

# New Amsterdam Singers

Clara Longstreth, Music Director

## ANNUAL REPORT

### 2018 - 2019



*Photo by Jennifer Taylor*

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

### **BRIAN FARRELL**



Our 51<sup>st</sup> season enjoyed sustained audience and donor enthusiasm as Clara expertly guided us through another series of challenging and uplifting concerts. Although each one was a success on its own terms, the final concert in May was particularly stunning, with Clara deftly handling chorus, orchestra, and solo artists in two unforgettable performances of Martin Palmeri's "Tango Mass," each concert earning spontaneous standing ovations from sold-out houses.

Our fundraising benefits, so crucial to our financial stability, were once again organized and executed by a large army of volunteers. In the fall we returned to the popular theatre district venue "Don't Tell Mama" for two cabaret performances, professionally directed by Rebecca Dee. Then, during the winter, we presented a very successful event entitled "Seasons of Life," featuring entertainment, food, and silent auction, for which we have many people to thank: Robin Beckhard, Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff, Orren Alperstein, Rebecca Dee, John Pinegar, Rebecca Harris, Jenny Delson, and a dozen more hard-working volunteers. Special thanks go to Bob Pietrzak who once again sponsored the evening.

We also gratefully acknowledge our wonderful staff: our enthusiastic and adept manager Will Maitland Weiss, remarkable assistant conductor David Recca, amazing accompanist Pen Ying Fang, and skillful Chamber Chorus assistant conductor Nathaniel Granor. There are also several people behind the scenes who contribute

their time and energy as if they were staff: our indefatigable printed program producer Steve Holtje; faithful publicist Lucy Kraus; librarians Leila Sesmero and Vera Sziklai, ably assisted by Bob Palmer; intrepid webmaster Mike Landy; social media coordinators Ellen Stark and Clara Schuhmacher; and former singer and board president Andy James, who continues to assist us from afar with his technical expertise as we continue to improve our website, donor outreach, and other ongoing projects. Last, but far from least, we thank our recently retired librarian Scott Gillam for his decades of service. A founding member of NAS, Scott spent 50 years organizing, cataloguing, storing, and even renting out our vast trove of music. Scott set the bar very, very high.

I personally want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Board of Directors, a group of individuals who meet month after month to share different ideas and often-different opinions but one common goal— supporting the present and ensuring the future of NAS. Well done, Ladies and Gentlemen, well done.

Of course, we all know the main reason 75 singers return every fall to recommence rehearsals and continue the NAS tradition. Fifty-one years ago a singularly talented young lady founded this chorus and has nurtured it ever since, tirelessly finding new and challenging music and inspiring us to conquer it, all the while creating a spirit of camaraderie and pride that keeps us coming back year after year to make new memories together. So... on behalf of the entire chorus, thank you, Clara, for another superb season.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

### ORREN ALPERSTEIN

I am pleased to report that the New Amsterdam Singers broke even in Fiscal Year 2018-2019 (with a small surplus of \$148), even after incurring the considerable guest artists expense (\$29,036) needed to perform the fantastic *Tango Mass* by the Argentine composer Martin Palmeri, a tremendous highlight for singers and audiences alike.



In addition to increased concert expenses, the chorus increased payments to music and administrative staff (\$18,262), to bring salaries closer to the industry standard. On the other hand, we were able to reduce promotion/development costs by 35%—and still sold more tickets!

On the revenue side, the chorus moved closer (by \$21,900) to our \$150,000 goal for the 50th Anniversary Campaign—less than \$25,000 still to go; increased ticket revenue over the prior season by 50% (\$8,740); and, in accord with our Endowment policy, allocated \$9,300 in earnings to offset special guest artist costs associated with *Tango Mass*. Other revenue, from members' dues, our spring benefit event, and individual, corporate, and foundation contributions, was essentially even with that in 2017-2018.

The New Amsterdam Singers is well positioned to support another exciting concert season for 2019-2020, including the commission of a piece by the composer Robert Paterson, an NAS favorite.

