

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

CLARA LONGSTRETH, Music Director

2024-2025 Season



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*

An Invitation to the Voyage

Cantique de Jean Racine

Gabriel Fauré

(1845-1924)

Pen Ying Fang, *Piano*

Full Chorus

Romancero Gitano

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

(1895-1968)

1. *Baladillo de los tres ríos (Ballad of the Three Rivers)*

featuring Robin Beckhard, Nathaniel Granor, Rebecca Dee,
Bendix Anderson, Michelle Neary, Ellen Stark, Charlotte Rocker,
Dana Crowell, Jaime Leifer, Paul Parsekian

2. *La Guitarra (The Guitar)*

3. *Puñal (Dagger)*

4. *Procesión: Procesión (Procession); Paso (Platform); Saeta (Holy Song)*

featuring Nicholas Hay

5. *Memento*

6. *Baile (Dance)*

featuring Nathaniel Granor, Paul Parsekian, Benjamin Prud'homme

7. *Crótalo (Castanet)*

Oren Fader, *Guitar*

Chamber Chorus

INTERMISSION

Le Dernier Voyage

Sydney Guillaume
(b. 1982)

Pen Ying Fang, *Piano*

L'Abécédaire de Huon,
"Roi de Cambrai"

Philip Lasser
(b. 1963)

*A poetic adaptation into modern French of the
XIIIth Century Abecedary by
Huon, "Roi de Cambrai"*

featuring Fred Nangle, Elisa Peimer, Nate Mickelson
Andrew Adelson, *Oboe*
Violetta Maria Norrie, *Harp*
Hannah Kerwin, *Handbells*

Full Chorus

All soloists are listed in the order of appearance.

*Handbells courtesy of the Presbyterian Church at Bound Brook, New Jersey,
Benjamin T. Berman, Music Director.*

*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.*

An Invitation to the Voyage

French music is very often characterized by clarity, grace, charm and restraint. These traits are found in choral as well as instrumental music. The earliest composer on today's program, **Gabriel Fauré**, embodies these ideals completely.

Fauré's musical education started when he was sent at age nine to attend a boarding school in Paris, the École Niedermeyer. It was austere and gloomy, but in 11 years there he received an excellent musical education; Camille Saint-Saëns was his teacher. He received first prize at school for his *Cantique de Jean Racine* (*Song by Jean Racine*). In 1870 he volunteered for military service in the Franco-Prussian War, and he was awarded the Croix de Guerre.

Fauré was considered the most advanced composer of his generation, and he was especially successful at songs (he wrote over 100), piano works, and chamber music. As a professor at the Conservatoire de Paris, his students included Maurice Ravel and Nadia Boulanger. He became head of the Conservatory in 1905 and broadened its curriculum. In his later years he was admired by Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, and Aaron Copland. His most famous composition was his 1901 Requiem.

Originally written for chorus and organ, his popular *Cantique de Jean Racine* was later revised for chorus, harmonium, and string quartet and eventually fully orchestrated. Here, we perform it with piano accompaniment. Over serene and continuous arpeggiated figures in triplets, voices enter from lowest to highest, swelling from pianissimo to forte and back. The form is a simple ABA.

*Verbe égal au Très-Haut,
notre unique espérance,
Jour éternel de la terre
et des cieux;
De la paisible nuit nous
rompons le silence,
Divin sauveur,*

*Word equal to God, the Almighty,
our only hope,
Eternal day of the earth
and heavens;
We break the silence of
the peaceful night,
Divine Savior,*

jette sur nous les yeux!

*Répands sur nous le feu
de ta grâce puissante,
Que tout l'enfer fuie
au son de ta voix;
Dissipe le sommeil
d'une âme languissante
Qui la conduit à l'oubli
de tes lois!*

*Ô Christ, sois favorable
à ce peuple fidèle
Pour te bénir maintenant
rassemblé.
Reçois les chants qu'il offre
à ta gloire immortelle,
Et de tes dons qu'il
retourne comblé!*

look upon us!

*Fan the fire of your
powerful grace upon us,
So that all Hell may flee
at the sound of your voice;
Shake off the sleep
of a languishing soul
Who has forgotten
your laws!*

*O Christ, be kind to
these faithful people
Who have now
gathered to bless you.
Receive the chants they offer
to your immortal glory,
And may they come away
fulfilled with your gifts!*

— Jean Racine

English translation from lyricstranslate.com

While there are only a handful of choral works with guitar accompaniment, the Spanish songs of Federico García Lorca seem made for the instrument. The composer **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco** was born in Florence, where his career flourished early. An Italian of Spanish and Jewish heritage, he emigrated to America in 1939, settling first in New York and ultimately in southern California. He became a U.S. citizen in 1946. A prolific artist, he was an active film composer and composition teacher. His works for voice are considered among the best of his creations.

