

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

2024 - 2025

ANNUAL REPORT



MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Clara Longstreth



When I plan a year's repertoire, I want to include a variety of music for the season as a whole and for each individual program. We need challenging repertoire, some of it brand new, and if possible a theme for each concert.

Knowing that this was my last season, I wanted each program to include works by composers of color. I also wanted to include some personal favorites from past seasons: Bach, pieces in French, and works of Ben Moore and Abbie Betinis. As always, I know that the music I love will find a place in the hearts of singers and listeners.

I am proud that the Board and the chorus have shared my commitment to the work of living composers. Commissioning a major work for my farewell season was a real gift - Philip Lasser's "L'Abécédaire" was a success beyond all expectations. A delight!

The 2024-2025 season included three programs plus some extra events relating the transitional year. Other reports will cover the transition and the "Party for Clara" (which I enjoyed enormously, but should not report on). I will stick to the music, and only comment on how grateful I have been all year that the Board handled the non-musical aspects of chorus life so that I could focus on the music.

DECEMBER (A Winter Tapestry)

These concerts included two works in the "old favorites" category, Bach's double chorus motet, "Ich lasse dich nicht," and "A Ceremony of Carols" by Benjamin Britten. Two works by the living composer Morten Lauridsen demonstrated the range of this "best selling" composer, "O Magnum Mysterium," and the far more complex "Mid-Winter Songs." While the women relished working on Britten's medieval and Renaissance texts, the men faced a steeper challenge - the unfamiliar language in their Yiddish folk songs.

MARCH (An Invitation to the Voyage)

This program focused on French language pieces for the full chorus and Spanish language for Chamber Chorus. The commissioned work by Philip Lasser, "L'Abécédaire," was daunting due to so much French, but totally rewarding once the words were learned. He chose texts from the 13th Century, and composed a delightful piece with oboe, harp, and handbells. Almost as popular with singers was Sydney Guillaume's "Le Dernier Voyage," with a moving text and atmospheric harmonies. Chamber Chorus enjoyed "Romancero Gitano" by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco on beautiful poetry by Federico Garcia-Lorca with guitar accompaniment.

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

continued



MAY (A Few of my Favorite Things)

There were, as advertised, "favorite things," which included works by Ronald Perera, Matt Harris, Michael Dellaira, Tara Mack, Robert Paterson, and Abbie Betinis.

Among the new-to-us works were two by Undine Smith Moore, considered "the dean of Black women composers," one by Marques Garrett, and one by John W. Work III. The favorite pieces for many singers and listeners were the emotionally gripping songs, "Dear Theo" and "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by Ben Moore.

The applause - for the singing and for the end of the "Clara era"- led us to sing an encore, Matt Harris's "Tell me where is fancy bred," ending the concert on a lively note.

Finally, here is a chance to say what working with New Amsterdam Singers for 57 years has meant to me. I can summarize my experience as PURE JOY. From the beginning I was given the freedom to choose music I loved, and that I knew the chorus would love. Somehow the repertoire we sang influenced the kind of singers who wanted to join us. The singers of NAS have a variety of skills, some most accomplished for their voices, some most accomplished for their musicianship. Each singer worked hard to support the music and each other. The gratitude showed by singers for being in the group is more than matched by my gratitude in getting to work with you all. I was especially aware of the focus and enthusiasm in our final concerts. I cannot imagine a more talented, dedicated, close knit community. It has been a privilege to lead you.

With love,
Clara

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Michelle Neary



It was a momentous season for us – Clara's last as Music Director after 57 years. Our goal was to give her a proper send off, set us up for the beginning of our next chapter, and of course sing some wonderful music! She shared more about her three memorable programs in her letter above. It was the perfect mix of old and new that NAS is known for, all the way from Bach to a brand-new commission from Philip Lasser, "L'Abécédaire." We also had the pleasure of revisiting some favorite pieces of Clara's and of the chorus, many of which were written by composers with whom Clara has worked closely over the years.

Alongside our performances in Clara's final season, we worked behind-the-scenes to search for our next Music Director - someone that would be the right fit to carry us into the future. We wanted to find someone who had a conducting style that meshed well with our singers, who would program an exciting mix of music as Clara always did, but also who would have their own ideas (and the freedom to explore them).