#### NAS FINANCIALS: FY18 AND FY19

	2017-2018	2018-2019
<b>General Operating Revenue:</b>		
Ticket Sales and Performances	\$19,220	\$27,960
Dues; CD Sales	\$17,212	\$18,232
<b>Contributions:</b>		
Events ( <i>net</i> )	\$12,879	\$12,182
Individual, Corporate, and Foundation Contributions	\$58,250	\$56,662
<b>Total General Operating Income:</b>	<b>\$107,561</b>	<b>\$115,036</b>
<b>General Operating Expenses:</b>		
Personnel	\$44,525	\$62,788
Concert, Rehearsal, and Music	\$18,207	\$29,563
Promotion & Development	\$21,947	\$12,883
Other Operating Expenses	\$8,257	\$9,330
<b>Total General Operating Expenses:</b>	<b>\$92,936</b>	<b>\$114,564</b>
<b>NET from General Operations:</b>	<b>\$14,625</b>	<b>\$472</b>
<b>Special Activity Income:</b> 50th Anniversary Campaign Donations	<b>\$124,471</b>	<b>\$21,900</b>
<b>Special Activities Expenses:</b>		
50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala	\$24,603	--
Commissioned Works	\$23,500	\$2,500
Guest Artists	\$15,941	\$29,036
<b>Total Special Activities Expenses:</b>	<b>\$64,044</b>	<b>\$31,536</b>
<b>NET from Special Activities:</b>	<b>\$60,427</b>	<b>(\$9,636)</b>
<b>Endowment Earnings</b>	<b>\$9,143</b>	<b>\$9,312</b>
<b>NET (DECREASE)/INCREASE:</b>	<b>\$84,195</b>	<b>\$148</b>



## MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### CLARA LONGSTRETH

The New Amsterdam Singers' 51<sup>st</sup> season was different from the 50<sup>th</sup>: no commission, no book to produce, and no gala event, but it did NOT feel like a letdown. In each concert the chorus sang works that were new to us all. In December the Psalm settings included Samuel Wesley's contrapuntal tour de force, *In Exitu Israel*, as well as a fairly unknown Bach motet, *Jauchzet dem Herrn, Alle Welt*.

In March we sang a 2016 work by Carol Barnett, *Musica, Dei donum optimi*, and a recent work by Robert S. Cohen, *Peter Quince at the Clavier*. The familiar, beloved *Zigeunerlieder* by Brahms was the main feature of the concert and the occasion of much successful labor on German diction.

In May we sang a 1996 work by Martin Palmeri, *Tango Mass*, which immediately won the hearts of the chorus. Also called *Misa a Buenos Aires*, this extraordinary piece calls for string orchestra, piano, and bandoneon--that mysterious and evocative instrument so crucial to the tango sound. Our soprano soloist, Kara Dugan, sang her emotional lines with grace and fervor. Bandoneon player Rodolfo Zanetti proved himself a master of the style, and gave the audience a welcome bonus piece by Piazzolla before

the Mass. Pen Ying Fang proved a quick study of tango style, shown in her solo with the characteristic ebb and flow of tempo.

Chamber chorus returned to an old favorite, *Romancero Gitano* by Castlenuovo-Tedesco for chorus and guitar. We loved the work, despite the challenge of Castillian Spanish.

David Recca, our assistant conductor in his fifth season with NAS, has been a steady hand, a cheerful, trusted teacher to us all. Will Maitland Weiss, in his first year as manager, has been wise in the big matters, willing in all the mundane ones. We are lucky that he has joined us.

The chorus board has worked tirelessly, benefitting from an infusion of newer singers who have joined old hands in leadership roles. I thank Brian Farrell, who is ending three years as president, and am grateful to Donna Zalichin, who has taken on that job once again.



Composer Doug Brandt with Music Director Clara Longstreth

I thank every singer in our group. Your talent, dedication, and enthusiasm make my job a joy. I thank every listener in our audience. Your support, and your own dedication and enthusiasm are why we sing.

## NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS REPERTOIRE for 2018 – 2019

### December 7 and 9, 2018 — Psalms and Celebrations

Exultate Justi	Ludovico Viadana
In Exitu Israel	Samuel Wesley
An den Wassern zu Babel	Heinrich Schütz
Von Himmel hoch da komm ich her	Johann Hermann Schein
Hvalite imia Ghospodne	Pavel Chesnokov
Duo Seraphim Clamabant	Tomas Luis Victoria
O Maria, Diana Stella	Lauda of 15 <sup>th</sup> Century
Noel!	Steven Sametz
Abendlied zu Gott	Joseph Haydn
Wende dich, Herr	Johann Hermann Schein
Remembering That It Happened Once	Doug Brandt
Der Jäger	Johannes Brahms
Jauchzet dem Herrn, alle Welt	Johann Sebastian Bach
O Praise the Lord of Heaven	Ralph Vaughan Williams

### March 8, 2019 — The Romantic Spirit: Wild and Tender

Three Songs from opus 59	Felix Mendelssohn
Abschied vom Walde	
Die Nachtigall	
Jagdlied	
Musica, Dei donum optimi	Carol Barnett
Die Beredsamkeit	Joseph Haydn
Der Greis	Joseph Haydn
Peter Quince at the Clavier	Robert Cohen
Im Sommer	Hugo Wolf
Mailied	Hugo Wolf
Der Bräutigam	Johannes Brahms
Die Braut	Johannes Brahms
Zigeunerlieder	Johannes Brahms

### May 16 and 19, 2019 — Tango Mass

Romancero Gitano	Mario Castelnuevo-Tedesco
<i>For chamber chorus and guitar</i>	
Pierre Ferreyra-Mansilla, guitar	
Misa a Buenos Aires/ Misatango	Martin Palmeri
<i>For chorus, strings, and bandoneon</i>	
Rodolfo Zanetti, bandoneon	
Kara Dugan, Mezzo soprano	

## NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS 2019 TOUR



### **Day One – Arrival in Varna**

We arrived in Varna to meet our tour guide, Ekaterina, and bus driver, Ilyan. We were quickly enchanted with the lilt of Ekaterina's English and her earnestness in attending to our needs. Ilyan proved to be our hero, driving narrow mountain roads, and seamlessly getting our luggage and our group where we needed to be. Our first rehearsal, on the afternoon of our arrival, was on the 13th floor of the Rosslyn Hotel, giving us a distracting view of the Black Sea while we tried to focus on our ensemble.

### **Day Two – Varna**

Our introduction to Bulgarian monasteries came on our second day in Varna, with a drive to visit the stone caves of the nearby Aladzha monastery. A walking tour of downtown Varna followed, with an introduction to the Roman ruins found in nearly every Bulgarian town. The afternoon rehearsal with Prof. Marin Tchonev Girls' and Women's Choir was our first chance to test our Bulgarian with the lyrics of *Polegnala e Todora*. It was a success! The choir welcomed us after the rehearsal with the traditional loaf of bread, served with spiced salt and honey for dipping – representing the sharing of our experiences together.



Dinner that night in the ethno restaurant "The Old House" was a traditional Bulgarian dinner with the omnipresent drink, *rakia*, and the traditional *shopska* salad (red tomatoes, green cucumbers, and shredded white cheese garnished with dill) as our first course. (Steve Holtje observed that the colors of the salad are those of the Bulgarian flag.) We were serenaded by a local musician and his band, and watched as a group of women and children on the outdoor patio began dancing to the music. A dozen chorus members got up to join in the traditional folk dancing, which we observed and participated in again at our last night's dinner in Sofia.

### **Day Three – Varna**

As jet lag began to subside, we had nearly an entire day to relax prior to our first concert. Many headed for the

nearby Black Sea beaches, where a beach umbrella could be rented for a very reasonable five levs. Others visited the town's Ethnographic Museum, or wandered back through the town to enjoy a fish lunch at the seaside.

Our evening concert with the Women's Choir in the town's Episcopal Methodist Church concluded with the shared singing of *Simple Gifts* led by Clara, and *Polegnala e Todoro* led by the Bulgarian choir conductor, Zaharina Milkova-Nikitassova, who spoke to us in French and Bulgarian, with wonderfully expressive gestures.



