

Music at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church · 2023–24 Season

CELESTIAL SONGS IN CELEBRATION OF MUSIC



Friday, October 20, 2023 · 7 pm
Kirkland Chapel

The Fifth Avenue Chamber Choir
Patrick Kreeger, organ and piano
Ryan Jackson, director

PRESENTED BY THE ARTS & OUR FAITH COMMITTEE



Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

Welcome to Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and thank you for joining us.
This evening's program will be sung without an intermission.
Please refrain from taking flash photos during the performance.

Music at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

We hope you enjoy this evening's concert, the first in the eleventh season of our annual concert series. Please read on for more information about upcoming music events at Fifth Avenue. Be sure to mark the dates in your calendar and join us again!

Tickets for choral concerts are available online at fapc.org/tickets.

Patrick Kreeger Organ Recital

Sunday, Nov. 5 • 1 pm, Sanctuary

Carols by Candlelight: The Advent Concert

Friday, Dec. 8 and Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023 • 7 pm, Kirkland Chapel

Step away from the bustle of Christmas preparations for an hour of choral music and congregational carols in the candlelit beauty of Kirkland Chapel. Broadway star Jeanne Lehman reads seasonal poetry as the choir performs a selection of familiar music and new treasures that illuminate the wonder and majesty of Jesus's birth. This will be our final concert in Kirkland Chapel before its restoration in 2024!

The Music of Ruth Watson Henderson

Friday, Feb. 9, 2024 • 7 pm, Location TBA

An evening of enchanting choral music by Canada's legendary pioneering female composer Ruth Watson Henderson. Henderson is internationally celebrated for her distinctive contributions to choral music, which are characterized by a seemingly effortless blend of immediate appeal and musical sophistication. Featuring sweeping melodies, lush harmonies and innovative vocal textures, Henderson's choral works reflect her rare gift of capturing the emotional depth of a text through music. Following this performance, the Fifth Avenue Choir will head to the studio to record this marvelous program for their first professional recording project. Stay tuned for details!

Renaissance Reflections: Music for Lent

Friday, March 22, 2023 • 7 pm, Sanctuary

The Fifth Avenue Chamber Choir performs highlights from the Renaissance era, when composers like Byrd, Palestrina, Tallis and Victoria created a golden age of choral music. At the heart of the program is the *Mass for Four Voices* by William Byrd, one of the period's greatest masterpieces. Composed during the religious turmoil of Elizabethan England, the Mass showcases Byrd's tremendous ability to express his deeply held spiritual convictions through delicate strands of polyphony and evocative harmonies. The result is a work of profound faith and exquisite beauty.

Ryan Jackson Organ Recital

Sunday, May 19, 2024 • 1 pm, Sanctuary

PROGRAM

Celestial Songs: In Celebration of Music

The Fifth Avenue Chamber Choir
Patrick Kreeger, organ and piano
Ryan Jackson, director

Alleluia (2019)

Eurydice V. Osterman (b. 1950)

Hymn to St. Cecilia (1942)

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

Rachel Mikol, Devony Smith, Emery Kerekes
Rebecca Soelberg, Sean Clark, soloists

Sing Joyfully

William Byrd (1543–1623)

At Heaven's Proclamation (2023)

Jessica French (b. 1984)

Sam Denler, tenor

Fifth Avenue Te Deum (2023)

Philip Stopford (b. 1977)

Gloria (1959)

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Erinn Sensenig, soprano • Sam Denler, tenor

I. Gloria

II. Laudamus te

III. Domine Deus

IV. Domine fili unigenite

V. Dominus Deus, Agnus Dei

VI. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris

In presenting this evening's concert, the Arts and Our Faith Committee acknowledges the generous support of the Dr. Reid and Marguerite Pitts Special Music Fund.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS EVENING'S PROGRAM

Dear Friends,

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for the first concert of our eleventh annual concert series. The choir and I are thrilled to present tonight's exciting and eclectic program, Celestial Songs—a celebration of music!

We begin with Eurydice V. Osterman's *Alleluia* (2019), an uplifting invocation of praise that dances with the jubilant spirit of its title. Osterman, known for her mastery of lush harmonies and fascinating choral textures, offers a contemporary interpretation of the timeless liturgical text, demonstrating the enduring vitality of the *Alleluia* as an expression of spiritual exultation.

Following this, Benjamin Britten's *Hymn to St. Cecilia* (1942) takes us on an ethereal and reflective journey in honor of the patron saint of music. Featuring a haunting text written especially for Britten by the renowned poet W.H. Auden, Britten's peerless setting weaves a dazzling tapestry of striking harmonies and intricate counterpoint, serving as a beguiling homage to creativity, spirituality, and the transcendent power of music.

