

O U R *Boundless* H U M A N I T Y

MENDELSSOHN CHORUS OF PHILADELPHIA'S 152ND SEASON

Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor
Heather Mitchell, Associate Artistic Director



Photography by Kelsey DeJesus

A Feast of Carols

December 13, 2025 / 2pm & 5pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Chestnut Hill

MCCHORUS.ORG

From the Executive Director

Thank you for joining us for *A Feast of Carols*, an annual tradition of holiday music at St. Paul's Episcopal Church since 2003. For us, the holiday season begins the moment we start rehearsing this cherished repertoire that celebrates the magic and wonder of the season.



This concert marks a truly special milestone: the world premiere of *Great Miracles*, by acclaimed Philly-born composer Rex Isenberg. This beautiful work was commissioned by Mendelssohn Chorus on behalf of longtime singer and former Chorus President Mark Pinzur in celebration of the birth of his grandson, Benjamin Isaac Lev Pinzur — a gift of music that will touch hearts for generations to come.

Our recent tradition of Postcard Carols, brilliantly crafted by Dominick DiOrio, continues to flourish. This season features nine (!!) new carols, split between our two concerts, all commissioned in honor of loved ones. The singers are particularly excited about *Wassail, Drinkhail!* — a carol commissioned anonymously and dedicated to Dr. Russell H. Harris, our wonderful board member who generously hosts our annual fundraiser at his beautiful historic home, The Oaks Cloister. Remember, you too can commission your own carol (by December 15th!) as a lasting musical tribute to honor someone special in your life.

A program we don't talk about often enough is our Conducting Apprenticeship Program, founded by our beloved former artistic director, Alan Harler. This program provides gifted young conductors with real world learning experiences that complement traditional degree programs. This season we have four wonderful apprentices, and tonight you'll meet two of them: Byron De Leon and Brady Ketelsen. Each brings a fresh perspective, and we're thrilled to have them join us. We know you'll give them a warm welcome.

As always, we are grateful to be joined by Timberdale Brass, Andy Kotylo, St. Paul's Music Director and an exceptional organist, and of course you, our wonderful audience, for helping make our holiday season bright.

Thank you and happy holidays!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Flo".

Flo Gardner
Executive Director

Let us know what you think!
Please use this QR code to access a
brief audience survey.
Thank you so much!





Dominick DiOrio
Artistic Director & Conductor

Heather Mitchell
Associate Artistic Director

A Feast of Carols

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Chestnut Hill
Saturday, December 13, 2025

Dominick DiOrio, conductor
Andrew Kotylo, organ
Ting Ting Wong, piano
Timberdale Brass

Christmas Intrada (1992) David Conte

Andrew Kotylo, organ

Keep Your Lamps! (1982) arr. André J. Thomas

Erik Potteiger, djembe
Brady Ketelsen, conductor

Kyrie from *Cantus Missæ in E-flat* (1878) Josef Gabriel Rheinberger

❄ **O Come, All Ye Faithful (1743)** John Francis Wade

Carol of the Stranger (2013) Abbie Betinis

Byron De Leon, conductor

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day (1966) John Gardner

Erik Potteiger, snare drum
Katie Kershaw, tambourine
Brady Ketelsen, conductor

Hallelujah Chorus from *Messiah* (1741) George Frideric Handel

Heather Mitchell, conductor

Nine Postcard Carols (2025) Dominick DiOrio

world premieres

At the 2:00 performance

1. A Florist's Carol

Commissioned by Christopher Carriero in celebration of his father-in-law,
Dan Hunter, who inspired his wife Luanne Hunter and his son David Hunter,
both to whom this carol is dedicated.

2. A Life I Never Dreamt Of

Dedicated to Bernie and Rosa Meyers on the occasion of their 70th anniversary,
from their children, Ilene and Steve Miller, Marcia Meyers, and Joshua Meyers.

3. When I Think Back on Christmas

Commissioned by Mary Elizabeth (Emmy) Talian and dedicated to her mother, Tracy Kaye, and in memory of her grandmother, Mary Gray Kaye, both strong women who inculcated in her a love of music and the arts.

4. Wassail, Drinkhail!

Gifted by an anonymous donor and dedicated to an unsung hero of Mendelssohn Chorus, Dr. Russell H. Harris, whose generosity leads us to ever-greater heights in beautiful community, spirited friendship, and inspired artistry.

5. L'dor, v'dor, we light our way

Commissioned by Julie Cohen and dedicated to the memory of her dad, Joel Cohen, grandfather (Poppi) of Aaron Blower.

At the 5:00 performance

1. High wreaths of festive holly dressed

Commissioned by Rachele Armstrong and Mark Battaglia in memory of Rachele's Nana, Hila Jane Smith Whitman, former church organist, and lifelong lover of music.

2. A Child Is Born, Lully, lullae

Commissioned by Maryl and John Apadula, and dedicated "to our precious parents, who gave us unconditional love, and to our children, who taught us to love unconditionally."

3. We Welcome Eve of Christmas

Commissioned by the Pellathy family in celebration of their father, Gabriel S. Pellathy.

4. A Harbor Safe in Tempest Strong

Commissioned by Dr. Josh Atkins and Priscilla Lo in memory of their aunt, Ann M. Padova, whose profound faith, kindness, and devotion brought comfort, hope, and love to all who knew her.

5. Wassail, Drinkhail (reprise)

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (1943)

Hugh Martin & Ralph Blane
arr. Frank Comstock
trans. Russell C. Hair

Timberdale Brass
Eric Schweingruber, trumpet
Darin Kelly, trumpet
Karen Schubert, horn
Jarred Antonacci, trombone
Brian Brown, tuba

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen (1609)

Michael Praetorius
arr. Jan Sandström (1990)

Heather Mitchell, conductor

There Shall A Star Come Out of Jacob (1846)

Felix Mendelssohn

Byron De Leon, conductor

✳ **Angels We Have Heard on High** (1842) arr. William Shippen Barnes (1937)

Brady Ketelsen, conductor

The Bell Carol 2.0 (2021)

arr. David Hicken

Ting Ting Wong, piano

Erik Potteiger, drum set

Great Miracles (2025)

Rex Isenberg

world premiere

Commissioned by Mendelssohn Chorus with the generous support of Mark Plnzur
in celebration of the birth of Benjamin Isaac Lev Plnzur.

