NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

MUSIC DIRECTOR & PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Clara Longstreth & Donna W. Zalichin

Soon after it became clear that New Amsterdam Singers could not perform, or even rehearse, in 2020, we embarked on a series of Zoom events we called *Music in Place*. Initially, they were planned as a way to maintain contact among our singers, but gradually we planned more ambitious events to engage our alumni, audience members, and other friends as well. These became so successful that we will include elements of the format even in the presence of live music-making this coming season.

For our singers, we hosted group voice lessons, sing-alongs, and a session of body work. Of more general interest, we programmed wonderful recitals by our own members and some special guests. Our beloved accompanist, Pen Ying Fang, and her husband, NAS alumnus Steve Hanna, gave a truly memorable recital of piano and clarinet music, and Assistant Conductor David Recca wowed us with two programs of challenging works for solo piano. Tim Kaine, US Senator, former Vice Presidential candidate, and an accomplished bluegrass harmonica player, talked about the role of music in his life and treated us to some clips of his playing. And the artists Rupert Boyd and Laurie Metcalf, performing as Boyd meets Girl delighted us with duets on guitar and cello, both classical and contemporary.

There were two interviews of special interest. One was with the bass-baritone Dashon Burton, who discussed his experience as a professional singer of color and member of the avant guard octet Roomful of Teeth. Another was an interview with recorded performances by our former longtime accompanist Elizabeth Rodgers and her colleague, composer and artist Wendy Griffiths. The featured compositions, beautifully interpreted by Elizabeth, were accompanied by drawings of whimsical, fantastical creatures.

In observance of Black History Month, we fashioned a program in which we took great pride, focusing on mostly instrumental works by Black American composers whose work has been sadly neglected. A team of singers researched and introduced composers William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson, and recorded excerpts of their works were played. We also included two choral works, one by Margaret Bonds, and one by Joel Thompson, whose "Seven Last Words of the Unarmed Men" is a stunning, tragic piece for our time. We called the program "Lift Every Voice," in homage to the Black national anthem.

Twice during the past season we gave Zoom "concerts," in which we used a variety of means to substitute for in-person singing. The first, which took the place of our usual December concert, was called "Tidings of Joy" and presented highlights from some favorite NAS performances, some going back many years. In addition, we did two new virtual video recordings in which individual singers sang and recorded themselves independently from home. Their recordings were then combined into a work that sounds as though they are actually singing together – it's a lot of work, and rather stressful, but the finished product was quite gratifying. In May we presented "A Season of Hope," which featured selections of past NAS performances as well as an interview with composer Philip Lasser, whose work, *The Dream Keeper*, will receive its New York premier at our May 2022 concert. It is a marvelous, intricate work using texts of American poet Langston Hughes.

The NAS board has had an especially active year, working behind the scenes to keep the chorus going through a time of no singing.

Early on, we struggled with the national events that re-ignited the Black Lives Matter movement, and reflected on how NAS, as a performing arts organization temporarily unable to perform, might respond to this crisis. Our program for Black History Month, mentioned above, was an outgrowth of the work we did to educate ourselves about the wealth of choral music by Black composers whose works we have not performed, and we committed to incorporating pieces into upcoming seasons. Our Advisory Council member Diana Solomon-Glover participated in some of our early discussions, and was helpful in introducing us to members of The Harlem Chamber Players, who will join us in our May 2022 performance.

A committee of Board and non-Board members was formed and has continued to meet as we grapple with issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the ways in which Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) have been marginalized in classical American music. We have had thoughtful, enlightening discussions about ways in which we can work to bring about racial diversity and racial equity in our chorus. Although over the years our singers have come from a variety of different backgrounds, we have begun a more deliberate, long-term effort to introduce ourselves to talented singers of color who might be interested in joining our ranks, and we continue to develop actions we can take toward this goal.

During the spring and summer of 2021, the Board reviewed the constantly-changing guidelines about group gatherings in general and choral singing in particular, in order to develop safety protocols that would allow us to sing together in person. And in September, a slightly smaller than usual group of vaccinated, masked singers met for the first time in over 18 months to make music together as never before.

