

Presented at Carnegie Hall by
MidAmerica Productions, Inc.

1,508th Concert Worldwide, 1,168th in New York, 713th in Carnegie Hall

Peter Tiboris: Founder and General Director Emeritus

Sir John Rutter, CBE: Conductor Laureate

Sunday, June 1, 2025 at 1 PM
Isaac Stern Auditorium / Ronald O. Perelman Stage

New England Symphonic Ensemble

Preston Hawes, Artistic Director and Concertmaster

Celebrating the New England Symphonic Ensemble's
400th performance at Carnegie Hall

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Mass No. 4 in C Major, D. 452

I. Kyrie
II. Gloria
III. Credo
IV. Sanctus
V. Benedictus
VI. Agnus Dei

Sara LeMesh, Soprano
Megan Esther Gray, Contralto
Derrek Stark, Tenor
John Allen Nelson, Baritone
Kristin Jones, Organ
Dennis Malfatti, Conductor

This afternoon's program is continued on the following pages.

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Magnificat, RV 610

- I. Magnificat
- II. Et exultavit
- III. Et misericordia eius
- IV. Fecit potentiam
- V. Deposuit
- VI. Esurientes
- VII. Suscepit Israel
- VIII. Sicut locutus est
- IX. Gloria patri

Sara LeMesh, Soprano
Megan Esther Gray, Contralto
Derrek Stark, Tenor
John Allen Nelson, Baritone
Adrian Ford, Organ
Chantae D. Pittman, Conductor

Participating Choruses:

Campbell High School Festival Chorus, Smyrna, GA (Chantae D. Pittman, Director)
Evansville Day School Upper School Choir, Evansville, IN (Laura D'Alto, Director)
Harrison High School Concert Choir, Evansville, IN (Olivia Doyle, Director)
University of Evansville Choral Society and University Choir, Evansville, IN
(Dennis Malfatti, Director)

INTERMISSION

GABRIEL FAURÉ

Requiem, Op. 48

- I. Introit et Kyrie
- II. Offertoire
- III. Sanctus
- IV. Pie Jesu
- V. Agnus Dei
- VI. Libera Me
- VII. In Paradisum

Katherine Henly, Soprano
Rocky Eugenio Sellers, Bass-Baritone
Mary Nelson, Organ
Jeffrey L. Webb and **Craig Denison**, Conductors

Participating Choruses:

Central Bucks East High School Chamber Choir, Doylestown, PA (Christopher Villante, Director)
Indiana University of Pennsylvania Chorale, Indiana, PA (Craig Denison, Director)
Indiana University of Pennsylvania Alumni Choir, Indiana, PA (Craig Denison, Director)
Johnstown Symphony Chorus, Johnstown, PA (Jeffrey L. Webb, Director)
Ranger Chorale of Northwest Mississippi Community College, Senatobia, MS
(Alex Belohlavek, Director)
Pitt-Johnstown Concert Choir, Johnstown, PA (Jeffrey L. Webb, Director)

INTERMISSION

JOHN RUTTER

Gloria

I. Allegro vivace

II. Andante

III. Vivace e ritmico

Katherine Henly, Soprano

Kipper Ackerman, Conductor

JOHN RUTTER

Te Deum

Sonja Sepúlveda, Conductor

Participating Choruses:

Arizona Lutheran Academy A Cappella Choir, Phoenix, AZ (Joshua Severeid, Director)

Brookdale Concordia Chorale, Bedford, NJ (John Balme, Director)

Palmetto Voices Spiritual Ensemble, Sumter, SC (Sonja Sepúlveda, Director)

Presbyterian College Choir and Alumni, Clinton, SC (Kipper Ackerman, Director)

Virtual Voices Chorale (VVC), East Meadow, NY (Stephen C. Pagano, Director)

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

Rodgers is the Official House Organ of Carnegie Hall.

The Program

Program notes for this performance are available in the digital playbill at midamerica-music.com/programnotes61 or by scanning the QR code below:



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

A Letter for the New England Symphonic Ensemble from James E. Redcay III, CEO MidAmerica Productions

On behalf of MidAmerica Productions, I wish to extend a heartfelt congratulations on your 400th performance with us at Carnegie Hall, a truly remarkable achievement. We are deeply grateful to every member of the orchestra and the entire NESE organization for your tireless dedication to artistry at its highest level. Your exceptional musicianship, professionalism, and passion continue to set the standard, and without you, our annual series at Carnegie Hall would simply not be the same. A special thanks to you, New England Symphonic Ensemble Artistic Director Preston Hawes, for your extraordinary leadership and commitment to us and, even more importantly, to the musicians of the orchestra. Your vision and dedication have been vital to the ensemble's continued success and lasting impact.

