

MUSICĀ SACRĀ

PROFESSIONAL CHORAL MUSIC AT ITS FINEST

SCOTT LETHBRIDGE, PRESIDENT | KENT TRITLE, MUSIC DIRECTOR | RICHARD WESTENBURG, FOUNDER

For Immediate Release: November 16, 2015

Contact: Thomas F. Reynolds; E: reynoth@msn.com, T: 646-300-1310

MUSICA SACRA PRESENTS HANDEL'S MESSIAH: A NEW YORK HOLIDAY TRADITION

“I doubt if the city offers a better version of *Messiah*.” – *New York Magazine*

“Mr. Tritle gave the excellent Musica Sacra Chorus full and exciting scope...” – *The New York Times*

New York, NY, November 16, 2015

On **Tuesday, December 22, 2015, at 7:30pm**, Musica Sacra returns to Carnegie Hall for its highly acclaimed annual performance of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*. Led by Music Director **Kent Tritle**, hailed as “NYC’s foremost choral conductor” by *Time Out New York*, these performances feature the Musica Sacra Chorus and Orchestra with a superb cast of soloists: soprano **Kathryn Lewek**, countertenor **Christopher Ainslie**, tenor **Mingjie Lei**, and bass **Matt Boehler**.

Founded in 1964 by Richard Westenburg, Musica Sacra is the longest continuously performing professional chorus in New York City. Musica Sacra presents performances each year at prestigious venues throughout New York City, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. “Presented with musical skill and stylistic insight” (*The New York Times*), the chorus and orchestra’s performances of Handel’s *Messiah* are a New York holiday tradition. In addition, the Music Sacra Chorus is frequently invited to perform with such ensembles as the New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the New York City Ballet, and concert presenters throughout the region.

First presented in 1742, Handel’s *Messiah* is, without question, the most performed oratorio ever written. In addition to annual Christmas and Easter performances across the globe. Compiled by Charles Jennens and based primarily on texts from the King James Bible, *Messiah* was originally devised as a musical meditation for the Lenten season, when operas were not permitted to be performed. Unlike other dramatic works, *Messiah* shuns, to a certain extent, the traditional narrative style — a conventional tale with identifiable characters and a clear series of events — in favor of a conceptual meditation on religious themes.

Individual tickets for *Messiah* range from \$90 to \$15. For ticket information, please visit MusicaSacraNY.com, e-mail tickets@musicasacra.com, or call 212-330-7684. Tickets are also available through Carnegie Hall at CarnegieHall.org, at CarnegieCharge: 212-247-7800, or the Carnegie Hall box office: 57th Street and 7th Avenue.

MUSICĀ SACRĀ

PROFESSIONAL CHORAL MUSIC AT ITS FINEST

SCOTT LETHBRIDGE, PRESIDENT | KENT TRITLE, MUSIC DIRECTOR | RICHARD WESTENBURG, FOUNDER

BIOGRAPHIES

Now in his ninth season as Music Director of Musica Sacra, **Kent Tritle** is one of America's leading choral conductors. Concurrently serving as Director of Cathedral Music and organist of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, as well as Music Director of the Oratorio Society of New York, Maestro Tritle was described as "the brightest star in New York's choral music world" by *The New York Times*. A dedicated educator, Mr. Tritle is Director of Choral Activities at the Manhattan School of Music, where he was also recently appointed Chair of the Organ Department, and he is also a member of the graduate faculty of the Juilliard School. Also an acclaimed organ virtuoso, he is the organist of the New York Philharmonic and the American Symphony Orchestra, and is in demand internationally as a recitalist. Mr. Tritle led the "Mass Appeal Mass" of the "Make Music New York" festival for three years, including the 2012 premiere of a work by Philip Glass in Times Square. And in 2013 Mr. Tritle was the Chorus Director of the Carnegie Hall National High School Choral Festival, preparing three choruses from high schools across the country in Mozart's Requiem. Kent Tritle has made more than a dozen recordings on the AMDG, Epiphany, Gothic, Telarc, VAI, and MSR Classics labels. CDBaby.com recently made available his recording of Juraj Filas' Requiem, *Oratio Spei*, dedicated to the victims of 9/11, with the Prague Symphony Orchestra. His most recent release is "Four Quarters of Jerusalem" with the Cathedral Choir of St. John the Divine and Rose of the Compass, on the Pro Organo label. For more information, please visit www.kenttritle.com.

