

# NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

CLARA LONGSTRETH, Music Director

**2023-2024 Season**



**THREADS  
OF JOY**

*Britten's ode to the  
patron saint of music and  
other a cappella classics*

**FRIDAY, MAY 17 • 7:30 PM**  
**SUNDAY, MAY 19 • 4:00 PM**

Broadway Presbyterian Church  
114th Street and Broadway  
New York City



# NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

Clara Longstreth, *Music Director*

T.J. Barnes, *Assistant Conductor*

Nathaniel Granor, *Chamber Chorus Assistant Conductor*

Pen Ying Fang, *Piano*

## ***Threads of Joy***

O Heiland Reiss

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Im Herbst

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Full Chorus

Threads of Joy

Dale Trumbore  
(b. 1987)

Women's Voices

Hymn to St. Cecilia

Benjamin Britten  
(1913-1976)

Kirby Burgess, *Soprano*  
Kate Leahy, *Mezzo-Soprano*  
Nate Mickelson, *Tenor*  
Fred Nangle, *Bass*

Full Chorus

## ***INTERMISSION***

Waldesnacht

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Der Abend

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Pen Ying Fang, *Piano*

Lieder und Romanzen

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

1. *Der bucklichte Fiedler*
2. *Das Mädchen*
3. *O süßer Mai!*
4. *Fahr Wohl!*
5. *Der Falke*
6. *Beherzigung*

Robin Beckhard, *Soprano*

Chamber Chorus

An Irish Airman Foresees His Death

Byron Adams  
(b. 1955)

T.J. Barnes, *Conductor*

Drinking Song

Matthew Harris  
(b. 1956)

Men's Voices

Alleluia

Jake Runestad  
(b. 1986)

Full Chorus

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*Please turn off all phones and other devices during the performance. The use of cameras (including smartphones) and recording devices during the performance is prohibited.*

## ***Threads of Joy***

Today's program includes music spanning two centuries, from the mid-1800s to 2016. The texts are mostly secular (poems or folk texts), and with one exception, the music is *a cappella*.

We begin with Brahms, and if you have attended NAS concerts for many years, you will have heard several of these Brahms pieces before. They are favorites of mine.

**Johannes Brahms** was a great Romantic composer, but not a typical one. In an age that valued the virtuoso performer, program music, and opera/music drama, Brahms was a throwback to earlier ideals. In Paul Henry Lang's *Music in Western Civilization*, Brahms is discussed in a chapter called "Crosscurrents." Lang writes, "Brahms was the Lord Keeper of the seal of classical heritage, in which all threads united once more before they were lost in chaos."

Brahms gained experience as a choral conductor in three cities: Detmold, where he conducted a court choral society in 1857; Hamburg, where he conducted a women's chorus in 1859-61; and Vienna, where he spent a year (1863-64) as conductor of the Wiener Singakademie. His first and third concerts in Vienna went well enough, but his second was anything but a success. He programmed a difficult selection of pieces, including a Bach cantata and some 17<sup>th</sup>-century *a cappella* works, all unrelievedly gloomy. This prompted a quip in Viennese circles: "When Brahms is really in high spirits, he gets them to sing *The Grave Is My Joy!*"

When Brahms conducted the first complete performance of his *German Requiem* in 1868, however, he experienced total success. He later became artistic director of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (1872-75) and in that position presented works of Bach, Händel, and Mozart, including works previously unknown at the time, to great acclaim. He collected manuscripts of the

old masters and edited orchestral works with a restraint unusual in his century.

The melody heard in Brahms' *O Heiland Reiss* appeared in a German songbook from 1666. The text is even older, found in a 1631 *Catholisch Gesangbuch*. Brahms writes five verses, each with different harmony and counterpoint. Verse 1 is a sturdy, straightforward hymn. Verse 2 treats the melody in "diminution" in the lower voices, while the sopranos retain the melody in its original (slower) form. Verse 3 gives the melody to the tenors, while the other voices surround it with complex counterpoint. Verse 4 treats the lamenting words with chromatic lines and "sobbing" couplets. Brahms ends with a joyful hymn of praise and interlocking canons in a final "Amen."

*O Heiland, rei die  
Himmel auf.  
Herab, herauf, vom  
Himmel lauf.  
Rei ab vom Himmel  
Tor und Tr;  
Rei ab was Schlo  
und Riegel fr.*

*O Gott, ein Tau vom  
Himmel gie;  
Im Tau herab,  
O Heiland, flie;  
Ihr Wolken brecht  
und regnet aus  
Den Knig ber  
Jakob's Haus.*

*O Erd, schlag aus,  
Da Berg und Tal  
grn alles werd.  
O Erd, herfr dies  
Blmlein bring.*

*O Savior, break  
heaven open;  
Run away  
from heaven;  
Tear open heaven's  
gates and door;  
Tear down the  
locks and bars.*

*O God, pour down  
dew from heaven.  
As part of the dew,  
O Savior, You fly down;  
Break open Your clouds  
and pour down  
Yourself, the King, over  
Jacob's house.*

*O Earth, burst forth,  
So that mountain and valley  
all become green.  
O Earth, bring forth  
the flowers.*

O Heiland, aus  
der Erden spring.

