

Lincoln Center's

# white light festival

October 18–November 15, 2017

**Friday, November 10, 2017, at 6:30 pm**

## *The Psalms Experience*

CONCERT 7

# Abandonment

Norwegian Soloists' Choir

Grete Pedersen, *Conductor*

Introduction by Rev. Winnie Varghese,  
Director of Justice and Reconciliation, Trinity Church Wall Street

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

*(Program continued)*

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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.**

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New York Society for Ethical Culture

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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:**

*Friday, November 10, at 8:30 pm at the New York Society for Ethical Culture*

**The Psalms Experience**

**Concert 8: Lamentation**

**Netherlands Chamber Choir**

**Peter Dijkstra**, conductor

Visit [PsalmsExperience.org](http://PsalmsExperience.org) for full concert schedule.

*Saturday, November 11, at 1:00 pm in James Memorial Chapel, Union Theological Seminary*

**The Psalms Experience**

**Concert 9: Security and Trust**

**The Tallis Scholars**

**Peter Phillips**, conductor

Visit [PsalmsExperience.org](http://PsalmsExperience.org) for full concert schedule.

*Saturday, November 11, 2017 at 3:00 pm in James Memorial Chapel, Union Theological Seminary*

**The Psalms Experience**

**Concert 10: Pilgrimage of Life**

**Norwegian Soloists' Choir**

**Grete Pedersen**, conductor

Visit [PsalmsExperience.org](http://PsalmsExperience.org) for full concert schedule.

*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**

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit [WhiteLightFestival.org](http://WhiteLightFestival.org). Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a White Light Festival brochure.

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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.*

# Abandonment

Traditional Arabic chant/  
Norwegian shepherds' song  
(arr. Gunnar Eriksson)

## **Psalm 44**

ZAD MOULTAKA  
(b. 1967)

**Sakata** (U.S. premiere) (Psalm 60)

JOHN BLOW  
(1649–1708)

**O God, wherefore art thou absent** (Psalm 74)

JACHET DE MANTUA  
(1483–1559)

**In die tribulationis** (Psalm 77)

Traditional

**Gaelic chant from the Isle of Lewis** (Psalm 79)

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI  
(b. 1933)

**Song of Cherubim** (Psalm 80)

Traditional

**Armenian Orthodox chant** (Psalm 83)

OLIVER BROWNSON  
(1746–1815)  
(arr. Grete Pedersen)

**My never-ceasing songs** (Psalm 89)

PER NØRGÅRD  
(b. 1932)

**Ad te Domine clamabo, from Four Latin Motets,  
No. 3** (Psalm 28)

OTTO OLSSON  
(1879–1964)

**Ad Dominum cum tribularer clamavi** (Psalm 120)

LUCA MARENZIO  
(1553/54–1599)

**Super flumina Babylonis** (Psalm 137)

JOHANN SCHEIN  
(1583–1630) /  
Traditional  
(arr. Grete Pedersen)

**Der Herr denket an uns /**

**Ned i vester soli glader (Norwegian Evening  
Prayer)** (Psalm 115)

*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.

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This seventh program in *The Psalms Experience* presents settings of 12 psalms that focus on the idea of "Abandonment." When (as tradition has it) Moses liberated himself and his people by fleeing into the Sinai desert via the Red Sea, there was plenty to bemoan. The same was true following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. Swüste observes: "These are periods when the people felt 'godforsaken,' both literally and figuratively. From the midst of these disasters the cry of distress rises to God: 'Be with us.' God had made his name known to Moses: 'I shall be there for you.' The complaint, the prayer, is that God must live up to that name."

Refugees can be found all over the world and throughout history. The repercussions of this are reflected in today's program, which includes traditional psalms of Arabian, Scottish, Armenian, and Russian origin; a commissioned work in Arabic by a French-Lebanese composer, Zad Moultaqa; and music from the disparate cultures of Germany, Italy, England, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the U.S., all of this encompassing at least a millennium.

The hymn by Krzysztof Penderecki of Poland involves the original Russian Orthodox version of Psalm 80, in which a direct connection is drawn between angels and the Holy Trinity. Thus Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasse, who are cited in this psalm, are transformed into "the Life-giving Trinity" for Penderecki's text. This twist in the direction of the New Testament follows the practice of most Russian Orthodox usage in settings of this psalm, such as versions by Gretchaninov and Rachmaninoff.

Though his name is scarcely recognized today, Oliver Brownson was a prominent composer and singing-school master in late 18th-century Connecticut. His setting of the tune known as "Bedford," to the words of Psalm 89, first appeared in *Select Harmony*, a collection of hymns and anthems he published in 1783, probably in Hartford. In this concert, we encounter it through the prism of what conductor Grete Pedersen calls her "deconstruction" of the original.