Soprano **Kathryn Lewek** is rapidly establishing herself as one of the most promising coloratura sopranos of this generation. Ms. Lewek's interpretation of her signature role, a quintessential Mozart villain, Queen of the Night, has garnered international critical acclaim and she has performed the role in productions of *Die Zauberflöte* in débuts with Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bregenzer Festspiele, the Metropolitan Opera, Washington National Opera, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Opera Leipzig, Opera de Toulon, English National Opera, Nashville Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Last season alone, she reprised the Queen in débuts worldwide with The Royal Danish Opera, Wiener Staatsoper, Houston Grand Opera, Welsh National Opera, and in a return to The Metropolitan Opera. This season, she will appear in the role at Teatro Real in Madrid. Also this season, Lewek makes a string of exciting role débuts: Teresa in *Benvenuto Cellini* at Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona; the title role in *Maria Stuarda* at Edmonton Opera; and Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Deutsche Oper Berlin. In concert, she sings Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* under Maestro John Nelson with Orchestre symphonique de Montréal; Händel's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall; and *Carmina Burana* with the Dallas Symphony. Future seasons through 2018 include exciting role and company débuts at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Canadian Opera Company, as well as multiple returns to the Metropolitan Opera.

Countertenor **Christopher Ainslie** started his singing career as a chorister in the choir of St. George's Cathedral under the direction of Dr. Barry Smith in Cape Town, his home city. Christopher studied singing with Sarita Stern at the University of Cape Town College of Music and viola with Jürgen Schwietering and Hermina de Groot. After moving to London in 2005 he completed his postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music with distinction, and is now performing at leading venues around the world. Christopher was the first countertenor to win the Richard Tauber Prize at the Wigmore Hall (2008) and won the Michael Oliver Prize in the 2007 Handel Singing Competition. He was a 2010 Classical Opera Company Associate Artist, and is grateful for the significant support of Independent Opera in the formative years of his career. In September 2011 he was the winner of the Gianni Bergamo Classic Music Award for Countertenors.

MUSICĀ SACRĀ

PROFESSIONAL CHORAL MUSIC AT ITS FINEST

SCOTT LETHBRIDGE, PRESIDENT | KENT TRITLE, MUSIC DIRECTOR | RICHARD WESTENBURG, FOUNDER

Christopher is rapidly establishing himself as a leading interpreter of repertoire within and outside the traditional confines of the countertenor voice type. His performance in the title role of Handel's Poro as part of the London Handel Festival, was highly acclaimed. Other opera roles include his recent US opera debut in the title role in Handel's Amadigi at Central City Opera; Ottone in *Poppea* with Glyndebourne on Tour, Opera North, and Drottningholms Slottsteater, Sweden; Antonio *The Merchant of Venice* for Bregenzer Festspiele; Innocent 4 in the world premiere of Birtwistle's *The Minotaur* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; the title role in Handel's Tamerlano in the Göttingen Handel Festival; and the title role in Arne's Artaxerxes at the Royal Opera House.

Tenor **Mingjie Lei**, a native of Hengyang, China, is rapidly gaining acclaim in United States. This season he is joining the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center Ensemble of Lyric Opera of Chicago, and soon will be singing on the Lyric stage in productions of *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Romeo et Juliette*. He will be part of the *Beyond the Arias* series with Chicago Harris Theater with Pianist Craig Terry. Highlights of recent seasons include his Carnegie Hall debut in 2013 singing Handel's *Messiah* with the Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra of New York, Conte di Lerma and Un Araldo Reale in Verdi's *Don Carlo* with Opera Philadelphia, Romeo in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette* with New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and Handel's *Messiah* with the Oratorio Society of New York under the direction of Kent Tritle. He appeared with the New York Festival of Song with composer Bright Sheng, and he sang Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and numerous other roles with the Curtis Opera Theater, the Young Collector in Pervin's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Jupiter in Handel's *Semele* in the Schwabacher Summer Concert with Merola Opera Program at the San Francisco Opera. Mingjie holds a Bachelor of Music from Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, a Master of Music in voice from Manhattan School of Music in New York City, an Artist Diploma in Opera from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He has received awards from Opera Index Inc., Gerda Lissner Foundation, Mario Lanza Institute, Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation, Giulio Gari Foundation, and Kurt Weill Foundation.

