

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 Jennifer Sheffield

Vigil for Love

October 18, 2025 / 4pm

The Church of the Holy Trinity
Rittenhouse Square

MCCHORUS.ORG

From the Desk of the Board Chair

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia's first concert of our 2025-2026 season. This season's theme, *Our Boundless Humanity*, comes at a time when we need to be reminded of music's power to heal. Between the unrest in our world and the chorus's personal loss of two beloved members, music has been a balm to our souls. In June, we lost our former longtime artistic director Alan Harler, and most recently, our music librarian and former board member Carolyn Linarello — both of whom were critical parts of our organization's DNA.



Today, we celebrate and contemplate the one emotion that can bind us all together: love. In the darkest times of our history and our lives, love is a guiding force we can turn to — the love we have for those close to us, for our communities, and for all those with whom we share this world. It is the capacity for love that allows us to find common ground and shared purpose.

It is an honor to serve as Mendelssohn Chorus's board chair, but it was even more of an honor to step into the shoes of our former board chair, Charlotte Sibley. She has given her time, talent, and treasure to this organization, and it is with great pride that artistic director Dominick DiOrio — a very accomplished composer, if you didn't know — composed *Vigil for Love* in her honor, set to words by fellow singer Kyle Conner. In Dominick's program notes for the work, he writes that "Charlotte is a model for living and loving life fully." A model we can all aspire to!

This work is paired with Henry Purcell's classic *Dido and Aeneas* — an opera that tells the tragic story of Queen Dido of Carthage and the Trojan hero Aeneas. Their love, though passionate and profound, is torn apart by duty and fate. Dido's famous lament as she faces death is one of the most moving expressions of heartbreak in all of opera. While the story (spoiler alert!) doesn't have a happy ending, it reminds us that music has the power to illuminate love in all its forms — the joy of new love, the pain of loss, and the enduring strength love gives us even in our darkest moments.

We hope that you walk away today not only moved by the beauty of these works, but inspired by the power of love to sustain us, connect us, and remind us of our shared humanity. Thank you for being here with us.

Julie Cohen
Board Chair



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.



Dominick DiOrio
Artistic Director & Conductor

Heather Mitchell
Associate Artistic Director

Vigil for Love

Vigil for Love (2025)

music by Dominick DiOrio
libretto by Kyle Conner

Dedicated to our friend and former leader, Charlotte Sibley, a model for living life fully.

- i. Prayer
- ii. Intercession: A Madrigal
- iii. Responsory
- iv. Song to the Friend
- v. Offertory
- vi. Invocation
- vii. Song of Sanctuary / *for Ting Ting*
- viii. Lesson
- ix. Canto
- x. CREDO

Ting Ting Wong, piano
Dominick DiOrio, conductor

Intermission

Dido and Aeneas (1688)

music by Henry Purcell
libretto by Nahum Tate

Overture

Act I: Dido's Court

Act II, Scene 1: The cave of the Sorceress

Act II, Scene 2: A grove, in the midst of a hunt

Act III: The harbor of Carthage

Dido

Katy Avery

Belinda

Sophia Santiago

First Witch

Ian Martin

Second Woman

Rachael Lipson

Aeneas

Lucas DeJesus

Sorceress

Sharon Rhinesmith

Second Witch

Erik Potteiger

Sailor

D'quan Tyson

Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia
Dominick DiOrio, conductor

*This performance is funded in part by the
Roberta Rote & Martin Levitas Professional Musicians Fund*

Program Notes

Vigil for Love (2005)

Dominick DiOrio (b. 1984)

In addition to being a conductor and savvy creator of musical programs, Mendelssohn Chorus founder W. W. Gilchrist was also a highly regarded, award-winning composer, and was able to work his own compositions into the programming mix. With the arrival in 2020 of Dominick DiOrio, MCP once again enjoys an artistic director with that same skill set, and DiOrio has been able to contribute his own compositions to programs he has created. *Vigil for Love* is dedicated to Charlotte Sibley, who served 17 years on MCP's Board, ten of them as Board Chair, and is, as the dedication on the score says, "a model for living and loving life fully." The work was previewed on MCP's Canadian tour this past summer and has its American premiere in this concert.

DiOrio turned to poet and long-time MCP singer Kyle Conner for the text. Conner has worked with DiOrio previously, providing the libretto for the 2021 *Yuletide Carol*, and he has also written the libretto for MCP alum Michael Smith's 2024 *The Anonymous Stranger*. Conner holds a Master's in Creative Writing from Temple University, has published four chapbooks of poetry, and serves as co-editor-in-chief of *Evanescence: A Journal of Literary Medicine*. In his libretto for *Vigil for Love*, he has created an expansive and evocative text filled with unusual, vivid imagery and delightful word play. He has provided the following notes: "Love is that emotion that we believe distinguishes humans from all other forms of life. It ennobles, it transforms, it illuminates. It also confounds, mystifies, and frustrates. The piece explores various facets and utterances of love, hopefully bringing us to a more profound understanding of its unique mysteries and many layers. Our friend Charlotte, a former leader, is a model for living and loving life fully, and this piece is, created in her honor."

Conner imagines a different mood for each of the movements, which he indicates by brief images or expression marks, and which inform the varied styles that DiOrio uses to set each movement. The music is playful, sensuous, breathless, lyrical, and ceremonial by turns. DiOrio even manages to suggest the layout of the texts. For example, in the eighth movement, "Lesson", most of the verses begin with the same word that ends the previous verse, which DiOrio sets with overlapping voices on that repeated word. In the final movement, he reprises a melodic line from the first movement, providing a sense of both unity and completeness to the music. The other unifying element is the relentlessly *bravura piano* part. Interestingly, when the piano is given a solo movement, DiOrio gives it an unexpectedly simple, quiet, and dreamlike line, all the more striking for the contrast.

Dominick DiOrio has provided the following notes: "I am honored to have created this major new work with my friend and poet Kyle Conner in honor of Charlotte Sibley, an amazing and visionary leader who is also the former board chair of Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia. *Vigil for Love* is a testament to the love that she has offered so selflessly for our organization and for the many bright lights in our life.