Erik Potteiger, bass

Jennifer Rafferty, alto

Ian Martin, tenor

✳ **There's a Wideness in God's Mercy** (1977)

Calvin Hampton

Eric Schweingruber, trumpet

Byron De Leon, conductor

Sure on This Shining Night (2005)

Morten Lauridsen

✳ **Silent Night** (1818)

Franz Xaver Gruber

✳ **Hark! The Herald Angels Sing** (1855)

Felix Mendelssohn
arr. William Cummings

Mendelssohn Chorus would like to thank the supporters of our 2025-2026 season including: the donors to the Alan Harler New Ventures Fund, Archie W. and Grace Berry Foundation, ArtPhilly, The Musical Fund Society, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, The Presser Foundation, and the Roberta Rote & Martin Levitas Professional Musicians Fund.

About the Cover Photography

For our third season, Mendelssohn Chorus invited singers to contribute original artwork and photography for our season imagery. The image for **A Feast of Carols** was contributed by Kelsey Rose DeJesus, a member of the soprano section and a talented photographer. This simple image captures an intimate moment – a single candle burning brightly against the backdrop of a crisp winter wonderland. It represents a bright spark of human joy burning brightly against the timeless beauty of snow falling outside the rustic frame, and serves as a reminder that no matter how dark or cold the winter, the human spirit shines bright. For a complete description of this artwork and Jennifer Sheffield's artwork for our previous concert, **Vigil for Love**, please visit our e-program.



Please use this QR code to access the full e-program, which also includes staff and donor lists. It is designed specifically for ease of use with your mobile device.

Program Notes

This afternoon's concert opens with David Conte's (b. 1955) brilliant and aptly-named ***Christmas Intrada*** (*intrada* is a Baroque term for prelude or entrance music). It is in the form of a quodlibet, a piece which freely quotes other music, in this case the Christmas carols *Ding-dong! Merrily on High*, *Angels from the Realms of Glory*, *Angels We Have Heard on High*, *From Heaven Above*, and the *Sussex Carol*. Sometimes the quotations are straightforward and sometimes they are disguised by altering their rhythms. The *Christmas Intrada* was originally premiered in 1991 as an instrumental work, and the organ version heard today followed the next year. Conte also created choral versions for mixed, mens' and womens' ensembles.

André Thomas (b. 1952) has had a long and distinguished career as a conductor, composer and educator, and has been recognized with prestigious awards in all three fields. He wrote what has become the standard reference for performance practice of African-American spirituals. His original music and arrangements of traditional spirituals are widely performed, but perhaps none more so than his 1982 ***Keep Your Lamps!*** The text refers to the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. They were sent to greet the bridegroom with lighted lamps, and when his arrival was delayed, only the wise ones, who had brought along extra oil, were there to greet him and be admitted to the reception. Like many spirituals, it also speaks obliquely of a yearning for freedom and a journey of deliverance.

Josef Rheinberger (1839–1901) was a composer, conductor, virtuoso organist, and undoubtedly the most famous musician from the Principality of Liechtenstein. He was a child prodigy who began playing the organ at his parish at age seven, had his first composition premiered the next year, and was admitted to the Munich Conservatory at twelve. He held positions as professor of piano and composition at the conservatory, director of the Munich Oratorio Society, and from 1877 onward, Kapellmeister for church music at the court of Ludwig II of Bavaria. Church music at that time was strongly influenced by the Cecilian movement, which advocated a return to the simplicity of unaccompanied masses rigorously following the liturgical texts in the compositional style of Palestrina. While Rheinberger had a great affinity for the polyphony of Palestrina, he firmly believed that liturgical music required a contemporary esthetic, and he wrote his 1878 ***Cantus Missæ***, set for unaccompanied double chorus and completed in just five days, as an example. While the form reflects Palestrina, Rheinberger's rich harmonic palette, with its modulations and chromatic writing, was Romantic music at its finest. Predictably, the Cecilians panned the work, but Rheinberger dedicated it to the newly elected, socially progressive Pope Leo XIII, who was delighted with the Mass, naming Rheinberger a knight of the Order of St. Gregory.

The Latin hymn *Adeste fideles* (***O Come, All Ye Faithful***) was written by John Francis Wade (1711–1796), an English convert to Catholicism who emigrated to an English Catholic community in Douay, France. He was a teacher of Latin and plainsong chant, and a music copyist specializing in chant, much admired for the beauty of his manuscripts. The hymn first appeared in print in his 1751 *Cantus Diversi*, a collection of liturgical chants and hymns for Catholic services, but had circulated in manuscript in the English Catholic community from 1743 onward. One manuscript was evidently intended for the English College in Lisbon, home

of another English emigré community. Samuel Webbe, who happened to be organist at the Portuguese embassy in London, included the hymn, uncredited, in his 1782 *Essays in Plain-song Chant*. By 1795, it was being performed at the embassy in Christmas programs, where it was heard by the Duke of Leeds, who branded the unfamiliar (to him) carol as *The Portuguese Hymn* and presented it at his popular Concerts of Ancient Music. By the early 19th century it had become frequent Christmas fare as an anonymous carol, and Wade was not credited with the work until 1947. There have been many English translations, but the one in near universal use today was created in 1841 by Frederick Oakeley (1802–1880), an Anglican cleric turned Catholic priest, and published in *Murray's Hymnal*, compiled for use in the Anglican Church.

Award-winning composer Abbie Betinis is the third generation of Burt Family Carol composers. In the 1920s, Rev. Bates Burt began the tradition of writing a Christmas carol each year and sending it as a greeting card to friends and family. He handed down the tradition to his son Alfred, a jazz trumpeter and arranger, who wrote 15 carols before his untimely death in 1954. Through his Hollywood connections a commercial recording of his carols was released and enjoyed enormous popularity, and his carols have been published and widely covered. In 2001, Betinis, Alfred's great niece, picked up the tradition, and has written 16 carols to date. She holds bachelor's (St. Olaf College) and master's (University of Minnesota) degrees in composition, has sung with the Dale Warland Singers, and worked as an assistant to composer Libby Larsen. Best known for her vocal and choral music, she has composed over sixty commissioned works, and currently serves as Composer-in-Residence of The Schubert Club (St. Paul, MN) and Adjunct Professor of Composition at Concordia University. Her 2013 ***Carol of the Stranger*** is set in the style of a folk carol, with a text by poet Michael Dennis Browne.