Hie leiden wir die  
größte Not;

Vor Augen steht  
der bittre Tod.

Ach, komm, führ uns  
mit starker Hand,

Von Elend zu  
dem Vaterland.

Da wollen wir all  
danken dir,  
Unserm Erlöser für und für.

Da wollen wir all  
loben dich

Je allzeit,  
immer, und ewiglich.

O Savior, spring out  
from the earth.

Here we suffer the  
greatest misery;  
Before our eyes stands  
a bitter death.

O come, lead us  
with a strong hand  
From misery to  
the fatherland.

There we all want  
to thank You,  
Our Savior forever.  
There we all want  
to praise You  
All the time,  
always, and forever.

— Friedrich von Spee

**Brahms' Im Herbst** is the last of a set of five a cappella songs from 1886 (opus 104). The poet (Klaus Groth) compares autumn to the end of life. The first two verses are somber, in a minor key, but the third changes to major and a vision of comfort shining through tears.

Ernst ist der Herbst  
Und wenn die Blätter fallen  
Sinkt auch das Herz  
Zu trüben Weh herab.  
Still ist die Flur,  
Und nach dem Süden wallen  
Die Sänger stumm,  
Wie nach dem Grab.

Bleich ist der Tag;  
Und blasse Nebel schleiern  
Die Sonne wie die Herzen ein.

Grave is autumn  
And when the leaves fall  
The heart also sinks  
To gloomy woe.  
Still is the meadow,  
And southward drift  
The songbirds silently  
As to the grave.

Bleached is the day  
And pale mist veils  
The sun like the heart.

Früh kommt die Nacht:  
Denn alle Kräfte feiern  
Und tief verschloßen  
ruht das Sein.

Soon comes night,  
For all strength to rest,  
And close-locked  
rests the being.

Sanft wird das Mensch,  
Er sieht die Sonne sinken,  
Er ahnt des Lebens  
Wie des Jahres Schluß.  
Feucht wird das Aug,  
Doch in der Träne Blinken  
Entströmt des Herzens  
Seligster Erguß.

Man becomes peaceful,  
He sees the sun sink;  
He foresees the end of life  
As the end of the year.  
His eye becomes moist,  
But in the sparkle of tears,  
Streams the heart's  
Most blessed flood.

— Klaus Groth

Next, we move on to a piece for sopranos and altos. The poem chosen by composer **Dale Trumbore** for her four-voice piece *Threads of Joy* also deals with comfort existing alongside pain. In her notes in the score, Trumbore writes:

*I've always loved when songs about happiness are set in a minor key (think Feeling Good as performed by Nina Simone); the harmonic language acknowledges that we can't have joy without recognizing the opposite. Threads of Joy has similar undertones. Not just an exultation of happiness, it recognizes how we emerge from darkness and pain back into light, and the music captures this duality in ever-shifting, prismatic harmonies.*

Trumbore's compositions are performed widely in the United States and internationally by groups including the American Choral Directors Association, Los Angeles Master Chorale, and Vocal Essence. New Amsterdam Singers commissioned and performed her work for chorus and instruments, *Charting the World*, in 2023.

*I have noticed joy  
how it threads below  
the darkness.  
Have you seen it too?  
And have you heard it,  
how it speaks  
the unspeakable,  
the bliss?  
A kind of silence, a light  
beneath pain.  
Have you noticed?  
It rises like fingers  
and then—look!  
it presses through.*

— Laura Foley

Our next piece for Full Chorus, *Hymn to St. Cecilia* by Benjamin Britten, is so beloved by singers that it stands at the forefront of 20th-century choral works. NAS sang it in 1988, 1993, and 2007.

Benjamin Britten was born in England in 1913 on November 22, the name day of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music. After a boyhood in which he composed prolifically, he attended the Royal College of Music, which he found frustratingly parochial and conservative. In his early twenties, Britten found useful employment writing music for plays and for documentary films made by the General Post Office. In the poet and film script writer W. H. Auden, he found a collaborator with whom he undertook many early projects. Auden wrote of Britten: "What immediately struck me was his extraordinary musical sensitivity in relation to the English language... Here at last was a composer who could set the language without undue distortion."

