

Presented at Carnegie Hall by
MidAmerica Productions, Inc.

1,514th Concert Worldwide, 1,174th in New York, 719th in Carnegie Hall

Peter Tiboris: Founder and General Director Emeritus
Sir John Rutter, CBE: Conductor Laureate

Sunday, June 29, 2025 at 8:30 PM
Isaac Stern Auditorium / Ronald O. Perelman Stage

New England Symphonic Ensemble

Preston Hawes, Artistic Director and Concertmaster

ELAINE HAGENBERG *Illuminare*
I. Splendor
II. Caritas
III. Nox
IV. Munera Pacis
V. Illuminare His

Victor Starsky, Tenor
Frank Basile, Piano
Clement Cano, Conductor

This evening's program is continued on the following page.

SHERRY BLEVINS

*Tipping Point: A Choral Suite on
Climate Change* (New York Premiere)

- I. I remember (Grief Stage 1: Denial)
- II. Where Will We Go Now?
(Grief Stage 2: Anger and Fear)
- III. The Eye of the Hurricane
(Grief Stage 3: Depression)
- IV. The Power to Change
(Grief Stage 4: Acceptance and Hope)

Chessa Metz, Soprano

Megan Gillespie, Mezzo-Soprano

Sherry Blevins, Conductor

Jeremiah Selvey, Assistant Conductor

Participating Choruses:

Cantabella Children's Chorus, Pleasanton, CA (Clement Cano, Director)

Durham Community Chorale, Durham, NC (Melody Zentner, Director)

Evergreen Chorale, Evergreen, CO (Christine Gaudreau, Director)

Lilly Chorus, Indianapolis, IN (Ruth Dwyer, Director)

The Lighthouse Ensemble of West Vancouver Schools, West Vancouver, BC, Canada
(Suzanne Fulton, Director)

Selvey Studios Ensemble, Santa Monica, CA (Jeremiah Selvey, Director)

Wellshire Sanctuary Choir, Denver, CO (Christine Gaudreau, Director)

St. Justin's Choir, Santa Clara, CA (Lillian Kwiatkowski, Director)

Hillbrook School Choir, San Jose, CA (Clement Cano, Director)

INTERMISSION

WOLFGANG
AMADEUS MOZART

Requiem, K. 626 (arr. Robert Levin)

Introitus
Requiem aeternam
Kyrie
Sequenz
Dies irae
Tuba mirum
Rex tremendae
Recordare
Confutatis
Lacrimosa
Amen
Offertorium
Domine Jesu
Hostias
Sanctus
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei
Agnus Dei
Communio
Lux aeterna
Cum sanctis tuis

Zhanna Alkhazova, Soprano
Sishel Claverie, Mezzo-Soprano
Victor Starsky, Tenor
Brandon Coleman, Bass
Laurier Fagnan, Conductor

Participating Choruses:

ArteLab, Versailles, France (Mailys Pascual and David Sotiropoulos, Co-Directors)
Chœur classique de Montréal, Montréal, Québec - Canada (Louis Laviguer, Director)
Chœur de la Colline, Ville de Québec, Canada
(Catherine-Élisabeth Loiselle, Director; Sponsor: Hôtel Château Laurier Québec)
Chorale Saint-Jean, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (Laurier Fagnan, Director)
Harmonia Choir of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (Kurt Ala-Kantti, Director)
San Diego Children's Choir's Premier and Chamber Choirs, San Diego, CA
(Ruthie Millgard, Director)

Please hold your applause until the end of multi-movement works.

The Program

Program notes for this performance are available in the digital playbill at midamerica-music.com/programnotes0629 or by scanning the QR code below:



Please note that the use of any type of mobile device during the performance is strictly prohibited.

The Artists

Clement Cano, Conductor

Clement Cano is in his fourth year as artistic director of Cantabella Children's Chorus, where he helps young singers grow in skill, confidence, and love for choral music. He recently completed his first year teaching at Hillbrook School in Los Gatos and San Jose where he continues that passion. Cano also serves as music director at St. Joseph's Cathedral Basilica in San Jose.



Cano's musical journey began early, starting with piano lessons as a kid—encouraged by his mom—and a steady stream of live performances, including the likes of Chanticleer and West End shows introduced by his dad. He began singing with George Hernandez and Saringhimig, and later continued his choral journey under Dr. Charlene Archibeque at San Jose State University. Cantabella recently received the honor of performing at the American Choral Directors Association Western Regional Conference in San Jose, California in 2026.