The Transition Committee we established last season continued their work of designing and executing a thoughtful process to allow us and potential candidates for Music Director to get to know each other. After interviewing candidates virtually and then in person, they selected four finalists for conductor auditions. These were essentially two-hour rehearsals that allowed us to get a real understanding of what it would be like to sing with each conductor. Many of our singers were able to attend and gave thoughtful feedback. Ultimately, taking into account singer feedback, programming plans, and all the other factors, the committee recommended that we hire Ben Arendsen, who exhibited excellent musicianship, strong technical conducting skills, the capacity to help us produce excellent choral tone, as well as personal warmth and genuineness. The board was delighted to approve. Thanks to the committee - Orren Alperstein, Robin Beckhard, Elizabeth Hardin, Nate Mickelson, Diana Solomon-Glover, Donna Zalichin - for all their hard work!

In the meantime, we wanted to celebrate Clara's special and significant tenure, so we put together a party for her at our long-time rehearsal location, Broadway Presbyterian Church, complete with some musical surprises. We also put together a benefit at the Yacht Club to mark the turning over of the helm from Clara to Ben. You can read more about each of these special events later in the report.

It has been an absolute pleasure to sing with Clara over the last seven years for me personally, and the last 57 years as a chorus. She has left a remarkable legacy, and we are looking forward to continuing and expanding upon that legacy with Ben as we look to the future.

TREASURER'S REPORT



Orren Alperstein

What an exciting year this has been! You can read about the details in the Music Director, President and Celebration reports, but in financial terms we are excited to report that we have ended the year in the black (\$38,728) in contrast to the small shortfall we had anticipated (-\$11,443). It is very clear: we have ended the year almost exactly on budget in every revenue category except development, where we dramatically exceeded expectations. We budgeted conservatively, recognizing that with Clara’s retirement her last year was going to be somewhat unpredictable. Due to an outpouring of support and love for Clara, our annual benefit and individual/corporate/foundation donations significantly surpassed our expectations, while our expenses actually came in somewhat under budget, bringing us comfortably into the black.

Was this year an anomaly? We think so, but we really don’t know, and we will continue to budget conservatively as we work our way through the transition and explore expanded musical territory with our new Music Director. We are actively focused on addressing the current 2025-2026 season, as well as planning for the future. We spent down our 50th Anniversary Fund, and expect changes in our historical pattern of donations, volatility in our endowment investments, shifts in singers and consequently our audience, and continued competition for funding in the arts. To begin to address these challenges, we have planned an October strategic planning retreat where we will thoroughly and creatively examine our options. If you have any ideas for us as we undertake this process, we would love to hear from you! Reach out to Stefanie Izzo, our manager, at manager@nasingers.org.

ASSETS	6/30/2024	6/30/2025
General Operating	\$73,797	\$127,966.00
50th Anniversary Funds	\$19,168	\$0
Private Trust	\$27,407	\$26,918
Endowment	\$335,981	\$367,234
TOTAL	\$456,352.40	\$522,118.21

24-25 Ticket Sales

	Budgeted	In Person	Streaming	Total Income
December	\$11,000	\$10,895	\$1,921	\$12,816
March	\$9,000	\$6,406	\$1,532	\$7,938
May	\$10,500	\$8,656	\$1,380	\$10,126
TOTAL	\$30,500	\$25,957	\$4,833	\$30,880