Britten's last collaboration with Auden was *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, a work written during Britten's trip home to England in 1942 following a three-year visit to the United States. When Britten and his companion Peter Pears disembarked, British Customs



impounded the sketches of a clarinet concerto intended for Benny Goodman and this choral work, the *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, imagining in mid-war that these might be coded messages. Britten was able to reconstruct what he had written of the Hymn. Though there were no coded messages of a political kind in Auden's poem, there were messages indeed, somewhat enigmatic to a current reader. A letter Auden wrote to Britten three months before the voyage and composition sheds some light, especially when we remember that Auden wrote the poem specifically for Britten:

*Goodness and Beauty are the results of a perfect balance  
between Order and Chaos, Bohemianism and Bourgeois  
Convention. Bohemian chaos alone ends in a mad jumble of  
beautiful scraps. Bourgeois convention alone ends in large  
unfeeling corpses. Every artist except the supreme masters  
has a bias one way or the other... For middle-class  
Englishmen like you and me, the danger is of course the  
second! Your attraction to thin-as-a-rail juveniles, to the  
sexless and innocent, is a symptom of this.*

Auden's poem reflects his knowledge of the mythology surrounding St. Cecilia herself as well as the lucky date of Britten's birth. Cecilia was a Roman patrician brought up as a Christian. Her father gave her in marriage to Valerius, but she was determined to remain a virgin dedicated to God. She persuaded Valerius to live with her in celibacy. The couple were martyred in Sicily in 176. In the 12th century, legend described Cecilia singing under martyrdom and attracting an angel to earth with her voice. In the 14th century Chaucer used her story in the *Second Nun's Tale*. Later she became associated with the organ, and many paintings show her at this instrument (which she probably never played).

In writing his *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, Auden consciously refers back to poet John Dryden's 1687 ode to the same saint. Dryden

praised music's power to harmonize the universe, to show people their lost innocence. (The theory had been that before the Fall, humans could hear the music of the spheres.) Auden first writes a narrative about the virgin saint, then an invocation ("Blessed Cecilia"), which recurs as a refrain, then a middle section in the voice of music itself – childlike before the too-much-reason of adults ("fallen" man). The third section is a dialogue between the suppliant and Cecilia, to whom the artist prays for inspiration.

Britten sets the Auden poem for five-voice *a cappella* chorus. In each section there is a dual time scheme – one group of voices having fast rhythms, the other group an elongated pattern functioning like the cantus firmus in early music. He also uses a combination of two keys in the main theme, so that one hears E Major and C Major (and then Phrygian mode) in quick succession. Lydian mode is also used, to invoke angels or the innocence of children; with its raised fourth degree, the Lydian pattern gives a lift and innocence to the vocal lines. In the middle section Britten seems inspired by Mendelssohn's "fairy" scherzos. The soprano and tenor lines sing a darting canon, like children playing catch, while the lower voices in slower lines seem to echo the darker side of the playful words, "I cannot grow." In the third section, Auden has imagined the voice of Cecilia in four instruments: the violin, the drum, the flute, and the trumpet. Britten arranges the text so that the prayer, "Blessed Cecilia," follows each section, giving the piece a rondo form (ABACA). Thus, the artist's appeal, "Translated daughter, come down and startle composing mortals with immortal fire," is given primary importance as a unifying refrain.

# I

*In a garden shady this holy lady  
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,  
Like a black swan as death came on  
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:*

*And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin  
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,  
And notes tremendous from her great engine  
Thundered out on the Roman air.*

*Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,  
Moved to delight by the melody,  
White as an orchid she rose quite naked  
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;  
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing  
Came out of their trance into time again,  
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses  
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.*

*Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.*

## **II**

*I cannot grow;  
I have no shadow  
To run away from,  
I only play.*

*I cannot err;  
There is no creature  
Whom I belong to  
Whom I could wrong.*

*I am defeat  
When it knows it  
Can now do nothing  
By suffering.*

*All you lived through,  
Dancing because you  
No longer need it  
For any deed.*

*I shall never be  
Different. Love me.*

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

### III

*O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,  
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,  
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all  
The gauchness of her adolescent state,  
Where Hope within the altogether strange  
From every outworn image is released,  
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast  
Into a world of truths that never change:  
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.*

*O dear white children casual as birds,  
Playing among the ruined languages,  
So small beside their large confusing words,  
So gay against the greater silences  
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,  
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,  
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,  
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,  
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.*

*O cry created as the bow of sin  
Is drawn across our trembling violin.*

*O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.*

*O law drummed out by hearts against the still  
Long winter of our intellectual will.*

*That what has been may never be again.*

*O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath  
Of convalescents on the shores of death.*

*O bless the freedom that you never chose.*

*O trumpets that unguarded children blow  
About the fortress of their inner foe.*

*O wear your tribulation like a rose.*

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions  
To all musicians, appear and inspire:  
Translated Daughter, come down and startle  
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

— W. H. Auden

After intermission, the Chamber Chorus presents songs by **Brahms** that demonstrate his interests in music of the past and folk music. *Waldesnacht* is one of a group of *Seven Songs* (opus 62). The poet, Paul Heyse, wrote of finding peace in the woods.