Victor Starsky, Tenor

Tenor Victor Starsky, a native of Richmond Hill, New York, received critical acclaim this year for his performance as Stiffelio in Sarasota Opera's production of Verdi's *Stiffelio*, as well as for his 2024 season performances as Mario Cavaradossi in New York City Opera's production of Puccini's *Tosca*, Maurizio in Pittsburgh Festival Opera's production of Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and Don José in Sarasota Opera's production of Bizet's *Carmen*. Also in 2024, Starsky made his debut as Nemorino with Charlottesville Opera in their production of Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* and performed the role of Jim Casy in MasterVoices' Carnegie Hall presentation of Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Starsky's remaining 2025 season will feature such performances as Don José in the Washington Opera Society's production of Bizet's *Carmen*, Mario Cavaradossi in the Princeton Symphony Orchestra's production of Puccini's *Tosca*, and Enzo in Pittsburgh Festival Opera's production of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, among other engagements.





Sherry Blevins, Conductor

Sherry Blevins is a sought-after artist, award-winning composer, conductor, and lyricist, as well as an acclaimed music educator. Since 2018, she has published over 30 works with seven different publishing houses, including her own series with Hinshaw Music. She has been commissioned by 47 organizations, including National ACDA, five all-state choirs, and other renowned ensembles around the world. She has also conducted numerous award-winning choirs, as well as all-state and all-county ensembles. *Tipping Point* marks her second premiere at Carnegie Hall. According to Hinshaw Music, “Sherry Blevins, a luminary in the world of choral composition and education, orchestrates harmonies that resonate with the soul. Her musical expertise is surpassed only by her dedication to nurturing the next generation of voices, making her a revered figure in both composition and education.” She is excited to serve as the founder and artistic director of the International Choral Composers Institute, debuting this summer in Charlotte, North Carolina. Blevins holds a bachelor’s degree in music education with a concentration in voice from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a master’s degree in choral conducting from Appalachian State University. Her hope is that, whether through composing or teaching, the music she shares will bring hope, life, and light to others.



Chessa Metz, Soprano

Chessa Metz is a NYC-based actor and singer-songwriter who recently made her Broadway debut in the 2x Tony-Award-Winning musical *Suffs*. Other theatrical credits include: John W. Engeman Theater (Jenna; Waitress), Ogunquit Playhouse (Ado Annie; *Oklahoma!*), Disney Cruise Line (Elsa; *Frozen*), NC Symphony (Mabel; *The Pirates of Penzance*). Chessa met composer Sherry Blevins through her participation in the Charlotte Children’s Choir when she was just 9 years old. Twenty years later, they get to share one of the world’s most prestigious stages. To Miss Blevins, whose teachings emboldened me to choose this musical life—I have a voice because of you.

Megan Gillespie, Mezzo-Soprano

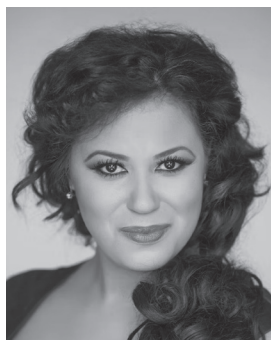
Megan Gillespie, mezzo-soprano, is a distinguished performer and educator whose career encompasses operatic, oratorio, and art song repertoire at the highest levels. Renowned for her rich vocal timbre and compelling dramatic presence, she has performed leading roles such as Carmen (*Carmen*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), and Lyubasha (*The Tsar's Bride*). Her concert appearances include solos in masterworks such as *Messiah*, *Alexander's Feast*, *Stabat Mater*, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. She has appeared on international stages including The Royal Opera House of Oman, The Broad Stage, and the Kennedy Center.



Laurier Fagnan, Conductor

Dr. Laurier Fagnan holds a master's degree in vocal pedagogy from Université Laval and a doctorate in choral conducting (University of Alberta/IRCAM, Paris), as well as a certificate in vocology from the National Center for Voice and Speech in the US. Since 1995, he has conducted the dynamic Chorale Saint-Jean, Western Canada's largest Francophone choir. His innovative field of research, choral acoustics, has led him to lecture at numerous international conferences and to offer vocal technique workshops to hundreds of choirs in Canada, the US, and France. He is director of the Vocal Acoustics Laboratory at Campus Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta, where he is a full professor. He has been a guest lecturer for the European Choral Federation and is a frequent clinician and guest conductor for l'Alliance chorale du Québec, les Choralies internationales de Vaison-la-Romaine in France, as well as for l'Académie internationale du Domaine Forget in Quebec. In May 2018, he made his debut as guest conductor at Carnegie Hall and is delighted to be returning there to conduct Mozart's Requiem with the New England Symphony in June 2025. Fagnan is a recipient of the Richard S. Eaton Award and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, in recognition of his contributions to Canadian choral singing. One thing is certain: Fagnan is passionate about all facets of the human voice and about what can be achieved collectively through the wonderful art of choral singing.





