

DECEMBER 2018

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Jaap van Zweden Music Director



PLAYBILL®

David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center
Home of the **New York Philharmonic**



The special magic of New York is never more on display than during the holiday season. The days may be shorter and colder, but the glow is palpable. Cue the glittering windows of Fifth Avenue, the ice skating in Central Park, and, of course, the hotel rooms that cost twice as much. We are pleased to offer, in our own unique Philharmonic style, a way to celebrate seasonal festivities with not only New Yorkers but visitors from around the world.

First, Jaap van Zweden partners with baritone Matthias Goerne, our Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence, in Schubert and Richard Strauss songs that transport us through the highs and bittersweet lows of love.

What would the holiday season be without the great American tradition of Handel's *Messiah*? Jonathan Cohen, music director of the early-music ensemble Les Violons du Roy, gives the beloved work an innovative twist with the inclusion of countertenor and Handel specialist Anthony Roth Costanzo in place of the usual mezzo-soprano soloist.

Bring the whole family to our joyful Sunday afternoon Holiday Brass concert on the 16th. And you won't want to miss the chance to watch the adventures of young Kevin in the classic film *Home Alone* while the Philharmonic brings John Williams's buoyant score to life "in real time." We are proud to present this New York first.

For Jaap's very first New Year's Eve in New York, he has invited America's beloved soprano Renée Fleming to join him in an evening of Viennese and popular classics that will be telecast to the nation on *Live From Lincoln Center*.

Be sure to come and see David Geffen Hall all dressed up for the holidays, with poinsettias and other festive decorations on the stage. What better way to ring in 2019?

Wishing you and yours a wondrous holiday season,

Deborah Borda
President and Chief Executive Officer

BAROQUE DRAMA

By Naomi Lewin

Messiah, created by a master of opera, invites performers to show their theatrical flair.



The statue sculpted in Handel's honor that resides in the Victoria and Albert Museum

M*essiah's* world premiere in 1742 at the Great Music Hall in Dublin was a huge success. The benefit concert — which was filled to overflowing — made money for two hospitals and freed 142 men from debtor's prison. Handel himself was acquainted with debt. His losses from composing and producing Italian opera in London and his ensuing need for a new source of income were what had led him to invent a new form of musical entertainment: the English oratorio. *Messiah* was his seventh.

But when *Messiah* was first performed at Covent Garden in the British capital a year later, it fell afoul of the separation of church and stage. Londoners considered theaters such dens of iniquity that the Bishop of London ordained them

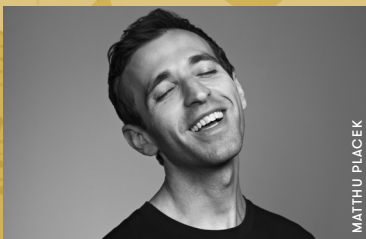
off-limits for any religious performance. The libretto for *Messiah*, of course, consists entirely of verses from the King James Bible, and unlike the majority of Handel's other oratorios, there are no characters, plotline, or action. That didn't stop Handel — a true man of the theater — from imbuing the piece with drama. As Jonathan Cohen, who conducts the Philharmonic's performances, presented by Gary W. Parr, December 11–15, says: "Handel always imagined the music as if it's for the stage. He's always telling a story, and the music is always reflecting that. And I think there's no difference between that and opera." In choosing soloists for *Messiah*, Cohen looks for dynamic singers who can "grip the audience" and "bring alive the music."

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Inside Story

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Clockwise from top left:
bass Neal Davies, soprano
Lauren Snouffer, tenor
Andrew Staples, and
countertenor Anthony
Roth Costanzo