*Waldesnacht du wunderkühle  
die ich tausend Male grüß;  
nach dem lauten  
Weltgewühle,  
o, wie ist dein Rauschen süß!*

*Träumerisch die  
müden glieder  
berg ich weich ins Moos,  
und mir ist, als würd ich  
wieder  
all der irren Qualen los.*

*Fernes Flötenlied, ertöne,  
das ein weites Sehnen rührt,  
die Gedanken in die schöne,  
ach, mißgönnte Ferne führt.*

*Lass die Waldesnacht mich  
wiegen,  
stillen jede Pein,  
und ein seliges Genügen  
saug ich mit den Düften ein.*

*In den heimlich engen Kreisen  
wird dir wohl,  
du wildes Herz,*

*Darkness of the woods, wondrous cool,  
I greet thee a thousandfold;  
after the noisy tumult  
of the world,  
oh, how sweet is thy rustling!*

*Dreamily, I rest my  
weary limbs  
in the soft moss,  
and it is as if I were  
freed  
from all my doubts and fears.*

*Sound, distant flute song,  
that stirs a vast longing  
and leads my thoughts  
into the lovely distance, oh so envied.*

*Let the woods' darkness  
lull me  
and deaden my pain,  
and with its fragrance let me  
breathe a blissful content.*

*In thy secret, close confines  
you will recover,  
turbulent heart;*

und ein Friede schwebt  
mit leisen  
Flügel schlägen niederwärts.

Singet, holde Vögelieder,  
mich in Schlummer sacht!  
Irre Qualen, löst euch wieder,  
wildes Herz, nun gute Nacht!

and peace floats  
downward  
on lightly beating wings.

Tender birdsongs,  
sing me to gentle sleep!  
Doubts and fears, begone;  
restless heart, good night!

— Paul Heyse

**Brahm's** next piece is based on *Der Abend*, a poem by Friedrich Schiller on a Greco-Roman myth. The setting could not be more romantic: Phoebus, the god of the sky, descends in his chariot to meet Thetis, the goddess of the sea. Cupid holds the horse's reins as the couple embrace. Night comes. They rest.

Senke, strahlender Gott,  
die Fluren dürsten  
nach erquickendem  
Tau, der Mensch  
verschmachtet,  
mutter ziehen die Rosse,  
senke den Wagen hinab.

Siehe, wer aus des Meers  
krystallner  
Woge lieblich lächelnd  
dir winkt!  
Erkennt dein Herz sie?  
Rascher fliegen die Rosse,  
Thetys, die göttliche, winkt.

Schnell vom Wagen herab in  
ihre Arme  
springt der Führer,  
den Zaumer greift Cupido,  
stille halten die Rosse,

Sink, beaming god;  
the meadows thirst for  
refreshing dew,  
Man is  
listless,  
the horses pull more slowly;  
the chariot descends.

Look, who from the sea's  
crystal  
waves, warmly smiling  
beckons you!  
Does your heart know her?  
The horses fly more quickly.  
Thetis, the divine, beckons.

Quickly from the chariot  
into her arms  
springs the driver.  
Cupid grasps the reins.  
The horses silently pause

trinken die kühlende,  
kühlende Flut.

An dem Himmel herauf  
mit leisen Schritten,  
kommt die duftende Nacht,  
ihr folgt die süße Liebe.  
Ruhet und liebet,  
ruhet, ruhet, und liebet!  
Phöbus, der liebende, ruht.

and drink from the  
cool waters.

In the sky above,  
with a soft step,  
comes the fragrant night;  
sweet Love follows her.  
Rest and love;  
rest, rest and love!  
Phoebus, the amorous, rests.

— Friedrich Schiller

**Brahms** wrote his set of six *Lieder und Romanzen* on folk texts and poetry between his third and fourth symphonies.

In the first, a Rhenish folk song, voices imitate the tuning of a fiddle while circular melodies illustrate the *Wreath of Roses* danced by Walpurgisnacht celebrants.

In his setting of a Serbian text, Brahms alternates between 3/4 and 4/4 meter in a manner typical of Serbian folk melodies. As the girl ("Das Mädchen") thinks of a young lover, the music changes from minor to major mode.

The poem by Ludwig Achim von Arnim expresses a longing to be free of sadness in May.

The *Farewell* poem by Friedrich Rückert was sung at Brahms' funeral in 1897.

Another Serbian folk tale imagines a falcon smitten by the beauty of a young woman.

In the last poem of the set, Goethe urges courage in the face of trials. Brahms set it as a duet canon, with tenors echoing sopranos and basses echoing altos.

