

Lincoln Center's

white light festival

October 18–November 15, 2017

Saturday, November 11, 2017, at 5:00 pm

The Psalms Experience

CONCERT 11

Celebration of Life

Netherlands Chamber Choir

Peter Dijkstra, *Conductor*

Introduction by Esther J. Hamori, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible,
Union Theological Seminary

This program is approximately one hour long and will be performed without intermission.

(Program continued)

The White Light Festival presentation of *The Psalms Experience* is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This program is supported as part of the Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York.

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

James Memorial Chapel,
Union Theological Seminary

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The Psalms Experience was created and first produced by Tido Visser, managing director of the Netherlands Chamber Choir.

The Netherlands Chamber Choir was supported by the Netherland-America Foundation for the development of this project.

UPCOMING WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL EVENTS:

Saturday, November 11, at 8:30 pm in Alice Tully Hall

The Psalms Experience

Concert 12: Consequences of Power

The Tallis Scholars

Peter Phillips, conductor

With members of **The Choir of Trinity Wall**

Street, Netherlands Chamber Choir, and

Norwegian Soloists' Choir

Sunday, November 12 at 3:00 pm in David Geffen Hall

Beethoven's Missa solemnis

Swedish Chamber Orchestra

Thomas Dausgaard, conductor

Swedish Radio Choir

Peter Dijkstra, choral director

Malin Christensson, soprano

Kristina Hammarström, mezzo-soprano

Michael Weinius, tenor

Josef Wagner, bass

BEETHOVEN: Mass in D major ("Missa solemnis")

Pre-concert lecture by Andrew Shenton at 1:45 pm in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Tuesday, November 14 at 7:30 pm at Church of St. Mary the Virgin

Swedish Radio Choir

Peter Dijkstra, conductor

MAIJA EINFELDE: Lux aeterna

SVEN-DAVID SANDSTRÖM: En ny himmel och en ny jord

ANDERS HILLBORG: Mouyouyoum

SCHNITTKKE: Concerto for Choir

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We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

Celebration of Life

ANDREAS HAMMERSCHMIDT (c. 1611–1675)	Machet die Tore weit (Psalm 24)
CAROLINE SHAW (b. 1982)	and the swallow (World premiere) (Psalm 84)
CHIARA MARGARITA COZZOLANI (1602–1678)	Dixit dominus (Psalm 110)
GEORGE KIRBYE (1565–1634)	Praise ye the Lord, for he is good (Psalm 136)
ADRIANO BANCHIERI (1568–1634)	Omnes gentes plaudit (Psalm 47)
THOMAS ATTWOOD WALMISLEY (1814–1856)	O give thanks unto the Lord (Psalm 105)
SAMUEL HOLYOKE (1762–1820)	The Lord, the Sovereign, sends his summons forth (Psalm 50)
VIC NEES (1936–2013)	Fundamenta ejus (Psalm 87)
HENRY PURCELL (1659–1695)	O give thanks unto the Lord (Psalm 106)
JAKOB HANDL (JACOBUS GALLUS) (1550–1591)	Laudate Dominum (Psalm 150)
RUGGIERO GIOVANNELLI (c. 1560–1625)	Cantate Domino (Psalm 149)
JAN TOLLIIUS (c. 1550–1620?)	Sicut fluit cera (Psalm 68)
ISIDORA ŽEBELJAN (b. 1967)	Psalm 78 (U.S. premiere)
ALEXANDER GRECHANINOV (1864–1956)	Praise the name of the Lord, Op. 34 (Psalm 135)
FRANCIS POULENC (1899–1963)	Exultate Deo (Psalm 81)

Please hold applause until the end of the performance.

The Book of Psalms and Its Musical Interpretations

By Neil W. Levin

Common to the liturgies, histories, and spirit of Judaism and Christianity, the Book of Psalms is one of the most widely familiar and frequently quoted books of the Hebrew Bible. The Psalms are also basic to Western culture as literature. Their expression in musical notation spans more than ten centuries. Their unnotated musical traditions predate Christianity, extending to Jewish antiquity and the Temple eras when the Psalter served in effect as the Temple music manual and prayer book.

LITERARY and RELIGIOUS CONTENT.

Most current biblical scholarship places the Psalms' composition as well as unified canonization substantially prior to the second century BCE, by which time their popularity was well established. Their common attribution to King David as a popular post-biblical tradition notwithstanding, it is impossible to know the identity of the Psalms' author(s) or compiler(s). But we can celebrate their uninterrupted endurance through their embrace of a broad spectrum of human experience and their perceived manifestations of a respectable form of popular theology.