With admiration and sincere appreciation,
James E. Redcay III

The Artists

Dennis Malfatti, Conductor

Dennis Malfatti is the Oramay Cluthe Eades Distinguished Professor of Music and director of choral activities at the University of Evansville in Evansville, Indiana. Choirs under his direction have sung by invitation at the American Choral Directors Association Central Division Conference in Chicago, at state level music education conferences in both Virginia and Indiana, and at Washington National Cathedral. 2025 marks his third appearance with the New England Symphonic Ensemble and festival chorus at Carnegie Hall. Previous performances with the New England Symphonic Ensemble at Carnegie Hall have included Haydn's *Paukenmesse* in 2011 and Mozart's *Te Deum*, K. 141, *Kyrie in D Minor*, K. 341, and Haydn's *Te Deum for Empress Marie Therese* in 2016. Previous positions he has held include founder and conductor of the Evansville Bach Singers, conductor of the Evansville Philharmonic Chorus, and assistant conductor and chorus master of the Operafestival di Roma in Rome, Italy. As conductor of the Evansville Philharmonic Chorus, he prepared several major works including Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and Haydn's *The Creation*. A native of the San Francisco Bay area, Malfatti lives in Evansville, Indiana with his wife of 23 years, Celia Teoh, and their daughter Annamaria.



Sara LeMesh, Soprano

Romanian-American soprano Sara LeMesh, praised for her “vocal dynamism and sonorous timbre” (*OperaWire*), was a 2024–2025 Baumgartner Studio Artist at The Florentine Opera, where she performed Galatea in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Luigia in Donizetti's *Viva la mamma!*, and Frasquita in *Carmen*. In the summer of 2025, she joins the Brooklyn Art Song Society at the Lake George Music Festival and Opera North, where she will perform the Contessa in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Antonia in Leigh's *Man of La Mancha*, and the Rose in Portman's *The Little Prince*. LeMesh is a recent First Prize winner of the PARTNERS for the Arts National Opera Competition, the Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition, and the Federation of the Art Song Fellowship Competition. Concert highlights of her 2023–2024 season included Poulenc's *Gloria* with the New England Symphonic Ensemble at Carnegie Hall and the soprano solo in Richter's *Wolf Works* with American Ballet Theatre at the Metropolitan Opera House.





Megan Esther Gray, Contralto

Contralto Megan Esther Grey is quickly gaining attention for her “brilliant interpretation(s) and singing” (*Maryland Theatre Guide*). A recent graduate of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, contralto Grey is quickly gaining attention in roles large and small across the US. Having appeared as a vocal soloist in Arnold Schoenberg’s prolific *Pierrot Lunaire* with the NOVA ensemble under the direction of Alexander Ravitz, she has also

appeared as Madame de la Haltière in Massenet’s *Cendrillon* with UNT Opera. In March of 2024, Grey returned to the Metropolitan Opera to cover the role of Gertrude in *Roméo et Juliette* and wrapped up the season as the alto soloist in Mahler’s Second Symphony, “Resurrection,” with the Phoenix Symphony. During the 2022–2023 season, Grey appeared with Opera San Jose as Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* and Emeline in Alma Deutscher’s *Cinderella*. She also appeared as the soloist in Mahler’s *Rückert Lieder* with the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra and covered Dritte Dame in both the holiday adaptation and Simon McBurney’s new production of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* with the Metropolitan Opera.



Derrek Stark, Tenor

Tenor Derrek Stark is quickly establishing a reputation as an elegant performer with nuanced and stylish singing. This season, Stark sang the Prince in *Rusalka* (Pacific Opera Project), Fredric in *The Pirates of Penzance* (Knoxville Opera), the title role of *Candide* and cover of Rodolfo in *La bohème* (Opera Tampa), Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Gulfshore Opera), and Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (Amelia Island Opera). He also makes his Carnegie Hall debut with MidAmerica

Productions as the tenor soloist in Schubert’s Mass in C and Vivaldi’s Magnificat. In 2025–2026, Stark will return to Opera Tampa to sing the Narrator/Quint in Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw*, and will sing as the tenor soloist in Verdi’s Requiem with the Billings Symphony. During the 2023–2024 season, he made his company debut with Pacific Opera Project to sing Alfred in *Die Fledermaus*, and his house and role debut with Knoxville Opera as Fenton in *Falstaff*. He also returned to the Metropolitan Opera to cover Prunier in *La rondine*—a *Met Live in HD* production.