## 1. Der bucklichte Fiedler

Es wohnet ein Fiedler zu  
Frankfurt am Main,  
Der kehret von lustiger  
Zeche heim;  
Und er trat auf den Markt,  
was schaut er dort?  
Der schönen Frauen  
schmausten gar viel'  
an dem Ort.

"Du bucklichter Fiedler,  
nun fiedle uns auf,  
Wir wollen dir zahlen  
des Lohnes vollauf!  
Einen feinen Tanz,  
behende gegeigt,  
Walpurgisnacht wir  
heuer gefeirt!"

Der Geiger strich einen  
fröhlichen Tanz,  
Die Frauen tanzten  
den Rosenkranz,  
Und die erste sprach:  
"mein lieber Sohn,  
Du geigtest so frisch,  
hab' nun deinen Lohn!"

Sie griff ihm behend' unter's  
Wams sofort,  
Und nahm ihm den  
Höcker vom Rücken fort:  
"So gehe nun hin,  
mein schlanker Gesell,  
Dich nimmt nun jedwede  
Jungfrau zur Stell'."

## 1. The Hunchbacked Fiddler

There dwelt a fiddler in  
Frankfurt-am-Main,  
Who was returning from a  
merry drinking party;  
As he stepped into the marketplace,  
what did he see?  
Many beautiful women  
feasting in that  
very place!

"Thou, hunchbacked fiddler,  
now strike up a tune,  
We want to pay you  
a generous fee!  
A fine dance,  
smartly fiddled!  
Today we are celebrating  
Walpurgis Night.

The fiddler struck up a  
merry dance,  
The ladies danced the  
"Wreath of Roses";  
And the first one said:  
"My dear son,  
You have fiddled so briskly,  
now have your reward!"

She seized him suddenly  
by the jacket  
And took the  
hump right off his back:  
"Go along now,  
my trim young friend;  
Now every girl will  
take you on the spot!"

— Rhenish folksong



## 2. Das Mädchen

Stand das Mädchen,  
stand am Bergesabhang,  
Widerschien der Berg  
von ihrem Antlitz,  
Und das Mädchen  
sprach zu ihrem Antlitz:  
"Wahrlich, Antlitz,  
o du meine Sorge,  
Wenn ich wüßte,  
du mein weißes Antlitz,  
Daß dereinst ein Alter  
dich wird küssen,

Ging hinaus ich nach den  
grünen Bergen,  
Pflückte allen Wermut  
in den Bergen,  
Preßte bitt'res Wasser  
aus dem Wermut,  
Wüsche dich, o Antlitz,  
mit dem Wasser,  
Daß du bitter, wenn dich küßt  
der Alte!

Wüßt' ich aber,  
du mein weißes Antlitz,  
Daß dereinst ein Junger  
dich wird küssen,  
Ging hinaus ich in den  
grünen Garten,  
Pflückte alle Rosen  
in dem Garten,  
Preßte duftend Wasser  
aus den Rosen,  
Wüsche dich, o Antlitz,  
mit dem Wasser,

## 2. The Maiden

The young girl stood  
on the mountain slope;  
The peak was reflected  
in her countenance,  
And the girl  
spoke to her own face:  
"Truly, visage,  
o my source of grief,  
If I knew,  
my white face,  
That someday an old man  
was going to kiss you,

I would go out to the  
green mountains,  
Pick all the wormwood  
in the mountains,  
Press bitter juice  
from the wormwood,  
And wash you, o visage,  
with that water,  
So that you would taste bitter  
if the old man should kiss you!

But if I knew,  
my white countenance,  
That a young man  
was going to kiss you,  
I would go out into the  
green garden,  
Pick all the roses  
in the garden,  
Press fragrant water  
from the roses,  
And wash you, o visage,  
with that water,

Daß du duftest,  
wenn dich küßt der Junge!"

So that you would smell sweet  
when the young man kissed you!"

— Siegfried Kapper

### 3. O süßer Mai!

O süßer Mai,  
Der Strom ist frei,  
Ich steh verschlossen,  
Mein Aug' verdrossen,  
Ich seh nicht deine grüne Tracht,  
Nicht deine buntgeblünte  
Pracht,  
Nicht dein Himmelblau,  
Zur Erd' ich schau;  
O süßer Mai,  
Mich lasse frei,  
Wie den Gesang  
An den dunkeln Hecken entlang.

### 3. O sweet May!

O sweet May;  
Thy stream runs free;  
I stand reserved,  
With a jaundiced eye;  
I see not thy green raiment,  
Thy many-colored  
splendor,  
Thy sky of heavenly blue.  
I gaze upon the ground.  
O sweet May,  
Let me go free,  
Like the birdsong  
Along the dark hedges.

