



Oratorio Society of New York

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**THE ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK LAUNCHES ITS
139TH SEASON OF “CHORAL GRANDEUR” WITH
MOZART’S ARRANGEMENT OF HANDEL’S *MESSIAH* LED BY KENT TRITLE
AT CARNEGIE HALL ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2011**

“The Oratorio Society has held the line for choral grandeur,” said *The New York Times* of the Society’s performance of Handel’s *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall in 2008. The Oratorio Society of New York, the city’s own 200-voice volunteer chorus, begins its 139th season – the seventh season under the direction of acclaimed choral conductor Kent Tritle – with its annual holiday tradition: *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall, on Monday, December 19, 2011, at 8:00 PM. For its 202nd performance of *Messiah*, the OSNY will perform Mozart’s arrangement of the Handel masterwork. The soloists are Emalie Savoy, soprano; Mary Phillips, mezzo-soprano; Aaron Blake, tenor (Carnegie Hall debut); and Kevin Deas, bass.

The Oratorio Society of New York has the longest continuous relationship with Carnegie Hall, which this season celebrates its 120th anniversary, of any musical organization. The Society was onstage at the hall’s opening night concert on May 5, 1891, and a few days later performed the U.S. premieres of Tchaikovsky’s *Legend* and *Pater noster* conducted by the composer. One of New York’s first cultural organizations, the Society was central to the inception and building of the hall. (Andrew Carnegie was a member of the board of directors, serving as its president from 1888-1919.)

“[Tchaikovsky] spoke of the amiability of the chorus of the Oratorio Society in following his beat” at the inaugural concerts, observed the *Musical Courier*. Through the next 138 seasons, during which many thousands of singers have passed through its membership, the Oratorio Society has become the city’s standard for grand, joyous choral performance – since 2006 under the leadership of Music Director Kent Tritle, called “New York City’s foremost choral conductor” by *Time Out New York*, who was recently appointed Director of Cathedral Music and Organist for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. “The sheer energy of the society’s sound had an enveloping fervor,” wrote Allan Kozinn in *The New York Times* of a 2008 presentation of Brahms’s *Ein Deutsches Requiem*; and of a 2005 performance of *Messiah*, also led by Tritle, Jeremy Eichler said in the *Times*, “this was...a vibrant and deeply human performance, made exciting by the sheer heft and depth of the chorus’s sound.”

Mozart’s *Messiah* Arrangement

Kent Tritle says of Mozart’s 1789 arrangement of *Messiah*, “In Mozart’s *Messiah* we have the meeting of two great compositional minds. Aside from one purely new recitative, Mozart uses Handel’s original text and adds his own personal flair for orchestration: he ‘modernizes’ the orchestra to include trombones, two flutes, two clarinets, two horns and divided bassoons.

“He even has the first flutist switch to piccolo for the famous ‘Pastoral Symphony.’ Thus the music will be a mixture of Classical and Baroque – we will perform it in Mozart’s style, though the chorus will be singing in English. And, similar to Handel’s own practice of ‘switching out’ the recitatives and airs to different voice types, so does Mozart – here we have the bass soloist singing ‘But Who May Abide.’ The tenor soloist sings ‘Rejoice Greatly,’ and the soprano soloist sings all of ‘He Shall Feed His Flock/Come Unto Him,’ plus the recitatives in the central portion of the Passion section.”

Kent Tritle talks about the Oratorio Society’s 2011-2012 season in a brief video on www.oratoriosocietyofny.org.



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World Premiere of Filas's *Song of Solomon*

The Oratorio Society of New York returns to Carnegie Hall on Thursday, April 26, 2012, with a program of Czech music featuring the world premiere of an OSNY commission, *Song of Solomon* by Juraj Filas, as well as Kent Tritle's first performance of Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*. The program's soloists include Rachel Rosales, soprano; Renée Tatum, mezzo-soprano; and John Bellemer, tenor. The program is presented in partnership with Carnegie Hall as part of its 120th Anniversary Celebration.

Juraj Filas, born in 1955 in the Slovak Republic, is one of the most prominent composers of the Czech Republic, where he has lived and worked for the past 35 years. Also a singer who has won several vocal competitions, Filas writes music which has been described as belonging to the Czech neo-Romantic movement. "Juraj's musical language draws from the music of Janáček and folk idioms from the Austro-Hungarian region, creating a voice that is both romantic and lyrical but also completely of our time," Kent Tritle says.

Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition

Since 1977, the OSNY has every year presented the Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition. Named after the OSNY music director from 1973 to 2005, the competition is believed to be the only one devoted exclusively to the art of solo oratorio singing, drawing more than 100 applicants from around the world. The competition holds its final round as a public event, which takes place this season on Saturday, April 14, 2012, at 1:30 PM in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

Visit www.oratoriosocietyofny.org

Monday, December 19, 2011, at 8:00 PM
Carnegie Hall – Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage

THE ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

Kent Tritle, Music Director and Conductor

Emalie Savoy, Soprano

Mary Phillips, Mezzo-Soprano

Aaron Blake, Tenor

Kevin Deas, Bass

The Orchestra of the Society

HANDEL *Messiah* (arrangement by W. A. Mozart)

Tickets: \$22 - \$85, call 212-247-7800 or visit www.carnegiehall.org

November 15, 2011