"The work progresses in ten movements according to Kyle's libretto, which borrows extensively from sacred liturgical forms and secular song structures. My

music attempts to evoke many of these ancient sounds and symbols while also placing us harmonically decidedly in the present. It is also a virtuosic feature for Mendelssohn Chorus' amazing collaborative pianist and senior artist-in-residence Ting Ting Wong, who is asked – along with the chorus – to evoke love's many moods: playful and placid, exhausted and exultant, virile and virtuous."

***Dido and Aeneas* (1688)**

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

It may seem odd for Mendelssohn Chorus to program Henry Purcell's chamber opera *Dido and Aeneas*, but opera has been in the ensemble's blood since its inception. In only its second concert as a mixed chorus in 1879, it presented the finale of Mendelssohn's unfinished opera *Die Lorelei*, with soloists drawn from the chorus. While MCP has appeared in many concert opera productions over the years, this afternoon's production of *Dido and Aeneas* is the first self-produced opera, drawing soloists from the chorus, since a 1905 reprise of *Die Lorelei*.

Henry Purcell was one of the most prolific and influential composers of the English early Baroque period. If the name is not familiar, his music probably is. Benjamin Britten used a theme from a suite Purcell extracted from his incidental music to the 1676 play *Abdelazer* for his *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. And Dido's moving aria "When I am laid in earth" has been performed by opera and pop singers alike, and in instrumental arrangements has appeared in everything from memorial services to movies.

He was born into a musical family. He followed in his father's footsteps as a chorister in the Chapel Royal at Westminster Abbey. He was a precocious musician, said to have begun composing at nine. He was able to study with some of the most highly regarded composers of the day – Henry Cooke, Matthew Locke and John Blow. When he aged out as a child chorister, he obtained a court position as assistant organ builder. At 18, he was named Composer to the King's Violins, at 21 became organist at Westminster Abbey and two years later added the position of organist of the Chapel Royal. He continued to hold royal appointments for the rest of his life.

Purcell's output of music was both large and varied. He wrote more than 200 anthems, hymns, Anglican services and odes. He wrote some 250 secular songs and catches (rounds) and about the same number keyboard and orchestral works, many for public performance (a relatively new phenomenon in London). He was equally involved in theatrical music, writing incidental music for 43 plays and 7 operas or semi-operas (mixtures of spoken dialog, which moved the plot forward, and music.)

Purcell wrote only one true opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, composed throughout, with the plot advanced in Italian-style recitatives, and with arias sung by the principals. The libretto was provided by the Irish poet and playwright Nahum Tate, with whom Purcell had previously collaborated, and was adapted from an earlier play of Tate's based on Virgil's *Aeneid*. The libretto provides a very abbreviated version of the story. Most educated people would have known the details, as the *Aeneid* had long been used as the standard work for Latin study. Likewise, the mythology it references would have been equally familiar.

Publius Vergilius Maro was already an acclaimed poet when he was recruited to join a coterie of writers that provided Octavian with a veneer of culture intended to counter Mark Antony's populist charm. Octavian finally defeated Antony and Cleopatra in 30 B.C.E., and freshly christened Caesar Augustus by the Senate, decided to buff up the image of his new empire. He commissioned Virgil to create an epic poem about the founding of Rome, a task which filled the last 11 years of the poet's life. There was already a legend about Aeneas's role in the founding of Rome, and he was a minor character in Homer's account of the Trojan War. Virgil expanded this to 12 books of dactylic hexameter, recounting Aeneas's epic struggle to fulfill his destiny. Virgil worked in historical events or locations wherever possible to connect myth with reality. The work appeared unfinished at his death, and Virgil's will instructed that the manuscript be burned. Augustus intervened with the executors and had the work published. Unfinished or not, it is considered one of the masterpieces of literature and has inspired writers and poets from St. Augustine to Dante to Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser.

Virgil uses Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as models for his epic poem, not only structurally but also thematically. The overarching idea in Homer is that man is the unwitting plaything of the gods. In the *Aeneid*, the attempt by two goddesses to change Aeneas's destiny leads to the tragic love story of Dido and Aeneas. Aeneas is the son of the goddess Venus, and she has predicted a somewhat mysterious destiny which involves the Trojans bowing to him as king. He survives the destruction of Troy, fleeing with a band of other survivors and setting sail to find a new home. With the destruction of Troy, Aeneas feels that there is some nuance to his destiny that he doesn't yet understand, and eventually learns that he is to create a dynasty in the land of his ancestors, which surprisingly turns out to be Italy, and Virgil's readers knew that his line would be responsible for founding Rome.

Aeneas makes it as far as Sicily, but when he sets sail for the mainland he is blown off-course through the agency of Juno, who has been waging a vendetta against all things Trojan. He wanders for six years before making landfall in Carthage, where he is welcomed coolly by Queen Dido – she is still in mourning for her long-since slain husband. Dido is resourceful and capable, just the sort of woman that Juno, an early proponent of women's empowerment, admires, and the goddess has placed Dido and Carthage under her protection. Virgil has Juno receive a vision of a future in which Carthage is destroyed by Aeneas's descendants (the Romans), which Virgil's readers would have understood as the Punic Wars, still some 800 years in the future.

Juno enlists the aid of Venus in a plan to keep Aeneas from leaving Carthage. Venus makes Dido and Aeneas fall in love with each other. The couple goes hunting (as lovers apparently do). Juno conjures up a storm, which forces them to take shelter in a cave, and they end up making love while waiting out the rain. Dido and Aeneas make plans to rule Carthage together, and his men will settle there. Of course, Venus and Juno were naïve to think things could be settled that easily. Jove has been watching all this, and he sends his messenger Mercury to remind Aeneas of his destiny and order him to be on his way. Aeneas is reluctant to face Dido with the news that he must leave, and is recalling his men and readying his ships secretly. Dido finds out anyway and confronts Aeneas,

who pleads that he must obey the will of the gods. She curses him, saying that from this time forward there will be enmity between her people and his (the Punic Wars again). Aeneas departs and Dido plunges a dagger into her breast and dies.