William Byrd's *Sing Joyfully* (c. 1590) adds historical depth to our program, transporting us back to the Elizabethan era. Its intricate polyphonic textures and dynamic vocal interplay reflect Byrd's exceptional skill, artistry, and mastery of choral techniques popular during the English Renaissance. Characterized by lively rhythms and vibrant melodies, *Sing Joyfully* captures a tremendous sense of exuberance and celebration, especially meaningful as we mark the 400th anniversary of Byrd's death in 1623.

Our program then transitions to two brand new works for choir and organ. *At Heaven's Proclamation* (2023) by Jessica French draws its text from the mystical writings of Mechtilde of Magdeburg, specifically an ecstatic poetic meditation on the Transfiguration of Christ. French's grand and majestic musical setting powerfully and poignantly captures Mechtilde's idea that nature itself is a song of praise, pouring forth in response to God's grace.

Philip Stopford's *Fifth Avenue Te Deum* (2023) marks a celebratory milestone in the program, commissioned to commemorate my tenth anniversary as Director of Music and Fine Arts Ministries at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in 2022. Stopford's composition, influenced by the bustling energy of New York City, infuses the ancient text with contemporary vibrancy, incorporating Broadway-style melodies and dynamic rhythmic patterns that mirror the spirit of the city that never sleeps.

Francis Poulenc's beloved *Gloria* (1959) crowns this evening's program with its colorful textures and dramatic contrasts, reflecting the composer's nuanced spiritual journey. Poulenc deftly weaves solemn introspection with fervent celebration throughout the piece's six movements, brilliantly capturing the complexity of the life of faith. This work is quintessential Poulenc, showcasing his unique fusion of timeless sacred elements and contemporary musical language (including jazz!), solidifying his profound legacy as a distinctive figure in the realm of sacred choral music.

Thank you again for joining us. We sincerely hope you enjoy the program!



Dr. Ryan Jackson
William S. Perper Director of Music & Fine Arts Ministries

LYRICS

Alleluia • Eurydice V. Osterman (b. 1950)

Hymn to St. Cecilia • Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

Rachel Mikol, Devony Smith, Emery Kerekes, Rebecca Soelberg, and Sean Clark, soloists

I.

In a garden shady this holy lady
With reverent cadence and subtle psalm,
Like a black swan as death came on
Poured forth her song in perfect calm:
And by ocean's margin this innocent virgin
Constructed an organ to enlarge her prayer,
And notes tremendous from her great engine
Thundered out on the Roman air.

Blonde Aphrodite rose up excited,
Moved to delight by the melody,
White as an orchid she rode quite naked
In an oyster shell on top of the sea;
At sounds so entrancing the angels dancing
Came out of their trance into time again,
And around the wicked in Hell's abysses
The huge flame flickered and eased their pain.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

II.

I cannot grow;
I have no shadow
To run away from,
I only play.

I cannot err;
There is no creature
Whom I belong to,
Whom I could wrong.

I am defeat
When it knows it
Can now do nothing
By suffering.

All you lived through,
Dancing because you
No longer need it
For any deed.

I shall never be
Different. Love me.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

III.
O ear whose creatures cannot wish to fall,
O calm of spaces unafraid of weight,
Where Sorrow is herself, forgetting all
The gaucheness of her adolescent state,
Where Hope within the altogether strange
From every outworn image is released,
And Dread born whole and normal like a beast
Into a world of truths that never change:
Restore our fallen day; O re-arrange.

O dear[est] children casual as birds,
Playing among the ruined languages,
So small beside their large confusing words,
So gay against the greater silences
Of dreadful things you did: O hang the head,
Impetuous child with the tremendous brain,
O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain,
Lost innocence who wished your lover dead,
Weep for the lives your wishes never led.

O cry created as the bow of sin
Is drawn across our trembling violin.

O weep, child, weep, O weep away the stain.

O law drummed out by hearts against the still
Long winter of our intellectual will.

That what has been may never be again.

O flute that throbs with the thanksgiving breath
Of convalescents on the shores of death.

O bless the freedom that you never chose.

O trumpets that unguarded children blow
About the fortress of their inner foe.

O wear your tribulation like a rose.

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

W.H. Auden (1907–1973)

Sing Joyfully • William Byrd (1543–1623)

Sing joyfully unto God our strength.
Sing loud unto the God of Jacob.
Take the song and bring forth the timbrel,
The pleasant harp and the viol.
Blow the trumpet in the new moon,
Even in the time appointed,
And at our feast day.
For this is a statute for Israel,
And a law of the God of Jacob.