### **Day Four – Velika Tarnovo**



Our foray into the middle of the country began with a four-hour drive to Velika Tarnovo, the ancient former capital. On the drive, we were mesmerized by the fields of sunflowers, the second largest crop in

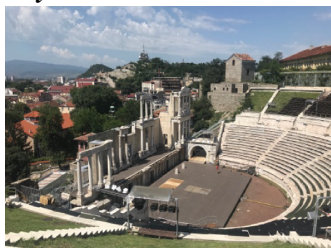
Bulgaria (roses being the largest). Our driver obliged us with a stop along the road to take pictures of the flowers.

Arriving in the hilly town, we were hit with the heat that had been sizzling the rest of Europe earlier in the week. After a quick lunch, the group split into two for walking tours of the sights, including the fortress and the St. Peter and Paul Church. It was so hot that one of our tour guides, Reuben, was already soaked from his 15-minute walk to meet us. After the walking tour, we were offered the opportunity to ride out to the local excavation of Roman ruins. Reuben had worked at the site for six years, and provided a personalized walking tour through the site to those of us who had braved the unforgiving heat!

After dinner on our own, many of us met in the hotel restaurant for drinks and desserts, and the evening's treat, a light and sound show on the fortress buildings across the valley, depicting the history of the ancient capital.



### **Day Five – Plovdiv**



From the hills of Velika Tarnovo, on we drove across the Balkan Mountains to our next destination, Plovdiv. We were again hit with high temperatures, which made the anticipated

hotel arrival, with its advertised outdoor pool, even more desirable! But first, lunch, and then a walking tour of the old town in Plovdiv, with its churches, historic homes, Roman theater, and ethnographic museum.

Our now-resident Bulgarian, Rick Hibberd, had provided suggestions for good local restaurants, and David Ortiz, party planner extraordinaire, organized a gathering in the piano bar of our Hotel, complete with music and dancing.

### **Day Six – Plovdiv**

Our second concert was scheduled for this evening, but the group had most of the day to enjoy the museums and shopping in Plovdiv, or just the relaxing hotel pool. One of the most visited sites was the Tanaka Museum, with its wonderful ancient glass and restored mosaics.

The Gaudeamus Choir hosted our Plovdiv performance, held in the Regional History Museum. The Bulgarian choir performed traditional Orthodox music, led by director Vesela Geleva, including a mesmerizing chant performed by four of the men in the choir. The two choruses joined together for a moving performance of Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*, led by Clara. The small air conditioner could not compete with the heat of the day and the appreciative and enthusiastic audience that filled the small but colorful performance space.



### **Day Seven – Sofia**

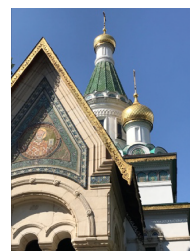
Our final destination in Bulgaria was its current capital, Sofia. We boarded the bus for the drive through the countryside, first visiting the Boyana Church, a UNESCO Heritage site, outside the city. After a group lunch of moussaka, we met our guides to visit the church nestled on the hill. The small building and the fragility of the paintings inside mandated that only ten people at a time could visit, so we took turns admiring the amazingly vibrant and expressive wall paintings and the mountain gardens outside. A brief rainstorm was a welcome relief..

Arriving in the city later in the afternoon, our guides led separate tours through the downtown to see the Alexander

Nevsky Cathedral, now-familiar Roman ruins, and other historic locations. The heat continued, in spite of a thunderstorm passing through. After checking into our Downtown Hotel, we headed out for a final group dinner at the traditional Bulgarian ethnic restaurant Chevermeto. The entertainment for the evening was provided by young men and women performing Bulgarian folk dances in the center of the restaurant, clad in traditional garb. Our assistant conductor, David Recca, was enlisted to join two of the young men in a traditional dance, which he performed to great acclaim!

### **Day Eight – Sofia**

On the last day, the group was offered an opportunity to visit another UNESCO Heritage site, the Rila Monastery. Those who boarded the bus were rewarded with a visually impressive complex of buildings in the beautiful mountains 90 minutes outside the city.