TREASURER'S REPORT continued



	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Budgeted	2024-25 Actual
GENERAL OPERATING REVENUE			
Ticket Sales & Performances	\$34,830	\$31,100	\$31,480
Dues/CD Sales/Music Rentals	\$16,502	\$16,100	\$17,106
Benefits & Events	\$53,480	\$40,000	\$56,507
Individual/Corporate/Foundation Donations	\$54,300	\$61,000	\$88,085
<i>Total General Operating Revenue</i>	\$159,112	\$148,200	\$193,178
SPECIAL ACTIVITY REVENUE			
50th Anniversary Campaign Donations	\$0	\$0	\$0
Private Trust Gift	\$63	\$0	\$0
<i>Total Special Activity Revenue</i>	\$63	\$0	\$0
TOTAL REVENUE: GENERAL + SPECIAL	\$159,175	\$148,200	\$193,178
GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES			
Personnel	\$69,445	\$76,000	\$74,831
Concert, Rehearsal, Music	\$33,373	\$22,250	\$26,325
Promotion/Development	\$43,198	\$39,100	\$33,057
Other Operating Expenses	\$17,366	\$16,561	\$16,778
Outreach	\$0	\$500	\$0
<i>Total General Operating Expenses</i>	\$163,382	\$154,411	\$150,991
SPECIAL ACTIVITY EXPENSES			
Commissioned Works/Transition	\$5,000	\$8,500	\$9,594
Guest Artists	\$31,648	\$18,800	\$14,823
Covid-Related Expenses	\$1,127	\$500	\$489
<i>Total Special Activity Expenses</i>	\$37,775	\$27,800	\$24,906
TOTAL EXPENSES:GENERAL + SPECIAL	\$201,157	\$182,211	\$175,897
INCREASE/DECREASE	(\$41,982)	(\$34,011)	\$17,282
ENDOWMENT EARNINGS TRANSFER	\$0	\$3,500	\$4,600
ANNIVERSARY FUND/PRIVATE FAMILY TRUST TRANSFER	\$47,750	\$21,568	\$19,657
INTEREST (CHECKING/SAVINGS)	\$1,307	\$1,000	\$1,789
NET TOTAL INCREASE/DECREASE	\$7,075	(\$11,443)	\$38,728

THE GREAT MUSICAL VOYAGE

Celebrating Clara Longstreth & Ben Arendsen



NAS held our annual fundraising benefit on May 5 at the NY Yacht Club's Model Room, a lovely and unique venue which houses a large collection of full- and half-hull models. The setting lent itself wonderfully to a lively celebration of the "passing of the baton" from our founder and retiring Music Director Clara Longstreth, to incoming Music Director Ben Arendsen. The event included live performances of sea shanties by NAS chorus members, complete with a sing-along, as well as Arendsen accompanying NAS manager Stefanie Izzo on guitar for a special performance of an Italian song.

95 donors, chorus members, and friends of NAS joined in for this special celebration, which netted over \$21,000 towards the long-term financial and artistic goals of the chorus.



All photos by Harold Levine

CELEBRATING CLARA

Donna W. Zalichin



The 2024-25 season was in some ways much like those that preceded it. But in so many ways it was unlike any we have had in our long and storied history. There wasn't a singer among us who wasn't trying to make this season special for Clara - our beloved Music Director. And while Clara planned a season of old and new music that was special to her, we had a few surprises in mind as well.

Anyone who knows Clara knows that she doesn't like to be fussed over. But if there's anything worth making a fuss over, it's a Music Director who has led the same chorus for 57 years. With Clara's permission (and after a bit of persuasion), we planned a party and sent invitations far and wide. It was a grand party - the sanctuary of Broadway Presbyterian Church, where we have rehearsed for over 40 years, was transformed into a magical garden, complete with cherry trees and blossoms galore. Former singers came from Chicago, Texas, Mississippi, Washington, and France. There was memorabilia aplenty - Kate Leahy culled through 57 years of programs and compiled lists of all the singers onto large panels; and Hannah Kerwin's trove of photos and clippings provided guests with many opportunities to remember what we looked like "way back when." The general consensus was that the person who had changed the least was Clara!

But back to the surprises. We presented Clara with two books. Rick Hibberd designed and produced "The Repertoire of a Career in Choral Music," a collection of all 57 years of NAS programs, complete with photographs of performances and concert venues. And Dana Crowell produced a book entitled "Dear Clara - Tributes and Memories, 57 Seasons of New Amsterdam Singers," to which 124 people contributed stories, recollections, and photographs. The books captured so many aspects of the music and camaraderie that have nourished the NAS community over the years.