In 1932 Castelnuovo-Tedesco first met the Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia, whose work inspired him to write for the guitar. (He wrote almost 100 compositions for this instrument.) He was also inspired by great literature, especially the works of Keats, Wordsworth, Whitman, Cervantes, García Lorca, and Shakespeare. Another major source of inspiration and pride was his Jewish heritage. He

wrote a violin concerto influenced by that heritage, even in the face of rising antisemitism that was sweeping across Europe.

The *Romancero Gitano* is a seven-movement cycle written in 1951. (It is directly translated as *Gypsy Romance*, though Romani would be the more modern and correct term). The text is by Federico García Lorca, the Spanish playwright and poet who lived from 1898 to 1936, when he was shot (possibly by Falangist soldiers) at the start of the Spanish Civil War. García Lorca's work from the 1920s breathed new life into the old tradition of the Spanish ballad. Benet's *Reader's Encyclopedia* describes it as "evocative of the Andalusian countryside and its [Romani] people, a compelling fusion of naïve and primitive folk motifs and a deeply personal, thoroughly modern voice." The seven songs here come from Lorca's *Poema del Cante Jondo*, which can be translated as *Poem of the Deep Song*. "Cante Jondo" also means a type of flamenco singing. Lorca wrote that these songs represent "the scream of a dead generation, the sharp elegy of the disappeared centuries."

In the extended first movement, characteristically Spanish and Latin American rhythms are used, alternating 6/8 and 3/4 time. The introduction and postlude for guitar flow like the water of the three rivers in the title. The poetry vividly describes orange blossoms, olive trees, and lost love. The movement called "Procesión" is in three parts, all describing folk festivals and processions. (Fishing villages in Italy and Spain have festivals in which a statue of the Virgin is carried to the sea, where she blesses the boats.) "Memento" is marked "tempo de tango," while "Baile" is marked "tempo de seguidilla." As a bass soloist sings of an aging Carmen, the sopranos and altos imitate the sound of her castanets. In "Crótalo" we again have 6/8 and 3/4 meter in a description of a castanet (black beetle) marked "furioso."

1. Baladilla de los tres ríos

*El río Guadalquivir
va entre naranjos y olivos.*

1. Song of the Three Rivers

*The river Guadalquivir
flows between oranges and olives.*

Los dos ríos de Granada
bajan de la nieve al trigo.

¡Ay, amor que se fue y no vino!

El río Guadalquivir
tiene las barbas granates.
Los dos ríos de Granada
uno llanto y otro sangre.

¡Ay, amor que se fue por el aire!

Para los barcos de vela,
Sevilla tiene un camino;
por el agua de Granada
sólo reman los suspiros.

¡Ay, amor que se fue y no vino!

Guadalquivir, alta torre
y viento en los naranjales.
Dauro y Genil, torrecillas
muertas sobre los estanques.

¡Ay, amor que se fue por el aire!

¡Quién dirá que el agua lleva
un fuego fatuo de gritos!

¡Ay, amor que se fue y no vino!

Lleva azahar, lleva olivas,
Andalucía, a tus mares.

¡Ay, amor que se fue por el aire!

2. La guitarra

Empieza el llanto de la guitarra.
Se rompen las copas
de la madrugada.
Empieza el llanto de la guitarra.
Es inútil callarla.
Es imposible callarla.

The two rivers of Granada
descend from the white snows to the
wheat fields.

Ah, love that left, never to return!

The Guadalquivir
has a beard of garnet.
The two rivers of Granada,
one of tears and one of blood.

Ah, love that flew into thin air!

For boats under sail,
Seville has a channel;
In the waters of Granada,
only sighs remain.

Ah, love that left, never to return!

Guadalquivir, high tower
and wind in the orange groves.
Dauro and Genil,
lifeless cairns above the ponds.

Ah, love that flew into thin air!

Who can say how the waters carry a
vain fire of cries!

Ah, love that left, never to return!

Carry orange blossoms, carry olives,
Andalucia, down to the sea.

Ah love that flew into thin air!

2. The guitar

The weeping of the guitar begins.
The cups of dawn
are broken.
The weeping of the guitar begins.
It is useless to silence it.
It is impossible to silence it.