— Ludwig Achim von Arnim

### 4. Fahr wohl!

Fahr wohl, o Vöglein,  
Das nun wandern soll;  
Der Sommer fährt von hinnen,  
Du willst mit ihm entrinnen:  
Fahr wohl, fahr wohl!

Fahr wohl, o Blättlein,  
Das nun fallen soll,  
Dich hat rot angestrahlet  
Der Herbst im Tod gemalet:  
Fahr wohl, fahr wohl!

Fahr wohl, all Liebes,  
Das nun scheiden soll!  
Und ob es so geschehe,

### 4. Farewell!

Farewell, o little bird,  
Who must wander away;  
Summer departs,  
Thou wilt fly with it:  
Farewell, farewell!

Farewell, o little leaf,  
That now must fall;  
With rays of red has  
Autumn in death painted thee:  
Farewell, farewell!

Farewell, all love,  
That now must leave!  
And should it happen

Daß ich nicht mehr dich sehe:  
Fahr wohl, fahr wohl!

That I see thee no more:  
Farewell, farewell!

— Friedrich Rückert

## 5. Der Falke

Hebt ein Falke sich empor,  
Wiegt die Schwingen  
stolz und breit,  
Fliegt empor,  
dann rechtshin weit,  
Bis er schaut der Veste Tor.

An dem Tor ein Mädchen sitzt,  
Wäscht ihr weißes Angesicht,  
Schnee der Berge glänzet nicht,  
Wie ihr weißer Nacken glitzt.

Wie es wäscht und wie es sitzt,  
Hebt es auf die  
schwarzen Braun,  
Und kein Nachts tern  
ist zu schau n,  
Wie ihr schwarzes Auge blitzt.

Spricht der Falke aus den Höhn:  
"O du Mädchen wunderschön!  
Wasche nicht die Wange dein,  
Daß sie schneeig glänze nicht!

Hebe nicht die Braue fein,  
Daß dein Auge blitze nicht!  
Hüll den weißen Nacken ein,  
Daß mir nicht das Herze bricht!"

## 5. The Falcon

A falcon rises in the air,  
Spreads his wings,  
proud and wide,  
Flies around,  
then far away,  
Until he sees the Veste Gate.

At the gate a maiden sits,  
Washing her white face;  
Snow of the mountains shines not  
As does her white neck.

As she washes and as she sits,  
She raises her  
black brows;  
And no night star  
is to be seen,  
That sparkles like her black eyes.

Speaks the falcon from the heights:  
"O maiden wondrous fair,  
Wash not your cheeks,  
Let them not shine like snow.

Lift not up your fine eyebrows;  
Let your eyes not sparkle!  
Cover up your white neck,  
So my heart will not break!"

— Siegfried Kapper

## 6. Beherzigung

Feiger Gedanken  
Bängliches Schwanken,

## 6. Courage

Timid thoughts,  
Anxious wavering,

Weibisches Zagen,  
Ängstliches Klagen  
Wendet kein Elend,  
Macht dich nicht frei.

Allen Gewalten  
Zum Trutz sich erhalten,  
Nimmer sich beugen,  
Kräftig sich zeigen,  
Rufet die Arme  
Der Götter herbei!

Feminine fearfulness,  
Anguished laments,  
Turn away no misery,  
Do not make you free.

Against all powers  
Stand defiantly,  
Never to bow,  
To show yourself sturdy,  
May call down  
The mercy of the gods!

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The tenors and basses sing two works on texts by W.B. Yeats that could not be more different. *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death*, with music by Byron Adams, is a beautiful elegy, while *Drinking Song*, with music by Matt Harris, is a clever, jaunty samba.

**Byron Adams** writes about his piece:

*The protagonist who speaks throughout An Irish Airman Foresees His Death is not merely an abstract persona invented by Yeats in order to articulate his poetic message, but was intended to represent the voice of Major Robert Gregory, whose own voice was stilled forever when he was killed in the First World War. Major Gregory, who grew up near the Irish village of Kiltartan, fully exemplified in his life the disinterested heroism attributed to him by Yeats in the poem.*

*I composed this musical setting of Yeats' elegy in wartime. I deliberately chose the male chorus as the most appropriate and poignant medium with which to realize musically the meditation on war and its inexcusable waste of noble lives.*

Adams has had frequent performances of his music in Europe, such as at the 26th "Warsaw Autumn" International Festival of Contemporary Music, as well as numerous performances in this country at such institutions as the Eastman School of Music, Harvard University, Yale University, and Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall. He is currently on the faculty of the University of California, Riverside, where he conducts the university choral ensembles.