With heartfelt thanks to our dedicated singers and professional staff, our incredibly hardworking Board, and our loyal friends and audience members, we look forward to singing for you again – live and in-person – soon.

Clara Longstreth, Music Director Donna Zalichin, President of the Board

TREASURER'S REPORT

Orren Alperstein

Despite the difficulties of the last year, NAS is in a strong financial position. In the past year, we saved money on expenses, our contributed income exceeded our projections by over \$25,000, and our endowment benefitted from a robust stock market and is now at its highest point ever. It seems clear that keeping singers, donors, and audience members engaged throughout the year with our *Music In Place* program was key to our unexpectedly successful nonsinging season.

- ◆ We have approximately \$87,000 in general operating funds, because (a) we have stewarded surpluses from past years, and (b) instead of the \$20,000 shortfall we anticipated a year ago, we realized a surplus of \$27,000.
- ◆ We have \$72,000 in restricted 50th Anniversary Campaign funds that we have not yet spent. They are earmarked for a big orchestral concert in an upcoming season.
- ◆ We received over \$52,000 from a planned gift made to NAS by dear friends of longtime chorus member Bob Palmer and his late wife, Jessie. \$7,500 of this was used in 2020-2021 to cover a portion of the commission of a new piece by composer Dale Trumbore. (These funds will also cover the balance of the commission in 2022.)
- ◆ We have \$302,000 in our endowment account, thanks to a robust stock market.

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	2019-2020	2020-2021
GENERAL OPERATING REVENUE		
Ticket Sales and Performances	\$11,353	\$600
Dues; CD Sales	\$14,369	\$7,959
Contributions:		
Events	\$1,465	\$0
Individual, Corporate, and Foundation Contributions	\$66,163	\$66,807
Total General Operating Revenue	\$93,350	\$75,364
GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES		
Personnel	\$64,516	\$31,900
Concert, Rehearsal, and Music	\$15,660	\$4,339*
Promotion & Development	\$7,474	\$8,799
Other Operating Expenses	\$10,369	\$4,330
Total General Operating Expenses	\$98,019	\$52,678
NET FROM GENERAL OPERATIONS	(\$4,669)	\$22,686
SPECIAL ACTIVITY INCOME		
50th Anniversary Campaign Donations	\$13,050	\$525
SPECIAL ACTIVITY EXPENSES		
Commissioned Works	\$8,161	\$13,500
Guest Artists	\$1,000	\$0
Board Retreat	\$1,772	\$0
Total Special Activities Expenses	\$10,933	\$13,500
NET FROM SPECIAL ACTIVITIES	\$2,117	(\$12,975)
ENDOWMENT EARNINGS TRANSFER	\$9,300	\$9,800
NET TOTAL (DECREASE)/INCREASE:	\$6,748	\$27,011

^{*} Design cost for new branding

Assets as of June 30, 2021

General Operating Funds	\$87,428
50th Anniversary Campaign Fund	\$71,742
Board Designated Funds From Special Gift	\$46,126
Endowment	\$302,000
Total Assets	\$507,296

- ◆ Despite unanticipated costs for Music In Place, we were able to lower overall spending on salaries, space rental, and other operating expenses.
- ◆ We had more donors an increase of 25% over the 2019-2020 number—with many loyal audience members, alumni, and chorus members renewing support.

We also received Membership dues support from most of the chorus, even though we were not rehearsing or singing live, and realized additional support from new online audience members.

Music in Place



After pausing our season and rehearsals in March 2020, we launched Music in Place, a virtual series that allowed us to gather together as a chorus and as an audience to sing, listen to recitals, learn from composers, and more.

The 2020-2021 Music in Place Programming included:

DASHON BURTON

September 15, 2020

An evening with world-renowned bass-baritone Dashon Burton, a past guest artist with us and a member of vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth.



GYROKINESIS WITH ALEXANDRA BERGER

September 29, 2020

A workshop to help us keep our bodies healthy for singing. Gyrokinesis is a technique of gentle stretching and breathing exercises that help to strengthen the back and increase range of motion.



SENATOR TIM KAINE

October 13, 2020

Tim Kaine is an avid bluegrass harmonica player and singer. He also loves the New Amsterdam Singers, especially the Golgotha concert we performed at Trinity Church in 2016. In his spare time, he's a US Senator from Virginia and was Hillary Clinton's Vice Presidential running mate in 2016.

