clara Longstreth, Music Director

When I choose music that is new to NAS, I naturally choose music that I find both beautiful and interesting. Sometimes the music stands up so well to the process of rehearsals that it exceeds my expectations. That happened at the last NAS concert in December, when Conrad Susa's Spanish language Carols and Lullabies proved a true delight – far better than I had hoped. I am finding that the big new piece we will perform on March 7th and 9th is the same; as we know it better and better, it is proving to be an even better piece than I expected, though it came with some extraordinary reviews.

The Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi wrote *Canticum Calamitatis Maritimae* with two purposes. He wrote it for the second European Composition Contest for Cathedral Choirs in 1997. It also honored the memory of the 852 people drowned in the shipwreck of

the ferryboat Estonia, sailing from Estonia to Sweden in 1994.

Mäntyjärvi found dignified yet compelling texts for his tribute. What he calls the “objective” element is a recital of the events of the disaster as found in the weekly news broadcast in Latin by the Finnish Broadcasting Company. A tenor speaks these bulletins in newsreader style as a musical recitative. The chorus’s “collective” element is found in the extensive psalm text – “They that go down to the sea in ships” – and in fragments from the Latin Requiem Mass.

The most poignant, personal element of the piece is a wordless lament at the beginning and end by a soprano soloist. In our performances, the distinguished guest soprano Winnie Nieh sings this role.

Mäntyjärvi's musical style is as varied as his texts. The chorus is divided into eight parts and requires singing challenging lines based on an unfamiliar scale. The resulting counterpoint is dense, the harmony strangely beautiful. Occasional whispered prayers add to the solemnity and heighten the expression.

In many NAS concerts, we sing a mix of old and new music. Audiences may come with the idea that at least they will be sure to like the familiar music. What happens so often is that our listeners are most moved by the unfamiliar, by the new music. The opportunity to open the ears and upend the expectations is part of our plan. Do come!

## Introducing Rakia Clark - Our new NAS Manager

### By Jaime Leifer

New Amsterdam Singers' esteemed manager Lauren Scott's term came to a close in January, leaving us with some prominent shoes to fill. After a thorough search with several highly qualified candidates, the board selected Rakia Clark as the choir's next manager. Clark, who works as a freelance writer and editor, joins NAS member Jaime Leifer for a quick Q&A about music, artistry, and the necessity of



late-night pizza:

**Rakia, as a writer and editor, I know you're committed to artistic expression, but are you a musician as well?**

I used to be. I sat first chair flute in my high school's very competitive symphonic band.

Rakia Clark and Donna Zalichin (Photo courtesy of H. Kerwin)

I haven't played in many, many years. I'm not sure I'd get a sound out of a flute anymore! But it was great fun learning to play and then getting better as time went on. The NAS rehearsals remind me a lot of the rehearsals I used to have. It's nice to enter the music world again, even if it's behind the scenes.

**How did you find out about NAS, and what drew you to working with us?**

A friend and former colleague of mine, Rebecca Harris, sings with the chorus. She and I were just talking in December about my wanting to take on more formal work aside from the editing and teaching I do. I just had too much time on my hands. I tend to be a hyper-organized person, and a lot of the work I've done in the past requires wrangling with a lot of finesse, tact and speed. When Rebecca forwarded me the job posting and I saw the responsibilities and read more about the chorus, I thought it was a perfect fit. Three interviews later, I was hired. I couldn't be more excited!

**You've sat in on a couple of rehearsals. Do you see a connection between preparing a manuscript for publication and preparing a musical piece for performance?**

Absolutely! In publishing, there are a lot of moving parts all working towards the same goal. Same thing goes with getting a musical performance ready. There are lots of stops and starts and let's-try-it-again. In publishing, that happens chiefly in the editorial process. In a chorus, that happens during the rehearsal process. In both, everyone has to be playing their part well. It's highly collaborative.

**Have we inspired you yet to envision any goals or ambitions for the group?**

I'd like to see NAS retain its loyal audience while attracting younger fans.

**Many NAS singers are longtime New Yorkers, but even the newbies are passionate about the city! Where do you live in the city, and how does New York inspire you?**

I'm an Atlanta native but I can't imagine ever moving back there after almost twelve years here in the Big Apple. I've been in Harlem almost that entire time, and I really love the area's history, vibrance and diversity. What keeps me in New York, though, is constantly meeting and working with people who are doing the coolest, smartest things. It makes me hunker down more in my work. I also love the convenience. Pizza at 2am? Yes please!

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## **"A Midwinter Night's Dream" Benefit**

**By Bernardica Sculac Stern**

Attendees of "A Midwinter Night's Dream" were treated to a truly magnificent evening of music. While in the midst of one of the coldest winters in recent memory, and with the Olympics occurring concurrently, dreaming



was an apropos theme. The audience was treated to a dream team of singers in Robin Beckhard, Nathaniel Granor, Kate Leahy, Mike Milton and Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff, all of whom were beautifully accompanied by Paul Greenwood.



Robin Beckhard, Nathaniel Granor, Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff, Mike Milton, Kate Leahy and Paul Greenwood  
(Photo courtesy of H. Kerwin)

Through song, we went on a journey of dreams; *"If He Were Straight and I Were Young"* was wistful, whereas *"(S)He loves me"* inspired hope. *"Stab a Penguin"* laughingly reminded us that love is worth a little craziness. *"Imaginary Guy"* had us dreaming of perfection, while *"Some Cats Know"* reminded us reality is best. The musical program ranged in mood and style, ensuring every audience member had a few favorites.

Many others volunteered their time, talents and resources to make this event such a success. The evening's mood was set by Hannah Kerwin's snowflake-themed decorations. Robert Pietrzak donated the space and wine, chefs John Duncan, Dennis Goodenough, and Paul Parsekian prepared wonderful food, all of which was enjoyed on dishes and glasses donated by Julia and Rick Bonsall. Several new and returning members of the New Amsterdam Singers helped to serve food, tend bar, and check coats. Not to be overlooked are organizing and coordinating efforts by Nina Reiniger and Ellen Stark.

As the evening came to a close, all were happily fed and beautifully entertained. We left with smiles on our faces, knowing that midwinter night's dreams can come true!

### Follow NAS!

Do you follow NAS on Twitter? Have you liked us on Facebook? We hope so, but if you haven't, take a moment to do so now! We'll be sharing more on social media about our March and May concerts.

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/NewAmsterdamSingers>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/nasingers>



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