Zhanna Alkhazova, Soprano

Dramatic soprano Zhanna Alkhazova has earned accolades and acclaim for her performances in a range of iconic roles, including *Turandot*, *Manon Lescaut*, Elisabetta in *Don Carlos*, *Tosca*, and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*. She has sung with Sarasota Opera, Opera Connecticut, New Jersey Opera, Geneva Light Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, and Des Moines Metro Opera, among others. Concert highlights include Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage, Lincoln

Center's Alice Tully and Avery Fisher Halls, and Boston's Jordan Hall. Her accolades include top prizes in the NJ Verismo Opera Competition and the London International Music Competition, along with an Encouragement Award from the Wagner Society of New York. She was a semifinalist in the Montserrat Caballé and Elizabeth Connell International Competitions. Originally from Russia, Alkhazova immigrated to the US in 1995 and was raised in New England. She holds a Master of Music degree from Boston University.



Sishel Claverie, Mezzo-Soprano

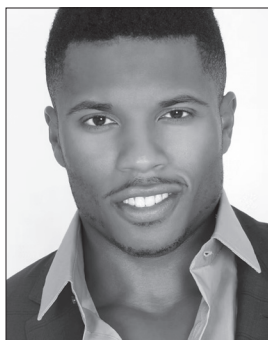
Described as an “alluring smoky-toned mezzo” by *The New York Times*, Mexican mezzo-soprano Sishel Claverie enjoys a versatile career in opera, new music, and multidisciplinary collaborations. This season, Claverie made her debut with St. Pete Opera in the title role of Bizet's *Carmen*. She has performed this iconic role on numerous occasions, most notably with El Paso Opera and the innovative Heartbeat Opera, praised by *The New York Times* as a “riveting and smoldering

Carmen.” Additionally, Claverie returned to the Santa Fe Opera to serve as stage director for the Santa Fe Opera Young Voices Scenes Showcase. Recent engagements include Bernstein's *Mass* with the National Symphony Orchestra, Renata in the mariachi-opera *El Milagro del Recuerdo* with San Diego Opera, and Olga in the daring adaptation of *Eugene Onegin* by Heartbeat Opera. Claverie holds a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Houston and a master's degree in music from Rice University.

Brandon Coleman, Bass

Brandon Coleman has been praised for his “exotic vocal coloring” by *Opera News* and “wonderful resonance” by *Classical Singer*. He commands the stage with confidence and captivates audiences with his voice. Coleman's

most recent roles include the Garvey Preacher in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, Muhammad Ali in *Approaching Ali*, Ramfis in *Aida*, and King Heinrich in *Lohengrin*. He has performed with Stuttgart Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Louisiane, Hawaii Opera, Kentucky Opera, Utah Opera Festival, Sarasota Opera, Opera North, Toledo Opera, Central City Opera, Opera on the James, Tri-Cities Opera, Middlebury Opera, and Syracuse Opera. Coleman has been especially recognized for his portrayals of Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, Ibn Hakia in *Iolanta*, and Crown in *Porgy and Bess*. In 2018, Coleman made his Carnegie Hall debut performing as the bass soloist in the “Lord Nelson” Mass.



Preston Hawes, New England Symphonic Ensemble Artistic Director and Concertmaster

Hailed by the European Academy of Arts and Sciences as an “electrifying and virtuosic” performer with “exquisite taste and rare talent,” Canadian violinist Dr. Preston Hawes is a laureate of the Concours de musique du Canada, the Andrews International Music Competitions, and the Prix de Musique de Chambre à Fontainebleau, and is a recipient of the J.C. Van Hulsteyn Award and Peabody Career Grant. He has been heard as a soloist in more than 35 countries and in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, and Plovdiv Symphony Hall. Having earned a Master of Music degree and the coveted Artist Diploma at Yale University, Hawes completed his studies by earning a Doctorate of Musical Arts from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Hawes is a professor of music and director of strings at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Maryland, and is the artistic director of the New England Symphonic Ensemble.