Psalm 74 by John Blow is a fine example of the influence that strict Renaissance polyphony exercised practically to the end of the 17th century; his somber five-part setting of "O God, wherefore art thou absent" probably dates from the 1670s, not long after he was appointed organist at Westminster Abbey. Little known today, Jachet (or Jacquet) de Mantua was born in Brittany but pursued his career mostly in Italy, working for the Estes, Gonzagas, and other notable Mantuan families for the last three decades of his life. Also representing the High Renaissance in Italy is Luca Marenzio, most famous for his chromatically complex madrigals. Here, we meet him instead through a setting of the refugee text "Super flumina Babylonis," rendered lavish through his magnificent three-choir polyphony. Johann Hermann Schein's Psalm 115 is taken from the splendid collection *Israelsbrunnlein* of 1623, which helped develop the advances of Venetian composers like Gabrieli and Monteverdi within German musical culture.

The mass wanderings of the 20th and 21st centuries underscore the ongoing relevance of texts about the desolation of refugees. In "Ad te Domine clamabo," written in 1991 by Per Nørgård, a dean of Danish composers, we cannot fail to hear the despondency of the displaced and their apprehension of abandonment.

*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



**Grete Pedersen**

Grete Pedersen is internationally acclaimed for her stylistically assured and musically convincing performances of Baroque, Classical, and contemporary music. She is regarded as a pioneer for her work in bringing Norwegian folk music and traditional singing into the field of choral music. Ms. Pedersen studied conducting with Kenneth Kiesler, and choral conducting with Terje Kvam and Eric Ericson. She is a professor of choral conducting at the Norwegian Academy of Music and is in great demand as a guest conductor for professional choirs throughout Europe.

Ms. Pedersen founded the Oslo Chamber Choir in 1984, which she conducted until 2004. She is a frequent guest conductor with European choirs, including the BBC Singers and Swedish Radio Choir. Music for choir and orchestra will form an important part of her work in the coming years, in close collaboration with Ensemble Allegria and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, among others.

## **Norwegian Soloists' Choir**

The Norwegian Soloists' Choir is one of Norway's leading ensembles and among the foremost chamber choirs in Europe. Equally at home with Classical and Romantic repertoire as well as contemporary music, the choir also makes regular excursions into folk-derived music and national Romantic works. The Norwegian Soloists' Choir was founded in 1950 by the composer Knut Nystedt, who served as its conductor for 40 years. In 1990 he was succeeded by Grete Pedersen, who remains the choir's artistic director.

Comprising 26 singers, the choir organizes numerous concerts on its own and participates in festivals in Norway and abroad. In recent years, it has collaborated with ensembles such as the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, Lautten Compagny, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, RIAS Kammerchor, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Accademia Bizantina, Oslo Sinfonietta, TrondheimSolistene, and Norwegian Chamber Orchestra.

The Norwegian Soloists' Choir was named performer of the year in 2012 by the Norwegian Society of Composers, receiving the Gammleng Award in the category of art music that same year. In 2015 the choir was nominated for a classical Spellemann prize for its recording *Meins Lebens Licht: Nystedt-Bach*. The ensemble's most recent recording, *J. S. Bach: Motets*, was released this year.

## **Rev. Winnie Varghese**

The Rev. Winnie Varghese is the priest and chief justice and reconciliation officer at Trinity Church Wall Street. Rev. Varghese oversees the domestic grants program; direct service and outreach from Trinity Church; and programming in areas of service and justice for Trinity Church. Before joining Trinity, Rev. Varghese was the rector of St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery, a historic Episcopal congregation in New York City. From 2003 to 2009, she served as the Episcopal chaplain at Columbia University. From 1999 to 2003, she served as the curate at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Westwood, and as Episcopal chaplain to UCLA.

She graduated from the Union Theological Seminary (M.Div., 1999) and Southern Methodist University (B.A., Religious Studies, 1994). As an intern in the Episcopal Service Corps (1994–95), she worked with the Mental Health Association of Los Angeles as an outreach worker to people who were homeless and living with severe mental illness. She is a blogger for the



*Huffington Post*; author of *Church Meets World*; editor of *What We Shall Become*; and author of numerous articles and chapters on social justice and the church.

## **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.

## **Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.**

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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## Norwegian Soloists' Choir

Grete Pedersen, *Artistic Director*

### Soprano

Karin Lundström  
Ingeborg Dalheim  
Ditte Marie Bræin  
Marie Köberlein  
Karen Heier Hovd  
Mari Øyrehagen

### Alto

Astrid Sandvand Dahlen  
Eva B. Landro  
Jorunn L. Husan  
Live Maartmann  
Tobias Nilsson  
Cecilia Tomter

### Tenor

Håvard Gravdal  
Masashi Tsuji  
Paul Kirby  
Øystein Stensheim  
Robert Lind  
Eirik Grøtvedt

### Bass

Peder Arnt Kløvrud  
Svein Korshamn  
Arild Bakke  
Olle Holmgren  
Jan Kuhar  
Oskar Olofsen

### Organ

James Kennerley

### Norwegian Soloists' Choir Staff

Ingvar Ørn Thrastarson, *Producer*  
Ingvild Skaatan, *Managing Director*