Tate makes a number of interesting and humanizing changes to the canonical story. First of all, he gets rid of the gods. His characters are free to make their own choices. In the first scene, Aeneas has already fallen in love with Dido and is wooing her with great persistence, while she rejects his advances. But by the Grove scene in the second act, it is clear that she has thawed toward him and opened her heart. A woman from Dido's court recounts a myth, warning Aeneas not to take Dido's love lightly. Because Tate disposed of the gods, he introduces the character of the sorceress to break the lovers apart. The sorceress is motivated by *schadenfreude*, taking joy in someone else's misfortune, a very human emotion. Aeneas is heartbroken by the command to leave Dido, but mostly because of how she will feel, and is resolved to face her. Dido's rage is fueled by her humiliation about opening herself to love one day and being abandoned the next, and even when Aeneas changes his mind and pledges to stay with her and ignore the will of the gods, she rejects him. The chorus sadly acknowledges another human trait, to misguidedly act against one's own interests and "shun the cure they most desire."

Purcell composed *Dido and Aeneas* sometime in the 1680s, but the precise date is not known, nor is the venue, or even the music. We know there was one early performance at Josias Priest's boarding school for young gentlewomen, with the young women taking roles and performing the dances (Priest was a dancing master and choreographer), from a printed, but undated, copy of the libretto. A spoken epilogue from the opera was published separately in 1690 by the poet and playwright Thomas D'Urfey, a collaborator of Purcell's, and it appears to reference the Glorious Revolution which installed Mary Stuart and her husband William of Orange on the throne in November, 1688, making early 1689 a good guess for the performance. But there is also circumstantial evidence that suggests an earlier performance at Priest's boarding school (which had a history performing chamber operas), or even an earlier presentation at the royal court of James II, dethroned in the Glorious Revolution.

No contemporaneous score of *Dido and Aeneas* has been found to date. The oldest manuscript dates from about 100 years after the opera was composed, although it is thought to be a copy of a contemporaneous source due to the 17th century notation. It forms the basis of the edition which is being presented this afternoon. The libretto opens with a prologue whose material is only tangentially related to the opera, but that music has been lost and the prologue is not performed. There are also a pair of dances marked for guitar in the libretto for which no music exists. Purcell probably left them to the guitarist to extemporize. The music that remains, however, is extraordinary. Purcell has a wonderful gift for melody and word painting, like the descending line for "drooping" and the sighs for "soft" in the final chorus. He pays great attention to the harmonic structure – Dido's opening sadness is reflected in C minor, which brightens to a more hopeful C major as the Second Woman answers Dido's reservations, all effects that would become common in the later Baroque.

– Michael Moore

The Texts

DiOrio: Vigil for Love

i. Prayer

Ominous

Monks whispering fervently in temples:

Holy Love
Come upon us
Lift us
Guide us
Set us free

(Repeat)

Sages contemplating in the mountaintop refuges:

Subtle passion
Supple mission
Pierce the veil
Deliver vision

(Repeat)

Ritual celebrants circle-dance and chant by moonlight.

What is hidden
shall be known

What has raged
shall be tamed

What was lost
shall be gained

What is nameless
shall be named

(Repeat)

Seekers floating in vision quest:

Move us!
Sate us!
Fill our cups!
Ecstatic vision
Lift us up!

(Repeat)

All together:

Love enchanted
Love enshrined

Love embodied
Love divined

Love transcendent
Love unshamed
Love ascendent
Love new named

Chanted by those consumed by the dance, eyes ablaze, feet spasming in cadence beguiled:

Wild love!
We demand release!
We will have nothing else!

[Stomp our feet!
Clap our hands!]
Aaaaaahhh!

Gathered voices across eons:

Rumi, raise your cup!

Speak for us
this fervid stuff,
Jolt us to unfettered vision

In storming ocean, gathering forest,
roaring gale or placid seas
We consummate our vow with life
The wilds of love draw us on

Seduce and surge
 buoy and burden
Buffet and buttress,
 confuse and captivate
Soothe and sanctify,
 fortify and fascinate

Love's blade carves and shapes us —
 Old clay made new

We are never the same.

ii. Intercession: A Madrigal

Love, be my wound!
I offer this flesh to thy pleasures.
Thy cuts are holy,
Thy balms mystical.

I submit —
 Teach me.
I burn —
 Heal me.

Love, be my gauze!
Thou art the physician of my soul.
Thy touch is medicine.
Thy potions wondrous.

I resist —
 Restrain me.
I relent —
 Salve me.

Love, be my nurse!
I cannot control my heart.
Offer me words of comfort.
My temples burn, my hands sweat.

I waver —
 Bolster me.
I falter —
 convince me.

iii. Responsory

Measured, ceremonial

Whose is the face nestled to mine?
 So we are one visage anneal'd

Whose tender kisses warm my cheek,
my neck, my eyelids?

*So that I am bathed in your
 mouth's warmth*

Who embraces me in all fullness?
 *So that I am a flower bursting
 into bloom*

Whose rain washes by forest?
 A child of Nature reborn

Whose love raised me from the
deserts of men,
Their bloodless words
Their frozen stares
Their conceal'd knowledge
Their vacant mansions?

*So that I am welcomed into every
oasis*

Whose pasture encircled me?
 *So that I took refuge from the
world's degrees*

Whose love anointed and washed me
clean of sadness?

*So that I recover and embrace
that which I am*

Whose love illuminated my
surroundings?

*So that I could see the
immanence of beauty*

Whose love was an unfiltered draught
from crystal pure spring?

*So that I could drink my fill and
purify my attention*

iv. Song to the Friend

Folksy. Heartfelt.

Friend, embrace me now
I'm in need of
sweet affection.

The warming of body to body
The spark of skin on skin
Belly on belly

[A] quiver of anticipation
On my tongue
I am open, vulnerable.
Breath caught.

What was once unknown,
Now understood.
What was once upset,
Now becalmed.
What was once desired,
Now possessed.

