

Lincoln Center's

white light festival

October 18–November 15, 2017

Thursday, November 9, 2017, at 6:30 pm

The Psalms Experience

CONCERT 5

State of Humankind

Netherlands Chamber Choir

Peter Dijkstra, *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)

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.

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:

Thursday, November 9, at 8:30 pm at the New York Society for Ethical Culture

The Psalms Experience

Concert 6: Gratitude

The Tallis Scholars

Peter Phillips, conductor

Visit PsalmsExperience.org for full concert schedule.

Friday, November 10, at 6:30 pm at the New York Society for Ethical Culture

The Psalms Experience

Concert 7: Abandonment

Norwegian Soloists' Choir (New York debut)

Grete Pedersen, conductor

Visit PsalmsExperience.org for full concert schedule.

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 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

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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.

State of Humankind

J.S. BACH (1685–1750)	Lobet den Herren, alle Heiden (Psalm 117)
MOHAMMED FAIROUZ (b. 1985)	Diversions (U.S. premiere) (Psalm 14)
HANS LEO HASSLER (1564–1612)	Beatus vir qui non abiit, from Cantiones sacrae 1591 (Psalm 1)
THOMAS TALLIS (1505–1585)	Dominus quis habitabit (Psalm 15)
HEINRICH SCHÜTZ (1585–1672)	Wohl denen, die ohne Wandel leben (Psalm 119)
LUDOVICO VIADANA (1564–1627)	Exsultate justi (Psalm 33)
RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)	O praise the Lord (Psalm 148)
SAMUEL WESLEY (1766–1837)	In exitu Israel (Psalm 114)
MICHEL VAN DER AA (b. 1970)	Shelter (U.S. premiere) (Psalm 5)
BO HANSSON (1943–2010)	Du har varit vår tillflykt från släkte till släkte (Psalm 90)
CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)	Lauda Jerusalem Dominum (Psalm 147)

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.

This fifth program in *The Psalms Experience* presents settings of 11 psalms that focus on the "State of Humankind." History can be viewed as a kind of lesson for society, a lesson to help people find and follow the right path. That was the case in Biblical times, and it remains most emphatically the case today. Swüste notes: "This path is referred to particularly in the Torah, the Ten Words. It offers no strict commandments, but signposts: if you live like this, you will be happy. At first sight, this path is often directly opposed to what people find attractive, and yet it is the path to happiness." The psalms in this concert find humankind at different places along that path.

Our program begins and ends in musical majesty, with Johann Sebastian Bach and Claudio Monteverdi, two masters from opposite ends of the Baroque era. It goes without saying that such a project must include a work by Bach, who employed Psalm 117 for his four-part motet "Lobet den Herren, alle Heiden." It is not an iron-clad piece in the Bach canon—its autograph does not survive, and its inclusion of an optional continuo part makes it atypical among Bach motets—but its quality is certainly high. Just as Bach represents a culmination of Baroque style, Monteverdi looms over its beginning. Where the Renaissance composers had generally viewed their best work as reflecting the harmony of God's universe, those who crafted the new Baroque style were more concerned with how music might affect the passions of men and women. Monteverdi straddled this divide, and probably no Italian composer has proved as prophetic.

Between these opening and closing pillars, we find two premieres of psalm settings; both were commissioned for this *Psalms* project. The first is by Mohammed Fairouz, an American of Arabic descent, and the other is by the Dutch composer Michel van der Aa. Despite his youth, Fairouz has an impressive oeuvre to his name, including orchestral and choral works, operas, and chamber music. Van der Aa is internationally renowned for his multimedia music theater, but this is his first *a cappella* choral work. Among other items in this concert is a contemplative setting of Psalm 90 by the Swedish guitarist-singer-composer Bo Hansson, and the celebrated eight-voice “In exitu Israel” (Psalm 114), written in about 1810 by the one-time British child prodigy Samuel Wesley.

Many of the psalms in this program speak of gratitude—the theme of the next installment in this concert series. We are urged to praise, to extol, to give thanks. More reflective in tone is the lengthy Psalm 119 setting “Wohl denen, die ohne Wandel leben,” from which only the first of the 22 verses set by Heinrich Schütz will be performed. Schütz published an entire collection of nothing but psalm settings in 1619, but this work falls later in his career. It appeared as part of his *Schwanengesang* (“Swan-Song”), a collection completed around 1670. Here a mirror is held up to his face, and to ours.

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



Peter Dijkstra

Peter Dijkstra is chief conductor of the Netherlands Chamber Choir. He has also been chief conductor of the Swedish Radio Choir since 2007. He is highly sought-after as a guest conductor by both orchestras and choirs throughout the world, and has conducted the BBC Singers, RIAS Chamber Choir in Berlin, Norwegian Soloists' Choir, Danish National Radio Choir, the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, among others.

Mr. Dijkstra was awarded the Kersjes van de Groenekan Prize for young orchestral conductors in 2002 and the Eric Ericson Award in 2003, where, at the organization's competition finals, he first conducted the Swedish Radio Choir.

Mr. Dijkstra was born in Roden, Holland in 1978. In his youth, he sang with the boys' choir Roder Jongenskoor, founded by his father Bouwe Dijkstra, and also performed in larger opera productions in Amsterdam, including Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at Dutch National Opera. He studied choral and orchestral conducting and voice at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, the Hochschule für musik und Tanz Köln, and at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm with Jorma Panula. In 1999 he formed his own all-male vocal group, The Gents.

Netherlands Chamber Choir

Over the past several decades, the Netherlands Chamber Choir (Nederlands Kamerkoor) has established itself as a leading world-class choir, praised by critics in and outside of the Netherlands alike. Since

its founding 80 years ago, the choir has forged a reputation for its adventurous and innovative approach to performance, owing to its commissioning of renowned composers and young talent, as well as its continual pursuit of new formats and exciting collaborations. Education and participation is a vital part of the choir's mission, as it provides coaching and workshops, and invites choirs to perform as supporting ensembles at its own concerts.

Since September 2015, the choir has been led by its chief conductor Peter Dijkstra. His predecessors include Uwe Gronostay, Tõnu Kaljuste, Stephen Layton, Risto Joost, and the ensemble's founder, Felix de Nobel.

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 multi-disciplinary 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

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Netherlands Chamber Choir

Peter Dijkstra, *Chief Conductor*

Soprano

Mariët Kaasschieter
Saejeong Kim
Annet Lans
Mónica Monteiro
Cressida Sharp
Maria Valdmaa

Alto

Elsbeth Gerritsen
Marleene Goldstein
Dorien Lievers
Chantal Nysingh
Åsa Olsson
Karin van der Poel

Tenor

Stefan Berghammer
Harry van Berne
Alberto ter Doest
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