*I know that I shall meet my fate  
Somewhere among the clouds above;  
Those that I fight I do not hate,  
Those that I guard I do not love;  
My country is Kiltartan cross,  
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,  
No likely end could bring them loss  
Or leave them happier than before.  
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,  
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds.  
A lonely impulse of delight  
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;  
I balanced all, brought all to mind,  
The years to come seemed waste of breath,  
A waste of breath the years behind  
In balance with this life, this death.*

— W.B. Yeats

New Amsterdam Singers has regularly performed works of **Matthew Harris**, a fellow New Yorker. His *Shakespeare Songs* have become part of the choral repertoire worldwide and have been a staple of our international tour programs, delighting audiences with their craft and humor.

In 2007 the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts presented Harris's complete five books of *Shakespeare Songs*. His cantata, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, has been performed throughout the U.S. and Britain. New York City Opera presented scenes from his opera, *Tess*; the symphony orchestras of Minnesota, Houston,

and Florida have played his orchestral works; and his chamber music has been performed by the Lark Quartet, New York New Music Ensemble, and at the Aspen Festival.

*Drinking Song* is the lively finale to a set for men's voices called *Love Songs*. Harris characterizes it as a quasi-samba.

*Wine comes in at the mouth  
And love comes in at the eye;  
That's all we know for truth  
Before we grow old and die.  
I lift the glass to my mouth,  
I look at you, and I sigh.  
[La, la, la, la, la, la.]*

— W.B. Yeats

Our finale is a 2013 work by **Jake Runestad**, *Alleluia*. Runestad is an award-winning composer who has received commissions and performances from leading ensembles and organizations such as Washington National Opera, the Netherlands Radio Choir, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and Seraphic Fire. He is one of the most frequently performed composers in the United States.

In this short piece, the single word "alleluia" conveys its message though complex, shifting rhythmic patterns and key changes, leading up to an exciting end.

Program Notes © 2024 Clara Longstreth

# **New Amsterdam Singers**

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Orren Alperstein  
Robin Beckhard\*  
Martha Beckwith  
Kirby Burgess  
Dana Crowell\*\*  
Susan Daum  
Naomi Draper  
Lillie Dremeaux  
Rebecca Harris  
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Elspeth Strang  
Jennifer Trahan

## **Alto**

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Liz Basile\*  
Cindy Brome  
Isabel Colman  
Johanna de la Cruz  
Rebecca Dee\*\*

## **Alto (cont.)**

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Stephanie Golob  
Sally Hoskins\*  
Nora Isacoff  
Daniela Kempf  
Hannah Kerwin  
Elisa Peimer  
Charlotte Rocker\*\*  
Bernardica Sculac  
Stern  
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## **Tenor**

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Nathaniel Granor\*\*  
Thomas Haller  
Robert Marlowe  
Nate Mickelson  
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John Pinegar  
Adam Poole  
Benj Prud'homme\*  
Tim Sachs\*\*  
Hsin Wang

## **Bass**

Bendix Anderson\*  
T.J. Barnes  
Michael Berger  
Walter Daum  
Philip Holmgren\*\*  
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T.J. Barnes, *Assistant Conductor*

Pen Ying Fang, *Accompanist*

Stefanie Izzo, *Manager*

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New Amsterdam Singers

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## About the Artists

**New Amsterdam Singers**, now in its 56<sup>th</sup> year, is known for the breadth and variety of its repertoire. Specializing in a *cappella* and double-chorus works, the chorus sings music ranging from the 16th century through contemporary pieces, including many it has commissioned. In addition to works by Carol Barnett, Lisa Bielawa, and Ben Moore commissioned for the group's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, recent world premieres include compositions by Matthew Harris, Paul Alan Levi, Elizabeth Lim, Robert Paterson, and Ronald Perera. Our most recent solo commission, *The World of Dreams* by Dale Trumbore, was presented in March 2023. NAS also co-commissioned Michael Dellaira's folk opera *Arctic Explorations* with the cell theatre and performed its world premiere in March 2024.

American and New York City premieres in the previous decade included works by Robert Paterson, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Matthew Harris, Abbie Betinis, Steven Stucky, Kirke Mechem, Steven Sametz, Kitty Brazelton, Clare Maclean, Alex Weiser, Sheena Phillips, and Judith Shatin. In 2016 NAS performed Frank Martin's oratorio *Golgotha* with professional orchestra and soloists as guests of Trinity Church Wall Street, under the direction of Clara Longstreth, the first time the work was heard in New York City in over 60 years.

NAS has performed with the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein, at Alice Tully Hall as a guest of Clarion Concerts, and with the American-Russian Youth Orchestra under Leon Botstein at Tanglewood and Carnegie Hall. NAS has appeared twice with Anonymous 4 in Richard Einhorn's *Voices of Light* - in 1999 at Avery Fisher Hall with Concordia Orchestra under Marin Alsop, and in 2006 at the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center with Ensemble Sospeso under David Hattner, for broadcast on WYNC's *New Sounds*.