How does a US Senator find time to be a musician, especially when he's running for Vice President? Senator Tim Kaine answered that question, and shared with us anecdotes and lessons learned from his life in music.



LIFT EVERY VOICE: BLACK AMERICAN CLASSICAL COMPOSERS

February 23, 2021

In celebration of Black History Month, New Amsterdam Singers Music Director Clara Longstreth took a look at the rich history of Black composers in classical music. This program of musical excerpts and discussion spanned the works of early to mid-20th century pioneers William Grant Still, William Dawson, and Florence Price and a new choral work by Joel Thompson inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement.



MADLY MIXED MUSICAL MEDIA – TONAL COLLAGES BY WENDY GRIFFITHS, COMPOSER, AND ELIZABETH RODGERS, PIANIST

April 6, 2021

A musical evening with pianist (and long-time NAS accompanist) Elizabeth Rodgers and composer Wendy Griffiths.

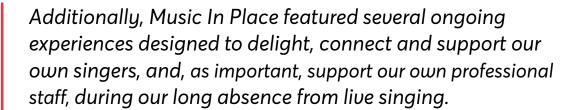


BOYD MEETS GIRL, A RECITAL FOR NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS AND FRIENDS

June 22, 2021

A recital by Boyd Meets Girl, a vibrant duo of Australian classical guitarist, Rupert Boyd, and American cellist, Laura Metcalf.







DAVID RECCA

October 27 & November 24, 2020 and January 12, February 9, April 27 & June 8, 2021

Assistant Music Conductor David Recca led us in several singalongs, and treated us to two of his own piano recitals.



PEN YING FANG AND STEVE HANNA

December 1, 2020

New Amsterdam Singers accompanist and pianist Pen Ying Fang, and her husband, clarinetist Steve Hanna, joined together for a duet recital.



VOCAL COACHING SESSIONS WITH GRANT ANDERSON

March 23 & August 31, 2021

Singer Grant Anderson, on the voice faculty at the Harlem School of the Arts and Marymount Manhattan College, joined the New Amsterdam Singers for two vocal coaching sessions, as a way to help the chorus stay in vocal shape.



VIRTUAL CONCERTS



Along with our Music in Place programming, New Amsterdam Singers presented two virtual concerts in the 2020-2021 season, gathering audience members from New York and beyond over Zoom to enjoy eclectic programs that spoke to the moment.

TIDINGS OF JOY: SING AND CELEBRATE WITH THE NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

December 13, 2020

On a Sunday afternoon in December, when in normal times NAS would have given a live concert and a cheery reception, we instead brought our community together in a new way. Audience members from around the world joined Clara Longstreth and the chorus via Zoom to enjoy musical treasures, including video and audio recordings from past NAS concerts, a virtual recording of "In the Bleak Midwinter" (Gustav Holst), made for this occasion, and carol singing for everyone as our audience joined singers in seasonal carols from the comfort of home.



A long-standing tradition following our December concerts is our carol sing at the reception. For "Tidings of Joy," a quintet of singers filmed a masked & distanced sing-along with Clara Longstreth and David Recca. This was edited and included in our Zoom experience, bringing a touch of around-the-piano holiday cheer to our virtual gathering.

A SEASON OF HOPE

May 21, 2021

To cap off a season unlike any other, New Amsterdam Singers offered a free virtual concert as thanks to our loyal friends and family. The program included recordings of well-loved favorites from our past, new virtual chorus performances of "An Irish Blessing" (Andrew Rindfleisch) and "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (Ben Moore), and, in a look ahead to a brighter musical future, a discussion with composer Philip Lasser, whose work "The Dream Keeper" will receive a New York premiere on our planned spring 2022 concert.

LEADERSHIP 2020-2021



Clara Longstreth, Music Director

Clara Longstreth is the founder and Music Director of New Amsterdam Singers and has led the group for its past 53 seasons. Under her direction, NAS has become known as one of the premier avocational choruses in New York City. 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." And in June, 2018, Times critic Anthony Tommasini wrote, "You think von Karajan's 35year 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, 2018], Clara Longstreth concluded her 50th season as music director of the 70-member New Amsterdam Singers....Ms. Longstreth conducted with undiminished energy and focus."