Llora monótona
como llora el agua,
como llora el viento
sobre la nevada.
Es inútil callarla.
Es imposible callarla.
Llora por cosas lejanas.
Arena del Sur caliente
que pide camelias blancas.
Llora flecha sin blanco,
la tarde sin mañana,
y el primer pájaro muerto
sobre la rama.
¡Oh, guitarra!
Corazón malherido
por cinco espadas.

3. Puñal

El puñal
entra en el corazón,
como la reja del arado
en el yermo.
No. No me lo claves. No.
El puñal,
como un rayo de sol,
incendia las terribles
hondonadas.
No. No me lo claves. No.

4. Procesión

I. Procesión

Por la calle vienen
extraños unicornios.
¿De qué campo?
¿De qué bosque mitológico?
Más cerca,

It cries, monotonously,
as the waters cry,
as the wind cries
over the snowfall.
It is useless to silence it.
It is impossible to silence it.
It weeps for things far away.
It asks the Sands of the South
for white camellias.
It cries for the arrow without a target,
for the afternoon without a morning,
and for the first bird who dies
on the branch.
Oh, guitar!
Heart wounded by five swords.

3. Dagger

The dagger
pierces the heart
like the blade of the plow
in dry mud.
No. Do not stab me. No.
The dagger,
like a ray of sun,
burns the desolate
ravines.
No. Do not stab me. No.

4. Procession

I. Procession

Down the road come
strange unicorns.
From what fields?
What mythological woods?
Circling closer,

*ya parecen astrónomos.
Fantásticos Merlines
y el Ecce Homo,
Durandarte encantado.
Orlando furioso.*

II. Paso

*Virgen con miriñaque,
virgen de la Soledad,
abierta como
un inmenso tulipán.
En tu barco de luces vas
por la alta marea
de la ciudad,
entre saetas turbias
y estrellas de cristal.
Virgen con miriñaque
tú vas por el río de la calle,
¡hasta el mar!*

III. Saeta

*Cristo moreno
pasa
de lirio de Judea
a clavel de España.
¡Miradlo, por dónde viene!*

*De España.
Cielo limpio y oscuro,
tierra tostada,
y cauces donde corre
muy lenta el agua.
Cristo moreno,
con las guedejas quemadas,
los pómulos salientes
y las pupilas blancas.
¡Miradlo, por dónde va!*

*they look like astronomers.
Ghostly Merlins
and the condemned Christ,
Enchanted Durandarte,
Orlando Furioso.*

II. Platform for Statue

*Virgin with glittering crinoline skirts,
virgin of solitude,
Opening like
an immense tulip.
In your boat of lights you sail
with the high tide
of the city,
among gypsy [sic] songs
and crystal stars.
Virgin with glittering crinoline skirts,
you float on the river of the street
to the sea!*

III. Holy Song

*The swarthy Christ
transforms
from the lily of Judea
to the carnation of Spain.
Look where he's coming from!*

*From Spain,
the sky, clean and dark,
the earth scorched,
and ditches where
water runs very slowly.
Swarthy Christ,
his locks of hair burned,
his cheekbones protruding
and his pupils white.
Look where he's going!*

5. Memento

*Cuando yo me muera,
enterradme con mi guitarra
bajo la arena.*

*Cuando yo me muera,
entre los naranjos
y la hierbabuena.*

*Cuando yo me muera,
enterradme, si quieries,
en una veleta.*

¡Cuando yo me muera!

6. Baile

*La Carmen está bailando
por las calles de Sevilla.
Tiene blancos los cabellos
y brillantes las pupilas.*

¡Niñas, corred las cortinas!

*En su cabeza se enrosca
una serpiente amarilla,
y va soñando en el baile
con galanes de otros días.*

¡Niñas, corred las cortinas!

*Las calles están desiertas
y en los fondos se adivinan,
corazones andaluces
buscando viejas espinas.*

¡Niñas, corred las cortinas!

6. Crótalo

*Crótalo.
Crótalo.*

5. Memento

*When I die,
bury me with my guitar
under the sand.*

*When I die,
between the orange trees
and the peppermint.*

*When I die,
bury me, as you wish,
on a weather vane.*

When I die!

6. Dance

*Carmen is dancing
in the streets of Seville.
Her hair is white
and her pupils sparkle.*

Girls, close the curtains!

*Around her head is entwined
a yellow snake,
and she is dreaming, dancing
with gentlemen from the past.*

Girls, close the curtains!

*The streets are deserted
and in the shadows are gleamed
Andalucian hearts
Unearthing old sorrows.*

Girls, close the curtains!

6. Castanet

*Castanet.
Castanet.*

Crótalo.
Escarabajo sonoro.