Taken together, the Psalms express human thirst for moral, ethical, and spiritual grounding as well as the common search for a guiding faith. Viewed from theological or even deist perspectives, they encapsulate human pursuit of the Divine essence. "In the Torah and the Prophets," wrote biblical scholar Nahum Sarna, "God reaches out to man. In the Psalms, human beings reach out to God. The language is human." Indeed, in their singular blend of majestic grandeur, lofty sentiments, and poignant simplicity, the Psalms address nearly every human emotion and mood. Judaic origin and Judeo-Christian association

aside, their ageless attraction abides in the universality of their appeal and teachings, transcending religious orientation, time, and geography.

MUSICAL RECONSTRUCTION. From musicological scholarship and Judaic sources, we understand something about psalmody—the manner of musical Psalm rendition—in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, including probable vocal range and predominance of particular tones; syllabic versus melismatic articulation; embellishment; type of choirs and performance formats (responsorial, antiphonal, etc.); and instrumental accompaniment. But this knowledge is academic and theoretical rather than aesthetic or artistic. It cannot effectuate authentic Temple-era reproductions of Psalms vis-à-vis modalities, pitches, melodic progressions, timbres, or precise rhythms. Similar limitations apply to reasonable suppositions concerning early Church psalmody, in which some musical practices may have been borrowed from Hebrew psalmody. Despite various irresponsible claims over the years to have deciphered imagined encoded systems of musical information, all attempts to replicate Temple psalmody aurally are at best naively romantic exercises in fantasy.

Although ancient psalmody has not survived intact in any synagogue music tradition, one hears presumed echoes in certain Sephardi and Near Eastern repertoires. In some of those, however, as in Ashkenazi practice inherited from Europe or expanded elsewhere, Psalm renditions have also acquired artificial meter through superimposed syllabic patterns or adaptations to secular tunes. Rarely have modern composers employed perceived psalmodic features.

THE PSALMS IN HEBREW and CHRISTIAN LITURGIES.

The development of Hebrew liturgy relied heavily on the Psalms, which provided an obvious foundation. They permeate the traditional prayer books of every rite, and they infuse Reform

worship as well. No other biblical book is so directly, richly, or consistently represented. Outside formally designated services, societies of “Psalm reciters” are features of many fervently pious communities, such as one in contemporary Jerusalem whose two distinct subgroups divide between them the daily recitation of the entire Psalter at the Western Wall.

The Psalter also offered a wellspring of liturgical material for the nascent Church. Latin translations are thought to have predominated its earliest services; eventually, usage differed between Eastern and Western rites. Aside from a few extant fragments, their musical notation survives only from the ninth century on.

In the Roman, or Western Church, the continuum of unabridged Psalm singing is most conspicuous in the Office of Vespers, though not exclusive to it. In the Mass and other liturgies, however, Psalms became abbreviated or partially quoted. Many polyphonic settings for Roman Catholic liturgy continued even past the Renaissance to reflect or incorporate elements of psalmody. But in the various Protestant movements, Psalm composition followed the course of art music in which those historical references were largely abandoned: Bach motets, for example. The Reformation also led to emphasis on Psalm singing in the vernacular: German, English, etc. To encourage congregational singing, metrical—even superficially rhymed—versions and paraphrases were created, often only approximating the original Hebrew loosely if at all. These were set to hymn-like strophic tunes with simple chordal accompaniments. Communal singing in 19th- and early 20th-century classical Reform Jewish worship exhibited a similar fashion.

PSALMS IN THE WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSICAL TRADITION. Original Psalm settings proliferated in Europe from the 15th century on as sacred music from Western

artistic perspectives, and eventually also outside religious contexts altogether. Psalm composition in the 17th and 18th centuries is intertwined with contemporaneous paths of motet and anthem genres; English and American anthems of that time both display abundant reliance on Psalm texts. During the 19th century, throughout the modern era, and into the 21st century in both sacred and secular worlds, composers of nearly every stripe and orientation have engaged the Psalms in expressions ranging from large-scale choral and orchestral works to art songs and a cappella choral settings—even in exclusively instrumental inspirations such as solo organ sonatas or Krzysztof Penderecki’s electronic *Psalmus* (1961). There is no stylistic approach or treatment, no technical procedure (including 12-tone serialization), no melodic, contrapuntal, or harmonic language—in short, no aspect of Western musical development—from which the Psalms have escaped.