The last surprise was the hardest to pull off. Over a year in advance, as the plan for celebrating Clara began to take shape, the Board commissioned six composers with whom Clara had worked over the years to write short pieces in her honor that we could learn without the benefit of Clara's tutelage and perform for her at the party. Composers were given free rein, with the only instruction that the piece be under two minutes in length, for SATB chorus, and suitable for reduced forces to master with very little rehearsal time. The compositions were all excellent and well performed. And Clara was indeed surprised and very, very pleased.

Brava, Maestra, and thank you from all of us.

Compositions:

Lisa Bielawa - Reverie for Clara

Ben Moore - We Will Sing our Song

Carol Barnett - Longfellow Channels Luther

Dale Trumbore - Emmeline

Matthew Harris - Blessing

Paul Alan Levi - It was a lover and his lass

CELEBRATING CLARA



All photos by Harold Levine

CELEBRATING CLARA



All photos by Harold Levine

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF | 2024-2025



Board of Directors

Michelle Neary, President
Donna W. Zalichin, Vice-President
Orren Alperstein, Treasurer
Robin D. Beckhard, Secretary

Robert H. Palmer
Susan H. Perkins
A. Robert Pietrzak
Gwendolyn D. Simmons
Ellen G. Stark
Elizabeth Stein

Advisory Council

Joanne Hubbard Cossa
Amy Kaiser
Richard Kessler
Paul Alan Levi
Allan Miller
Diana Solomon-Glover
Brian Zeger

Staff

Clara Longstreth, Music Director
T.J. Barnes, Assistant Conductor
Pen Ying Fang, Accompanist
Stefanie Izzo, Manager

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS | 2024-2025



SOPRANOS

Orren Alperstein
Robin D. Beckhard*
Martha Beckwith
Colleen Blain
Laura Cohen**
Dana Crowell**
Susan Daum
Naomi Draper
Lillie Dremeaux
Rebecca Harris
Laura Klein
Abigail Kniffin
Dana Kramer
Alyssa Lafosse
Kate Leahy
Jaime Leifer**
Michelle Neary*
M. Tracey Ober
Andrea Olejar**
Lauren Osborne
Judith Pott*
Clara Schuhmacher**
Bernardica Sculac Stern
Elizabeth Stein
Elspeth Strang
Miki Takebe
Jennifer Trahan

ALTOS

Gabi Barton
Cindy Brome
Isabel Colman
Johanna de la Cruz
Rebecca Dee*
Jenny Delson
Stephanie Golob
Elizabeth Hardin
Sally Hoskins*
Nora Isacoff
Eva Karolczak
Daniela Kempf
Hannah Kerwin
Betty Kulleseid
Naya Mukherji
Elisa Peimer
Daniela Ramos
Charlotte Rucker**
Ellen Stark*
Vera Sziklai
Briel Waxman
Donna Zalichin
Barbara Zucker-
Pinchoff

TENORS

Paul Blanchard*
Nathaniel Granor**
James Gregory
Jonathan Gutterman
Thomas Haller
Bill Hunter
Jason Lowenhar
Robert Marlowe
Nate Mickelson
Paul Parsekian*
Bob Pietrzak
John Pinegar
Adam Poole
Benj Prud'homme
Tim Sachs**
Hsin Wang

BASSES

Richard Abel
Bendix Anderson*
T.J. Barnes
Michael Berger
James Crowell
Walter Daum
Jethro Eisenstein
Eli Enenbach
Brian Farrell
Steven Hanna
Philip Holmgren**
Steve Holtje*
Michael Landy*
John Leuenhagen
Fred Nangle
Robert Palmer
David Recca
Raymond Wells*
Rafael Yuste

*Chamber Chorus

**Chamber Chorus Only

ANNUAL FUND DONORS | 2024-2025



ARCHANGELS

(\$2,500 and greater)

Orren Alperstein
Robin D. Beckhard & Bryan R. Shelby
Peter Davoren & Stacey Farley
Hanne & Jeremy Grantham*
William Hunter & J. Christian Annalora*
Mary K. Libby
Charles Raskob Robinson*
Robert H. Palmer
Bob Pietrzak & Nancy Fuchs
Susan H. Perkins
Charlotte Rocker
Donna Zalichin & Barry Kramer*