John Allen Nelson, Baritone

Baritone John Allen Nelson is known for his “deliciously hearty sound” with “uniformity from top to bottom.” Recent credits include Washington National Opera as the Fighter Pilot in the world premiere of *Grounded*, Opera in the Heights as Lord Enrico Ashton in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Moores Opera Center as Ping in *Turandot*, and Northern Lights Music Festival as Marcello in *La bohème*. Other engagements include Schaunard in *La bohème* and Marullo in *Rigoletto* with Pacific Symphony; Imperial Commissioner and Sharpless (cover) in *Madama Butterfly* with Lubbock Symphony; Nicholas in *Vanessa* and Alcindoro in *La bohème* at the Spoleto Festival; and the title role in *Don Giovanni* with West Bay Opera. He has appeared with Opera Colorado, Boston Lyric Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, New York City Opera, Utah Opera, Minnesota Opera, and at Carnegie Hall with MidAmerica Productions. A Minnesota native, he holds degrees from Boston University, the University of Missouri–Kansas City, and St. John’s University.



Chantae D. Pittman, Conductor

Chantae D. Pittman is the director of choral activities at Campbell High School in Smyrna, Georgia in the Cobb County School District, and adjunct professor at Georgia College and State University. She is a proud graduate of Tennessee State University (bachelor’s degree, 2010), VanderCook College (master’s degree, 2013). In May 2021, Pittman graduated from the University of Georgia where she completed her doctorate in education with an emphasis in choral music education. During her 15-year career in choral music education she has taught students from elementary through high school. Due to that experience, and her demonstrated commitment to excellence in performance, she is highly respected as a choral clinician, music education consultant, instructor, grant writer, and adjudicator. She is very active as a soprano soloist and choral musician as a member of the Grammy Award-winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus since 2011, and the Atlanta Women’s Chorus since 2020. Having performed with orchestras, choirs, and small vocal ensembles throughout her career as a musician, Pittman proudly continues to learn, grow, and develop as a musician and pedagogue. She is a proud and active member of the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA), National Association for Music Education (NAfME), American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), National Educators Association (NEA), Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity, Inc., and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., and Tau Beta Sigma National Honorary Band Sorority, Inc.





Jeffrey L. Webb, Conductor

Jeffrey L. Webb is professor of music/director of choral activities and head of the music department at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Having joined the faculty in 2001, Webb has taught courses in music theory, western art music, critical listening, jazz and popular music, and conducts the Pitt-Johnstown Choral Ensembles. In addition to his work at Pitt-Johnstown, Webb was appointed conductor of the Johnstown Symphony Chorus in 2018. Webb

holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Allegheny College and a Master of Music degree in choral conducting from Binghamton University. Active as a guest conductor and vocal clinician, Webb has worked with singers and conducted festival choirs in Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, and New Zealand. His research on vocal health in the choral rehearsal has been published in *Music Educators Journal* and presented for both the Pennsylvania and Virginia Music Educators Associations. In 2016, his research and creation of new editions for William Grant Still's *Three Rhythmic Spirituals* led to publications in the *Choral Journal* and with William Grant Still Music. Webb made his Carnegie Hall conducting debut in June 2023, leading singers from the Johnstown Symphony Chorus and Pitt-Johnstown Choral Ensembles in a performance of Vivaldi's *Magnificat*.



Craig Denison, Conductor

Craig Denison is director of choral activities and professor of choral music/music education. Prior to coming to IUP, he taught and conducted collegiate, youth, and children's choirs for nearly 30 years. During that time, Denison prepared choirs for numerous international orchestras, opera companies, and premieres of new works. He founded the Schola Cantorum at Westminster Choir College as assistant professor of conducting. In summer 2020,

Denison presented at the Modern Band Summit, and in summer 2019 he presented, workshopped, and adjudicated at the China International Chorus Festival in Beijing. He regularly conducts state and regional honor choirs. In recent years, this has included choirs in Louisiana, Colorado, Georgia, West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Florida. His recent publications include a feature article in the *Choral Journal* and a chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy*. Denison has prepared singers for numerous opera companies as diverse as Central City Opera to Los Angeles Opera to Florida Grand Opera. He has prepared choirs and soloists for the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Symphony, New World Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Berlin

Philharmonic, the BBC Proms, and Johnstown Symphony. His television and movie work includes *Dexter* and *Interview with the Vampire*.

Katherine Henly, Soprano

Praised for her captivating portrayals across many genres, the “radiant” American soprano Katherine Henly has performed with Los Angeles Opera, Washington National Opera, the Royal Opera House Muscat, Oper Köln, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Charlottesville Opera, Virginia Opera, New York Musical Theatre Festival, and New York International Fringe Festival. Last season, Henly sang Clorinda in Opera Maine’s production of *La Cenerentola* and was seen in concert with Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra and the Creede Musical Arts Collective. This season, she joins the South Florida Symphony for *Messiah*, Minnesota Opera to cover Adina in *L’elisir d’amore* and Heartbeat Opera as the lead in the world premiere of *The Extinctionist*.