New England Symphonic Ensemble

With performances described as “flawless” (*Rhodes Magazine*), the New England Symphonic Ensemble (NESE), under the artistic direction of Dr. Preston Hawes, is among the most frequently featured organizations in Carnegie Hall. Since its inception in 1989, the NESE has drawn global critical acclaim in hundreds of concerts on the world’s most prestigious stages. In collaboration with MidAmerica Productions, the NESE has been led by a roster of guest conductors including John Rutter, Peter Tiboris, Sherrill Milnes, Helmuth Rilling, Simon Carrington, and Jonathan Willcocks, and regularly hosts international guest soloists.

NESE world premieres include Dinos Constantinides's *Byron's Greece*, *Hymn to the Human Spirit*, and *Midnight Fantasy II* for wind ensemble; John Rutter's *Cantate Domino*, *Distant Land*, *Magnificat*, and *Mass of the Children*; and John Leavitt's *A Christmas Garland*. The NESE boasts multiple US premieres, including Mozart's *Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebots*, Reimann's Concerto for Violin and Cello, Tchaikovsky's *Ode to Joy*, and René Clausen's *Hellas: In the Name of Freedom*. The NESE can be heard on the Naxos label in an award-winning recording of spirituals with internationally renowned mezzo-soprano, the late Barbara Smith Conrad.

New England Symphonic Ensemble

First Violins

Preston Hawes
Funda Cizmecioglu
Katie Pawluk
Agata Manka
Gabriella Apola
Valentina Anzola
Elissa Cassini
Rafailia Kapsokavadi

Second Violins

Ana Milosavljevic
Eun Jung Lee
Amneris Puscasu
Marc Szammer
Celine Boulben
Jason Garcia
Asara Greaves
Katie Thomas

Violas

Mitsuru Kubo
Christian Barros
Surai Balbeisi
Tina Clara Lee
Kerrick Sasaki
Thomas Purcell

Cellos

Christopher Cortez
Kevin Charlestream
Sofia Yatsyshyna
Sonna Kim
Samuel Quiggins
Laura Masferrer

Basses

Kyle Colina
Laurence Goldman
Dara Bloom

Flutes

Jessica Taskov
Cynthia Kimmel

Oboes

Mark Sophia
Ellen Gruber

Clarinets

Boris Shpitalnik
Megan Shumate
Beaumont

Bassoons

Dirk Wels
Gili Sharrett

Horns

Tim McCarthy
Taylor Peterson
Ser Konvalin
Principal relief

Trumpets

Justin Nurin
Christopher Delgado

Trombones

Burt Mason
Eric Coughlin
DJ Zentla

Tuba

Andrew Madej

Percussion

Zoey Cobb
Stella Perlic
Oliver Xu

MidAmerica Productions, Inc.

Founded by Conductor, Music Educator, Entrepreneur Peter Tiboris over 40 years ago, MidAmerica Productions has brought together conductors, soloists, and choral and instrumental ensembles from the US and abroad to appear at New York's top venues, including Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage, Weill Recital Hall, and Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall; and Alice Tully Hall and Avery Fisher Hall (now David Geffen Hall) at Lincoln Center. Additionally, MidAmerica Productions has presented concerts in numerous US cities and in countries throughout the world, including Greece, England, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy, France, Portugal, Sweden, and Russia. MidAmerica Productions' concerts have showcased choral groups singing oratorios with talented conductors, full orchestra, and professional soloists; individual instrumental and choral groups performing as part of the Ensemble Spotlight Series; and solo recitals. Diverse programs have included Madrigal Festivals, Vocal Jazz Festivals, National Wind Ensemble, National Festival Youth Orchestra, and Sweet Adelines. Among the renowned guest conductors who have led MidAmerica's concerts are Sir John Rutter (who has conducted more than 140 concerts in Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage at Carnegie Hall), Sherrill Milnes, Lukas Foss, Helmuth Rilling, H. Robert Reynolds, JoAnne Falletta, Michael Morgan, and Jonathan Willcocks. More than 800 conductors have conducted on MidAmerica's series in New York and abroad, sharing the stage with 1,300 solo artists from the world's greatest opera companies and concert stages, and 3,700 choral ensembles from the US and abroad. There have been 174 youth and collegiate orchestras as well as 146 youth and collegiate bands, jazz bands, and wind ensembles.

MidAmerica Productions | 265 Sunrise Highway, Suite 1-183; Rockville Centre, NY 11570
212-239-0205 | midamerica-music.com | contact@midamerica-music.com

Content for this program was provided by the presenter and does not necessarily reflect views or beliefs held by Carnegie Hall. Carnegie Hall is not responsible for any inaccurate or misleading statements, omissions, and/or errors in this program. All usage rights required herein are the responsibility of the presenter, and content has been included based on presenter's representation that it has secured all necessary rights.