Our final concert was hosted by a local choir, Ave Musica, and their conductor, Tania Nikleva-Vladeva. A full house enthusiastically clapped for our combined choir performances of Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*, *Polegnala e Todora*, and Ms. Nikleva's arrangement of *Amazing Grace*.



Following a reception graciously provided by our host chorus, we boarded the bus for a special evening overlooking the city of Sofia at the apartment of Rick Hibberd and Gail Buyske. The catered event was also attended by members of the *America for Bulgaria Foundation*, on whose board Gail sits. It was a raucous and thoroughly wonderful close to a musically and culturally eventful week!

The Bulgarian choral tradition made for a rich musical experience on this tour, and the camaraderie and shared singing with our host choirs was memorable. As always, music director Clara Longstreth led us in a varied program, and we enjoyed the accompaniment of assistant conductor David Recca.

Grateful and exuberant praise to our tour organizers, Donna Zalichin and Nina Reiniger, for working with our tour company, KI Concerts, to create an even-paced and interesting itinerary, and for managing us all with aplomb!

*Narrative by Ari Brose*

*Photos by Ari Brose, Gail Buyske, and Jason Stern*

## 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN DONORS

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This donor list reflects contributions received July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. With any questions, or for information about supporting the New Amsterdam Singers, please contact [manager@nasingers.org](mailto:manager@nasingers.org).

## PROFESSIONAL STAFF

### **Clara Longstreth, Music Director**

Clara Longstreth has conducted New Amsterdam Singers since its formation in 1968. She has served on the faculty of Rutgers University, where she conducted the Voorhees Choir of Douglass College. A student of G. Wallace Woodworth at Harvard, Ms. Longstreth trained for her Master's degree at the Juilliard School under Richard

Westenburg. Further study included work with Amy Kaiser and Semyon Bychkov at the Mannes College of Music and with Helmuth Rilling at the Oregon Bach Festival.

In 1997, Ms. Longstreth guest-conducted the Limón Dance Company in performances with NAS and the Riverside Church Choir. In 2010, she again conducted the Limón Dance Company at the Skirball Center at NYU. She is a frequent guest conductor at the annual Messiah Sing-In at Avery Fisher Hall and at the summer sings of the West Village Chorale, the New York Choral Society, and other choruses. She has also served as adjudicator of choral festivals, conducted the Riverdale Country School choral groups and conducted the Juilliard Chorus and Orchestra at Alice Tully Hall. In 2006, she presented a lecture-demonstration on "Adventures in Programming" for the Eastern Division Convention of the American Choral Directors Association.

Of Ms. Longstreth's programs, Allan Kozinn wrote in the *New York Times*, "When a director takes up the challenge of building a cohesive program around a broad theme, we are reminded that programming can be an art." In June, 2018, *Times* critic Anthony Tommasini wrote, "You think von Karajan's 35-year reign at the Berlin Philharmonic and Eugene Ormandy's 44-year association with the Philadelphia Orchestra were impressive runs? Well, at a concert on Wednesday night [May 30], Clara Longstreth concluded her *50th* season as music director of the 70-member New Amsterdam Singers... Ms. Longstreth conducted with undiminished energy and focus."

### **David Recca, Assistant Music Director**

David Recca is currently an Adjunct Professor of Music at the Conservatory of Music of Purchase College, SUNY. There he directs the Purchase College Chorus and Purchase Chamber Singers, he is a conductor of the Purchase



*Photo by Hannah Kerwin*

Symphony Orchestra, and he teaches a variety of undergraduate courses including music history, music theory, ear training, and conducting. He also directs the Southern Connecticut Camerata, a Norwalk-based early music ensemble celebrating its 60th season.

In 2018, Recca received his Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the Yale School of Music. He

holds a Master's degree in Choral Conducting from the Eastman School of Music and a Performer's Certificate in Vocal Coaching and a Bachelor of Music degree in Composition from Purchase College.