Friend, let's love a little
And build a city of hands
a passage of skin,

Let's hang a door of mouths
Press a keyhole of lips
Cut a key of kisses
That unlock & open
into a world
into fire.

This world rushes [in]
In the highways of the blood,
Captivating rhythm...

But the touch transfixes
And the moment quickens
There are no other
sounds in sight —

We are stuck to each other,
Seized in the moment.

*Of hush and moan
Of lush and bless
Of blush and sigh,
Of rush and yes*

This is the world
Of which we sing.

v. Offertory

Courtly, strident. In Medieval style.

I am a packhorse with many bags!
Load me up!
Adorn me with baggage!

I am thy jewelry box—
Stow thy glittering stones
In my storehouse—
I will not divulge them!

I am thy fruit-bearing tree—
Pluck the apple—
Bite, savor its juice
That runs down your throat.
Join me in the orchard!

I am thy book!
Write thy words of desire
On the white pages
Of my skin.
(Thy punctuation is my command!)

Now recite me.

vi. Invocation

*Incense. Resonance. Ceremony.
Percussion*

O Gods and Goddesses hear us now—
Rain down \ blessings \ upon us
We make \ offering of \ voices
Use them \ as conduit
Sing to us \ of Love \ that
burns \ and also \ freezes \ blood
Come to us \ in chariots

Festooned \ with glittering garlands
On \ wing of \ mighty bird
Enfolded in \ bosom of \ Nature's
breast

We call you \ now \ to educate us
Preserve us \ in these \ bold
pursuits

Cupid! Venus! Aphrodite!
Inanna! Ishtar! Oshun! Bes!
Bastet! Hathor! Siebog! Min!
Živa! Áine! Freyja! Eros!
Astghik! Bangan! Hermaphroditos!
Apollo! Ixcuiname!
Kamadeva and Rati!
Xōchiphilli! Kurupi!
Rudá! Yue-Lao! Tu Er Shen!

Bless us!
Soothe us!
Hear our pleas!

Satisfy! Sanctify!
Deliver us!
Give release!

Bind us!
Melt us!
Cool us!
Thrill us!

Join us in our dance and song!

vii. Song of Sanctuary

for Ting Ting

"Get out the bottle of red."

viii. Lesson

Methodical, Minimalist

Throw the clay
To tone its mass
And warm the slab for kneading work.

Knead the clay
To make it supple
Ready for a novel shape

Shape the clay
With careful hands
Add the breath enmolding hope

Mold the clay
With clear design
and build it for the world to see

See the clay
To final form
Removing what is not for fire

Fire the clay
To set resolve
Now the vessel sings its use

Use the clay
And fill the form—
Exalted vessel, living day.

ix. Canto

*Timeless, ancient. Sotto voce building
gently to full voice.*

Love is tolerant
Love is welcome
Love is patient
Love is loyal

Love is humble
Love is earned
Love is demanding
Love is active!

Love is gracious
Love is playful
Love is expansive
Love is generous

Love is gentle
Love is unbordered
Love is unrepentant
Love courageous, always so

Love embroidered on the soul

Love is soulful
Love is generative
Love is movement
Love commands

Love expectant
Love immoderate
Love momentous
Love naive

Love is native
Love understanding
Love understates

Love is nature, naturally

Love ungendered
Love attended
Love satiated
Love unbending

Love sanctity
Love sensate
Love calamity
Love is sane

And love will save—
If you want it to.

x. CREDO

Mysterious, slowly building intensity.

What interiors yet to find and chart?
What guides us, yet we live apart?

What scans the quick'ning day for
light?
Sometimes unreach'd yet always
in sight

What is the lack we share in plight?
And how is it found to set things
right?

Riddles you say are nothing new.
Nor is there novelty in this world.

Yet what I say now, heed or not—
This is the crux; this is the plot—

You think that things are just and so,
Settled like the sun and snow,

The rain the light the night the sky
The day the moon the planets high.

No change can make a difference
now.

The board is set, the moves are
known.

You're tired, you're lost, you're hurt,
you're sad
You're traumatized, you're weak,
you're mad.

The thing we've sung, raged, incanted,
Deliberated, sniffed, decanted.

It's real, it's all, it's time, it's tough.
Its strength is in the warp and weft.

[This life won't go away, it's true.
The sound and fury, blur and hue,
The blood and scuff, the rue and
rough—

Take it, leave it, grab it, shove it,
Get the hell away from it—]

Nothing matters but what we've sung.
This thing we know is on the tongue,
It's on the brain, it's not the same
As any other thing we know—

Yes, it's strife
And yes, it's pain
But a life that's full
Is full of rain

The sky is hung
The mind is wrung
The skin is stung
The limbs are strung

As the heart will break
when all's at stake
what we say is God
is just a nod,
it's just a nod

What we want is
What we need is
What we ache is
What we know is
What we dream is
What we breathe is
What we yearn is
What we scream is

Is

Is...

Is—

And will be again.

– Kyle Conner

PURCELL: Dido & Aeneas

Overture

ACT I

Scene: The Palace

Enter Dido, Belinda and Train.

BELINDA
Shake the cloud from off your brow,
Fate your wishes does allow.
Empire growing,
Pleasures flowing,
Fortune smiles and so should you.
Shake the cloud from off your brow.

CHORUS
Banish sorrow, banish care,
Grief should ne'er approach the fair.

DIDO
Ah! Belinda, I am press'd
With torment not to be confess'd.
Peace and I are strangers grown,
I languish till my grief is known,
Yet would not have it guess'd.

BELINDA
Grief increases by concealing.

DIDO

Mine admits of no revealing.

BELINDA

Then let me speak: the Trojan guest
Into your tender thoughts has press'd.

SECOND WOMAN

The greatest blessing Fate can give.
Our Carthage to secure, and Troy
revive.

CHORUS

When monarchs unite, how happy
their state,
They triumph at once o'er their foes
and their fate.

DIDO

Whence could so much virtue spring?
What storms, what battles did he
sing?
Anchises' valour mix'd with Venus'
charms.
How soft in peace, and yet how fierce
in arms.