MATTHU PLACEK



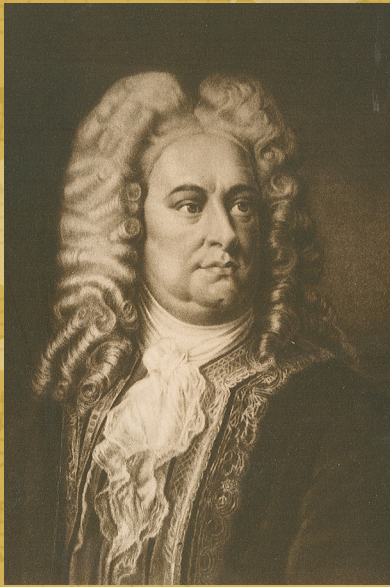
ANDREW STAPLES

All of this season's soloists are celebrated for their vivid operatic portrayals. Bass Neal Davies thinks "our job is to draw the listener in without the full effects of an opera production — but then, that should also be our aim when singing opera!" Countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, *Musical America's* Vocalist of the Year, feels that Handel's *Messiah* "must be delivered exactly as one of his operas would be. The arias are narrative, emotional, at times psychological, and should be rendered with a full dramatic palette." Soprano Lauren Snouffer finds the Bible itself operatic. "Regardless of religious beliefs, it's a compelling story with interesting characters and a captivating sequence of events."

Musical storytelling in *Messiah* begins with the first vocal line, delivered by tenor Andrew Staples. "Those magical,

simple, opening chords of the recitative 'Comfort ye' are very special; Handel's done all the hard work; the soloist's job is to put the audience at ease, and say to them, look this is going to be a great concert, and you'll love it." The aria that follows, "Ev'ry valley," shows the composer's skill at word-painting, letting music illuminate the words "crooked," "straight," "exalted," and "plain."

Given craftsmanship like that, the few times Handel seems to have gotten it wrong feel strange: an extended melisma in the chorus "His yoke is easy" that is anything but easy; stressing "For unto *us* a child is *born*" rather than "For unto us a *child* is born." The reason is not, as a choir director friend likes to joke, that it makes sense if you sing it with a German accent, as Handel would have done. It's that the score to *Messiah*



From left: Handel and conductor Jonathan Cohen



was completed in an astonishing 24 days, which the composer did in part by borrowing material from a set of his own Italian duets. In those, the text underlay works, and the “easy” melisma illustrates the Italian word *ride*, which in English means “laughs.”

Handel knew a good tune when he’d written (or recycled) one, and *Messiah* consists of one great tune after another. Jonathan Cohen says Handel’s ability to send audiences home whistling the melodies has made *Messiah* a perennial favorite. “That’s a great achievement, to churn out hit after hit after hit in the same piece. It’s not many people — not even our pop stars — who can churn out hit after hit after hit on a single album.”

Cohen and the soloists all agree that *Messiah* could hold its own as an opera, although Andrew Staples thinks

the piece is so epic in scope that “it would make a better film, or an HBO box set. Imagine the *Game of Thrones* special-effects guys creating scenes of angels appearing to shepherds in a field.”

Then again, Neal Davies, who’s been in a staged version of *Messiah*, says, “As soon as a piece is presented as an operatic production, the listener is guided by the concept of the director. In a concert performance, they are free to put any interpretation upon it they may choose.”

That’s the genius of Handel’s *Messiah*: the drama is in the ear of the beholder.

Naomi Lewin was the host of weekday afternoon music on WQXR and the podcast *Conducting Business*, after having created the award-winning weekly program *Classics for Kids* for WGUC in Cincinnati. She has produced Metropolitan Opera broadcast features, NPR reports and music specials, and arts organizations’ podcasts. She is also a speaker, emcee, media coach, and the radio voice of Arizona Opera.



PARTY ON!

By Madeline Rogers

For many Philharmonic musicians, the traditional New Year's Eve concert is the centerpiece of a marathon celebration.

Work on New Year's Eve? For most of us that would be a grim prospect. For the musicians of the New York Philharmonic, "playing the Eve" (as jazz musicians used to say) makes for a hectic day and night, but it is one that they relish: "I always enjoy the New Year's Eve concert," says Joseph Alessi, Principal Trombone. "I love seeing everyone in the mood for a good time."

The jam-packed day starts with a morning rehearsal. Afterwards, Alessi heads across the street to The Juilliard School to give lessons to students he couldn't fit in during the regular academic year. Russian-born violinist Yulia Ziskel spends the afternoon cleaning and cooking up a storm for her family's

post-concert bash. "Because the Soviets banned Christmas, this is our big holiday. We have a New Year's tree and we exchange presents." Menu musts: "Russian potato salad, desserts, fruits — and always caviar and, of course, champagne. If I'm lucky, I get in a nap before the concert."

