



Press Release

MASTEROICES ANNOUNCES DETAILS OF ITS 2021-22 SEASON

A Joyful Noise opens the company's 80th season with guest artists Mikaela Bennett, Northwell Health Nurse Choir, and Take 6

Concert version of Stephen Sondheim's and Arthur Laurents' unconventional 1964 musical, *Anyone Can Whistle*, stars Vanessa Williams

Outdoor concert, *Songs for a Summer Night*, features a world premiere by Tariq Al-Sabir, guest artist Shereen Pimentel, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's



New York, NY, October 20, 2021 — Ted Sperling, Artistic Director of **MasterVoices**, announced details of the celebrated chorus' 80th season, celebrating the power of the human voice to unite, inspire and connect since 1941. The 2021-22 season opens on **December 6 at Carnegie Hall** with *A Joyful Noise*, a return to performing before an audience after a two-year absence, featuring music to mark the holiday season as well as the perseverance of the human spirit after a long hiatus. Works include Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, Thomas A. Dorsey's *If We Ever Needed the Lord Before (We Sure Do Need Him Now)*, traditional songs, and music by Adam Guettel, John Rutter and Randall Thompson. Joining MasterVoices are soprano **Mikaela Bennett**, the **Northwell Health Nurse Choir** and **Take 6**. MasterVoices will provide free tickets to a few hundred essential and frontline workers to this concert to thank them for their personal sacrifices during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The second concert of the anniversary season is on **March 10 at Carnegie Hall**: a semi-staged concert production of the cult-favorite musical, **Stephen Sondheim's** and **Arthur Laurents' *Anyone Can Whistle***, starring **Vanessa Williams**. Written in 1964, the ahead-of-its-time satire shows early signs of Sondheim's

rebel genius as it skewers many targets, revealing what can happen when a community puts its faith in an unreliable leader. It has not been seen in New York since 2010, when it was presented by the Encores! series at City Center.

The season ends in June with an outdoor concert, ***Songs for a Summer Night***. All of the pieces chosen for this program evoke the sounds, smells and emotions of summer, in their own fashion. It will feature several new arrangements conceived for the program. The concert includes the **world premiere** of a newly commissioned piece by **Tariq Al-Sabir**, inspired by the sounds of a New York City summer, as well as music by Barber, Berlioz, Gordon, Mendelssohn, Schwartz and Sondheim, among others. Joining MasterVoices are guests **Shereen Pimentel**, **Tariq Al-Sabir**, and the **Orchestra of St. Luke's**. Complete details of the outdoor performance will be announced at a later date.

Said Mr. Sperling, "We are delighted to return for our 80th season to our historic home, Carnegie Hall, where MasterVoices, then The Collegiate Chorale, first began. More than ever, we yearn to experience the powerful emotions felt by the singers and listeners alike when more than 100 voices sing in a great acoustic setting. Meanwhile, we have used our time offstage for dreaming and planning. We updated our logo and mission statement to reflect the evolution of our identity as an engaged community chorus, prepared for a professional recording of our acclaimed 2019 City Center performance of Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin's *Lady in the Dark* starring Victoria Clark, and will soon release a new short video - directed by Sammi Cannold with script by Rick Elice - to launch on the occasion of our 80th anniversary later this year."

The central project of MasterVoices' 2020-2021 season was the virtual rollout of award-winning composer Adam Guettel's 1998 theatrical song cycle, ***Myths and Hymns***, in an online staging conceived by Ted Sperling. The concert will be reprised this fall in a full-length broadcast version distributed by [ALL ARTS](#), which will premiere nationwide on November 10 at 8 p.m. ET on the free [ALL ARTS app and allarts.org](#), and in the New York metro area on the ALL ARTS [TV channel](#). The ALL ARTS special will include an introduction by Ted Sperling.

[A Joyful Noise](#)

Monday, December 6, 2021, 7:30 pm

Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage

MasterVoices

Ted Sperling, Artistic Director and Conductor

Mikaela Bennett, soprano

Take 6, a cappella gospel music group

Northwell Health Nurse Choir (**Tim Davis**, Producer)

Highlights:

John Rutter: *Rejoice and Sing*

Randall Thompson: *Alleluia*

Adam Guettel: *Myths and Hymns* excerpts: *Migratory V* (arr. Ted Sperling); *Jesus, the Mighty Conqueror* (arr. Mark Kibble)

Thomas A. Dorsey (arr. Mervyn Warren): *If We Ever Needed the Lord Before (We Sure Do Need Him Now)*

Leonard Bernstein: *Chichester Psalms*

Traditional (arr. Jeffrey Biegel): Hanukkah Medley

Traditional/Peter J. Wilhousky (lyrics), **Mykola Leontovych** (music) (arr. Cedric Dent): *We Wish You a Merry Christmas / Carol of the Bells*

Theodor Seuss Geisel (lyrics), **Albert Hague** (music) (arr. Mark Kibble): *You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch*
Richard Bernhard Smith (lyrics), **Felix Bernard** (music) (arr. Mark Kibble): *Winter Wonderland*
Traditional (arr. Cedric Dent and Mark Kibble): *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*