BELINDA

A tale so strong and full of woe,

Might melt the rocks as well as you.

SECOND WOMAN

What stubborn heart unmoved could
see

Such distress, such piety?

DIDO

Mine with storms of care oppress'd
Is taught to pity the distress'd.
Mean wretches' grief can touch,
So soft, so sensible my breast,
But ah! I fear, I pity his too much.

BELINDA, SECOND WOMAN, CHORUS

Fear no danger to ensue,
The hero loves as well as you,
Ever gentle, ever smiling,
And the cares of life beguiling,
Cupid strew your path with flowers,
Gather'd from Elysian bowers.

(Dance this chorus. Basque dance.)

Aeneas enters with his Train.

BELINDA

See, your royal guest appears,
How godlike is the form he bears!

AENEAS

When, royal fair, shall I be bless'd
With cares of love and state
distress'd?

DIDO

Fate forbids what you pursue.

AENEAS

Aeneas has no fate but you!
Let Dido smile and I'll defy,
The feeble stroke of Destiny.

CHORUS

Cupid only throws the dart
That's dreadful to a warrior's heart,
And she that wounds can only cure
the smart.

AENEAS

If not for mine, for Empire's sake,
Some pity on your lover take.
Ah! make not, in a hopeless fire
A hero fall, and Troy once more expire.

BELINDA

Pursue thy conquest, Love! Her eyes
Confess the flame her tongue denies.

(A dance with guitar – chaconne)

CHORUS

To the hills and the vales, to the rocks
and the mountains,
To the musical groves and the cool
shady fountains
Let the triumphs of Love and of
Beauty be shown.
Go revel, ye Cupids! The day is your
own.

The Triumphant Dance

(At the end of the dance, thunder and lightning.)

ACT II, Scene 1

Scene: The Cave

Enter Sorceress

Prelude for the witches

SORCERESS

Wayward sisters, you that fright
The lonely traveller by night
Who like dismal ravens crying
Beat the windows of the dying,
Appear at my call and share in the
fame
Of a mischief shall make all Carthage
flame.

Enter Witches.

FIRST WITCH

Say, beldam, say what's thy will.

CHORUS

Harm's our delight and mischief all
our skill.

SORCERESS

The Queen of Carthage, whom we
hate,

As we do all in prosp'rous state,
Ere sunset, shall most wretched
prove,
Depriv'd of fame, of life, and love!

CHORUS

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

TWO WITCHES

Ruin'd ere the set of sun?
Tell us, how shall this be done?

SORCERESS

The Trojan Prince, you know, is bound
By Fate to seek Italian ground.
The Queen and he are now in chase.

FIRST WITCH

Hark! The cry comes on apace.

SORCERESS

But when they've done, my trusty elf,
In form of Mercury himself,
As sent from Jove, shall chide his stay
And charge him sail tonight with all
his fleet away.

CHORUS

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

(Enter two drunken sailors, a dance.)

FIRST AND SECOND WITCH

But ere we this perform,
We'll conjure for a storm
To mar their hunting sport
And drive 'em back to court.

CHORUS (in a Manner of an Echo)

In our deep-vaulted cell
The charm we'll prepare,
Too dreadful a practice
For this open air.

Echo Dance

(Witches and Furies)

*Thunder and lightning, horrid music.
The Furies sink down in the cave, the
rest fly up.*

Act II, Scene 2

Scene: The Grove

*Enter Aeneas, Dido and Belinda, and
their Train.*

Ritournelle

BELINDA, CHORUS

Thanks to these lonesome vales,
These desert hills and dales.
So fair the game, so rich the sport,

Diana's self might to these woods
resort.

(Dance with guitar – chaconne)

SECOND WOMAN

Oft she visits this loved mountain,
Oft she bathes her in this fountain.
Here Actaeon met his fate,
Pursued by his own hounds.
And after mortal wounds,
Discover'd, discover'd too late.

A dance to entertain Aeneas by Dido's women.

AENEAS

Behold! upon my bending spear
A monster's head stands bleeding,
With tushes* far exceeding
Those did Venus' huntsman tear.

* tusks

DIDO, CHORUS

The skies are clouded. Hark how
thunder
Rends the mountain oaks asunder.
Haste to town, this open field
No shelter from the storm can yield.

*Exit Dido. The Spirit of the Sorceress
descends to Aeneas in likeness of
Mercury.*

SPIRIT

Stay, Prince, and hear great Jove's
command!
He summons thee this night away.

AENEAS

Tonight?

SPIRIT

Tonight thou must forsake this land,
The angry god will brook no longer
stay.

Jove commands thee waste no more
In love's delights those precious
hours,

Allow'd by th'Almighty powers
To gain th'Hesperian shore,
And ruin'd Troy restore.

AENEAS

Jove's command shall be obey'd
Tonight our anchors shall be weigh'd.

(The Spirit vanishes)

But ah! What language can I try,
My injur'd Queen to pacify?
No sooner she resigns her heart,
But from her arms I'm forced to part.
How can so hard a fate be took,
One night enjoy'd, the next forsook?
Yours be the blame, ye gods, for I
Obey your will, but with more ease
could die.

Ritornelle

ACT III

Scene: The Ships
Enter the Sailors, the Sorceress and her Witches.

Prelude

SAILOR, CHORUS

Come away fellow sailors, your
anchors be weighing,
Time and tide will admit no delaying.
Take a boozy short leave of your
nymphs on the shore,
And silence their mourning
With vows of returning,
But never intending to visit them
more.

The Sailors' Dance

SORCERESS

See the flags and streamers curling,
Anchors weighing, sails unfurling.

FIRST WITCH

Phoebe's pale deluding beams
Gilding o'er deceitful streams.

FIRST AND SECOND WITCH

Our plot has took,
The Queen's forsook,
Ha, ha, ha!
Elissa ruin'd,
Ha, ha, ha!

SORCERESS

Our next motion
Must be to storm her lover on the
ocean.
From the ruin of others our pleasures
we borrow,
Elissa bleeds tonight, and Carthage
flames tomorrow.