The unrelenting appeal of the Psalms for mainstream and avant-garde composers alike in each generation lies not only in their poetic religious spirit, but in their transcendent humanistic content. They continue to invite musical engagement both from Judaic or Judeo-Christian sensibilities and from basic Western literary-cultural worldviews. And some works communicate on intersecting planes. Thus, the Psalms may be understood not only as an ecumenical bridge between two faiths—which is no new observation—but as *artistic* mediators between sacred and secular music in the evolving, expanding Western canon.

Neil W. Levin is artistic director and editor-in-chief of the Milken Archive of Jewish Music, an emeritus professor of Jewish music at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and professor-in-residence at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

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Notes on the Program

By James M. Keller

Examine a well-used Bible and you will find that one of its most heavily thumbed sections is the Book of Psalms. It is easy to understand why. Whereas much of the Old Testament is given over to tribal histories, prophetic pronouncements, and declarations of rules for society (often with threats of divine retribution against those who don't toe the line), the Psalms are utterances of the human heart. They are not unique in that regard. We encounter personalized expression of specific human aspects elsewhere in the Old Testament, particularly in several of the Psalms' immediate neighbors—desolation in The Book of Job, sagacity in the Book of Proverbs, cynicism in Ecclesiastes, eroticism in The Songs of Songs. The Psalms, however, give voice to an exceptional breadth of the human spirit. In the 150 psalms, man is searching for his *condition humaine*, his right to exist, his country and culture, guided by his faith and his doubts, bemoaning his fate and dancing with joy. The Psalms are about him and belong to him.

Created as songs, these prose poems have appealed greatly to composers through the centuries, yielding a repertoire of many thousands of compositions. For this project, a team of Dutch scholars—Tido Visser, managing director of the Netherlands Chamber Choir, musicologist Leo Samama, and theologian Gerard Swüste—divided the corpus of Psalms into 12 groups by subject and then selected settings that would form musically balanced and satisfying programs out of each of those chapters. They established some ground rules: The settings would be for a *cappella* chorus (allowing very occasional organ accompaniments); each psalm might be represented through either its complete or partial text; and each composer, whether renowned or obscure, would figure exactly once throughout the entire project.

This penultimate program of *The Psalms Experience* focuses on settings of psalms that are a "Celebration of Life." Festivities were a normal part of life in ancient centuries just as they are today, but in times of disaster, war, doubt, or deprivations, there is all the more reason for people to seize upon occasions for song and dance. Accounts throughout the history of Moses' people relate how song, dance, and jubilation provide a necessary change of scene and welcome relaxation—however temporary—against a background of struggle. Even during such times, ethical behavior toward others remained a concern. Swüste writes: "The texts remind us not to lose sight of caring for the oppressed, the poor, and the stranger."

Variety characterizes this concert, in which 15 composers show different ways of setting a psalm. The most practical settings are either unison (such as chanted plainsong) or homophonic (as in chorales, where the various harmonized vocal lines unroll mostly in parallel rhythms). Psalm 105 by the British composer Thomas Attwood Walmisley (godson of Thomas Attwood, who was a favorite pupil of Mozart's) and Psalm 50 by the American Samuel Holyoke (a pillar of early New England musical life) are good examples of English-style chants or chorales. Of a totally different nature is the often luxuriant polyphony of Adriano Banchieri, Ruggiero Giovannelli, Jakob Handl (a.k.a. Jacobus Gallus), and Jan Tollius, late-Renaissance composers who hailed respectively from Bologna, Rome, Slovenia, and the Netherlands.

George Kirbye in England and Andreas Hammerschmidt in Bohemia, with their different religious backgrounds, both opted for a fairly taut setting of the Psalms; their primarily homophonic approach allows the text to be understood clearly when sung. In fact, this syllabic style can also be found in most Russian Orthodox psalm settings, as in the one by Alexander Grechaninov sung today. One finds it also in much choral music of the French school in the first half of the 20th century, such as that of Francis Poulenc. His “Exultate Deo” (Psalm 81) dates from a time of war—1941—and highlights its homophonic passages by contrasting them with sections of imitative polyphony. Homophonic writing also applies to the psalm settings of the late Belgian composer Vic Nees, even though his Psalm 87 is one of his more complex choral works.