En la araña
de la mano
rizas el aire cálido,
y te ahogas en tu trino
de palo.

Crótalo.
Crótalo.
Crótalo.
Escarabajo sonoro.

Castanet.
Raucous black beetle.

In the spider legs
of a hand
you curl the hot air
and drown in your trill
of wood.

Castanet.
Castanet.
Castanet.
Raucous black beetle.

— Federico Garcia Lorca,
English translation by Richard Gard

Just as composer Castelnuovo-Tedesco moved from his native Italy to America in 1939, **Sydney Guillaume** moved from Haiti to America in 2010. He lives in Portland, Oregon, working as a full-time composer, conductor, and clinician. Nearly all his works are written on commission, and they include music written for Seraphic Fire, Westminster Chorus, St. Louis Chamber Singers, the Illinois Wesleyan University Collegiate Choir, and the University of Miami Frost Chorale. As a conductor, he has worked with ACDA choruses, World Choir Games, several All-State Choirs, and an all-Guillaume concert at Lincoln Center. In 2017, Guillaume was honored by the top music school in Haiti for his "great contribution in the expansion and the promotion of the music and culture of Haiti around the world."

Guillaume's *Le Dernier Voyage (The Final Voyage)* was commissioned by the St. Louis Chamber Chorus in 2012 and was recorded by the group in 2015. The work, set for 8-9 parts in close harmony, is challenging but rewarding to sing. The text is by poet Gabriel Guillaume, the composer's father, writing in French-Haitian dialect. The poignant verse reflects his move from Haiti to Miami following the earthquake of 2010. It is an extended metaphor: a sea voyage standing in for the journey of a life.

He describes life as a pilgrimage, using fragments from Ecclesiastes, Psalm 18 and Alphonse de Lamartine about the fragility of life and the inevitability of death. The first section ends with the sober reflection, "All humans must die." Everything changes in the second half as the poet says, "Therefore I live intensely" and describes exulting in joy, love, and serenity. The tempo is fast and the chorus repeats, "I live, I live, I live" (je vis, je vis, je vis). Brief snatches of melody are heard over the "pedal" of repeated notes in the lower voices. Complex rhythms juxtapose 3/4 and 6/8 patterns. Eventually the music slows and the opening lines about life as a pilgrimage return. As the St. Louis conductor, Philip Barnes, puts it, "the undeniable momentum culminates in the gradual lapping of our final waves on this earth."

*J'ai appris que ma vie
est un pèlerinage
Qui va de port en port
jusqu'au dernier voyage.
Le port de la naissance
et le port de l'enfance,
Le port de la jeunesse,
le port de la vieillesse.*

*I have learned that my life
is a pilgrimage
That goes from port to port
until the final voyage.
The port of birth
and the port of childhood,
The port of adulthood,
the port of old age.*

*J'ai appris que ma vie
est un pèlerinage
Qui va de port en port
jusqu'au dernier voyage.
Le port de la jouissance
et le port du bonheur,
Le port de la souffrance
et le port de la peur.*

*I have learned that my life
is a pilgrimage
That goes from port to port
until the final voyage.
The port of joy
and the port of happiness,
The port of suffering
and the port of fear.*

*A chacun de ces ports
je refais mes valises,
Et à chaque départ j'ai
mon cœur qui se brise.
Je vis de ces amours que
je veux éternels:
Mon pays, mes amis*

*At each of these ports
I repack my bags,
And at each departure I have
my heart that's broken.
I live from these loves that
I want eternal:
My country, my friends,*

et mes liens fraternels.
Mais j'ai appris encor:
«Tout n'est que vanité,
Mensonge, fragilité...
Le monde est passager.»
Oh oui, vraiment oui! Il ne sert
à rien de gagner l'univers,
Car le parfait bonheur
n'est pas sur cette terre.
L'expérience de la vie
m'apprit également:
Tout humain doit mourir
indubitablement.

Puisqu'il en est ainsi,
je vis intensément;
Chaque jour, à chaque heure
et dans tous les moments.
J'exulte d'allégresse
en dépit des malheurs,
Et la sérénité s'installe
dans mon cœur.

La souffrance et la mort,
la tristesse et la peur
Ne sauraient effacer ce
qui est essentiel.
La pierre rejetée par
nos grands bâtisseurs
Est pourtant devenue
notre pierre angulaire.
Sous les dents de la mort
notre vie disparaît;
Mais l'Amour bien vécu
demeure à tout jamais.