Six o'clock finds Acting Associate Principal Clarinet Pascual Martínez Forteza, who hails from Mallorca, at home in Harlem with his three kids and Madrid-born wife, Skyping with extended family in Spain: "When it's six o'clock here, it's midnight there, so we get to celebrate twice." After champagne ("just a bit, as I have to play the concert") he's off to David Geffen Hall.

This year's concert, led by Music Director Jaap van Zweden — a sprightly

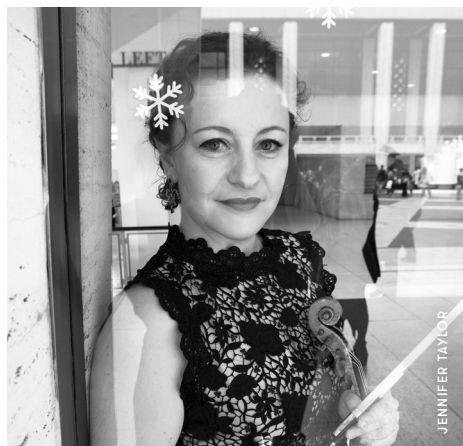
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The Buzz

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Joseph Alessi backstage at Holiday Brass



Yulia Ziskel in the musicians' lounge

confection of popular tunes, Viennese waltzes, and operetta selections featuring soprano Renée Fleming — will end at around 10:00 p.m. with the traditional “Auld Lang Syne.” Musicians will linger backstage just long enough for a quick toast with their mates. After that, it’s party time!

This will be Alessi’s 33rd Philharmonic New Year’s Eve concert. Over the decades, his post-concert routine has changed. At one time, he co-led a big band with saxophonist Al Regni (you may have seen him onstage in a Philharmonic performance of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*) that played gigs after the Philharmonic concert. Then there was the time that Joe and his wife participated in the “Midnight Run,” the New York Road Runner’s Central Park New Year’s Eve tradition. These days he celebrates at a “lovely party” at a neighbor’s house in Nyack, New York, where

he is greeted as a celebrity. “They’ve usually been watching the broadcast on *Live From Lincoln Center* and someone invariably asks me, ‘How did you get here so fast?’”

At Yulia Ziskel’s home in New Jersey, her two kids — ages five and nine — and husband are eagerly waiting. “We party until five, six in the morning,” she says. “We try to get the kids to sleep, but they sense the excitement and we usually can’t get them down until we go down.”

It’s a late night at the Martínez Forteza household as well: “We do a big party, and the kids, who are ten, eight, and four, stay up late; they are very Spanish.” Both their six o’clock celebration and the post-concert party feature an old-country custom: “At about twelve seconds to midnight, we start to count down to zero, and each second we eat a grape for health and good luck. At six o’clock, when we Skype with family, we



Pascual Martínez Forteza playing downtown

time it to the Spanish New Year's Eve broadcast from Madrid, where they slow down the count so people don't choke. At midnight we use the broadcast from Times Square. So, between our two celebrations we eat twenty-four grapes. Twice the good luck!"

With a pianist-wife and musician-friends in the house, Pascual Martínez Forteza's party invariably features performance: Spanish *villancicos* as well as popular American numbers. Yulia Ziskel is married to a jazz musician, so there's plenty of music-making at their house, too, along with dancing and games they invent. "Mostly, though," she says, "it's just an eating frenzy."

Of the marathon day, Joseph Alessi has just one observation: "Luckily, the next day is a day off."

Madeline Rogers is a creative consultant to non-profits based in New York, and former Director of Publications of the New York Philharmonic.

FROM THE MAESTRO



As we usher in 2019, my wife, Aaltje, and I would like to wish everyone peace, happiness, and good health in the New Year.

We are so happy to be part of the New York Philharmonic family, and we send holiday greetings and good wishes from our family to yours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Jaap van Zweden".

Jaap van Zweden
Music Director



CAROLINE DE BON

GOERNE THE GREAT

By Peter W. Goodman

Master of Lied. Champion of the contemporary. Generous collaborator. Matthias Goerne's Philharmonic residency shows many sides of his artistry.