MasterVoices and guest artists soprano **Mikaela Bennett** and **Take 6** offer a joyful concert to celebrate the holiday season, and to thank all workers who kept New York City going during the difficult pandemic hiatus. Musical selections include works by John Rutter, Randall Thompson and Adam Guettel that MasterVoices performed virtually last season and will sing together in person for the first time. Take 6 perform their unique arrangements both on their own and with MasterVoices joining, including *If We Ever Needed the Lord Before (We Sure Do Need Him Now)* by Thomas A. Dorsey, “the father of gospel music.” A pillar of the program is Bernstein’s *Chichester Psalms* which uses the text “A Joyful Noise,” from the opening of Psalm 100. It features Mikaela Bennett, who sang the role of Mary Wintergreen in MasterVoices’ 2019 concert production of Gershwin’s *Let ‘Em Eat Cake* as well as joining MasterVoices in a performance of Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* in 2018. The evening ends on a majestic note with the traditional carol, *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing* with Take 6 and Ms. Bennett joining forces with MasterVoices. The program also features the **Northwell Health Nurse Choir**, which began its journey in 2020 when nurses from different hospitals of New York gathered virtually to support the Nurse Heroes initiative. In June 2021, the Choir appeared on *America’s Got Talent* and its captivating performance resulted in a Top 10 spot in the TV show’s season finale.

Tickets, starting at \$30 are on sale on October 25, 2021, and may be purchased online at carnegiehall.org, by calling CarnegieCharge at [212.247.7800](tel:212.247.7800) or in person at Carnegie Hall’s box office at 57th and Seventh Avenue. Ticket holders need to comply with the venue’s health and safety requirements, which can be found [here](#).

[Anyone Can Whistle](#)

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and Book by Arthur Laurents

Thursday, March 10, 2022, 7:00 pm

Carnegie Hall’s Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage

MasterVoices

Ted Sperling, Artistic Director and Conductor

Vanessa Williams, Cora Hoover Hooper

Additional casting to be announced at a later date

MasterVoices’ revival of a semi-staged concert production of cult-favorite ***Anyone Can Whistle***, **Stephen Sondheim** and **Arthur Laurents’** absurdist 1964 musical, features **Vanessa Williams**. With ***Anyone Can Whistle***, Sondheim and Laurents—who had previously worked together on *Gypsy* and *West Side Story*—created a surreal, experimental show that was both very much a product of its time and also ahead of its time. It boasts a complex, tuneful score that demonstrates Sondheim’s wit and range as both composer and lyricist and “is invaluable for providing an early, precocious example of a skill that Mr. Sondheim plies better than anybody in Broadway history: a gift for defining in song characters who are a hair’s breadth from nervous breakdowns” (Brantley, *The New York Times*). Arthur Laurents’ book reflects the zeitgeist of the era as it questions—as did such 1960s films as *The Graduate* and *King of Hearts*—who can be sane in an insane society and argues the importance of nonconformity. It skewers politicians who lie to stay in power, as well as religion, science, psychotherapy, and the conventions of musical theater itself.

The show—directed by Mr. Laurents and starring Angela Lansbury in her first Broadway musical role, as well as Lee Remick and Harry Guardino—was ultimately more satirical social commentary than mainstream entertainment. In a season that also included the premieres of *Hello Dolly!* and *Funny Girl*, *Anyone Can Whistle* closed after nine performances, the briefest run of any of Sondheim’s Broadway productions. In his memoir *Finishing the Hat*, Sondheim wrote, “Arthur and I had written the piece as if we were the two smartest kids in the class (in the back row, of course), wittily making fun of the teacher as well as our fellow students, demonstrating how far ahead of the established wisdom we were.” The cast recording was made the day after the show closed. Several songs from the show became Sondheim standards for revues and cabarets over the decades. Hit songs from the show include “Me and My Town,” “There Won’t Be Trumpets,” “Anyone Can Whistle,” “Everybody Says Don’t” and “With So Little to be Sure of.”

Tickets, starting at \$30, are on sale on December 13, 2021 and may be purchased online at carnegiehall.org, by calling CarnegieCharge at [212.247.7800](tel:212.247.7800) or in person at Carnegie Hall’s box office at 57th and Seventh Avenue. Ticket holders need to comply with the venue’s health and safety requirements, which can be found [here](#).

[Songs for a Summer Night](#)

June 2022 (*Date, venue, and tickets to be announced at a later date*)

MasterVoices

Ted Sperling, Artistic Director and Conductor

Orchestra of St. Luke’s

Shereen Pimentel, soprano

Tariq Al-Sabir, vocalist

Program to include:

Mendelssohn: Overture to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” in E major, Op. 21

Mendelssohn: *Song with Choir* (from “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”)

des Prez: *El Grillo*

Schwartz/Strouse: *Blame it on the Summer Night* (from “Rags”)

Loesser: *Song of a Summer Night* (from “The Most Happy Fella”)

Ricky Ian Gordon: Three songs, *New Moon*, *Summer*, and *Joy*

Barber: *Knoxville: Summer 1915*

Berlioz: Excerpts from *Les nuits d’été (Summer Nights)*, *Villanelle* and *La Spectre de la Rose*