«L'homme est un dieu tombé
qui se souvient des cieux.»
Bien vivre dans l'Amour,
voilà ce qui est mieux.

and my fraternal bonds.
But I have learned as well:
"Everything is none but vanity,
lies, fragility...
The world is transient."
Oh yes, indeed! It is useless
to gain the whole world,
For the perfect happiness
is not on this earth.
Likewise the experience of life
taught me:
All human beings must die
undoubtedly.

As this is how it is,
I live intensely;
Every day, at every hour,
and in every moment.
I exult in joy
in spite of the misfortunes,
And serenity settles
in my heart.

Suffering and death,
sadness and fear
Could never take away what
is essential.
The stone rejected by
the builders
Has however become
our corner stone.
Under the teeth of death,
our life disappears;
But Love well-lived
remains forever.

"Man is a fallen god
who remembers the heavens."
To live well in Love,
that is what is best.

*Je remercie le Ciel
d'avoir compris enfin
Qu'il faut en toutes choses
considérer la fin.*

*I thank the Heavens
to have understood at last
That one must in all things
consider the end.*

*J'ai appris que ma vie
est un pèlerinage
Qui va de port en port
jusqu'au dernier voyage...*

*I have learned that my life
is a pilgrimage
That goes from port to port
until the final voyage...*

— Gabriel T. Guillaume
English translation by Guillaume

There were many strands of thought that led me to invite Philip Lasser to write a piece for this concert. One is that we sang his *Dreamkeeper* on poetry of Langston Hughes in 2022. I loved Lasser's choice of text and loved his music even more. The next strand is that in the winter of 2023, the NAS board suggested that I could choose a composer for a commission in my last season.

Before this, in the summer of 2021, I had been looking at an old issue of *The Choral Journal* and saw a review of Guillaume's *Le Dernier Voyage* which called it "stunning." I ordered the score and CD and decided we had to program it soon. In 2023 I was struck by the idea of doing a mostly French program with Guillaume as one major part. Realizing that Philip Lasser was French-American, I thought of pairing two substantial works in French and asked Philip to write a secular work in French. He agreed. By February he was searching for a medieval poem, by June he discovered *L'Abécédaire*, and by August the work was complete.

Due to Lasser's dual cultural roots, his music creates a unique sound that blends the colorful harmonies of French Impressionist sonorities with the dynamic rhythms and characteristics of American music. "My music travels at the speed of our lives today," he says. "Its modernity resides not so much in musical style as in the speed at which its materials move and develop."

At an early age, Lasser entered Nadia Boulanger's famed Ecole d'Arts Américaines in Fontainebleau, France. Following his studies at Harvard College, Lasser lived in Paris, where he worked with Boulanger's closest colleague and disciple, Narcis Bonet, and legendary pianist Gaby Casadesus. He received his master's degree from Columbia University while studying with René Leibowitz's disciple, Jacques-Louis Monod, and his doctorate from the Juilliard School, where he worked with David Diamond. Lasser has been a faculty member at the Juilliard School since 1994.

Lasser's prolific works can be heard on the Sony Classical, Telarc, New World, Crystal, and BMG RCA/Red Seal labels. His pieces have been performed worldwide by artists such as Simone Dinnerstein, Frank Almond, Zuill Bailey, Susanna Phillips, Sasha Cooke, Elizabeth Futral, Margo Garrett, Makoto Nakura and Cho-Liang Lin. Lasser's music has been performed by the Atlanta, Seattle, and Boulder Symphonies and the Berlin and the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestras.

For this piece, I asked Philip Lasser to explain his interest in the Middle Ages and his discovery of *L'Abécédaire*. Here is his statement:

I have long been fascinated by the literature of the Middle Ages, particularly the French writers of the 13th-15th century. The topics they choose, their styles and their treatment of language seem so phenomenally modern that oftentimes, it seems that they could be writing today.

The technique they exhibit, whether writing sestinas, ballads, sonnets or epic poems, is always at the forefront of their art; it was just as important to fine-tune the way things were said as what was being actually said.

The Abecedary was just such a poetic form popular in the Middle Ages. Basically, each stanza begins with a letter in alphabetical order. Many of the Abecedaries were written by men and women alike, and most often their subject matter was devoutly Christian.

This is why Huon's Abecedary that we hear tonight is so unusual. The poet is not only taking each letter in alphabetical order as the starting point for each verse but also commenting on the letters themselves, some religious, some bawdy, some evil. With infinite wit, Huon not only describes the letters but also gives them life and personality.

The poem itself was too long for a sung work. Also, it is written in Medieval French. I turned the poem into modern French and distilled each verse to the essence of what the poet felt about the letter. Some of his puns are quite witty, and I tried to give an impression of them in the translation I have provided for the work.