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day first appeared in print in 1833, but the text dates back at least to the 15th century. Jesus recounts the details of his life using the dance as a metaphor for his mission of salvation. The repeated invitation to join the dance may have been literal – the word carol originally meant a festive circle dance accompanied by song, and the reference to “the legend of my play” suggests it may have been performed as part of a masque. John Gardner (1917–2011) was a prolific composer in many genres, but is best known for his choral and vocal music. He succeeded Gustav Holst and Herbert Howells as Director of Music at St. Paul's Girls' School and wrote this energetic, syncopated setting of *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* for the girls' choir in 1965.

The ***Hallelujah Chorus*** from *Messiah* is one of the best-known pieces of choral music ever written. George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) received the unsolicited libretto in 1741 from Charles Jennens, a frequent collaborator. Handel typically worked quickly, and completed the oratorio's 55 numbers in just 24 days. It was premiered at a charity concert in Dublin to raise money for the release of imprisoned debtors in April, 1742, in a music hall purpose-built for such charity concerts. Handel's vocal forces numbered 16 men's voices, 16 treble voices, and the two women soloists, a far cry from the hundreds of voices that would be marshalled in later British choral festival performances (my favorite, a 1787 concert featuring 800 performers to raise money for “decayed musicians”). The

Dublin performance was so popular that men were asked not to wear swords and women not to wear hoops in their dresses to accommodate the size of the audience, and the concert raised £400 (\$175,000 in today's money). The custom of standing during the *Hallelujah Chorus* was first mentioned in 1756, and it is not clear when it began. It probably did not begin with King George II standing at the 1743 London premiere. That concert was held at the Covent Garden Theatre, a venue widely criticized as inappropriate for a sacred oratorio, so much so that Handel removed all mention of the oratorio's name from the advertizing. And besides the question of propriety, the king had little interest in music, and there is no record that he attended the performance.

This is the fourth installment of Dominick DiOrio's **Postcard Carols**, which have become one of Mendelssohn Chorus's most popular fundraisers. This afternoon we have an embarrassment of riches – nine carols, divided between the two performances. As always, DiOrio relishes the opportunity to craft both the music and text, and to personalize the carols to reflect the people, stories, and memories the commission honors. This year's carols come in a variety of styles, both sacred and secular, and even includes a song of good cheer, fellowship, and the consumption of adult beverages (in moderation, of course). *L'dor v'dor* means "from generation to generation" in Hebrew. It signifies the passing of faith, knowledge, traditions, stories and the like from one generation to the next, and is important in both religious, cultural and family contexts. At this time of year, it is a near universal feeling, for no matter how we celebrate the holidays, our thoughts inevitably turn to our own family stories and traditions.

Michael Praetorius (1571–1621) was an influential scholar, writer, linguist, organist, composer and music theoretician. He was held in such regard that he occupied Kapellmeister positions at two major courts simultaneously. He composed over 1300 works but is best known today for his simple and beautiful 1609 harmonization of the 15th century German folk carol *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen* (**Lo, how a rose e'erblooming**). Theodore Baker (1851-1934), an American organist, musicologist, writer, editor, and inducted member of the Seneca nation, provided the most widely-used translation in 1894. The ethereal arrangement presented this afternoon was written in 1990 by Swedish composer Jan Sandström (b. 1954). It is set for a cappella double choir. The smaller choir sings the Praetorius harmonization, but greatly elongated, while the larger choir provides rich, soft, slowly shifting, wordless chords underneath in a gentle undulation. There is a great stillness and serenity to the music, like the hush of a fresh snowfall.

Felix Mendelssohn's (1809–1847) oratorio *Elijah* was an enormous success at its 1846 premiere, and he immediately began work on a new oratorio on the life of Jesus, with a German libretto drawn from Biblical passages. When he suddenly died at the age of 38, he left the new oratorio unfinished. His younger brother Paul collected and ordered the completed sections of the oratorio, which was published as *Christus* in 1857. Mendelssohn was greatly influenced by Bach, which can clearly be heard in the chorus ***There Shall a Star Come Out of Jacob***, with word painting like the ascending line to the word "star" and ending the chorus with a chorale, *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (How brightly shines the morning star), on which Bach based his cantata of the same name.

Composer Rex Isenberg (b. 1987) has Philadelphia roots but is now based in Los Angeles. He is best known for his choral works, which explore the nature of human relationships from personal to societal throughout history to the present day. He is also devoted to expanding the catalog of Jewish choral music, with compositions that honor the spirit of ancient texts while offering renewed meaning for contemporary audiences. He holds a B.A. in Music from Yale University and Master's and Doctorate degrees in Composition from Manhattan School of Music. His music has been performed by distinguished choral ensembles across the country. Mendelssohn Chorus has presented his music several times. **Great Miracles** is their first commission from him. The commission was the idea of, and was supported by, Mark Pinzur, a long-time singer and former Chorus President, to commemorate the birth of his grandson.

Isenberg has provided the following notes: "This piece is a celebration of miracles: the miracle of Hanukkah, the miracle of life, and the miracles we all experience every day. The cornerstone text in the piece is the Hebrew phrase *Neis gadol hayah sham*, whose initials appear on the four sides of the Hanukkah dreidel. The text translates to "A great miracle happened there," a reference to the rededication of the holy temple which is commemorated during the festival of Hanukkah. The piece weaves the Hanukkah blessing with passages from daily Jewish prayer about miracles - an excerpt from *Modim* (a prayer for thanks) and *L'dor vador* (from generation to generation) from the daily *Amidah* - to remind us both of the wonders performed in the times of our ancestors and the miracles happening all around us in our own time."

The piece opens with an ascending four-note motive for the horn, representing the many miracles which happen all around us, and which will reappear in various guises throughout the work. There is another recurring motive, a rapid passage of triplets in the organ, which suggests the spinning of the dreidel. The piece ends with a reprise of the opening music, a sort of musical *L'dor vador*, and concludes with a short but joyous coda.

Frederick Faber (1814–1863), another Anglican vicar turned Catholic priest, missed the richness of Anglican hymnology and was determined to remedy that. He wrote over 150 hymns with beautifully crafted texts designed to facilitate congregational singing, including his 1862 ***There's a Wideness in God's Mercy***. This beautiful setting was written in 1977 by Calvin Hampton (1938–1984), an exceptional and highly individual organist and a genre-bending composer of organ, orchestral, and choral music, as well as hymns. This setting may be unfamiliar to some, but it has made its way into a number of hymnals.

Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943) is one of the most frequently performed and recorded American choral composers, known for his long, flowing musical lines, luscious harmonies, and wonderful choice of text. His 2005 ***Sure on This Shining Night***, commissioned by the American Choral Directors Association, takes as text an excerpt from James Agee's poem *Description of Elysium*. In a description of the piece, Lauridsen mentions his admiration for the great Broadway musical composers, and the work's long, sinuous lines are meant to reflect what he considers the best of that musical tradition.

– Michael Moore

The Texts

Thomas: Keep Your Lamps!

Keep your lamps trimmed and
burning,
Keep your lamps trimmed and
burning,
Keep your lamps trimmed and
burning,
the time is drawing nigh.

Children, don't get weary,
Children, don't get weary,
Children, don't get weary
'til your work is done.

Christian, journey soon be over,
Christian, journey soon be over,
Christian, journey soon be over,
the time is drawing nigh.

Rheinberger: Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord have Mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have Mercy

* O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant.
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him
Born the King of Angels.
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above:
Glory to God
In the highest:

O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesu, to thee be glory giv'n;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

– English translation by
Frederick Oakeley

Betinis: Carol of the Stranger

Peace and grace be to this house
Where all are welcomed in;
Receive the guest, receive this heart:
Tell the stranger, tell.
Tell the stranger what you cannot
tell
Those who love you and desire
your joy:
Tell.

Make tall your walls, make long these
beams,
Who once believed alone;
Make wide the circle, feed the fire:
Tell the Silence, tell.
Tell the Silence what you cannot
tell
Those who love you and desire
your joy.
Tell.

Blessings be upon this place,
Let every wound be healed,
Let every secret, every dream:
Tell the Angel, tell.

Tell the Angel what you cannot tell
Those who love you and desire
your joy.
Tell.

Peace and grace be to this house,
All will be returned;
Let every soul be called your own,
Tell the Mystery, tell.

Tell the Mystery what you long to
tell
Those who love you and desire
your joy.
Tell.

– Michael Dennis Browne

Gardner: Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance;
*Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my
love, my love,
This have I done for my true love.*

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance;
Thus was I knit to man's nature,
To call my true love to my dance.
Refrain

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was,
So very poor, this was my chance,
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,
To call my true love to my dance.
Refrain

Then afterwards baptized I was;
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,
My Father's voice heard I from above,
To call my true love to my dance.
Refrain

Handel: Hallelujah Chorus

Hallelujah!
For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
Hallelujah!
The kingdom of this world is become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his
Christ.

And he shall reign forever and ever.
King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.
Hallelujah!

– Charles Jennens
from Revelation 19:6, 11:15, 19:16

DiOrio: A Florist's Carol

Daisies and daffodils, tulips and
touch-me-nots
Beautiful bounty from most modest
sprout
Father embracing and husband
devout
Alleluia, sing we this day: Alleluia
Hazel and hyacinth, sunflow'r and
silverweed
Beautiful bounty o'erflowing with
cheer
Sensible spirit and thinker most dear
Alleluia, sing we always: Alleluia.

Myrtles and mistletoe, violets and
virgin's bow'r
Beautiful bounty in garden's
greenweave
Wine shared with loved ones on
holiest eve
Alleluia, sing we and play: Alleluia
Lilacs and lavender, primrose and
peonies
Beautiful bounty this fragrance he
flow'r'd
Blossoms forever in fam'ly empow'r'd
Alleluia, ever we pray: Alleluia

DiOrio: A Life I Never Dreamt Of

A life I never dreamt of
Your father gave to me,
Of children and grandchildren,
Of generosity,
Of ventures and adventures,
Of curiosity:

A life I never dreamt of
Is what you gave to me.

A love beyond all other
Your mother gave to me,
Of romance and romantics,
Of amorosity,

Of gather and together,
Of reciprocity:
A love beyond all other,
Is what you gave to me.

A fam'ly here together
Our parents gave to us
Of business and endeavors
Of ethics, morals just,
Of ever and forever,
Of clan most generous:
A fam'ly here together
Is what you gave to us.

DiOrio: When I Think Back on Christmas

When I think back on Christmas,
I think back to ballet
The velvet red curtains,
Tchaikowsky's *relevé*,
Le Grand divertissement,
Toy soldiers who *jeté*,
When I think back on Christmas,
Your love for art holds sway.

When I think back on Christmas,
I think on Chamonix,
The mountain hills at twilight,
Of snow-capped evergreen,

A tiny church at Yuletide,
With stereo technique.
When I think back on Christmas,
Your music speaks to me.

When I think back on Christmas,
I think on Grammy's lake,
As children, 'twas her ocean,
As Ch'cago's winds would break,
And now with choir in Heaven,
She sings till rafter's quake.
When I think back on Christmas,
Our love, and I, namesake.

DiOrio: Wassail, Drinkhail!

Come gather round, come join the
dance,
"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

Our merry sound will soon entrance.
"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

Fa la la la la, la Fa la la la la,
Fa la la la la la la: "Wassail, Drink
hail!"

Oh, welcome Yule, great mystery,
"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

And banish cruel, old history,
"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

Fa la la la la la, Fa la la la la,
Fa la la la la la la: "Wassail, Drink
hail!"

As new year wakes to new day's shine,
"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

We eat our cakes and drink our wine!
"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

Fa la la la la la, Fa la la la la,
Fa la la la la la la: "Wassail, Drink
hail!"

On twelfth night's eve we light the fire,
"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

And spin our weave as well-soaked
quire!

"Wassail... Drink hail! Wassail... Drink
hail!"

Fa la la la la la, Fa la la la la,
Fa la la la la la la: "Wassail, Drink
hail!"

DiOrio: L'dor, v'dor, we light our way

L'dor, v'dor, we light our way
With lessons learned from elders past:
A fire held that will some day
Be passed to young ones growing fast.
L'dor, v'dor, we mold the clay,
L'dor, v'dor, l'dor, v'dor.

L'dor, v'dor, we gather near,
To share the secret of our clan
With laughter, joy, and words most dear
With stories, puns and jokes dead pan.
L'dor, v'dor, we spread our cheer,
L'dor, v'dor, l'dor, v'dor.

L'dor, v'dor, we learn to trust
In bonds rebuilt and links new made:
With time our knowing more robust
Our understanding ne'er betrayed.
L'dor, v'dor, we readjust,
L'dor, v'dor, l'dor, v'dor.