Rocky Eugenio Sellers, Bass-Baritone

Hailed for possessing a marmoreal basso voice, African-American bass-baritone Rocky Eugenio Sellers has appeared with the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Memphis, New York City Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Penn Square Music Festival, Portland Opera, Sarasota Opera, Opera Saratoga, Opera on the James, Pacific Opera Project, The Japan Society, Utopia Opera, Dell’Arte Opera Ensemble, Delaware Valley Opera Company, Opera Naples, Opera Ebony, Natchez Festival of Music, Wagner Society of Cincinnati, Regina Opera, and the Seoul International Opera Festival. Sellers has received awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Anna Sosenko Assist Trust, Mendelssohn Club of Albany, Kennett Symphony Voice Competition, Dell’Arte Opera, and the American Prize Competition in Vocal Performance. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



Kipper Ackerman, Conductor

Kipper Ackerman, a native of Dalzell, South Carolina, holds a Master of Music Education degree from North Greenville University and a Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Presbyterian College. A professional musician for over 27 years, she has directed choirs in churches as well as in



private and public schools. She has just completed her first year at Presbyterian College as the director of choral activities and visual and performing arts enrollment liaison, and she also serves as the director of the Laurens County Chorale. An accomplished vocalist and harpist, she is also the director of The Sounds of Grace, a nonprofit organization that uses music to promote peace and healing in healthcare and hospice facilities, as well as special needs classrooms. Ackerman is thrilled to make her Carnegie Hall conducting debut and is honored to share the stage with so many wonderful musicians, including the Presbyterian College Choir, PC alumni, many dear friends, and both of her parents. A special thank you to her husband, Curt, and their three amazing children—Eliza, Laura Ruth, and Sam. Your love and support are immeasurable and so appreciated!



Sonja Sepúlveda, Conductor

Sonja Sepúlveda is the artistic director of the Palmetto Voices Spiritual Ensemble and the director of the Winston-Salem Youth Chorus. She was the director of choral activities and professor of theory at Salem College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina for 11 years where she conducted the Salem College Chamber Choir, Chorale, and SuperTonix. Sepúlveda also conducted Salem Academy ensembles Glee Club and Spirit. She came to Salem following positions at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky and Brewton Parker College in Mt. Vernon, Georgia. Graduating from Winthrop University with a Bachelor of Music Education and Master of Music degrees, she studied conducting and sang under Dr. Robert Edgerton. Sepúlveda earned a Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in Conducting from the University of South Carolina where she studied under Dr. Larry Wyatt and Dr. Carol Krueger. Sepúlveda's choirs have performed concerts at the National Cathedral, Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, and Lincoln Center as well as performed concerts in Europe, Canada, and Mexico. Her choirs have had the honor of presenting solo concerts for National American Choral Directors Association Conferences as well as Southern Division ACDA and the Music Educators National Conferences. She sang with the Robert Shaw Festival Chorus for eight years and is in demand as a choral adjudicator and clinician, as well as being known for her *TEDx Talk* "Being a Woman Conductor and Overcoming the Prejudice." Sepúlveda is conductor-in-residence and program development associate for MidAmerica Productions and director of program development for MidAm International.

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
Agata Manka
Katie Pawluk
Amneris Puscasu
Heather Frank Olsen
Rafailia Kapsokavadi
Celine Boulben

Second Violins

Eun Jung Lee
Ana Milosavljevic
Marc Szammer
Katie Thomas
Nirmala Abraham
Dylan Ebrahimian
Jonathan Block
Marina Fragoulis

Violas

Christian Barros
Adam Kramer
Kerrick Sasaki
Thomas Purcell
Surai Balbeisi
Dudley Raine IV
Tina Clara Lee
Entela Barci

Cellos

Christopher Cortez
Karlos Rodriguez
Kevin Charlestream
Sofia Yatsyshyna
Sasha Ono
Katie Chambers
Laura Masferrer

Basses

Kyle Colina
Laurence Goldman
Lorenzo Sandi

Flutes

Cynthia Kimmel
Jessica Schmitz

Oboes

Rita Mitsel
Daniel Rodriguez

Clarinets

Boris Shpitalnik
Nadeen Fankhauser

Bassoons

Dirk Wels
Yuki Higashi

Horns

Tim McCarthy
Taylor Peterson
Ser Konvalin
Matthew Jaimes

Trumpets

Justin Nurin
Atse Theodros
Abner Marquez

Trombones

Eric Coughlin
Samuel George
Ehren Valmé

Tuba

Andrew Madej

Percussion

Katherine Fortunato
Zoey Cobb
John Tadlock

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.

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