Finally, there are 24 letters in the old French alphabet, including a "Titulus" which, in the words of the poet himself, is really not a letter and therefore does not truly exist!

As a result of this wonderful project, launched and eagerly championed by Clara Longstreth and the New Amsterdam Singers, I was able to befriend a wonderful unknown poet, self-declared "Roi de Cambrai" (King of Cambrai), but who was much more likely simply a traveling minstrel.

It is my hope that this work will bring a smile to our modern world through the humor and wit of Huon the medieval poet, and, in so doing, celebrate the wonderful achievement of Clara's 57 years as music director of the New Amsterdam Singers.

Philip Lasser

*Si le roi de Cambrai envoie
Son Art et son bon sens
Sur une autre voie
 que celle de l'éloquence
Il est facile à dire
Qu'il sera accueilli
 en de lieux les meilleurs.*

*If the king of Cambrai sends
His Art and good sense
On another path
 but that of eloquence,
It would be easy to say
That he would be received
 in the best places.*

Je vous dis bien sans
parchemin

Que tant d'hommes vont
par des chemins

Qui ne se tiennent pas sur
des droites voies.

Et ils y vont
à toute allure.

Je leur conseille de prendre
pause pour un moment

Avant de prendre la
mauvaise voie.

Écoutez ce que veut dire le **"A"**

C'est pour de bonnes raisons
qu'il est placé là

"A" exige que l'on ouvre
grand la bouche,

C'est à cela qu'aspirent tous
les prélats.

Inutile de leur apprendre

Car leur premier désir
est de prendre.

Celui qui a conçu les ABC

Le fit commencer par "A."

Car sans le "A" je ne puis
dire "avoir."

Je ne peux nommer aucun
bien sans **"B."**

Tous les bienfaits commencent
bien par "B,"

Et jamais sans "B" seront-ils
bien faits.

Tout le monde doit aimer le **"C"**

Car le "C" signifie la Croix

Ôtez le "C" de Croix et vous
obtiendrez le Roi!

I tell you well, without
(the use of) parchment

That so many men
go down paths

That do not hold to the straight
and narrow.

And they go down these paths
at top speed.

I would caution them to
pause for a moment

Before taking the
wrong path.

Listen to what the **"A"** means

It is for good reason

that it is placed first (là).

"A" demands that we open
wide our mouths,

This is certainly to what all the
Cardinals aspire.

Pointless to teach (apprendre) them

For their first desire
is to take (prendre)

He who first conceived of the ABC's

Had it begin with the letter "A"

For without "A," I cannot say
"to have" (avoir).

I can name no

good (bien) without **"B."**

All good deeds (bienfaits)
indeed begin with "B,"

And never, without "B" would they
be well done (bien faits).

Everyone must love the **"C"**

For the "C" signifies the Cross

Remove the "C" from Cross and you
will obtain the King (Roi)!

Et le **"D"** évoque l'image
de Dieu,
Mais le **"D"** trouva le
"C" bien amer.

Je vous parlerai ensuite de **"E."**
Il n'est guère long ni large.
Il est très petit et très courbé.
Si Ève n'avait pas mordu
dans le fruit défendu...
Vous comprenez bien
que sans **"E,"**
Nul ne pourrait nommer Ève.

"F" a ramené la joie
(dans ce monde.)
La Foi a ramené la joie
dans ce monde.

Le **"G"** aussi signifie
la "joie" ("goie")
Qui revint dans le monde
Grâce au **"F"** de la Femme
Comme on le raconte.

Je vous parlerai ensuite de **"H,"**
Les uns disent "Ache"
Les autres disent "Ha."
"H" est un cri, un cri!
Et la hache ressemble plus
à une arme
qu'aucune autre lettre,
À ce qu'il me semble.

Maintenant le **"I,"**
Le plaisir du monde
est plus bref
que le petit corps du **"I."**

Qu'a donc cette lettre **"K,"**
mon Dieu?

And the **"D"** evokes the image
of God (Dieu)
But the **"D"** found the
"C" rather bitter.

I will now speak to you of **"E."**
It is neither long nor wide.
It is very small and bent-over.
If Eve had not bitten
into the forbidden fruit...
You understand
that without **"E,"**
No one could name Eve.

"F" has brought back joy
(in this world)
As Faith has brought back joy
to this world.

The **"G"** also represents
joy ("goie" in old French)
Which returned to the world
Thanks to the **"F"** of Woman (Femme)
So they say.