Also on this program are celebratory settings by Pulitzer Prize winner Caroline Shaw (commissioned for *The Psalms Experience*) and Serbian composer Isidora Žebeljan, a notable figure of the European avant-garde. Henry Purcell’s “O give thanks unto the Lord” (Psalm 106) stands as one of the pearls of the English Baroque era. The 17th-century Milanese composer Chiara Margarita Cozzolani—who pushed back against church authorities trying to clamp down on the rich musical life of the Benedictine convent she oversaw as abbess—left behind an astonishing oeuvre, including a splendid “Dixit dominus” (Psalm 110).

Adapted from essays by Leo Samama

James M. Keller is program annotator of the New York Philharmonic (The Leni and Peter May Chair) and of the San Francisco Symphony. He also serves as critic-at-large for The Santa Fe New Mexican, the oldest newspaper west of the Mississippi.

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Please turn to page 22 for an article on the enduring resonance of the Psalms.

Meet the Artists

ASTRID ACKERMANN



Peter Dijkstra

Peter Dijkstra is chief conductor of the Netherlands Chamber Choir. He has also been chief conductor of the Swedish Radio Choir since 2007. He is highly sought-after as a guest conductor by both orchestras and choirs throughout the world, and has conducted the BBC Singers, RIAS Chamber Choir in Berlin, Norwegian Soloists' Choir, Danish National Radio Choir, the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, among others.

Mr. Dijkstra was awarded the Kersjes van de Groenekan Prize for young orchestral conductors in 2002 and the Eric Ericson Award in 2003, where, at the organization's competition finals, he first conducted the Swedish Radio Choir.

Mr. Dijkstra was born in Roden, Holland in 1978. In his youth, he sang with the boys' choir Roder Jongenskoor, founded by his father Bouwe Dijkstra, and also performed in larger opera productions in Amsterdam, including Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at Dutch National Opera. He studied choral and orchestral conducting and voice at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, the Hochschule für musik und Tanz Köln, and at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm with Jorma Panula. In 1999 he formed his own all-male vocal group, The Gents.

Netherlands Chamber Choir

Over the past several decades, the Netherlands Chamber Choir (Nederlands Kamerkoor) has established itself as a leading world-class choir, praised by critics in and outside of the Netherlands alike. Since

its founding 80 years ago, the choir has forged a reputation for its adventurous and innovative approach to performance, owing to its commissioning of renowned composers and young talent, as well as its continual pursuit of new formats and exciting collaborations. Education and participation is a vital part of the choir's mission, as it provides coaching and workshops, and invites choirs to perform as supporting ensembles at its own concerts.

Since September 2015, the choir has been led by its chief conductor Peter Dijkstra. His predecessors include Uwe Gronostay, Tõnu Kaljuste, Stephen Layton, Risto Joost, and the ensemble's founder, Felix de Nobel.

Esther J. Hamori

Esther J. Hamori is an associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Union Theological Seminary. She earned her bachelor of arts degree at Sarah Lawrence College with a major in violin performance in 1994, her M.Div. at Yale Divinity School in 1997, and her PhD in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature from the Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University in 2004. She taught at Sarah Lawrence College and Cornell University before joining the Union faculty in 2005. Ms. Hamori's research is focused on ancient concepts of divine-human contact and communication as reflected in Israelite and other Near Eastern texts. Her latest book, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature: Prophecy, Necromancy, and Other Arts of Knowledge* (Yale University Press, 2015), brings to light the full range of women's divinatory activities as portrayed in the Hebrew texts. Her courses at Union include the Book of Job, Monster Heaven, and the Psalms.

White Light Festival

I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colors. Only a prism can divide the colors and make them appear; this prism could be the spirit of the

listener. —Arvo Pärt. Now in its eighth year, the White Light Festival is Lincoln Center's annual exploration of music and art's power to reveal the many dimensions of our interior lives. International in scope, the multidisciplinary festival offers a broad spectrum of the world's leading instrumentalists, vocalists, ensembles, choreographers, dance companies, and directors, complemented by conversations with artists and scholars and post-performance White Light Lounges.

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Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader

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Netherlands Chamber Choir

Peter Dijkstra, *Chief Conductor*

Soprano

Mariët Kaasschieter
Saejeong Kim
Annet Lans
Mónica Monteiro
Cressida Sharp
Maria Valdmaa

Alto

Elsbeth Gerritsen
Marleene Goldstein
Dorien Lievers
Chantal Nysingh
Åsa Olsson
Karin van der Poel

Tenor

Stefan Berghammer
Harry van Berne
Alberto ter Doest
William Knight
João Moreira
Alessio Tosi

Bass

Matthew Baker
Kees Jan de Koning
Robbert Muuse
Gilad Nezer
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Organ

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Netherlands Chamber Choir Staff

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