



PROGRAM:  
APOLLO'S FIRE  
NOVEMBER 14/  
7:30 PM  
BING CONCERT HALL

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## ARTISTS

### Apollo's Fire

Jeannette Sorrell, *conductor*

Molly Quinn and Nell Snaidas, *sopranos*

Kristen Dubenion-Smith, *alto*

Karim Sulayman and Oliver Mercer, *tenors*

Jesse Blumberg, *baritone*

Jonathan Woody, *bass*



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Endowment  
for the Arts

This tour by Apollo's Fire is made possible by support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The CD recording of the Monteverdi *Vespers* by Apollo's Fire, as well as other Apollo's Fire CDs, will be on sale in the lobby.

## PROGRAM

### Claudio Monteverdi: *Vespers of 1610*

Versicle and Response: *Deus in adjutorium*

Antiphon: *Laeva eius sub capite meo*

Psalm 109: *Dixit Dominus*

Motet: *Nigra sum*

Oliver Mercer, *tenor*

Antiphon: *Nigra sum sed formosa*

Psalm 112: *Laudate pueri*

Motet: *Pulchra es*

Molly Quinn and Nell Snaidas, *sopranos*

Antiphon: *Pulchra es et decora*

Psalm 121: *Laetatus sum*

Motet: *Duo Seraphim*

Karim Sulayman, Oliver Mercer, and Owen McIntosh, *tenors*

Antiphon: *Iam hiems transit*

Psalm 126: *Nisi Dominus*

## INTERMISSION

Motet: *Audi coelum*

Karim Sulayman and Oliver Mercer (echo), *tenors*

Antiphon: *Virgo prudentissima*

Psalm 147: *Lauda, Jerusalem*

Sonata sopra *Sancta Maria*

Madeline Healey, *soprano*

Hymn: *Ave maris stella*

Kristen Dubenion-Smith, *alto*, and Jesse Blumberg, *baritone*

*Magnificat*

Antiphon: *Sancta Maria succure miseris*

*Magnificat anima mea*

*Et exultavit*

*Quia respexit humilitatem*

*Quia fecit mihi magna*

*Et misericordia*

*Fecit potentiam*

*Deposuit potentes*

*Esurientes*

*Suscepit Israel*

*Sicut locutus est*

*Gloria Patri*

*Sicut erat in principio*

**PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE.** Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.

## THE MYSTERIES OF MONTEVERDI

We will perhaps never understand why great artists often create their most sublime works during periods of personal despondency and depression. From Monteverdi to Mozart, from Dostoyevsky to Van Gogh, the world has been graced with beauty that comes out of the suffering of artists.

The winter of 1607–1608 was such a period for Claudio Monteverdi. Exhausted and despondent over the recent death of his wife, he was also overworked and underpaid as an employee of the Duke of Mantua. Thus, his father wrote to the duke to request an honorable dismissal for his grief-stricken son, whose health was suffering as well as his spirits.

The plea was ignored and Monteverdi was ordered to return to work. Important things were afoot at the Mantuan palace, and music was needed: the duke's son, Prince Francesco, was to be married to Margherita of Savoy. Though we don't know for certain, it is probable that Monteverdi was ordered to compose his extraordinary *Vespers* for the wedding celebrations, which commenced in Mantua in May 1608 and eclipsed all other events for several years. The eminent Monteverdi scholar Iain Fenlon has argued convincingly that the *Vespers* were most likely composed for performance in Mantua in 1608, not for Venice in 1610, where the work was published.

Monteverdi's *Vespers* are an extraordinary and revolutionary setting of the five psalms, hymn, and magnificat which make up a Roman Catholic vespers service. In addition to these standard movements, Monteverdi included four motets (sometimes called "concerti") for one, two, three, and six voices, respectively, based primarily on love poetry from the Song of Solomon. There is also an instrumental sonata movement over which is woven the chant "*Sancta Maria ora pro nobis.*"

What makes Monteverdi's setting of the psalms and the magnificat so remarkable

is that he uses the traditional psalm tones that would normally be chanted in a vespers service but turns them into a kind of *cantus firmus*—that is, a kind of slow-moving, repeated chant—around which he weaves the most elaborate and avant-garde counterpoint imaginable. The relationship between the fixed, archaic medieval psalm tone and the flamboyant and imaginative Baroque counterpoint that dances around it produces an extraordinary level of tension and beauty—indeed, it seems to evoke the struggle between ancient mysticism and modern enlightenment.