I will now speak to you of **"H,"**
Some say "Ache"
Others say "Ha"
"H" is a scream, a scream!
And the ax (ache) looks more like
a weapon
than any other letter
So it seems to me.

Now the **"I,"**
Pleasure in this world
is much more brief
than the little body of the **"I."**

What's going on with this letter **"K,"**
my goodness?

Elle crie toujours quand
on la nomme.

Cette mauvaise lettre
a deux ventres,
Elle veut toujours
la panse pleine.

Le **"L"** c'est la Loi.
La Loi que Dieu nous a donnée.
L'ordre établi dans le monde.
"L" signifie en somme, je crois,
Lettres, Langage et Loi.

"M" est le joyau de toutes
les lettres.
"M" est douceur, "M" est Marie,
"M" a trois pieds.
Amputée d'un pied,
"M" prendrait bien
la forme du **"N,"**
...Qu'un trait.

"O" est rond comme le monde.
Il marque le début
et la fin du monde.

"P" signifie le paradis
Et le Père qui créa les
jours, le ciel, la terre, la nuit.

"P" signifie la
pomme défendue.
L'arbre poussait dans le paradis.

Le **"Q"** est une lettre bien
mal tournée,
Tout comme le "Q" marche
à l'envers.
Il a l'arrière à l'avant,
Vilain est le "Q."

She always screams when we speak
her name.

This nasty letter
has two stomachs
She always wants to have
her belly full.

The **"L"** is the Law.
The Law that God has given us.
The order established on this earth.
"L" represents all told, I believe,
Letters, Language and Law.

"M" is the treasure among all
the letters.
"M" is sweetness, "M" is Mary,
"M" has three feet.
Amputated of one foot,
"M" would take
the shape of the **"N,"**
...Just one line.

"O" is round like the world.
It marks the beginning
and the end of the world.

"P" signifies Paradise
And the father (Père) who created the
days, the sky, the earth, the night.

"P" signifies also the
forbidden apple (pomme).
The tree grew in Paradise.

"Q" is a letter quite
badly formed,
All who are like the "Q" walk
backwards.
He has his rear-end in the front,
Nasty is the "Q."

Le **"R"** est une lettre qui grince,
Par mauvais caractère.
Il peut nommer le mauvais riche,
Et dire tout haut
sa mauvaise renommée.

"S" est une lettre Sainte.
Il signifie le sens et le silence.
La Sagesse, la patience et
l'"honnesteté" (honnêteté).

Je vais vous décrire
l'apparence du **"T."**
Il est bien tordu et contracté.
Il a les allures d'un
espion disgracieux,
Ramassé sur lui-même
Comme les mots
"Trahison," "Tricherie,"
"Traître," "Tricheur."

Le **"V"** a la forme du gibet.
Là, il se passa honteusement
la corde au cou,
Et s'étrangla.

Je vous dirai comment
est le **"X."**
Lettre à quatre extrémités
Qui signifient les quatre coins
du monde.

"Y" se prononce comme
deux lettres.
Les Hébreux ont emprunté
une lettre des Grecs
Pour dénommer Dieu
Croyant que Dieu ne
la comprendrait pas!
Quelle folie!

"R" is a letter that grinds,
Owing to its ugly nature.
He can name the mean rich man,
And speak aloud of
his bad reputation.

"S" is a Saintly letter.
It signifies common Sense and Silence.
Sagacity, patience and
Hon"es"ty.

I will describe to you
the appearance of **"T."**
He is quite twisted and constricted.
He looks like an
unsightly spy,
Collapsed on himself,
Like the words
"Treason," "Trickery,"
"Traitor," "Cheater" (Tricheur).

"V" has the shape of the gallows
There, in shame he slipped
the noose around his neck
And strangled himself.

I will tell you now
about the **"X."**
A letter with four extremities
That signify the four corners of
the earth.

"Y" is pronounced as
two letters. (I-Grec)
The Hebrews borrowed
a letter from the Greeks
To name God (Ya-We)
Thinking that God would not
understand it!
What craziness!

La lettre est mince comme un fil,
Comme le Fils de Dieu.

Le **"Z"** est une lettre grecque.
J'ai de la peine à vous la décrire,
Car on la rencontre
que rarement.
Et pourtant elle nous
est très utile:
Une lettre sage,
précieuse et élégante.

Mon ABC finit par le **"Titulus,"**
Mais ce n'est pas
une véritable lettre.
Il abrège ou remplace.
Il indique le chapitre
ou l'alinéa.
Celui que étudie les ABC
Arrive donc ici
à la dernière lettre,
Qui en somme n'existe pas.