Psalm 81:1–4

At Heaven's Proclamation • Jessica French (b. 1984)

Sam Denler, tenor

O ardens mons,
O electe sol,
O perfecta luna,
O inestimabilis fons,
O claritas immodica,
O sapientia aeterna,
O misericordia infinita,
O virtus ultra resistentiam,
O excelsum ineffabilis,
O lux inaccessabilis,
O corona omnis majestatis.

O burning mountain,
O chosen sun,
O perfect moon,
O fathomless well,
O clearness beyond all measure,
O wisdom without end,
O mercy without all limit,
O strength beyond resistance,
O unattainable height,
O unattainable light,
O crown of all majesty.

All creation humbly sings your praise:
Bright stars, high mountains,
Depths of the seas, rushing waters,
All these break into song
At heaven's proclamation:
This is my Son, my beloved,
My chosen One.
Alleluia!

Mechtild of Magdeburg (1207–1294)
Latin translated by Margaret White and Jessica French

LYRICS

Fifth Avenue Te Deum • Philip Stopford (b. 1977)

We praise Thee, O God,
We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.
To Thee all Angels cry aloud,
The Heavens and all the Powers therein.
To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry,
Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth!
Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy Glory.
The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.
The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.
The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee;
The Father of an infinite majesty
Thine honorable, true, and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man,
Thou did'st not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou had'st overcome the sharpness of death,
Thou did'st open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.
We believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge.
We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants,
Whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with Thy Saints in glory everlasting.

O Lord save thy people and bless Thine heritage,
Govern them and lift them up forever.
Day by day we magnify Thee and we worship Thy name,
Ever world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin,
O Lord, have mercy upon us,
O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in Thee.
O Lord, in Thee have I trusted.
Let me never be confounded.

LYRICS

Gloria • Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Erinn Sensenig, soprano, and Sam Denler, tenor

I. <i>Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.</i>	I. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.
II. <i>Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.</i>	II. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory.
III. <i>Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.</i>	III. Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.
IV. <i>Domine Fili Unigenite, Jesu Christe!</i>	IV. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son!
V. <i>Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis; qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.</i>	V. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
VI. <i>Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu: in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.</i>	VI. You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE FIFTH AVENUE CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANO

Brittany Hewitt
Rachel Mikol
Adrienne Lotto
Claire Myers-McCormick
Erinn Sensenig
Rebecca Soelberg

ALTO

Donna Breitzer
Sharon Byrne
Hilary Gardner
Megan Schubert
Devony Smith

TENOR

Sean Clark
Sam Denler
Nathan Fletcher
Alex McCoy

BASS

Phillip Cheah
Zachary Fletcher
Emery Kerekes
Julian Morris
José Pietri-Coimbre

Rachel Mikol, *Choir Administrator*

SPECIAL THANKS

...to all the members of the Arts and Our Faith Committee (chaired by Nancy Moore) for their vision, leadership, and hands-on support of this series, and to our dedicated team of volunteer ushers and greeters. This series could not take place without you!

...to Fifth Avenue's wonderful Communications and Facilities teams for all the ways they support this series and make it possible.

...to our piano technician, Alex Appel for taking such good care of our Steinway pianos.

ABOUT THE FIFTH AVENUE CHAMBER CHOIR

Founded in 2013, the Fifth Avenue Choir is a vocal ensemble comprising some of New York's finest professional singers. With a diverse repertoire spanning Renaissance polyphony through contemporary American, the choir presents an exciting series of sacred music concerts each season in Kirkland Chapel, their home venue at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Although the size of the choir varies between 16 and 24 singers, the ensemble's primary goal never changes: we seek to uplift and inspire all who hear us through passionate, engaging, and highly-polished performances of sacred choral music.

Kirkland Chapel

THE NEXT 100



Kirkland Chapel is one of the most important and beloved centers of ministry in all of Manhattan.

It is the home of our renowned sacred music concerts, such as tonight's performance. Kirkland Chapel also hosts our contemporary worship service, Chapel Church, on Sundays. We use this chapel to provide services and outreach to the homeless and refugees. Our congregation celebrates weddings in Kirkland Chapel. We mourn our faithful departed here. On busy days, the chapel offers quiet respite to the friend and stranger alike.

We love this place. To ensure it will continue to serve our congregation and city for another 100 years, in 2024 Kirkland Chapel will undergo an extensive renovation and restoration.

To learn more about this historic project and how you can help, please visit fapc.org/chapel.

Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

7 West 55th Street • New York, NY 10019