L'dor, v'dor, we celebrate
A vim most vibrant, mind most spry,
A heart expansive, wit first rate,
A father kept in daughter's eye.
L'dor, v'dor, and now we wait.
L'dor, v'dor, l'dor, v'dor.

DiOrio: High wreaths of festive holly dressed

High wreaths of festive holly dressed
An altar 'plete with bounty laid:
With patience we await our guest,
Whose coming we have long for prayed;
Glory now to all on high:
Christ child, our balm and welcome aid!

High psalmists' tones we once
perceived
A story first by prophets tolled:
Collected words in tomes received
Redeemer we will soon behold.
Glory now to all on high:
Christ child, Messiah, long foretold!

High heav'ns above in wonder crowned
With golden light where pure doves fly:
In flooded world was Noah found
When promised bow adorned the sky.
Glory now to all on high:
Christ child, true sun of Adonai

High cheers of laughter made this day
In Yuletide's wondrous deckéd hall,
Rememb'ring she who once held sway
With radiant spirit, dear to all.
Glory now to all on high:
Christ child, our hope and brightest ray!

DiOrio: A Child Is Born, Lully, lullae

A child is born, Lully, lullae,
A promise sworn, Lully lullae,
One God in peasant's cloth has come
To light the path to Heav'n wherefrom.
Lully, lullae, lully, lullae.

Incarnate flow'r, Lully, lullae,
Of virgin's bow'r, Lully, lullae,
One Christ in verdant grove is grown
To seed the soil of Earth full sown.
Lully, lullae, lully, lullae.

Small mystery, Lully, lullae,
Great ecstasy, Lully, lullae,
One Spirit wondrous, draw us near
To bask in Trinity most dear.
Lully, lullae, lully, lullae.

The Word most high, Lully, lullae,
Awaits us nigh, Lully, lullae.
This little babe in manger wide
Will be our light, our love, our guide.
Lully, lullae, lully, lullae.

DiOrio: We Welcome Eve of Christmas

We welcome Eve of Christmas,
Beloved chorus dear:
Rememb'ring well creation
Of God who knows no peer,
When all came into being
Grown tall on earthly sphere.
We welcome Eve of Christmas
As snow-frost crests the year.

We sing this Eve of Christmas,
Our fam'ly gather'd round:
Rememb'ring well the promise
Of Christ Child earthly bound,
When shepherds, angels, wise men
Came forth to holy ground.
We sing this Eve of Christmas
For infant newly crown'd.

We pray this Eve of Christmas,
Bright blessings for our kin:
Rememb'ring well the fire
Of Holy Ghost come in,
For safety, warmth, and humor
For spirits cleans'd of sin.
We pray this Eve of Christmas
For all held dear within.

And now on Eve of Christmas,
Full grown with faith and friends:
Rememb'ring well our loved ones
Whose story ever wends,
With Father, Child, and Spirit
Whose love sure knows no ends.
Rejoice on Eve of Christmas
For heav'n that Christ portends.

DiOrio: A Harbor Safe in Tempest Strong

A harbor safe in tempest strong,
You nurture, comfort every soul;
Protecting us from wicked throng,
Your light doth lighten God's true goal:
This is the day the Lord hath made,
Let us rejoice in every glade.

A shining sun in blackest gloom,
You galvanize the latent spark;
As Jesus laid in nascent womb,
Messiah to cast out the dark.
This is the day the Lord hath made,
Let us rejoice in Christ child's aid.

A mystic saint with Ghost's great fire,
You rouse forth those who've lost the
way;
Inspiring us to never tire,
Your spirit stirring all to pray:
This is the day the Lord hath made,
Let us rejoice e'er undismayed.

A fervent steward, kindest heart,
You served with elegance and grace;
You cherish'd music, ear's great art,
And shared with us God's warm
embrace:
This is the day the Lord hath made,
Let us remember God's handmaid.

Praetorius/Sandström: Es ist ein Ros entsprungen

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
as men of old have sung.

It came a flowerlet bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half spent was the night,

– translation by Theodore Baker

Mendelssohn: There Shall a Star Come Out of Jacob

There shall a star come out of Jacob,
and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel;

With might destroying princes and
cities!

*Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern!
So welch ein Glanz geht auf vom Herrn,
Licht und Trost zu geben!
Dein Wort, Jesu,
ist die Klarheit, führt zur Wahrheit und
zum Leben.
Wer kann dich genug erheben?*

*As bright the star of morning gleams,
So Jesus sheddeth glorious beams
Of light and consolation,
Thy Word, O Lord,
Radiance darting, truth imparting,
gives salvation:
Thine be praise and adoration.*

– Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen
translation by William Bartholomew

*** Angels We Have Heard on High**

*Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plain,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strain,
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be*

*Which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem, and see
Christ, whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

– James Chadwick

Isenberg: Great Miracles

*Neis gadol hayah sham
Halleluyah*

*A great miracle happened! A great miracle happened there! Great miracles
happen everywhere!
Neis gadol hayah sham*

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam she-asah nisim l'avoteinu ba-
yamim ha-heim bazman hazeh.*

*Blessed are you, Lord Our God, Ruler of the Universe, who performed miracles
for our ancestors in those days at this season.*

– Second blessing for Hanukkah

*Blessed are you, Lord Our Light, Ruler of Stars, who has brought great wonders
to our people in ages past and to this day.*

*And we give thanks unto You for each life that you hold in Your care, for each
soul entrusted to You, Adonai, and for the wonders You work all around us.*

*And for the daily miracles, O Lord, Our Light, whose loving kindness is without
end. And whose wonders never cease, unto every generation we place our hope
in You.*

– excerpt from *Modim* (Prayer of Thanks) from *Amidah*

*L'dor, vador nagid godlekha ul'netsakh n'tsakhim k'dushat'kha nakdish.
V'shivkhakha Eloheinu mi-pinu lo yamush l'olam va'ed.*

*From generation to generation, we will declare Your greatness, and forever
proclaim Your holiness, Your praise, O God, shall never leave our lips for all
eternity.*

– excerpt from *Kedushah* ("Holiness") from *Amidah*

A great miracle happened! A great miracle happened there! Great miracles
happen everywhere!

Adonai, Adonai, Adonai! Halleluyah!

Lauridsen: Sure On This Shining Night

Sure on this shining night
Of starmade shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.

The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.