Celui que l'on appelle
le Roi de Cambrai
A voulu ici éprouver son talent.
Quand le début
de l'oeuvre est bon
Et que le sage en fait l'éloge,
Celui qui l'a fait l'apprécie
encore plus
Et s'en réjouit si vivement.

The letter is thin like a filament (fil)
Like the Son (fils) of God.

"Z" is a Greek letter.
It is difficult for me to describe it
Since we see it
so rarely.
Nonetheless, it is very
useful to us:
A wise letter,
precious and elegant.

My ABC ends with the **"Titulus,"**
But this is not
a real letter.
It abbreviates or replaces.
It indicates the chapter
or the paragraph.
He who studies the ABC's
Arrives thus
at the final letter.
Which in fact does not exist!

He who is named
the King of Cambrai
Wished here to show his talent.
When the work has
a good beginning
and the wise man praises it,
He who made it appreciates it
even more
And rejoices in it most happily.

— Huon, "Roi de Cambrai"
English translation by Philip Lasser

New Amsterdam Singers

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New Amsterdam Singers

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About the Artists

New Amsterdam Singers, now in its 57th 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 tonight's commission by Philip Lasser and works by Carol Barnett, Lisa Bielawa, and Ben Moore commissioned for the group's 50th anniversary, recent world premieres include compositions by Matthew Harris, Paul Alan Levi, Elizabeth Lim, Robert Paterson, and Ronald Perera. Our most recent independent 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 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 57 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, *11th & 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.

Oren Fader, *Guitar*, has performed with a wide range of classical and new music groups, including the Met Chamber Ensemble, New York City Opera, New York Philharmonic, New York Festival of Song, Mark Morris Dance Group, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He has also played as a soloist with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the New Jersey, Danbury, and Omaha Symphonies.

Festival performances include Aspen, Tanglewood, Mostly Mozart, Bach Oregon, Istanbul, and Morelia, Mexico. Mr. Fader performs frequently with mezzo-soprano Jessica Bowers as the Bowers Fader Duo. He has premiered over 200 solo and chamber works with guitar and can be heard on 50 commercial recordings and film, including for the films "Everything Is Illuminated" (Schreiber) and "Little Women" (Gerwig).

Since 1994, Mr. Fader has been on the guitar and chamber music faculty of the Manhattan School of Music. He also directs the classical guitar programs at SUNY Purchase and Montclair State University, and is on the faculty of the Borough of Manhattan Community College. (orenfader.com)

Andrew Adelson, *Oboe*, has played solo English horn/Oboe in the New Jersey Symphony for 25 years. His 2 CD album, *The Bach Suites Reimagined*, is the world premiere recording of the complete Bach Cello Suites BWV 1007-1012 on English horn.

He has also performed with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York City Ballet Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Los

Angeles Philharmonic, Mexico City Philharmonic, and in many musicals on Broadway.

A dedicated teacher, Adelson is on faculty at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at the Juilliard School, where he continues to teach master classes in Interpersonal and Ensemble Skills for the Orchestral Player.

Violetta Maria Norrie, *Harp*, plays with diverse range and ability and is praised for her "powerful command and nuanced facility." She began playing the harp at the age of 6, after falling in love with the instrument at the New York Renaissance Faire. Violetta is the newly appointed principal harpist of the Cape Symphony, and has also performed with the Princeton Symphony, Harrisburg Symphony, the Experiential Orchestra and as a featured soloist with Young New Yorker's Choir and NYC Master Chorale.

She has performed throughout NYC at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Recital Hall, the Academy of Arts and Letters, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Spectrum, and Roulette, and played internationally in Paris, Powell River, Canada, and Jaragua do Sul, Brazil. Violetta has been featured on MTV's Silent Library and the Harmony ad campaign for Emirates Airlines. Violetta is an advocate for new music, premiering countless works. She plays regularly with new music ensembles Contemporaneous, Ensemble Echappé, and LPR Ensemble, and was a featured guest artist at the Tanglewood Contemporary Music Festival. She is a founding member of versicolor, Yale School of Music's all-student run new music ensemble.

Violetta holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Susan Jolles, and a Master of Music degree from Yale School of Music under the tutelage of Dr. June Han, and has studied at the Paris Conservatory with Isabelle Moretti and Sivan Magen.

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Visit www.nasingers.org for the latest chorus news, recordings, and videos. You can also see the many commissions and premieres that New Amsterdam Singers has been proud to present (hover over "Music" and click on "What We Sing").

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A Few of My Favorite Things, May 16 & 18, 2025

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