



Press Release

**MASTEROICES OPENS ITS 2023-24 SEASON  
WITH STEPHEN SONDHEIM AND BURT SHEVELOVE'S MUSICAL *THE FROGS*,  
INSPIRED BY ARISTOPHANES' PLAY AS ADAPTED BY NATHAN LANE,  
ON NOVEMBER 3 AND 4 AT JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER'S ROSE THEATER**

**Third Performance Added on Friday, November 3 at 8 PM**

**Conducted and Directed by Ted Sperling, Performances Star Nathan Lane as the Host,  
Douglas Sills, Kevin Chamberlin, Peter Bartlett, Dylan Baker, Chuck Cooper, Marc Kudisch,  
Jordan Donica, and Candice Corbin**



**New York, NY, September 28, 2023** – MasterVoices opens its 2023-24 season on **November 3 and 4** at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theater, with three performances of a concert staging of **Stephen Sondheim** and **Burt Shevelove's *The Frogs***, as adapted by **Nathan Lane**. **Ted Sperling**, celebrating his tenth season as MasterVoices' Artistic Director, directs and conducts the 120-member **MasterVoices** chorus, an 18-piece orchestra, and an all-star cast of MasterVoices favorites. In addition to the two performances initially announced for Saturday, November 4, MasterVoices has added a third performance on Friday, November 3, at 8 PM.

The boisterously hilarious yet poignant musical was inspired by the ancient Aristophanes play of the same name. With the world at war and civilization imperiled, Dionysos, god of wine and theater, feels something drastic must be done. He journeys to the underworld with his servant Xanthias to find the world's best playwright, who will inspire and save mankind; along the way, the two travelers encounter many well-known

mythic characters. This musical presentation of Aristophanes' comedy was "freely adapted" by **Burt Shevelove and Stephen Sondheim** in 1974 and "even more freely adapted" by **Nathan Lane and Sondheim** for its 2004 staging at Lincoln Center Theater. The script will be further adapted by Nathan Lane for MasterVoices' concert performances.

*The Frogs* is hopping with top Broadway veterans. Tony Award nominee **Douglas Sills**, last seen in MasterVoices' 2022 revival of *Anyone Can Whistle*, is Dionysos. Tony Award nominee **Kevin Chamberlin**, last seen in MasterVoices' concerts of *Of Thee I Sing* and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, is Xanthias. **Peter Bartlett**, who played Pluto in the 2004 production at Lincoln Center Theater, steps back into his toga to reprise the role. Tony and Emmy Award nominee **Dylan Baker** is George Bernard Shaw; Tony Award winner **Chuck Cooper**, who also performed in *Of Thee I Sing* and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, is Charon; and Tony nominee and Drama Desk Award winner **Marc Kudisch**, seen in MasterVoices' 2014 *Not the Messiah (He's a Very Naughty Boy)*, is Herakles. Tony nominee **Jordan Donica** is William Shakespeare and Ariadne is played by MasterVoices chorus member **Candice Corbin**. **Nathan Lane**, the three-time Tony Award-winning actor, will host the evening and provide narration. The choreography is by award-winning choreographer **Lainie Sakakura** and the sound design is by **Scott Lehrer**. **Tracy Christensen** is the costume designer and the lighting design is by **Shelby Loera**.

### [The Frogs](#)

**Friday, November 3, 2023, 8:00 pm**

**Saturday, November 4, 2023, 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm**

Rose Theater, Jazz at Lincoln Center

A play written in 405 B.C. by Aristophanes

Freely adapted by Burt Shevelove

Even more freely adapted by Nathan Lane

Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Original direction and choreography by Susan Stroman

Orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick

**Ted Sperling**, Director and Conductor

**MasterVoices Chorus**

**MasterVoices Orchestra**

Choreography by **Lainie Sakakura**

Sound design by **Scott Lehrer**

Costume design by **Tracy Christensen**

Lighting design by **Shelby Loera**

### **CAST**

HOST, **Nathan Lane**

DIONYSOS, **Douglas Sills**

XANTHIAS, **Kevin Chamberlin**

PLUTO, **Peter Bartlett**

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, **Dylan Baker**

CHARON, **Chuck Cooper**

HERAKLES, **Marc Kudisch**

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, **Jordan Donica**

ARIADNE, **Candice Corbin**

**Tickets** priced from \$30, may be purchased online at [jazz.org](http://jazz.org), at the Jazz at Lincoln Center box office, Broadway at 60<sup>th</sup> Street, or by calling 212-721-6500.

### **More About *The Frogs***

Aristophanes' 2400-year-old comedy *The Frogs* is set in a troubled war-plagued society that is bereft of moral and cultural leadership, with frogs embodying the complacency that keeps the world from moving forward. Burt Shevelove first adapted and directed a production of *The Frogs* when he was a graduate student at Yale University in 1941 and his concept was to stage it in the University's swimming pool with members of the swimming team as the frogs. In 1974, he was invited back to remount the play, and this time, he enlisted his friend Stephen Sondheim to provide music and lyrics (Sondheim and Shevelove had worked together earlier on *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, inspired by the ancient comedies of Plautus). Christopher Durang, Meryl Streep, and Sigourney Weaver, then students at the Yale School of Drama, performed as members of the chorus, and the set design was by Michael Yeagan.

Fast forward to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century when *The Frogs* was presented in concert at the Library of Congress and given its first recording. In 2004, Nathan Lane, who had starred in this recording, joined Mr. Sondheim in expanding and rewriting the show for a production at Lincoln Center Theater, starring Mr. Lane as Dionysos and Roger Bart as Xanthias. Like Sondheim's rarely heard *Anyone Can Whistle*, which was performed by MasterVoices last season, *The Frogs* has a rich and varied score with a substantial role for the chorus; it includes one of Sondheim's most beautiful love songs, "Ariadne." As Nathan Lane wrote in 2004, "There's something in this piece right now—where the country is and for me in particular—there's something idealistic about the notion of believing that the arts can make a difference. You can affect a change. And in *The Frogs*, that is Dionysos' dream—to go down to Hades and bring back this great writer. The belief that that could actually have an effect on the world is noble and touching and crazy—all at the same time."

Details of MasterVoices' 2023-24 season can be found at [mastervoices.org](http://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 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 of Adam Guettel's *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 last season's New York City premiere of Sheldon Harnick's full English translation of Bizet's *Carmen*, *Lady in the Dark* by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin, Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland*, the Gershwins'

*Let 'Em Eat Cake*, Stephen Sondheim and Arthur Laurents's *Anyone Can Whistle*, and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. 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](http://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 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 2020-2021 season, 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 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 from left to right: artwork created by Owen Gent, Nathan Lane, Douglas Sills, Kevin Chamberlin, Peter Bartlett, Dylan Baker, Chuck Cooper, Marc Kudisch, Jordan Donica, Candice Corbin, and Ted Sperling, courtesy of MasterVoices.

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