Bass **Matt Boehler** has been critically acclaimed both for his dramatic skill and his vocal ability. Mr. Boehler enjoys a busy schedule on the operatic stage and the concert platform. The 2014-2015 season included returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Bertrand in *Iolantha* and Madison Opera as Rocco in *Fidelio* and debuts with Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie as the Erster Schäfer in *Daphne*, Michigan Opera Theater as Méphistophélès in *Faust*, and Des Moines Metro Opera as Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Recent highlights also include *The Nose* with the Metropolitan Opera, his debut with Canadian Opera Company as Sir Walter Raleigh in *Roberto Devereux*, and a reprise of his *Messiah* with the Jacksonville Symphony. The 2015-2016 season and beyond will see his debut with Dallas Opera as the Donkey in *Becoming Santa*, the Sacramento Chorale for Haydn's *Harmoniemesse*, and his much anticipated return to Canadian Opera Company. Mr. Boehler is also a frequent collaborator in the world of contemporary music. He has been seen in two world premieres of John Musto's work *The Inspector* with Wolf Trap Opera and *Bastianello*, along with William Bolcom's *Lucrezia*, with New York Festival of Song. He premiered Michael Dellaira's *The Secret Agent* with Center for Contemporary Opera, and he has been seen in Argento's *Casanova's Homecoming* and Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale*, both with Minnesota Opera. His discography includes recordings of *Bastianello* and *Lucrezia* with NYFOS and a disc of songs by Stefan Wolpe with pianist Ursula Oppens. He is a graduate of the Juilliard Opera Center and he held a three year tenure as a resident artist with Minnesota Opera. At Viterbo University, his first alma mater, he graduated with a degree in Theatre Arts.

MUSICA SACRA

PROFESSIONAL CHORAL MUSIC AT ITS FINEST

SCOTT LETHBRIDGE, PRESIDENT | KENT TRITLE, MUSIC DIRECTOR | RICHARD WESTENBURG, FOUNDER

ABOUT MUSICA SACRA

The mission of Musica Sacra is to create definitive, professional choral performances of the highest caliber for the widest possible audience. It supports its mission by presenting concerts; recording, commissioning and performing new choral works; and educating audiences, students, and the general public in the appreciation and history of choral music. www.musicasacrany.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Scott Lethbridge, President | Maurice S. Mandel |
| Robert D. Krinsky, Vice President | Laurel McKee |
| Mary B. Davidson | Michael T. Naess |
| Gerald W. Richman, Treasurer | Lynne Sebastian |
| Fr. Walter F. Modrys, S.J., Secretary | Michael Stone, M.D. |
| James A. Kelly | Kent Tritle |

UPCOMING MUSICA SACRA PERFORMANCES

MOZART AND A WORLD PREMIERE

Wednesday, March 9, 2016, at 7:30pm

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Lincoln Center

Musica Sacra Chorus and Orchestra

Kent Tritle, Conductor

Lianne Coble, Soprano

Helen Karloski, Mezzo-Soprano

Marc Day, Tenor

Kevin Deas, Baritone

Evan Fein: *Deborah* (World Premiere)

Mozart: *Solemn Vespers*, K. 339

For more information, please contact:

Thomas F. Reynolds

Executive Director

Musica Sacra

P.O. Box 974

Lenox Hill Station

New York, NY 10021

E-Mail: reynoth@msn.com or press@musicasacrany.com

T: 646-300-1310, Messages: 212-330-7684