CHORUS

Destruction's our delight,
Delight our greatest sorrow,
Elissa dies tonight
And Carthage flames tomorrow.
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

The Witches Dance

(Jack of the Lanthorn leads the Spaniards out of their way among the Witches.)

Enter Dido, Belinda and Train.

DIDO

Your counsel all is urg'd in vain,
To earth and heaven I will complain.
To earth and heaven why do I call?
Earth and heaven conspire my fall.
To Fate I sue, of other means bereft,
The only refuge for the wretched left.

BELINDA

See, madame, where the Prince
appears!
Such sorrow in his looks he bears
As would convince you still he's true.

Aeneas enters.

AENEAS

What shall lost Aeneas do?
How, royal fair, shall I impart
The god's decree, and tell you we
must part?

DIDO

Thus on the fatal banks of Nile
Weeps the deceitful crocodile.
Thus hypocrites that murder act,
Make heaven and gods the authors of
the fact.

AENEAS

By all thats good...

DIDO

By all that's good, no more,
All that's good you have forswore.
To your promis'd Empire fly,
And let forsaken Dido die.

AENEAS

In spite of Jove's command, I'll stay,
Offend the gods, and Love obey.

DIDO

No, faithless man, thy course pursue,
I'm now resolved as well as you.
No repentance shall reclaim
The injur'd Dido's slighted flame.
For 'tis enough, whate'er you now
decree,
That you had once a thought of
leaving me.

AENEAS

Let Jove say what he will, I'll stay.

DIDO

Away!
To death I fly if longer you delay.

(Exit Aeneas.)

But death, alas! I cannot shun,
Death must come when he is gone.

CHORUS

Great minds against themselves
conspire,
And shun the cure they most desire.

DIDO

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades
me,
On thy bosom let me rest.
More I would, but death invades me,
Death is now a welcome guest.
When I am laid in earth, may my
wrongs create
No trouble in thy breast.
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.
(Cupids appear in the clouds o'er her tomb.)

CHORUS

With drooping wings ye Cupids come
And scatter roses on her tomb.
Soft and gentle as her heart,
Keep here your watch and never part.

Cupids' Dance

– Nahum Tate

We would like to thank the supporters of our 2025-2026 season including: the donors to the Alan 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.

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia

(appearing in this concert)

Soprano

Maryl Apadula
Katy Avery*
Mia Castro-Diephouse
Rachel Castro-Diephouse
Kristiane Cooper
Shiloh Cooper
Lauren Darkes-Mallis
Kelsey DeJesus
Sarah Fiordaliso
Caroline Fitch
Erica Fungiuelle
Teri Gemberling-Johnson
Miriam Goldberg
Lindsey Graham
Julia Hewitt
Elizabeth Hohwieler
Anna Juliar
Lynn Kirby
Maya Kociba
Rachael Lipson*
Fay Manicke
Juliana Melara
Ilene Miller
Andrea Nestman†
Lynn Petroski
Kate Philips-Kaiser
Carmen Ramirez
Gabrielle Rinkus
Roberta Rote
Sophia Santiago*
Leila Schwartz
Mary Kate Suhy
Marie Tavianini
Laura Temoyan
Victoria Tuck
Jessica Vega
Kathryn Wadsworth
Deanda Wilson
Lisa Wooldridge†

Alto

Christine Chaapel
Hannah Davis
Erin Donovan
Robin Eaton
Shannon Foley
Laura Fontanills
Rebecca Fülöp
Anne Gold
Lilah Gosman
Katherine Haas
Jennifer Hay
Monica Isomura*
Mari Kawakatsu
Sharon Kempin
Deborah Laird
Allison Levine
Susan Lin
Deborah McIntosh
Heather Mitchell
Florence Moyer
Gina Polite
Ava Pressman*
Rebecca Rendsburg
Sharon Rhinesmith*
Rebecca Roberts
Julia Scott
Jennifer Sheffield
Maria Sisto
Jane Uptegrove
Heather Wismer

Tenor

Jeremy Bannett
Andrew Beck
Will Budreau
Christopher Carriero
Kyle Conner
Mark Davidson
Campbell Holder
Eiki Isomura
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
Michael Carson
Keegan Connolly
Mark Cordova
Lucas DeJesus**
Brendan Fullam
Steven Glasser
Lowell Hoyt
Samuel Kampa
Steven Knauss
Jon Kochavi
John Kohlhas
Martin Levitas
Sean Martin
William Mendoza
Michael Moore
Erik Potteiger*
Cleveland Rea
Matthew Reese
Daniel Rosen
Thomas Sutton
Alexander Varghese
Jonathan J. Wallace

† Echo chorus in *Dido and Aeneas*

** Senior Vocal Artist & Section Leader

* Section Leader

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-genre 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's 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 presented notable works including the Philadelphia premiere of 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.

Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia

The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, a founding resident company of The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, is a 33-member professional ensemble led by Music Director David Hayes. Established in 1964 by Marc Mostovoy, and originally named Concerto Soloists, the orchestra has a well-established reputation for distinguished performances of repertoire spanning the Baroque period through the 21st century.

The inception of the ensemble was motivated, in part, by the desire to provide performance opportunities for young professional musicians emerging from the Curtis Institute of Music and other regional training programs, as well as the intention to contribute meaningfully to the region's cultural life. Over time, its mission and programming have broadened, inspired by a desire to help secure the future of classical repertoire by placing it in a broader context of contemporary works (including new commissions), other musical genres and traditions, and lesser-known pieces from the traditional repertoire which deserve modern audience attention. Creative collaborations with other major arts institutions, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Clef Club of Jazz, and the Annenberg Center, have been a key focus of those ambitions – all with the intention of enriching the musical experiences of Philadelphia audiences through original programming choices that stretch boundaries and invite fresh perspectives. In total, the organization has commissioned and premiered over seventy new works. It remains committed to showcasing emerging young performers of exceptional talent.