Three years after publishing the *Vespers*, Monteverdi finally escaped from his unhappy employment in Mantua in 1613 and became music director at St. Mark's Basilica in Venice. Many conductors have assumed that Monteverdi conceived the *Vespers* for the vast and monumental basilica—even though he had already published the piece three years before auditioning there—and that he composed the piece to impress the staff at St. Mark's. This theory then leads to an interpretation using large choral forces such as one would need in order to make a festive impression in the sprawling basilica. The fact is, though, that Monteverdi could hardly have had his eye on the St. Mark's job when he published the *Vespers* in 1610, as the preceding St. Mark's music director was still alive and healthy, and no one could have foreseen his unexpected death two years later, which resulted in a job opening.

By contrast, there is much evidence to suggest that the *Vespers* were composed and conceived for Mantua. It is apparent even from a quick glance at the score that the *Vespers* were written for the same vocal and instrumental ensemble as Monteverdi's opera *L'Orfeo*—that is, the small virtuoso ensemble which performed in Mantua in 1607. Both works call for two sopranos, two tenors (one with major solo demands), two basses, and one alto (with a small part). The ranges of these singers are nearly identical in the two works, including the

unusually low tessitura of the lead tenor. The instrumentation is the same. Finally, the opening toccata from *L'Orfeo* reappears as the opening response in the *Vespers*; the music is based on material that may well have been the fanfare for the Duke of Mantua.

On May 25, 1608, it is reported that a "solemn vespers" service was celebrated at the Church of St. Andrea in Mantua, as part of the wedding festivities mentioned above. This was a major event, in which Prince Francesco was installed as the first member of a new order of knights. The term "solemn" vespers means polyphonic (rather than merely chanted); so, as Iain Fenlon has suggested, it is highly probable that the music performed at this service was Monteverdi's *Vespers*. Of course, Monteverdi may have eventually performed his *Vespers* at St. Mark's when he took up employment there, and he may well have used the work as his audition piece for the post. But it is clear that he did not originally conceive the piece for that space.

Most conductors who oppose the large-scale "St. Mark's" approach to this piece have assumed that Monteverdi conceived the *Vespers* for the small ducal chapel at Mantua, which could have accommodated only a one-on-a-part performance (10 singers). However, there is no record of any festive event taking place in that chapel during 1608–1610 for which music as flamboyant as Monteverdi's *Vespers* would have been appropriate. On the contrary, Monteverdi's work would have been extremely appropriate for the wedding festivities at St. Andrea Church; the sensuous love poetry contained in Monteverdi's text, drawn from the Song of Solomon, is ideal for a wedding celebration but would certainly seem out of place at any other vespers service.

All of this impacts one's interpretation because there are so many questions left open by the score. The *Vespers* publication of 1610 (which is not even a score but a set of eight individual part-books) is typical of the time in that it contains minimal information about



how the piece is to be performed. There are few indications of instrumentation and none at all of tempo, dynamics, or articulation.

Nor do we know what size of forces he conceived. While most scholars agree that instrumental parts were performed with only one player to a part in this period, there is much disagreement about how many singers should be used. Monteverdi lived on the cusp between the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Some conductors take a "Renaissance" approach to the *Vespers*, using singers one on a part to create a kind of madrigal ensemble. Other conductors take an 18th-century (or later!) approach, evoking the image of St. Mark's and using a large Handel-sized chorus of 25 to 35 and soloists with operatic voices.

The fact is that Monteverdi was neither a Renaissance composer nor an 18th-century High Baroque composer. He was a revolutionary, living at the end of the Renaissance and pushing the limits to forge the new style which we call Baroque (just as Beethoven forged the Romantic style out of the Classical period three centuries later). He used the finest professional singers and instrumentalists in the region and gave them daringly avant-garde music to perform—music that uses the tools of the Renaissance and stretches them to convey the flamboyant, emotional imagery of the early Baroque. This is music full of sudden contrasts, freedom of expression, and spontaneous flights of imagination. I do not think it is ideally suited to a massive Handelian chorus, nor can the necessary contrasts be achieved by a one-on-a-part madrigal ensemble.

We take the cue for our performance from the setting of St. Andrea Church in Mantua on that spring day in 1608: the grand opening of festivities for an extraordinary royal wedding. The excitement of the cantor is palpable as he intones the chant that sets the drama in motion: "*Deus in adiutorium meum intende*,"/ "God, make speed to save me"—the ordinary words of the vespers, but not so ordinary

today. The company of 37 musicians responds with electrifying joy, launching the fanfare, the pageantry, and the royal procession of the Gonzaga family and the House of Savoy.