Sondheim: *Night Music Waltz Suite*, arr. Ted Sperling

Tariq Al-Sabir: **World Premiere Commission**

In June 2022, **Mr. Sperling** leads **MasterVoices** and the **Orchestra of St. Luke’s** with guests, soprano **Shereen Pimentel**, who was Maria in the recent Broadway production of *West Side Story*; and composer and vocalist **Tariq Al-Sabir**, in an outdoor performance demonstrating how the sounds of summer delight and inspire. The program opens with the beloved Overture to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” by 17-year-old Felix Mendelssohn, followed by *Song with Choir*, written later in his career for a staging of Shakespeare’s play. And what is summer without the song of crickets? The chorus performs the playful Italian madrigal *El Grillo* (“The Cricket”), by Renaissance composer Josquin des Prez. Written very likely for his friend Carlo Grillo, it is an early example of text painting in music, when the music matches the words being sung.

Broadway composers are represented by Stephen Schwartz and Charles Strouse, Frank Loesser and Mr. Sperling’s arrangement of Sondheim’s *Night Music Waltzes* from “A Little Night Music.” The program also includes three songs by Ricky Ian Gordon: *New Moon*, set to a poem by Langston Hughes; *Joy*,

commissioned by soprano Harolyn Blackwell; and *Summer*. We then hear Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer 1915*, his musical setting of a poem by James Agee of the same title, which served as the preface to Agee's 1948 novel *A Death in the Family*. Ms. Pimentel then sings two songs from *Les nuits d'été*, a song cycle by Berlioz set to six poems by Théophile Gautier. The evening ends with the **world premiere** of a **new commissioned piece** by **Mr. Al-Sabir**, inspired by the sounds of a New York City summer.

Composer, Vocalist, Producer and Music Director **Tariq Al-Sabir** has performed and premiered commissioned works at The Public Theater, Lincoln Center, National Sawdust, MoMA and Columbia university's Wallach Art Gallery. He nationally and internationally premiered the roles of Richard Moss and Travis Douglass in *Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower*, an opera by Toshi Reagon and Bernice Johnson Reagon. Al-Sabir's multimedia song cycle #UNWANTED, conceived during the 2018 SUITE/Space residency with the Mabou Mines Theater Company, premiered to the world at The Shed in 2019. Al-Sabir made his Los Angeles Philharmonic debut in the new production of Meredith Monk's ATLAS directed by Yuval Sharon and is collaborating with Monk on her new evening-length performance with the working title Indra's Net.

Details of MasterVoices' 2021-22 season can be found at mastervoices.org.

About MasterVoices

MasterVoices (formerly The Collegiate Chorale) was founded in 1941 by legendary American choral conductor Robert Shaw. Under the artistic direction of Tony Award-winner Ted Sperling since 2013, the group is known for its versatility and a repertoire that ranges from choral masterpieces and operas in concert to operettas and musical theater. Season concerts feature their volunteer chorus of 100+ members from all walks of life, alongside an inclusive roster of world-class soloists from across the musical spectrum, including Julia Bullock, Dove Cameron, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Renée Fleming, John Holiday, Jennifer Holliday, Norm Lewis, and Kelli O'Hara. Under Sperling's direction the group has created cross-disciplinary collaborations with such diverse creative minds as *Vogue* Editor-at-Large Hamish Bowles, fashion designer Zac Posen, Silk Road visual artist Kevork Mourad, illustrator Manik Choksi, stage designer Doug Fitch, and choreographers Doug Varone and Andrew Palermo. Roger Rees was the group's Artistic Associate from 2003–2015, and in 2021 the group received a Drama League Award nomination for their multi-genre digital concert production, *Myths and Hymns*.

The group continues to specialize in 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*, and Tchaikovsky's *Maid of Orleans*. They also commission and premiere new works; recent commissions include works by Ricky Ian Gordon, Marisa Michelson, 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, and Leonard Bernstein, among others. 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.

For more information, visit mastervoices.org. Connect with MasterVoices on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/mastervoicesny), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/mastervoicesny) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/mastervoicesny) (@mastervoicesny).

About Ted Sperling

One of today's leading musical artists, Tony Award-winning Maestro Ted Sperling is a classically trained musician whose 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 Carnegie Hall performances of 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 his *Song of Norway*; the New York City 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 New York City Center.

During the pandemic season of 2020-2021, Maestro Sperling spearheaded a filmed production of Adam Guettel's *Myths and Hymns* for MasterVoices, producing and music directing 24 short musical films and directing roughly half of them. This project was nominated for a Drama League Award, and featured over 100 artists collaborating remotely, including Renée Fleming, Take 6, Jennifer Holliday and Julia Bullock. Now that live performances are back, Maestro Sperling is supervising national and international productions of *My Fair Lady*, *The King and I*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. He has symphonic engagements in the US and Europe and continues to teach at NYU, conducting three different orchestras and training the next generation of Broadway musicians and conductors.

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. 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."

Images credit: MasterVoices 2021-22 season visual created by Asia Pietrzyk

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