Ignat Solzhenitsyn, a concert pianist and conducting graduate from the Curtis Institute, was named Principal Conductor in 1998 and Music Director in 2004. As Conductor Laureate (since 2010), Maestro Solzhenitsyn has gone on to a distinguished international career as a concert pianist and conductor but remains closely associated with the Orchestra.

The current Music Director is Maestro David Hayes, a conductor known for his extensive repertoire spanning symphonic, oratorio/choral, and operatic genres, who holds significant roles in the music world. His passion for pushing boundaries and his dedication to showcasing diverse musical expressions have earned him recognition as a transformative force in the classical music scene, inspiring audiences and musicians alike.

Over the course of the ensemble's rich and diverse history, the Chamber Orchestra has performed with a remarkable roster of world-renowned artists, including Luciano Pavarotti, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Mstislav Rostropovich, Isaac Stern, Rudolf Serkin, The Eroica Trio, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Steven Isserlis, Joseph Silverstein, and Catherine Michel, as well as virtuosos of contemporary music genres such as Julie Andrews, Bernadette Peters, Mark O'Connor, Elvis Costello, and Sylvia McNair.

We regret that we were unable to print the Chamber Orchestra's roster for this concert, but it can be found in our e-program, which can be accessed through the QR code on the first page of this program booklet.

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 Senior Artist-in-Residence and Collaborative Pianist 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 O22 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, Illinois, where she was the resident collaborate pianist for the third season.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, Ms. Wong holds a masters 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.

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.

Katy Avery, soprano – Dido

Multiple Grammy Award-winning soprano Katy Avery, with her “beautifully pure tone” (Classical Voice of North Carolina), is a soloist and ensemble singer based in Philadelphia. Regularly appearing at home and abroad, Katy has most frequently performed as a core member of three-time Grammy winning new music choir, The Crossing. Katy has also enjoyed engagements with Roomful of Teeth, Conspirare, Choral Arts Philadelphia, Les Canards Chantants, The Thirteen, and Opera Philadelphia, among many others. Recordings of Ms. Avery have been featured on the ECM, Parma, Innova, and Albany labels. Katy received her Bachelor of Music degree from East Carolina University in 2009, where she studied jazz and classical vocal performance, and completed her Masters of Music in Vocal Pedagogy and Performance from Westminster Choir College under the tutelage of Dr. Christopher Arneson. She currently maintains a private voice studio in Philadelphia and is actively curating new performances with ballet companies and other disciplines. When she’s not performing or teaching, you can find Katy sewing her own couture, dancing, or cooking creative meals.



Sophia Santiago, soprano – Belinda

Sophia Santiago has performed as a soprano soloist and pro choral artist across the New York Metropolitan Area. She appears frequently with the Opera Philadelphia Chorus and as a soloist and chorister with the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia and Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble. After receiving her bachelor's degree at Westminster Choir College, she studied for her Master's Degree in Vocal Performance at Manhattan School of Music with voice teacher Shirley Close. She won first place at the Spazio e Musica competition in Vicenza, Italy in 2022 and performed with ensemble I Musicalli Affetti. She was also a New York District



Winner in the Laffont competition of 2023. Recent engagements include the American Bach Soloist Academy of 2023 and participating in the Hugo Wolf Liedduo Competition of 2024 in Stuttgart, Germany. Upcoming appearances in 2025 include performances with the Crossing and VAE in Cincinnati.

Sharon Rhinesmith, mezzo-soprano – Sorceress

Mezzo-soprano Sharon Rhinesmith is a frequent performer of oratorio, opera and recital. Her solo performances include appearances with The Philadelphia Orchestra at the Mann Music Center and The Philadelphia Singers at Merkin Hall in New York. Other solo appearances include performances with Vox Amadeus, The Music Group of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Chorus, The Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra/Camerata Singers, The Princeton Pro Musica and The Bach Aria Festival of New York. She has also sung major roles with the ConcertOpera Philadelphia and the Lake George (New York) Opera Festival, among many others. Sharon is an alto section leader with Mendelssohn Chorus and has appeared with them in recent seasons as alto soloist in the Bach *Magnificat* and the Durufle *Requiem*.



As a recitalist Sharon's list of venues include the Temple University Noonday Arts Series, The Art Alliance of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Lively Arts Series at Montgomery County Community College and the Concerts by Candlelight Series in Cape May, New Jersey. Collaborating with classical guitarist Thomas Smith, she also performed on numerous concert series including the Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society and Concerts on the Square at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Philadelphia.

Sharon received her Bachelor and Master's of Music degrees in Voice Performance from Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music. She is currently on the voice faculty at Settlement Music School and Temple University Music Preparatory in Philadelphia.

Rachael Lipson, soprano – Second Woman

Rachael Lipson, soprano, enjoys frequent collaboration with opera companies, churches, and professional choirs located throughout the Tri-State area. She received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance at Westminster Choir College, and her Master of Music in Voice Performance at the University of Delaware in 2016, where she studied under Noël Archambeault. Since then, she has explored diverse repertoire as both a soloist and as a choral scholar, with a special passion for new music. Rachael is currently a staff singer at Saint Mark's Church, Philadelphia, a member of the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir's roster, and a member of Vox Amadeus. She can be heard on classical guitarist Kevin Cope's CD *Origin Unknown* performing his sets "Three Sephardic Songs" and "In the Sky," released in October of 2020. Rachael is very excited to begin her musical journey with the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia!



Lucas DeJesus, bass-baritone – Aeneas

Lucas DeJesus, bass-baritone, is a multi-disciplinary vocalist, arts administrator, and voice teacher based in his hometown of Philadelphia, PA. He holds the position of National Director of Program Operations and Regional Coordinator (Philadelphia) for ArtSmart, where he has been a voice mentor since 2017. Lucas specializes in choral music performance and is an active member of the Opera Philadelphia Chorus, EXIGENCE (Sphinx Organization), Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia (Lead Section Leader & Senior Vocal Artist), Philadelphia Symphonic Chorus, Convoco (founding member), Glassbrook Vocal Ensemble (founding member & Chorus Manager), The Same Stream (founding member), and the Delaware Choral Scholars.

