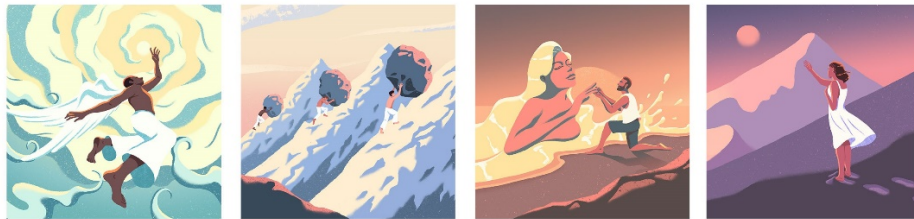


MASTEROICES PRESENTS *WORK*, THE SECOND CHAPTER OF ADAM GUETTEL'S FOUR-PART THEATRICAL SONG CYCLE *MYTHS AND HYMNS*, ON FEBRUARY 24, 2021

*Work* will feature the MasterVoices chorus, Singers Shoshana Bean, Daniel Breaker, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Michael McElroy, Ailyn Pérez, and Nicholas Phan; and Actor John Lithgow

Short Musical Films Created by Directors Anthony Roth Costanzo, Doug Fitch, Anne Kauffman and Ted Sperling; and Visual Artists Manik Choksi, Erik Freer, Thomas Nguyen, Adrienne Rogers, and Ray Charles White

# MYTHS AND HYMNS



**New York, NY, January 28, 2021** — MasterVoices, under the artistic direction of Ted Sperling, will present *Work*, the second chapter of its central project for the 2020-2021 season: a four-part virtual rollout of award-winning composer Adam Guettel's theatrical song cycle, *Myths and Hymns*. Conceived and supervised by Mr. Sperling, this free digital production will be offered starting on Wednesday, February 24 at 6:30 PM ET on [mastervoices.org](https://mastervoices.org) and the ensemble's [YouTube](#) channel.

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*. *Work* features the MasterVoices chorus and soloists Shoshana Bean, Daniel Breaker, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Michael McElroy, Ailyn Pérez, and Nicholas Phan, and actor John Lithgow. Also contributing are directors Anthony Roth Costanzo, Doug Fitch, Anne Kauffman and Ted Sperling; visual artists Manik Choksi, Erik Freer, Thomas Nguyen, Adrienne Rogers, and Ray Charles White; lyricist Ellen Fitzhugh; and orchestrators Don Sebesky and Jamie Lawrence.

*Myths and Hymns'* first chapter, *Flight*, launched on January 13 and the third and fourth chapters (*Love* and *Faith*) will be released in free digital installments, streaming on **April 14** and **May 26**. All chapters will remain available for streaming from their respective launch dates until June 30, 2021. Held the evening prior to each installment's public launch, MasterVoices will host a private virtual screening with additional content featuring Ted Sperling and some of the artists. More details on the screenings are available [here](#).

### **More About Myths and Hymns**

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*.

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.

**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](#)**

**MasterVoices**

**Ted Sperling**, director

*Children of the Heavenly King*

Anthony Roth Costanzo, soloist and director

Erik Freer, visual artist

*At the Sounding*

MasterVoices

Ailyn Pérez, soloist

Nicholas Phan, soloist

Anthony Roth Costanzo, soloist and director

Erik Freer, visual artist

*Build a Bridge*

Michael McElroy, soloist

Ted Sperling, director

Adrienne Rogers, textile artist

Ray Charles White, photographer

*Sisyphus*

MasterVoices

John Lithgow, narrator

Daniel Breaker, soloist (Sisyphus)

Anne Kauffman, director

Manik Choksi, animator

*Life is but a Dream*

Shoshana Bean, soloist

Ted Sperling, director

*Every Poodle*

MasterVoices

Daniel Breaker soloist

Ailyn Pérez, soloist

Nicholas Phan, soloist

Doug Fitch, director

Thomas Nguyen, animator

Additional details are available in the full *Myths and Hymns* press release [here](#).

**About Adam Guettel**

Adam Guettel is a composer/lyricist living in New York City. His upcoming musical, *The Days of Wine and Roses*, will tentatively 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.

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

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