### **Pen Ying Fang, Accompanist**

Pen Ying Fang was born in Taipei, Taiwan, and began studying piano at age five. She attended an "experimental" music-focused grade school there until she moved to the United States to continue her education. Here she studied with Paul Hoffmann, earning a B.M. and M.M. in Piano at Rutgers University in New Jersey. She has performed around the New York metropolitan area, building up an extensive repertoire of solo and chamber works.

Ms. Fang has toured domestically and overseas with various choirs in the New York area, and in 2007 she played at the "Florence Voice Seminar" in Florence, Italy. In 2018 she played Glass's "The Fall of the House of the Ushers" at Mass MOCA. Currently she serves as a staff accompanist at Westminster Choir College in Princeton and staff pianist for the CoOPERative program. Pen Ying coaches singers and teaches piano students in New Jersey.

### **Will Maitland Weiss, Manager**

Will Maitland Weiss joined the New Amsterdam Singers as its Manager at the start of the 2018-2019 season. He is an adjunct professor for St. Lawrence University, teaching a course on entrepreneurship and nonprofit management in their semester-in-New York City program; he has also had guest teaching positions with the Brooklyn College graduate program in arts administration, Brown, CUNY/Baruch, NYU, Seton Hall, and the University of the Virgin Islands. Mr. Weiss is a former executive director of the American Stage Festival, CSC Repertory Theater, the Arts & Business Council of NY, and the Big Apple Circus.

## NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

### Sopranos

Orren Alperstein  
 Kristen Anderson  
 Judith Ballan  
 Robin Beckhard  
 Martha Beckwith  
 Jayanthi Bunyan\*  
 Laura Cohen\*\*  
 Dana Crowell\*\*  
 Susan Daum  
 Lauren Goff\*\*  
 Borbola Görög  
 Rebecca Harris  
 Laura Klein  
 Abigail Kniffin  
 Alyssa LaFosse  
 Katherine Leahy\*\*  
 Jamie Leifer\*\*  
 Michelle Neary\*  
 M. Tracey Ober  
 Andrea Olejar\*  
 Judith Pott  
 Clara Schuhmacher\*  
 Bernardica Sculac Stern  
 Gabriella Smart  
 Elspeth Strang  
 Jennifer Trahan

### Altos

Gabriella Barton\*  
 Elizabeth Basile\*  
 Cynthia Brome  
 Joanne Hubbard Cossa\*\*  
 Isabella Creatura  
 Rebecca Dee\*  
 Jennifer Delson  
 Stephanie Golob  
 Elizabeth Hardin  
 Sally Hoskins  
 Hannah Kerwin  
 Lucy Kraus  
 Barrie Kreinik  
 Eleanor Kulleseid  
 Naya Mukherji  
 Charlotte Rocker\*  
 Leila Sesmero  
 Ellen Stark\*  
 Vera Sziklai  
 Donna Zalichin  
 Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff

### Tenors

Paul Blanchard\*  
 Vincent Cloyd Exito  
 Nathaniel Granor\*\*  
 James Gregory  
 Nicandro Ianacci  
 Bernie Lubell  
 Robert Marlowe  
 Nate Mickelson  
 David Moroney\*\*  
 Paul Parsekian\*  
 Bob Pietrzak  
 John Pinegar  
 Frayda Pitkowsky  
 Adam Poole  
 Timothy H. Sachs\*\*  
 William A. Simpson  
 Hsin Wang  
 Scott Wilson

### Basses

Rick Abel  
 Bendix Anderson  
 Michael Berger  
 James Crowell  
 Walter Daum  
 Timothy DeWerff\*  
 Eli Enenbach\*\*  
 Brian Farrell  
 Scott Gillam  
 Jason Hill\*  
 Philip Holmgren\*\*  
 Steve Holtje\*  
 Michael Landy  
 John Leuenhagen  
 Mike Nicholson  
 David Ortiz\*  
 Robert Palmer  
 Mondy Raibon  
 David Recca\*  
 John Weidemann  
 Jonathan Weinberger  
 Michael Zimmerman

\* Chamber Chorus

\*\* Chamber Chorus only

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*TANGO MASS photo by Hannah Kerwin*

# New Amsterdam Singers

Clara Longstreth, Music Director

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