Sure on this shining night
I weep for wonder
Wand'ring far alone
Of shadows on the stars.

– James Agee

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❄ Silent Night

Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child,
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,

Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia:
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.

– paraphrase by John Freeman Young

❄ Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled:
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With th'angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King.

Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see,
Hail th'incarnate Deity,

Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King.

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings;
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King.

– Charles Wesley & George Whitefield

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

(appearing in this concert)

Soprano

Maryl Apadula
Katy Avery*
Barbara Berry
Rachelle Brisson†
Mia Castro-Diephouse
Rachel Castro-Diephouse
Kristiane Cooper
Shiloh Cooper
Amanda Leah Davis
Kelsey DeJesus
Sarah Fiordaliso
Lindsey Graham
Teri Gemberling-Johnson†
Miriam Goldberg
Julia Hewitt
Anna Juliar
Lynn Kirby
Rachael Lipson*
Fay Manicke
Juliana Melara
Ilene Miller
Andrea Nestman
Carmen Ramirez
Gabrielle Rinkus
Roberta Rote
Leila Schwartz
Mary Kate Suhy
Marie Tavianini†
Victoria Tuck
Jessica Vega†
Deanda Wilson
Kathryn Wadsworth
Lisa Wooldridge

Alto

Rachele Armstrong†
Christine Chaapel
Hannah Davis

Erin Donovan
Robin Eaton
Eloise Flood†
Shannon Foley
Rebecca Fülöp
Anne Gold
Katherine Haas
Emily Grace Kane
Mari Kawakatsu†
Sharon Kempin
Katie Kershaw
Deborah Laird
Allison Levine
Susan Lin
Priscilla Lo
Deborah McIntosh
Heather Mitchell
Florence Moyer
Margaret Oravetz
Jennifer Rafferty*
Sharon Rhinesmith*
Rebecca Roberts
Julia Scott†
Jennifer Sheffield
Maria Sisto
Jane Uptegrove
Samantha Will
Heather Wismer

Tenor

Jeremy Bannett†
Jonah Bannett
Andrew Beck
Michael Cabán
Christopher Carriero
Kyle Conner
Mark Davidson†
Rich Galassini
Campbell Holder
Frank Kanther
Brady Ketelsen

J. Matthew Lista
Ian Martin*
Daniel Ojserkis
Mark Pinzur
Eric Rodriguez-Lopez†
Joel Rust
Roy Schmidt
Jeffrey Schwartz
Kyle Sheehan†
D'quan Tyson*
Steve Ullman
Zach Zaitlin

Bass

Patrick Beck
Evan Birnholz†
Paul Burgmayer†
Michael Carson
Tyler Cudia
Lucas DeJesus**
Byron De Leon
Brendan Fullam
Steven Glasser
Lowell Hoyt
Jon Kochavi
John Kohlhas
James Lamb
George Leone
Martin Levitas
Sean Martin
William Mendoza
Michael Moore
Erik Potteiger*
Cleveland Rea
Daniel Rosen†
Daniel Simpson
Thomas Sutton†
William Thomas
Richard Tolsma
Alexander Varghese

** Senior Vocal Artist & Section Leader

* Section Leader

† Small chorus for *Es is ein Ros gesprungen*

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, now in its 152nd season under Artistic Director & Conductor Dominick DiOrio, stands as one of America's most enduring and distinguished musical institutions. Founded in 1874 as an eight-part male chorus by William Wallace Gilchrist, a major figure in 19th-century Philadelphia music, the chorus has evolved into a world-class ensemble of over 150 voices representing diverse ages, backgrounds, genders, and professions. Since its inception, the chorus has beautifully balanced tradition with innovation, presenting beloved classics while fearlessly championing new works and cross-generational collaborations.

The chorus's longstanding partnership with The Philadelphia Orchestra, dating back to the orchestra's founding in 1900, underscores its integral role in Philadelphia's rich musical landscape. This relationship has produced numerous historic performances, including the 1903 performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, the 1927 world premiere of Rachmaninoff's *Three Russian Songs*, and American premieres of Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* "Symphony of a Thousand" (1916) and Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* (1932). Throughout its history, the chorus has collaborated with legendary conductors, including Leopold Stokowski, Eugene Ormandy, Claudio Abbado, Zubin Mehta, Mstislav Rostropovich, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Riccardo Muti, and most recently Fabio Luisi.

Mendelssohn Chorus has been at the forefront of introducing groundbreaking works to American audiences, from the Philadelphia premiere of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* (1910), to the North American premiere of Mendelssohn's version of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* (2015). The chorus has commissioned over 100 works from contemporary composers including Rollo Dilworth, Jennifer Higdon, David Lang, Caroline Shaw, and Melissa Dunphy, demonstrating its commitment to expanding the choral repertoire.

The chorus's unwavering commitment to excellence has earned prestigious accolades, including multiple ASCAP/Chorus America Awards for Adventurous Programming (1992, 2013) and a GRAMMY nomination for the 1985 recording of Vincent Persichetti's *Winter Cantata*. Most notably, the chorus's commission of Julia Wolfe's *Anthrax Fields* received the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music — a groundbreaking work that exemplifies their dedication to commissioning transformative contemporary music.

Beyond performances, the Mendelssohn Chorus serves as an incubator for emerging talent through its section leader and apprenticeship programs. The recently launched Joyful Abundance commissioning program specifically supports emerging composers and poets, furthering the chorus's mission to foster artistry, beauty, and belonging within Philadelphia's cultural landscape. The chorus proudly hosted the Chorus America conference in 2019, and continues to present the Philadelphia premieres of notable works including Tan Dun's *Water Passion after St. Matthew*, Reena Esmail's *This Love Between Us*, and Sarah Kirkland Snider's *Mass for the Endangered*.

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia remains dedicated to enriching the city's cultural fabric by illuminating our shared human experiences through the trans-

formative power of choral music. The chorus continues to serve as a model for how artistic institutions can honor their heritage while embracing innovation, creating meaningful connections between past and present through the universal language of music.



Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor

Dominick DiOrio serves as the fourteenth artistic director and conductor of the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, one of the most historic choral organizations in the United States. As part of those duties, he regularly prepares the chorus to sing with The Philadelphia Orchestra, including a “near ideal” (The Philadelphia Inquirer) performance of *Carmina Burana* in March 2024 with conductor Fabio Luisi. His artistic vision for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia has been regularly supported with multiple grants from the William Penn Foundation, the Presser Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Recognized with The American Prizes in both Choral Composition (2014) and Choral Performance (2019, with NOTUS), Dominick DiOrio is an imaginative, enthusiastic, and energetic conductor and composer who has won widespread acclaim for his contributions to American music. He is professor of music and chair of the department in choral conducting at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he joined the faculty in 2012, and where he serves as director of NOTUS, Indiana University’s storied contemporary vocal ensemble.

NOTUS has been invited to perform across the globe, including at the National Collegiate Choral Organization’s biennial national conference (2023, Atlanta), at national and regional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (2014, 2015, 2016, 2022), and at the International Federation for Choral Music’s 12th World Symposium (2020, Auckland). With NOTUS, he has also released three commercial albums to critical acclaim: *Of Radiance and Refraction* (2018, Innova), *What Is Ours: Music for an America in Progress* (2022, Navona), and *Weaving Eternity: Music of Wild Imagination* (2025, Navona).

DiOrio’s combined role as a composer-conductor has led to many unique opportunities and collaborations with some of the most important artists and icons of our time, including novelist Richard Powers, the Right Reverend Bishop

Gene Robinson, and William Shatner. DiOrio's guest conducting appearances regularly feature his original compositions, including with civic and professional ensembles such as the Choral Arts Society of Washington (*SOLARIS*), Houston Chamber Choir (*I Am*), Choral Arts Initiative (*All Is*), and the Young Naperville Singers (*Young Today*).

DiOrio's original music has been hailed for its keenly intelligent, evocative style, which shows "a tour de force of inventive thinking and unique colour" (Gramophone). His over 70 published works have appeared at major venues around the world including the Sydney Opera House, Washington National Cathedral, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall—as well as internationally in Austria, Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, The Netherlands, and the U.K.

He composes for musicians of all ages and experiences and maintains an active writing schedule — completing over 70 commissions in the last decade. Some of his recent commissioning partners include the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus and the San Francisco Symphony, the Children's Chorus of Washington, the Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble & Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, The Choral Arts Society of Washington, "The President's Own" United States Marine Band, and many academic institutions, including Macalester, Oberlin, Princeton, Smith, and the Universities of Michigan, Oregon, and Illinois.

DiOrio's love for contemporary music is reflected in his conducted repertoire, including such path-breaking works from the 20th and 21st centuries as James MacMillan *Seven Last Words*, Steve Reich *The Desert Music*, Alfred Schnittke *Requiem*, Sarah Kirkland Snider *Mass for the Endangered*, Joel Thompson *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, and Krzysztof Penderecki *St. Luke Passion*, which he prepared for the composer in November 2017. Equally at home with music of earlier eras, he has also conducted choral-orchestral performances of Bach *Magnificat*, Haydn *Mass in Time of War*, Mozart "Great" C Minor Mass, Vaughan Williams *Five Mystical Songs*, and Leonard Bernstein *Chichester Psalms*, among others.

DiOrio is deeply committed to strengthening the profession by empowering others, and he served as president and president-elect of the National Collegiate Choral Organization from 2018-22. For his leadership during the pandemic, he was honored with NCCO's inaugural Distinguished Service Award. DiOrio also previously served as Treasurer of NCCO, as chair of ACDA's Composition Initiatives Standing Committee (2016-2020), and as a member of the Board of Directors for Chorus America (2015-2018). He also previously served as Assistant Conductor and Tenor with the GRAMMY Award-winning Houston Chamber Choir and as Director of Choral Activities at Lone Star College - Montgomery (both from 2009-2012).

He earned the Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting from the Yale School of Music, as well as an M.M.A. and an M.M. in Conducting from Yale and a B.M. in Composition summa cum laude from Ithaca College. He proudly credits his mentors Janet Galván, Simon Carrington, and Marguerite Brooks for serving as model leaders and for making him the person he is today.

Andrew Kotylo, organ

Andrew Kotylo has been Director of Music and Organist at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Chestnut Hill since 2019. Previously he had served as Organist/Choirmaster at the Basilica of St. Peter in Columbia, South Carolina and Associate Director of Music at the historic Trinity Episcopal Church on the Green in New Haven, Connecticut.

A native of Binghamton, New York, Andy holds degrees from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music where he studied organ with Christopher Young and Larry Smith and choral conducting with William Jon Gray. Other teachers have included Carolyn Albaugh, the late Searle Wright, Jonathan Biggers, and John Schwandt. His doctoral dissertation concerns the life and organ works of Searle Wright, for which he received a citation of excellence from Indiana University.



Kotylo has concertized throughout the United States and in England, with performances at conventions of the American Guild of Organists and Association of Anglican Musicians that have earned critical acclaim. A top prize-winner in numerous competitions, including the American Guild of Organists' National Young Artists Competition and Poister Competition, his performances have been featured several times on American Public Media's *Pipedreams*. He is also active as a private teacher, competition adjudicator, and workshop clinician.

Ting Ting Wong, Collaborative Pianist and Senior Artist-in-Residence

Ting Ting Wong is a highly regarded vocal coach and collaborative pianist in the Philadelphia area. Her performances are noted for their clarity, precision, and emotional resonance, earning her a reputation as a dynamic and versatile artist. *Musical America* has said that her "nuanced pedaling and voicings painted some of the richest backdrops" in her recent performances. Currently, she is on the faculty at The Curtis Institute of Music, staff accompanist for The Academy of Vocal Arts and Collaborative Pianist and Senior Artist-in-Residence for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia. She regularly collaborates with singers at Haverford College and Bryn Mawr College, and maintains a busy schedule with her private coaching studio. She has served as chorus pianist with Opera Philadelphia, assistant conductor with ConcertOPERA Philadelphia, and pianist for the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and Castleton festivals.



Ms. Wong made her debut as a collaborative pianist at the Kennedy Center in 2016 and performed with IlluminArts in Miami in 2019. Recently, she was part of Princeton Festival 2022, and served as faculty at The Mediterranean Opera Studio Festival in Italy. She also recently worked as associate pianist (*Otello*) for 2022 with Opera Philadelphia. Ms. Wong finished a national tour with Curtis on Tour in 2022, performing with talented students and renowned bass-baritone Eric Owens. Ms. Wong just returned from Ravinia Steans Music institute in Highland Park, IL, where she was the resident collaborative pianist for the third season.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Ms. Wong holds a master's degree in piano performance from Carnegie Mellon University, where she also earned a piano pedagogy certificate. She continued her studies, receiving a master's degree in piano accompanying and coaching from Temple University, where she studied with Lambert Orkis and Charles Abramovic.