Ms. Longstreth studied conducting with G. Wallace Woodworth at Harvard University and with Richard Westenburg at the Juilliard School, from which she received her Master's Degree. She also studied with Amy Kaiser and Semyon Bychkov at the Mannes College of Music, and with Helmuth Rilling at the Oregon Bach Festival. Ms. Longstreth has been a frequent adjudicator at choral conferences, and was selected to present a lecture-demonstration on "Adventures in Programming" at the Eastern Division Convention of the American Choral Directors Association. In 2009 she received an Alumnae Recognition Award from Radcliffe College for her founding and longtime direction of New Amsterdam Singers. Ms. Longstreth has also served on the

faculty of Rutgers University, and as a guest conductor of the Limón Dance Company, the Mannes College Orchestra, and the popular Messiah Sing-In performances at Avery Fisher Hall. She has led the chorus on 17 international tours.

David Recca, Assistant Music Director

David J. Recca is currently a lecturer at the Conservatory of Music of Purchase College, SUNY, where he directs the Purchase Chorus and Purchase Chamber Singers, is a frequent guest conductor of the Purchase Symphony Orchestra, and teaches a variety of undergraduate courses including music history, music theory, ear training, and conducting. He is the newly appointed Artistic Director of the New York City Master Chorale. He is also the Artistic Director of the Southern Connecticut Camerata, and the Assistant Music Director of the New Amsterdam Singers.

Mr. Recca has served as Assistant Conductor to Mercury Opera Rochester, Principal Assistant Conductor to the Yale Camerata, and Artistic Director to Madrigalia Via, whose performances were hailed as "sinfully blissful" by the Wall Street Journal. He has prepared choirs for conductors such as Helmuth Rilling, David Hill, Masaaki Suzuki, Simon Carrington, Erwin Ortner, and Sir Gilbert Levine.

Mr. Recca holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the Yale School of Music, a Master of Music 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 and Barbara Gonzalez-Palmer, 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 accompanied the master classes of many prominent artists, including Keith Underwood, Evelyn Glennie, Brian McIntosh and Christopher Arneson. Additionally, she 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. Currently she serves as a staff accompanist at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, and teaches piano students in the central New Jersey area.

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.

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5 Minutes That Will Make You Love Choral Music

Listen to the gorgeous sound of a mass of voices: ancient, contemporary, gospel, opera, sacred and romantic.

Music Director Clara Longstreth was featured in the May 5, 2021 New York Times article, "5 Minutes That Will Make You Love Choral Music." Clara's choice of composition, Samuel Barber's 1940 piece, "The Coolin," is based on an old Irish love song. She says Barber "has an ear for accessible, but not trite, harmony. He delights me by highlighting certain words ("wine") with a subtle chord change." Clara joined other renowned music luminaries including Anthony Tommasini, Times chief classical music critic; Eric Whitacre, composer; Donald Palumbo, Metropolitan Opera chorus master; and Donald Nally, the Crossing director.

Read about and listen to all of the picks here

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS | 2020-2021



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Altos

Gabi Barton Elizabeth Basile Cvnthia Brome Joanne Hubbard Cossa Isabella Creatura Kari Day-Lucore Rebecca Dee Jennifer Delson Alex Gaynor Stephanie Golob Elizabeth Hardin Jenna Hinckley Sally Hoskins Hannah Kerwin Lucy Kraus Naya Mukherji Elisa Peimer Charlotte Rocker Leila Sesmero Ellen Stark Vera Sziklai Donna Zalichin Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff

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Orren Alperstein

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- in memory of Clayton James
- in memory of Mike Zimmerman

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As we prepare to return to in-person singing, we want to thank everyone who filled this pandemic break with music and friendship!

SINCE MARCH 2020:

1,324 guests attended 21 Music in Place programs via Zoom

5,900 YouTube views, including for eight virtual chorus videos created by 48 singers since the beginning of the pandemic

482 audience members tuned in to our December and May virtual concerts

11,500 fans reached on Facebook & 102 monthly listeners on our newly-launched Spotify channel

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