“I know few conductors who take such great care that everything is taking shape,” says Matthias Goerne, the New York Philharmonic's 2018–19 Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence, of Music Director Jaap van Zweden. “Everything is very concrete and worked out. It makes concerts more interesting in dramatic color, and it makes orchestras better.”

The fact that the baritone may be the greatest interpreter of the German *Lied* singing today inspires the repertoire that launches his residency, December 6–8,

in which he joins van Zweden in songs by Schubert and Strauss. As it happens, this is essentially the same program the two performed in their first collaboration, with the Hilversum Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Netherlands in 2006.

Goerne recalls that Jaap van Zweden “asked whether we could perform the set in the [Amsterdam] Concertgebouw,” because of the power of the orchestral settings. “Usually the singer asks, not the conductor,” he continues. “The first concert was so marvelous, the easiness of phrasing. It was a very natural way to

In Person

make music. I was touched and immediately convinced.”

The December performances already present the singer’s musical point of view. This particular set of *Lieder* is not a song cycle, like Schubert’s *Die Winterreise*, but, he explains, “you have to try to connect the pieces with each other, to prepare the atmosphere — you try to make the impression that it is a cycle.”

Goerne and Maestro van Zweden have since performed the songs together elsewhere, including in Dallas and Chicago. “We try to make the atmosphere such that, even with orchestra, there is the intimacy, the fragility, of chamber music,” Goerne says. “It is not most important that you sing loudly, powerfully, but that you go behind the words to deliver a kind of dark, shadow zone.”

It will not be difficult to enter that dark, shadow zone in the concluding program of Goerne’s Philharmonic residency — John Adams’s *The Wound-Dresser*, set to Walt Whitman poems, on March 21, 23, and 26, again conducted by Maestro van Zweden. The poems draw on Whitman’s experience as a nurse during the Civil War, when there was almost nothing medicine could do for the wounded. Adams composed the piece at a similar period, in 1989, during the depths of the AIDS epidemic, when even the cause of the disease was a mystery and the afflicted were dying without succor.

“People had a kind of treatment but no solution from any side,” Goerne recalls, “to express this kind of deep grief,

GOERNE, AT A GLANCE

Here’s a snapshot of Matthias Goerne’s 2018–19 New York Philharmonic residency:

- December 6–8
Songs by Schubert and Richard Strauss, conducted by Jaap van Zweden
- February 7–9
Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, conducted by Jaap van Zweden
- March 17
Chamber music settings of songs by Schubert, Eisler, Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms, at 92nd Street Y, with Philharmonic Musicians and pianist Daniil Trifonov
- March 21, 23, 26
John Adams’s *The Wound-Dresser*, conducted by Jaap van Zweden

In Person

the fear, the anxiety. To use this kind of text makes this a masterpiece.”

This master of European culture is not concerned that Whitman and Adams are pure American. “We are all humans, on a high level of artistry,” he believes. “We are not talking about only one kind of culture, but about something putting all us humans in this world in connection with each other.”

Goerne looks forward to his fifth set of appearances with the New York Philharmonic since his debut in 2005–06. “The orchestra is extremely alive,” he says. “It has high standards. There is a kind of challenging energy coming from the orchestra. Any time I have worked with them — with Dohnányi, Maazel, Masur — it was absolutely thrilling, especially also in conjunction with the New York audience.”

But audiences around the world should take note: the time of Matthias-Goerne-the-singer is coming to a close. “For sure, I will stop singing around in about five years,” he says. “I don’t want to retire completely, but when you get older, it gets more difficult. You have to change keys. By then I will have had 35 years that were fantastic, even the times when it was very complex and exhausting work. It never felt like work. It is more a passion than a job.”

Peter W. Goodman is director of the graduate program in journalism and an associate professor in the department of journalism, media studies, and public relations at the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University. He was a longtime music critic at Newsday and New York Newsday.

Briefing

New Year's Eve with Renée



How better to bid farewell to one year and welcome 2019 than with an elegant, bubbly evening of Viennese waltzes, operetta gems, and Broadway and film songs sung by the world's most beloved soprano? Renée Fleming joins Music Director Jaap van Zweden and the Philharmonic in arias by Lehár and Korngold and songs by Sondheim and Kander, and we'll waltz into the New Year to the tunes of Johann Strauss — both father and son. If you prefer celebrating at home, tune in to PBS at 8:00 p.m. to catch the national broadcast on *Live From Lincoln Center* (check local listings).