Timberdale Brass

Timberdale Brass is an ensemble committed to engaging listeners of all ages, convinced that if they enjoy the music they play, audiences will leave their concerts smiling and wanting more. With over one hundred and fifty performances over the past five years, they have become a common presence on many concert series throughout the Philadelphia region, with recent performances in Mt. Gretna (PA), Wilmington (DE), Blue Bell (PA) and Margate (NJ). Consisting of the Philadelphia region's most sought after brass musicians, individual members hold principal positions in many of the area's preeminent ensembles and have performed with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, Philly Pops, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Ballet, Delaware Symphony, Opera Delaware, Iris Chamber Orchestra, and with Philadelphia's premiere theater companies.

Timberdale Brass features Eric Schweingruber and Darin Kelly, trumpets; Karen Schubert, horn; Jarred Antonacci, trombone; and Brian Brown, tuba.

Heather Mitchell, Associate Artistic Director & Director of Operations

Heather Mitchell serves as the Associate Artistic Director and Director of Operations for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia. She is also in her inaugural season as the Artistic Director of the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, and additionally serves as Assistant Director of Choral Activities at The College of New Jersey, Adjunct Faculty at Temple University, and is the Repertoire and Standards Chair for Colleges and Universities of the NJ American Choral Directors Association. She is often sought out as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator for many major choral festivals, Honor Choir festivals and All-State Choirs including the Arizona Music Educators Association, All American Music Festival, OrlandoFest, Bach Festival Society of Winter Park, NJ Choral Consortium, and more throughout the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, Massachusetts, and Arizona.



Mitchell has conducted in prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Vatican, and many others across Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Canada, Germany, France, and Italy. As a choral mezzo, she is a core member of the Philadelphia Symphonic Chorus, the official choir of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and has sung with many professional groups all over the country including the Manhattan Chorale, Manhattan Choral Ensemble, Coro, True Concord Voices and Orchestra, and the Tucson Symphony Orchestra Chorus.

As a Bach scholar, Heather was the author of "A Reconsideration of the Performance of the Chorales in J.S. Bach's *Passio secundum Johannem*, BWV

245.” This article redirects commonly used performance practices and was published in the renowned American Choral Directors Association *Choral Journal*. Mitchell holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral and orchestral conducting from the University of Arizona, a Master of Music degree in choral conducting from Saint Cloud State University in Minnesota, and has studied and sung under such notable conductors as Alfred Mann, Christoph Wolff, Helmuth Rilling, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Nicholas McGegan, Nathalie Stutzmann, Fabio Luisi, Donald Palumbo, Bruce Chamberlain, Joe Miller, and Amanda Quist.

Brady Ketelsen, Conducting Apprentice

Brady Ketelsen is currently the music director and pianist for St. Michael’s Lutheran and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement. He also currently teaches voice lessons for members of the Philadelphia Boys and Girls Choirs as well as a few private students. An alumnus of Temple University, Brady earned his Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting, during which he was privileged to conduct almost every major singing ensemble, including his graduate recital with the Graduate Conductors Chorus. Prior to moving to Philadelphia, Brady earned his bachelor’s degree in Music Education at the University of South Dakota, after which he directed seven ensembles at Central High School in Rapid City, South Dakota along with the church choir at Trinity Lutheran, the musical ensembles of several musical theater productions, and several festival choirs. In addition to choral music, Brady enjoys cooking, traveling, and engaging with musical theater in the audience, in the orchestra pit, or (infrequently) on stage.



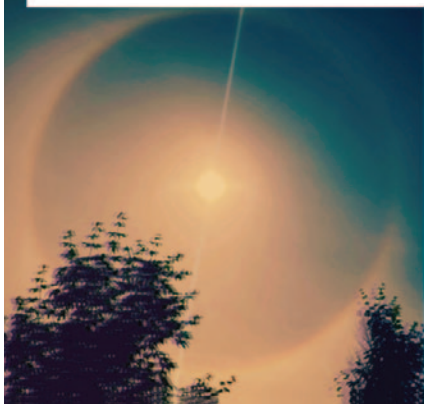
Byron De Leon, Conducting Apprentice

Byron De Leon is a Guatemalan-American conductor, baritone, and educator from New York City. He sings with the Marble Choir at Marble Collegiate Church and will join the Delaware Choral Scholars for the Tolosa Choral Competition in Spain in October 2025. He serves as Assistant Conductor, Voice Teacher, and Creative Musicianship Teacher with the Young People’s Chorus at Thurnauer School of Music (YPC@T)—a full-circle moment, having begun his musical journey with the Young People’s Chorus of New York City. De Leon earned his MM in Choral Conducting from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey–Brunswick, where he conducted various choirs and taught voice. He has participated in workshops such as the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival and Sarteano Choral Workshop. He holds a BM in Voice Performance with a minor in Linguistics from Ithaca College, where he served as Vocal Coach Coordinator and Student Conductor of the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers and made his conducting debut at the 2023 All-Eastern NAFME Conference.





OUR *Boundless* HUMANITY



Photography by Jennifer Sheffield, Kelsey DeJesus, Heather Mitchell, and Sharon Torello.

MENDELSSOHN CHORUS OF PHILADELPHIA'S 152ND SEASON

Dominick DiOrio, Artistic Director & Conductor / Heather Mitchell, Associate Artistic Director

Vigil for Love

Saturday, October 18, 2025 / 4pm

The Church of the Holy Trinity
1904 Walnut Street, Philadelphia PA 19103

A Feast of Carols

Saturday, December 13, 2025
2pm & 5pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
22 E. Chestnut Hill Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19118

The Space We Keep

Saturday, March 14, 2026 / 4pm

First Presbyterian Church
201 South 21st Street, Philadelphia, PA 191033

SPECIAL EVENT

A Celebration of Life for Alan Harler

Honoring the life and legacy of our beloved former
Artistic Director and Conductor Laureate Alan Harler.

Sunday, April 12, 2026 / 4pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
22 E. Chestnut Hill Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19118

Joyful Abundance

Part of ArtPhilly: What Now? Festival

Saturday, June 6, 2026 / 4pm

Rodeph Shalom
615 N. Broad St. Philadelphia, PA 19123