NAS has also appeared internationally under Ms. Longstreth's direction. The chorus has sung at the Heraklion Festival in Greece; the Granada Festival in Spain; the International Choral Festival at Międzyzdroje, Poland; the Festival of the Algarve in Portugal; Les Chorégies d'Orange in France; and the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales. The chorus has performed in Turkey, Scandinavia, Croatia, Spain, Argentina and Uruguay, South Africa, Greece, Iceland, Denmark, and, most recently, in Bulgaria in 2019. In 2010 NAS was pleased to receive permission from the State and Treasury Departments to tour Cuba on a cultural visa.

**Clara Longstreth, Conductor**, is the founder and Music Director of New Amsterdam Singers, and has led the group for its past 56 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 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, 2018], Clara Longstreth concluded her 50th season as music director of the...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 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.

**T.J. Barnes, Assistant Conductor**, a native of Buffalo, NY, is a NYC-based conductor, educator, performer, pianist, and arranger. He is the Director of Music at Flushing High School, where he revived and developed programs in Chorus, Piano, Guitar, and Music Appreciation.

T.J. holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and a graduate certificate in K-12 Music Education from the Aaron Copland School of Music at CUNY Queens College. Performance credits include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* at Queens College and Joe Hardy in *Damn Yankees* at the Kupferberg Center of the Arts. He also served as Music Director of the Queens College iTones, a coeducational *a cappella* group, writing numerous pop SATB arrangements, including their award-winning set at the 2019 ICCA Northeast Regional Semifinal Championships.

T.J. is a recipient of the first Maurice Peress Memorial Award in conducting and the American Choral Directors Association's 2019 Next Direction Collegiate Leadership Award.

**Nathaniel Granor, Chamber Chorus Assistant Conductor**, has been a member of NAS since 2013. He is also the Music Director of The Lost Keys, a NYC-based contemporary *a cappella* group that released their newest album, *11<sup>th</sup> & Waverly*, in April. Nathaniel is a graduate of Yale University, where he directed several ensembles including the Yale Spizzwinks(?) and the

Davenport Pops Orchestra. By day, he works as a freelance consultant in technology and education.

**Pen Ying Fang, Accompanist**, has performed widely in the New York and Philadelphia metropolitan areas, building an extensive repertoire of solo and chamber music. Currently, she serves as a coach and accompanist at Westminster Choir College, where she has worked with many prominent artists and renowned voice programs such as the CoOPERative summer program and the Florence Voice Seminar in Italy. As an accompanist, Pen Ying has also performed and toured with several choirs from the New York area, in which capacity *The New York Times* has praised her performances as "vivid" and "deft." In 2018 she was honored to be a featured performer in a Philip Glass opera workshop in North Adams, MA.

Pen Ying is a native of Taiwan, where she began studying piano at age five. There she attended an experimental music-focused grade school until moving to the United States. Here she studied with Paul Hoffmann and Barbara Gonzalez-Palmer, earning Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in Piano at Rutgers University.

**Stefanie Izzo, Manager**, is a classically trained soprano, educator, nonprofit administrator, and longtime resident of Queens, NY. She received a Master of Arts in vocal performance from the Aaron Copland School of Music at CUNY Queens College and a Bachelor of Music from NYU. Stefanie has been hailed as possessing a "gorgeously rich and full sound" for her work in opera and musical theater, in roles such as Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Anne Truelove in *The Rake's Progress*, Maria in *West Side Story* and Mozart heroines Pamina, Susanna, and Despina.

In addition to operatic repertoire, Stefanie devotes a significant amount of her performance time to art song, particularly that of women composers, and maintains an active concert schedule in

the NYC area. She is a frequent collaborator with living composers, and is a co-founder of the chamber ensemble The Astoria Music Project. Stefanie is the Manager of Education Partnerships at the Metropolitan Opera.

**Kirby Burgess, Soprano**, developed an interest in singing due to a fascination with sound itself, and the innate expressivity of the human voice. She is an Atlanta native and holds a Bachelor of Music from Furman University. For her graduate degree, she attended Bard Conservatory's Graduate Vocal Arts Program where she worked on projects ranging from Barbara Strozzi's *Lagime Mie* with the Baroque Ensemble to selections from György Kurtág's astounding *Kafka-Fragmente*.

Past stage credits include the role of Amalia in *She Loves Me*, scenes from Mozart's *Cosí fan tutti* (Despina) and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Susanna), Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* (Gretel), Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Constance), and Weber's *Der Freischütz* (Ännchen). She has recently performed with the Greater Newburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Albany Symphony Orchestra, and made her solo debut at Carnegie Hall with the American Symphony Orchestra. She has a particular interest in sacred music and is always on the hunt for new musical projects involving Emily Dickinson.

# Contributors

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