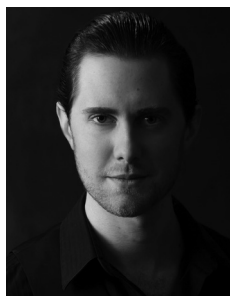


He received his Bachelor of Music degree in voice performance from Westminster Choir College in 2014. Lucas is committed to providing under-represented youth access to equitable music education and mentorship as well as fighting for the dignity, respect, and fair working conditions of professional choral musicians.

Erik Potteiger, bass – Second Witch

Erik Potteiger is a professional singer, percussionist, pianist, and composer currently based in Philadelphia, PA. He received his Bachelors of Music in Choral Music Education and Vocal Performance from the University of South Carolina. Erik has performed vocally as a bass in ensembles and solo setting across a plethora of cities and states in the US, as well as eight countries across three continents. A few of the professional vocal ensembles Erik has worked with include the Voces8 US Scholars Ensemble (London, England), The Cathedral Singers (Columbia, SC), The Cecilia Ensemble (Augusta, GA), Choral Arts Philadelphia, CORO Vocal Artists

(Des Moines, IA), Coro Vocati (Atlanta, GA), Philadelphia Symphonic Choir, The Princeton Singers (Princeton, NJ), The Red Shift (Baton Rouge, LA), Tenêo (Philadelphia, PA), Vox Fidelis (Bordentown, NJ), The Washington Chorus (Washington, D.C.) and Women's Sacred Music Project (Lafayette Hill, PA). He is also a founding member of Convoco, a professional choral ensemble based in the Philadelphia region.



An active church musician, Erik appears frequently as both a cantor and staff singer in the Tri-state area.

His prior church residencies include St. Thomas 5th Ave (New York, NY), Christ Church Cathedral (Dublin, Ireland), Durham Cathedral (Durham, England), Exeter Cathedral (Exeter, England), Southwark Cathedral (London, England), St Albans Cathedral (St Albans, England) and St. Patrick's Cathedral (Dublin, Ireland).

Erik has musically collaborated with instrumental ensembles nationally, including The Philadelphia Orchestra, Brandywine Brass, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Germantown Oratorio Orchestra, North Carolina Baroque Orchestra, Philadelphia Bach Collegium, Philadelphia Brass, Philharmonia Orchestra of New York, Quartetto Ogrigado, Reading Symphony Orchestra and members of Tempesta di Mare. Away from his multi-genre performing engagements he enjoys teaching, video and audio editing, producing, recording, as well as creating virtual ensemble content and practice tracks.

Ian Martin, tenor - First Witch

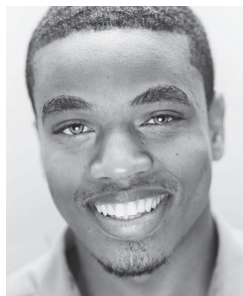
Ian Martin is a classically trained tenor vocalist and music teacher. An alumnus of Philadelphia's High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), he graduated magna cum laude from West Chester University, receiving his Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education with a concentration in voice. During Ian's time at West Chester, he earned the Hilary H. Parry Memorial Junior Voice Scholarship, and was an honors soloist for the WCU Symphony Orchestra. He was also a member of the Concert Choir, and the WCU Opera Theater Company, having performed in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, as well as Penhorwood's *Too Many Sopranos*, and Caccini's *La liberazione di Ruggiero*.



Ian has continued to perform as a freelance singer (having sung background for artists like Sarah Brightman and Bobby McFerrin), as a tenor section leader for the Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia, and as a member of the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir. When he's not performing, he's in the classroom, teaching general music to children from kindergarten to eighth grade, and directing his own elementary school chorus.

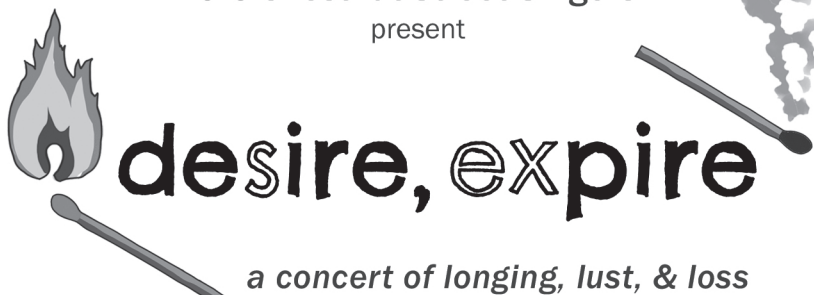
D'quan Tyson, tenor – Sailor

D'quan Tyson, tenor, is a performer, educator, and administrator based in Philadelphia. In 2016, he graduated with his Bachelor of Music, Vocal Performance degree from Ithaca College and has actively been pursuing outlets to express his passion for music. He is a section leader with Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia & Old Pine Presbyterian Church. In addition, he is a roster singer with the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir and substitute chorister at Opera Philadelphia. Currently, D'quan works at The Victor Café, where you can find the staff singing opera roughly every half an hour, as well as some freelance administration and education work.



Durst. Breneiser

the Chestnut Street Singers
present



desire, expire

a concert of longing, lust, & loss
Morten Lauridsen's Six Fire Songs
paired with ancient & modern counterparts

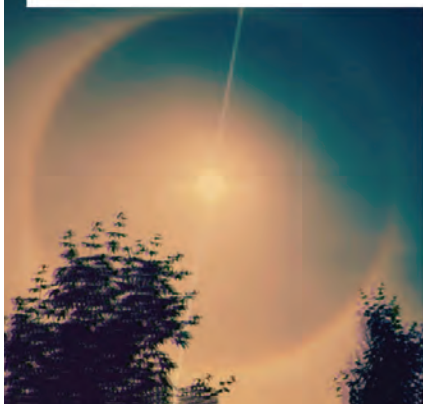
Saturday, Nov 22, 2025, 6:00pm
Church of the Holy Trinity

<http://chestnutstreetsingers.org>





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

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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

Ticket Prices: \$30-\$50 • For tickets or more information go to www.mcchorus.org