



**MASTEROICES PRESENTS GILBERT AND SULLIVAN'S *IOLANTHE*  
ON MAY 3, AT CARNEGIE HALL'S STERN AUDITORIUM**

**Conducted and Directed by Ted Sperling, Performance Stars David Garrison, Christine Ebersole, Shereen Ahmed, Schyler Vargas, Ashley Fabian, Santino Fontana, Jason Danieleley, and Phillip Boykin**



**New York, NY, March 16, 2023** – MasterVoices concludes its 2022-23 season on **May 3** at **Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium** with a concert staging of **Gilbert and Sullivan's** comic opera *Iolanthe*, directed and conducted by Ted Sperling. *Iolanthe*, with “one of Sullivan’s finest scores” (*The New York Times*), is a battle of the sexes pitting members of Britain’s House of Lords against the Fairy Queen and her kin, yet its themes are supremely relatable today; it tells of how a minority of landed gentry make rules that dominate the majority, how boorish masculinity disrupts and dominates a tranquil civilization of women, and how all that may still lead to surprising results.

Joining the 120–member **MasterVoices** chorus and orchestra are some of the brightest stars of the Broadway stage, the cinema and television: silver-tongued Tony Award-nominated veteran **David Garrison**, who among his many credits previously appeared in MasterVoices’ *Song of Norway*, *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *The Pirate of Penzance*; two-time Tony Award-winning actress **Christine Ebersole**, who performed in MasterVoices’ *The Grapes of Wrath*; mezzo soprano **Shereen Ahmed**, who most recently starred as Eliza Doolittle in the national tour of *My Fair Lady*; rising “powerful baritone” (*The Washington Post*) **Schyler Vargas**, whose recent credits include Arizona Opera, Atlanta Opera and Glimmerglass Opera Festival; rising soprano **Ashley Fabian**, whose “voice is absolutely beautiful” (*Scene and Heard*

*International*); Tony Award-winning actor **Santino Fontana**, seen in last season's MasterVoices sold-out revival of *Anyone Can Whistle* and also in *Song of Norway*; stage and concert veteran **Jason Danieleley**, "the most exquisite tenor on Broadway" (*The New York Times*), who performed in MasterVoices' production of *The Mikado* as well as in *Song of Norway*; and Tony Award-nominated bass **Phillip Boykin**, most recently seen on Broadway in the revival of *The Music Man* and who sang in the MasterVoices' revival of *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Artistic Director Ted Sperling said, "*Iolanthe* has been on my wish list for a long time—basically since I was 16 and first introduced to it at summer camp. Having a 120-person chorus backing a cast full of Broadway and opera stars is a great way to 'blow the dust' off these Gilbert & Sullivan classics, and also bring out the comedy in relatable ways. I can't wait to bring *Iolanthe's* score to life in all of its full glory."

**Wednesday, May 3, 2023, 7 pm**

Carnegie Hall, Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage, 881 Seventh Avenue

[\*\*\*Iolanthe \(or The Peer and the Peri\)\*\*\*](#)

**Music by Arthur S. Sullivan**

**Lyrics and libretto by W.S. Gilbert**

**MasterVoices Chorus**

**MasterVoices Orchestra**

Conducted and directed by **Ted Sperling**

Movements by **Andrew Palermo**

Costume coordination by **Tracy Christensen**

Lighting design by **Scott Lehrer**

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

THE LORD CHANCELLOR, **David Garrison**

THE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES, **Christine Ebersole**

IOLANTHE (a Fairy—Strephon's mother), **Shereen Ahmed**

STREPHON (An Arcadian Shepherd), **Schyler Vargas**

PHYLLIS (an Arcadian Shepherdess and Ward of Chancery), **Ashley Fabian**

GEORGE, THE EARL OF MOUNTARARAT, **Santino Fontana**

THOMAS, THE EARL TOLLOLLER, **Jason Danieleley**

PRIVATE WILLIS (of the Grenadier Guards), **Phillip Boykin**

CELIA, LEILA and FLETA (fairies) **Casting from the MasterVoices Chorus**

### **More about *Iolanthe***

**Gilbert and Sullivan's** timeless favorite *Iolanthe* is the seventh work in their fourteen operatic collaborations between 1871 and 1896, written when they were both at the height of their powers. The plot follows Iolanthe, a fairy, who commits the ultimate crime of marrying a mortal, and is banished from the fairy world. Fast forward 25 years, and her half-human, half-fairy son (Strephon) now wishes to marry a mortal (Phyllis) but it's a crime punishable by death. Iolanthe sets out to change this law by taking on members of the House of Lords, which is a bastion of privileged dimwits. The Lord Chancellor, as well as the rest of the House of Lords, are also in love with Phyllis. And thus a battle to win the affection of Phyllis's heart begins. *Iolanthe* was the first opera to open at the Savoy, the London theater built by producer and hotelier Richard D'Oyly Carte to present the work of Gilbert and Sullivan. It was the first new theater production in the world to be illuminated by electricity, which made several special effects possible, including electric wands used by the chorus of fairies and battery-powered lights worn in the principal fairies' hair. It ran for 398 performances.

The Gilbert and Sullivan operas, of which *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *The Mikado* are among the best known, continue to enjoy broad and enduring international success. The team's creative DNA is embedded in 20<sup>th</sup> century American musical theater in which book, music and lyrics combine to form an integrated whole, and they demonstrated that musicals can address contemporary social and political issues without sacrificing entertainment value. They also influenced political discourse, literature, film and television. Songwriter Johnny Mercer once said, "We all come from Gilbert." MasterVoices has previously presented concert stagings of *The Mikado* and *The Pirates of Penzance* featuring stars from Broadway and the opera world.

**Tickets**, priced from \$30 to \$165, may be purchased online at [carnegiehall.org](https://carnegiehall.org), by calling CarnegieCharge at 212.247.7800 or in person at Carnegie Hall's box office at 57<sup>th</sup> and Seventh Avenue beginning Spring 2023. Ticket holders need to comply with the venue's health and safety requirements, which can be found [here](#).

### **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 a volunteer chorus of 100+ members from all walks of life, alongside a diverse 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, Victoria Clark, and Kelli O'Hara. Under Sperling's direction the group has created cross-disciplinary collaborations with such diverse creative minds as legendary lyricist Sheldon Harnick, *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 New York Emmy Award nomination and a Drama League Award nomination for its multi-genre digital concert production, *Myths and Hymns*.

Known for its presentation of lesser-known artistic treasures such as Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*, and Tchaikovsky's *Maid of Orleans*, the group has received recent accolades for productions of rarely-heard works such as this season's New York City premiere of Sheldon Harnick's full English translation of Bizet's *Carmen*, the 2018-19 season's *Lady in the Dark* by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin, Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland*, the Gershwins' *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, and Stephen Sondheim and Arthur Laurents's *Anyone Can Whistle*. They also commission and premiere new works; recent examples include choral works by Ricky Ian Gordon, Marisa Michelson, Tariq Al-Sabir, and Randall Eng.

As one of the country's first interracial and interfaith choruses, MasterVoices (as The Collegiate Chorale) 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](https://mastervoices.org). Connect with MasterVoices on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) (@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 Stephen Sondheim's *Anyone Can Whistle*, 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*; 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 U.S. 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 Marcovici. 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 from left to right: David Garrison, Christine Ebersole, Shereen Ahmed, Schyler Vargas, Ashley Fabian, Santino Fontana, Jason Danieley and Phillip Boykin, courtesy of MasterVoices.

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