ANGELS

(\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Anonymous
Robin & Ralph Arditi
Dori Beckhard*
Eric Brose & Janice Seymour*
Nicky Chapin
Anke Dening
John & Gail Duncan
Constance Hoguet & Richard Neel
Katherine Leahy
Ann McKinney
Allan Miller
Bettina Murray
Barry S. Pinchoff & Barbara Zucker-Pinchoff
Judith Pott
Susan St. John*
Betsy Scott
Anthony & Margo Viscusi*
Robert & Ginny Walther
Cecil & Gilda Wray*

BENEFACTORS

(\$500 - \$999)

Lucinda Ballard
Tom & Nancy Berner
Joseph Brooks
Ari & Nancy Brose
In Memory of Carlton C. Brose
Jenny G. Delson
Jethro Eisenstein & Stefany Gordon
Carol Hamilton
Frieda Holober
Virginia & Timothy Millhiser*
Penelope & Xavier Pi-Sunyer
Diane & Larry Sobin
Jennifer Trahan
Rae Zimmerman

PATRONS

(\$250 - \$499)

Sarah & Doug Banker
Jutta & Hans Bertram-Nothnagel
Linda Bookheim
Meridee & John Brust*
Sam Bryan & Amy Scott
Beth & John Dugan
Joanne Hubbard Cossa
Hannah M. Kerwin
Lucy Kraus
Andy James
Jaime C. Leifer & Tom Denniston
Anne & Larry Martz
Guna & Robert Mundheim
Janet Neary°
Lee Potter
Hugh Rosenbaum
Ray Scheindlin & Janice Meyerson
Fritz Schwarz & Frederica Perera
Cynthia & Thomas Sculco

Christopher Smeall
Diana Solomon-Glover
Paul Sperry & Beatrice Mitchell
Ellen Stark
Kate Stiassni
Anne Todd & Frederick Osborn III
Raymond G. Wells
Scott Wilson & Mondy Raibon
Matthew & Myra Zuckerbraun

SPONSORS

(\$150 - \$249)

Charlesanna & Bill Ecker^
Thomas Emmons
Margaret Kulleseid
Michelle Neary
Mary Hawkins Sachs
Bill & Sharon Simpson

FRIENDS

(up to \$149)



Anne Marie & Jonathan Berger
Ruth Brooks
Barry R. Bryan
Dana Boocock Crowell
M De Saxe
Timothy DeWerff & Ibrahim Durul
Jane Wallison Stein Dougan
Jim Finder
Karen Freedman^
Carol & Victor Gallo
Alex Gelinas & Linda Sosnowitz
Tamar & Marshal Granor
Mary Harris
Matthew & Bonnie Harris
Molly Hazen
Priscilla Holmgren
Jeff & Juliette Hyson*
Debra Kaye*
Daniela Kempf
John G. Koeltl
Cynthia & William Krause
Ariana Kropsky
Nicola Lagonigro
Marcia Littlejohn
Jason Lowenhar
Susan McCormick
Lina Morielli
Emily Nammacher
Edward Nunes
Martha G. Otis
Jim & Julie Phelps
Sarah Plimpton
Gritli Rabin
Jay Rollins

Maryann Seduski
Nealie Small
Dr. Richard Smoker
Christopher St. John
Elizabeth Stein
Vera Sziklai
Quynh Thai+
Christine Thomas & Denny Denniston
Lee Wasserman
Will Maitland Weiss & Elspeth Strang
James Welby
Laila Williamson

**In Honor of Clara Longstreth*

^In Honor of Donna Zalichin

+In Honor of Orren Alperstein

°In Honor of Michelle Neary

Our concerts are made possible by the generous support of our donors. This donor list reflects contributions received from July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025.

If we have inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, we apologize; please let us know by email at manager@nasingers.org.

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

P.O. Box 373
Cathedral Station
New York, NY 10025
info@nasingers.org

www.nasingers.org
 [@NewAmsterdamSingers](https://www.facebook.com/NewAmsterdamSingers)
 [@newamsterdamsingers](https://www.instagram.com/newamsterdamsingers)
 nasingers.org/youtube

Scan for info on upcoming events in the 25-26 season:

