

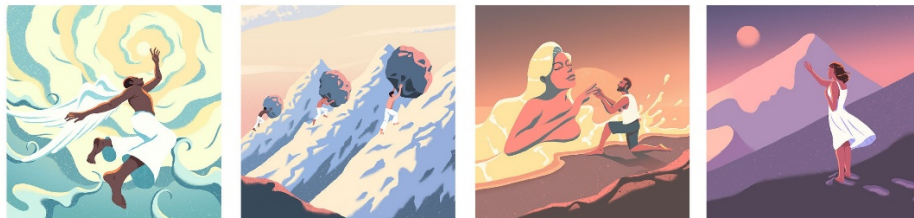
MASTEROICES WILL PRESENT ADAM GUETTEL'S THEATRICAL SONG CYCLE
MYTHS AND HYMNS IN A FOUR-PART DIGITAL SERIES
LAUNCHING ON JANUARY 13, 2021

New Choral Arrangements by Ted Sperling for MasterVoices

Short Films to be Created for Each of the 23 Songs in the Cycle, and Presented in
Four Chapters: January 13, February 24, April 14, and May 26

Myths and Hymns will Feature Singers Daniel Breaker, Julia Bullock, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Renée Fleming, Joshua Henry, Cheyenne Jackson, Capathia Jenkins, Mykal Kilgore, Norm Lewis, Jose Llana, Kelli O'Hara, Nicholas Phan, and Elizabeth Stanley; A Cappella Gospel Music Group Take 6; Actor John Lithgow; Pianists Anderson & Roe; Directors Greg Anderson, Sammi Cannold, Trip Cullman, Lear deBessonet, Khristian Dentley, Doug Fitch, Anne Kauffman, and Ted Sperling; Visual Artists Yazmany Arboleda, Cloud Chatanda, Manik Choksi, Steven Kellogg, Lucy Mackinnon, and Danny Mefford

MYTHS AND HYMNS



New York, NY, December 8, 2020 — Ted Sperling, Artistic Director of **MasterVoices**, announced details of the 79th season of the acclaimed ensemble, which celebrates the power of the human voice to unite, inspire, and connect. The central project of MasterVoices' 2020-2021 season will be a virtual rollout of award-winning composer **Adam Guettel's** theatrical song cycle, *Myths and Hymns*, in an online staging conceived by Ted Sperling. Inspired by Greek myths and a 19th-Century Presbyterian hymnal, the 1998 cycle is a kaleidoscopic collection of musical genres as it explores the nature of faith and longing in a secular world.

New short musical films will illustrate the protagonist's exploration of Flight, Work, Love, and Faith over **23 episodes**. The **four chapters** of this personal voyage will be released in free digital installments throughout

the winter and spring. The first chapter will be available for streaming starting on **January 13** at 6:30 PM ET on mastervoices.org and the ensemble's [YouTube](#) channel.

Aligned with MasterVoices' notable tradition of reclaiming hidden gems, *Myths and Hymns* ("Gabriel Fauré meets Stevie Wonder, Caetano Veloso embraces Earth, Wind and Fire, and they all dance together around the tribal hearth," raved Stephen Holden in *The New York Times*) will feature new choral arrangements by Ted Sperling and will involve dozens of artists. **The first chapter, Flight**, features the **MasterVoices** chorus; duo pianists **Anderson & Roe**; a cappella gospel music group **Take 6**; soloists from the pop, opera, and theatrical landscapes, including **Julia Bullock, Renée Fleming, Joshua Henry, Capathia Jenkins, Mykal Kilgore, Norm Lewis, Jose Llana, Kelli O'Hara, and Elizabeth Stanley**; with contributions by directors **Greg Anderson, Sammi Cannold, Lear deBessonet, Khristian Dentley and Ted Sperling**; visual artists **Yazmany Arboleda, Cloud Chatanda, Steven Kellogg, Lucy Mackinnon, and Danny Mefford**; arrangers **Greg Anderson and Mark Kibble**; lyricist **Ellen Fitzhugh**; and orchestrators **Don Sebesky and Jamie Lawrence**.

The three subsequent chapters, streaming on **February 24, April 14, and May 26** will feature the **MasterVoices** chorus; soloists **Daniel Breaker, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Joshua Henry, Cheyenne Jackson, and Nicholas Phan**; actor **John Lithgow**; directors **Trip Cullman, Doug Fitch, Anne Kauffman, and Ted Sperling**; visual artist **Manik Choksi**; lyricist **Ellen Fitzhugh**; and orchestrators **Don Sebesky and Jamie Lawrence**, as well as additional artists to be announced at a later date.

Following his Obie Award-winning 1996 musical *Floyd Collins* – for which Ted Sperling served as Music Director – Adam Guettel's next project was the song cycle *Myths and Hymns*. The songs were inspired by two very different sources: the ancient Greek stories of Icarus, Pegasus, Hero and Leander, and Sisyphus, and Protestant hymn texts that the composer found in an antique hymnal. It was workshopped in several forms and venues and ultimately performed as *Saturn Returns* in an extended run at the Joseph Papp Public Theater in 1998, where it became a must-see event. Sperling and Guettel made a recording of selections for Nonesuch Records using the original title, and ever since then the work has been known as *Myths and Hymns*.

Due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, these online performances replace the 2020-2021 season productions and concerts that would have taken place onstage before an audience in New York during the same period.

Said Mr. Sperling, "I've thought for years that this piece would merit revisiting with MasterVoices, and now it's proving to be the perfect project for us to tackle during the COVID era. I always aim to choose material for MasterVoices that has a relationship to the issues and feelings that we as a community are facing, and while this collection doesn't spring from this sort of external crisis, it does explore an internal one.... a crisis of purpose, a feeling of being lost, of having 'a hunger inside me.' As many of us struggle to figure out how to keep moving forward when so many options seem unavailable, I hope this project will bring a sense of joy and possibility to our performers, collaborators, and audience."

Adam Guettel added, "*Myths and Hymns* should be like clay for good directors and a vessel for imaginative singers. For the MasterVoices production, we have all of those rarities assembled, and I cannot wait to see what they do."

Held the evening prior to each installment's public launch, MasterVoices will host a series of private virtual screenings with additional content featuring Ted Sperling and some of the artists. More details on the screenings are available [here](#).

More About *Myths and Hymns*

The song cycle opens with a jaunty prologue, *Prometheus*, and is sparked by the song *Saturn Returns: the Flight*. This song lays out the central issue that the cycle is attempting to resolve: a "hunger inside" that is not easily categorized or sated, a feeling that something has been lost, a yearning for completion, for fulfillment. The four chapters then explore different "places" where the answer may lie.

In the first chapter, **Flight**, the answer seems to be "up," or "away." Guettel frames the myth of *Icarus* as the story of a young man striving to get out from under his famous father's shadow and shine like the sun. After his crash, the solace and hope of *Migratory V* expresses the human aspiration to fly together and soar above the troubles below. The retelling of *Pegasus* explores the fall of the hero Bellerophon when he angers Zeus. The chapter ends with the cycle's first hymn text, *Jesus, the Mighty Conqueror*, with its refrain consisting of the single word, "rise," repeated over and over.

In the second chapter, **Work**, the possible answer comes in dedication, striving, and struggle. *Children of the Heavenly King/At the Sounding* is a call to action creating an ebullient mood, and in contrast, *Build a Bridge* describes the sense of futility of attempting a bridge too difficult to cross. It is followed by the humorous back-and-forth motion of *Sisyphus*, who is relentlessly optimistic that he will finally succeed in pushing the rock to the top, and the chorus, which is forced to watch his vain efforts. *Life is But a Dream* takes "Row Your Boat" as a jumping-off point, and asks ruefully, "Is it really like the song? Do we gently row along?" The chapter ends with *Every Poodle* with scat lyrics and raga-inspired dance breaks, a release after all this effort.

In **Love**, the third chapter, *Hero and Leander* evokes the sounds of the roiling waves that stand in the way of the lovers' union, and ultimately prove their ruin. *Come to Jesus* intertwines the story of a young couple's dissolution because of an unwanted pregnancy with the haunting hymn text of the title, and the chapter ends with the wistfully humorous and self-involved *How Can I Lose You?*

In the last chapter, **Faith**, *There's a Land* conjures a version of heaven where all problems are solved. *There's a Shout* also puts stock in a God that will come to the rescue. *Awaiting You* mourns the loss of loved ones and teachers. A recasting of *Saturn Returns* shows the acceptance that fulfillment will have to come from an internal change, a reconciliation of desire and acceptance. *Light After Darkness* uses one more hymn text to recapitulate the themes of the piece and celebrate its completion.

Wednesday, January 13, 2021, 6:30 PM ET

[Myths and Hymns - CHAPTER ONE: FLIGHT](#)

Music and Lyrics by Adam Guettel

Additional lyrics by Ellen Fitzhugh

Orchestrations by Don Sebesky and Jamie Lawrence

MasterVoices

Ted Sperling, Artistic Director and Conductor

Prometheus

Anderson & Roe, piano duo

Greg Anderson, arranger and director

Saturn Returns: the Flight

MasterVoices

Joshua Henry, soloist

Ted Sperling, director

Icarus

MasterVoices

Mykal Kilgore, soloist (Icarus)

Norm Lewis, soloist (Daedalus)

Sammi Cannold, director

Lucy Mackinnon, designer

Migratory V

MasterVoices

Julia Bullock, soloist

Renée Fleming, soloist

Kelli O'Hara, soloist

Lear deBessonnet, director

Danny Mefford, co-creator

Yazmany Arboleda, co-creator and illustrator

Cloud Chatanda, animation

Pegasus

Jose Llana, soloist (Bellerophon)

Capathia Jenkins, soloist (Pegasus)

Elizabeth Stanley, soloist (Gadfly)

Ted Sperling, director

Steven Kellogg, illustrations

Jesus, the Mighty Conqueror

MasterVoices

Take 6, soloists

Mark Kibble, arranger

Khristian Dentley, director

Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 6:30 PM ET

[Myths and Hymns - CHAPTER TWO: WORK](#)

Music and Lyrics by Adam Guettel

Additional lyrics by Ellen Fitzhugh

Orchestrations by Don Sebesky and Jamie Lawrence

MasterVoices

Ted Sperling, Artistic Director and Conductor

Down and Up and Over and Over

Children of the Heavenly King

At the Sounding
Build a Bridge
Sisyphus
Life is but a Dream
Every Poodle

Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 6:30PM ET

[Myths and Hymns - CHAPTER THREE: LOVE](#)

Music and Lyrics by Adam Guettel

Orchestrations by Don Sebesky and Jamie Lawrence

MasterVoices

Ted Sperling, Artistic Director and Conductor

Lonely
Hero & Leander
Come to Jesus
How Can I Lose You?

Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 6:30 PM ET

[Myths and Hymns - CHAPTER FOUR: FAITH](#)

Music and Lyrics by Adam Guettel

Orchestrations by Don Sebesky and Jamie Lawrence

MasterVoices

Ted Sperling, Artistic Director and Conductor

The Great Highway
There's a Land
There's a Shout
Awaiting You
Saturn Returns: the Return
Light After Darkness (Encore)

Details of MasterVoices' 2020-21 season can be found at mastervoices.org.

For more information, visit mastervoices.org. Connect with MasterVoices on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) (@mastervoicesny).

About Adam Guettel

Adam Guettel is a composer/lyricist living in New York City. His upcoming musical, *The Days of Wine and Roses*, will have its first production on Broadway next season. Another new musical, *Millions*, is also slated for production soon. His musical, *The Light in the Piazza* (cast album on Nonesuch Records), with a book by Craig Lucas, premiered on Broadway at Lincoln Center Theater's Vivian Beaumont Theater in April 2005 and went on to receive six 2005 Tony Awards including two for Mr. Guettel – Best Original Score, Best Orchestrations, and a Grammy nomination for best cast recording. *The Light in the Piazza* also received five Drama Desk Awards, including two for Mr. Guettel – Best Music and Best Orchestrations. He received a Tony nomination for his score for *To Kill A Mockingbird* in 2019. He wrote music and lyrics for *Floyd Collins*, which received the 1996 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical and earned Mr. Guettel the Obie Award for Best

Music. *Saturn Returns* (recorded by Nonesuch as *Myths and Hymns*) was produced in an extended run at the Joseph Papp Public Theater in 1998. Accolades for Mr. Guettel include the Stephen Sondheim Award (1990), the ASCAP New Horizons Award (1997), and the American Composers Orchestra Award (2005). He received an honorary doctorate from Lehman College in 2007. In 2019 he was made an honorary member of The Royal Academy of Music in London.

About Ted Sperling

One of today's leading musical artists, Tony Award-winning Maestro Ted Sperling is a classically trained musician whose 35-year career has spanned from the concert hall and the opera house to the Broadway stage. Presently Artistic Director of MasterVoices, he has led such symphony orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Boston Pops, San Diego Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, the Iceland Symphony, Czech National Symphony, and BBC Concert Orchestra, as well as New York City Opera and Houston Grand Opera. Formerly Principal Conductor of the Westchester Philharmonic, Mr. Sperling is a multi-faceted artist also known for his work as orchestrator, singer, pianist, violinist, violist, director, and music director.

With MasterVoices, Maestro Sperling has led acclaimed productions of rarely-heard gems as both director and conductor. These include Kurt Weill's *The Firebrand of Florence*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *The Road of Promise* (based on *The Eternal Road* and subsequently recorded on Navona Records), and the 2018-19 season's sold-out three-performance run of *Lady in the Dark* at New York City Center. Other notable productions with the group include George and Ira Gershwin's satirical musicals *Of Thee I Sing* and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, a reconstruction of Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland*, and *Song of Norway* (all at Carnegie Hall); the NYC premieres of David Lang's *battle hymns* at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum; and Ricky Ian Gordon's operas *The Grapes of Wrath* at Carnegie Hall and *27* at NY City Center.

Outside of MasterVoices, 2019 projects included bringing *The King and I* to Japan, and several programs with the San Diego Symphony. Notable 2018 concerts included a Bernstein recital with soprano Isabel Leonard at the Kimmel Center and the Park Avenue Armory, an opera program with the RTE National Symphony Orchestra in Dublin, a benefit concert staging of *Camelot* starring Lin-Manuel Miranda, and two film programs with San Francisco Symphony. He served as Music Director and conductor for the revival of *My Fair Lady* at Lincoln Center Theater, and serves as Artistic Director of NYU's newly launched Broadway Orchestra Initiative. He made his Broadway stage debut as Wallace Hartley in *Titanic* and appeared as Steve Allen in the finale of Season Two of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel."

Sperling has conducted multiple concerts for PBS's *Live From Lincoln Center*, the American Songbook Series at Lincoln Center, and the *Lyrics and Lyricists* series at the 92nd Street Y. He conducted Audra McDonald in a double bill of *La Voix Humaine* and the world premiere of *Send: Who Are You? I Love You?* at the Houston Grand Opera. He won the 2005 Tony and Drama Desk Awards for his orchestrations of Adam Guettel's *The Light in the Piazza*, for which he was also Music Director.

In addition to his directing work with MasterVoices, Mr. Sperling's work as a stage director includes the world premieres of four critically acclaimed original musicals Off-Broadway—including *The Other Josh Cohen* and *See What I Wanna See*—and a noted production of *Lady in the Dark* at the Prince Theater in Philadelphia, starring Andrea Marcovicci. He graduated *summa cum laude* from Yale University, and received the Faculty Prize at The Juilliard School.

Mr. Sperling currently teaches orchestral playing and conducting at NYU.

About MasterVoices

MasterVoices (formerly The Collegiate Chorale) was founded in 1941 by legendary American choral conductor Robert Shaw and has been under the artistic direction of Tony Award-winner Ted Sperling since 2013. Known for its versatility, the group's repertoire ranges from choral masterpieces and operas in concert to operettas and musical theater. It is also known for highly theatrical performances of rarely-heard works such as the 2018-19 season's *Lady in the Dark* by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin, Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland*, Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*, Tchaikovsky's *Maid of Orleans*, and Rossini's *Moise et Pharaon*. The group regularly commissions and premieres new works; recent seasons included works by Ricky Ian Gordon, Marisa Michelson, Royce Vavrek, and Randall Eng.

As the country's first interracial and interfaith chorus, the group performed at the opening of the United Nations and has sung and recorded under the batons of esteemed conductors including Serge Koussevitzky, Arturo Toscanini, Leonard Bernstein, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, and Alan Gilbert. It has been engaged by top-tier orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Israel Philharmonic, and has appeared at the Verbier and Salzburg Festivals.

Concerts regularly feature an inclusive roster of world-class soloists from across the musical spectrum, including Anthony Roth Costanzo, Bryn Terfel, Stephanie Blythe, Deborah Voigt, Eric Owens, Nmon Ford, John Holiday, Kelli O'Hara, Paulo Szot, Bebe Neuwirth, and Victoria Clark, along with cross-disciplinary collaborations with such diverse creative minds as *Vogue* Editor-at-Large Hamish Bowles, Silk Road visual artist Kevork Mourad, and acclaimed choreographer Doug Varone. Roger Rees was the group's Artistic Associate from 2003–2015.

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