Phil the Stockings!

Wondering what to get for that special someone who swoons to the sounds of Grammy, Emmy, and Tony winner Audra McDonald? Pick up *Sing Happy*, recorded live at the Philharmonic's 2018 Spring Gala and chock full of Broadway favorites. For a lover of the classics? The "high octane" and "spirited" (WRTI) recording of Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies led by Music Director Jaap van Zweden. Both are available at Amazon and other online music stores.



And for someone who revels in live performance? There are Philharmonic Gift Certificates (call [212] 875-5656), or the Gift of Membership, which offers Philharmonic perks given to Friends, such as invitations to exclusive receptions and events (available at nyphil.org/support-us/membership).

Kudos

Congratulations to a trio of Philharmonic family members, all of whom were given honors by *Musical America*. Grab the chance to hear countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, Vocalist of the Year, in Handel's *Messiah* December 11–15, or be there when Composer of the Year Julia Wolfe's *Fire in my mouth* is premiered January 24–26 as part of *New York Stories: Threads of Our City*. We also applaud pianist Daniil Trifonov, a Board Member, who was named Artist of the Year.

A Musical Love Letter



“Dvořák was secretly in love with his sister-in-law,” says Gautier Capuçon, who feels this story is crucial to appreciating the great Czech master’s Cello Concerto. “When he was in America writing this concerto, almost done, he gets a telegram saying that she’s dying. He doesn’t have time to go back and say goodbye to her. They had this secret love song that Dvořák wrote, and he uses it in the concerto — it goes around and comes back and passes from the solo violin to the cello. He doesn’t want to let her go. My interpretation is that it’s his way of accompanying her. It’s absolutely breathtaking and emotional... . In a way, he accepts letting it go.” Capuçon brings his “distinctive, characterful, and intense” (*Gramophone*) rendition to the Philharmonic, January 3–5.



Face Page

This fall the Philharmonic inaugurated two curated new-music series, marked distinguished honors, and hosted events where Musicians and Patrons mingled.



1. September 28: Composer-pianist Conrad Tao (center), who curated the inaugural Kravis *Nightcap* event at the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse, with fellow performers tap dancer Caleb Teicher and vocalist Charmaine Lee

2. October 4: After performing with the Philharmonic and receiving the 2018 Avery Fisher Prize, violinist Leila Josefowicz (third from right) being congratulated by Charles Avery Fisher and Nancy Fisher (Avery Fisher's children), New York Philharmonic President and CEO Deborah Borda, Music Director Jaap van Zweden, and Philip Kirschner (Avery Fisher's grandson)

3. October 6: Geraldine L. Richmond, secretary and board member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, congratulating Ms. Borda on her induction into the Academy at a ceremony in Cambridge, Massachusetts

4. October 7: Composer Louis Andriessen, recipient of The Marie-Josée Kravis Prize for New Music at the New York Philharmonic, with fellow composer Julia Wolfe (left) and violinist Monica Germino, his wife, at the first performance in the GROW @ Annenberg *Sound ON* series, at The Appel Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center, featuring his works and those by two of his former students

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5. October 7: Music Director Jaap van Zweden conferring with Kravis Creative Partner Nadia Sirota, who hosts and curates *Sound ON*, before going onstage

6. October 11: Principal Harp Nancy Allen (center) with Barbara Erlich and her husband, Stuart Johnson, at *Music with a View*, a chamber music performance for Philharmonic supporters

7. October 23: Neil Westreich (third from left) with Philharmonic Musicians who performed at the salon he hosted at his home: Principal, Second Violin Group, Qianqian Li, Associate Principal Cello Eileen Moon-Myers, Assistant Concertmaster Michelle Kim, Associate Principal Viola Rebecca Young, and Assistant Principal Viola Cong Wu



8. October 23: International Advisory Board Co-Chair Angela Chen*, Sharon Hite*, and Cornelia Heins at the salon

Photos: 1-2, 4-5, Chris Lee; 3, Courtesy the American Academy of Arts & Sciences; 6-8, Linsley Lindakens

*Board Member