Thus, our evocation of the "solemn vespers" at St. Andrea Church employs forces appropriate to a church of that size—20 singers and 16 instrumentalists. In choosing these midsize forces, I hope to have captured the fleetness, flexibility, and dynamic contrast that Monteverdi must have intended.  
—Jeannette Sorrell, Cleveland, Ohio

#### APOLLO'S FIRE

Named for the classical god of music and the sun, Apollo's Fire was founded in 1992 by the award-winning young harpsichordist and conductor Jeannette Sorrell. Sorrell envisioned an ensemble dedicated to the Baroque ideal that music should evoke the various *Affekts* or passions in listeners. Apollo's Fire is a collection of creative artists who share Sorrell's passion for drama and rhetoric.

Hailed as "one of the pre-eminent period-instrument ensembles" (*Independent*, London), Apollo's Fire made its London debut in 2010 in a sold-out concert at Wigmore Hall, with a BBC broadcast. Apollo's Fire returned to Europe in autumn 2011 and spring 2014 and has been met with standing ovations in Madrid (Royal Theatre), Bordeaux (Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra), Lisbon, Metz (France), Birmingham (United Kingdom), and Bregenz (Austria). Its return to London in 2014 was praised as "an evening of superlative music making...the group combines European stylishness with American entrepreneurialism" (*Telegraph*).

Apollo's Fire has also toured throughout North America, appearing at the Aspen Music Festival, the Boston Early Music Festival series, the Library of Congress, the Tropical Baroque Festival in Miami, the Ojai International Festival in California, and major venues in Boston, Toronto, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The ensemble performed an 11-concert tour of the Monteverdi *Vespers* in 2010 and

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a nine-concert tour of the *Brandenburg* Concerti in 2013. Apollo's Fire is currently signed to Columbia Artists Management (CAMI) for exclusive representation in North and South America and is managed in Europe by Intermusica (London).

At home in Cleveland, Apollo's Fire enjoys sold-out performances at its subscription series, which has drawn national attention for creative programming. Apollo's Fire has released 20 commercial CDs and currently records for the British label Avie. Since the ensemble's introduction into the European CD market in 2010, its recordings have won rave reviews in the London press: "a swaggering version, brilliantly played" (*Times*) and "the Midwest's best-kept musical secret is finally reaching British ears" (*Independent*). Four of the ensemble's CD releases have become best sellers on the classical Billboard chart: the Monteverdi *Vespers*, Bach's *Brandenburg* Concerti, and Jeannette Sorrell's two crossover programs, *Come to the River* and *Sacrum Mysterium: A Celtic Christmas Vespers*.

#### JEANNETTE SORRELL

Jeannette Sorrell has quickly gained international attention as a leading creative voice among the new generation of early music conductors. She has been credited by the United Kingdom's *BBC Music Magazine* for forging "a vibrant, life-affirming approach to the remaking of early music...a seductive vision of musical authenticity."

Sorrell was one of the youngest students ever accepted to the prestigious conducting courses of the Aspen and Tanglewood music festivals. She studied conducting under Robert Spano, Roger Norrington, and Leonard Bernstein and harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam. She won both First Prize and the Audience Choice Award in the 1991 Spivey International Harpsichord Competition, competing against over 70 harpsichordists from Europe, Israel, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

Sorrell founded Apollo's Fire in 1992. Since then, she and the ensemble have built one of the largest audiences of any Baroque orchestra in North America. She has led AF in sold-out concerts at London's Wigmore Hall, Madrid's Royal Theater (Teatro Real), the Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra in Bordeaux, Boston's Early Music Festival, and the Aspen Music Festival, among others.

Sorrell made her debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony in 2013 as conductor and soloist in the complete *Brandenburg* Concerti. With standing ovations every night, the event was hailed as "an especially joyous occasion" (*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*). She has also appeared as conductor or conductor/soloist with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, Opera Theatre of St. Louis with the St. Louis Symphony, the Handel and Haydn Society (Boston), the Omaha Symphony, the Grand Rapids Symphony, and Arizona Opera and has appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra as guest keyboard artist. Upcoming engagements include a debut with the New World Symphony in Miami and a return engagement with the Pittsburgh Symphony.

Sorrell has attracted national attention and awards for creative programming. She has received an honorary doctorate from Case Western University, two special awards from the National Endowment for the Arts for her work on early American music, and an award from the American Musicological Society. Passionate about guiding the next generation of performers, Jeannette Sorrell has led many Baroque projects for students at the Oberlin Conservatory.

#### GUEST ARTISTS

**Jesse Blumberg**, *baritone*, is equally at home on opera, concert, and recital stages, having performed roles at Minnesota Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, the Boston Early Music Festival, Boston Lyric Opera, and London's Royal Festival Hall. He has made concert appearances with American Bach Soloists, Boston Baroque, the Oratorio Society of

New York, TENET/Green Mountain Project, Pacific MusicWorks, Apollo's Fire, and on Lincoln Center's *American Songbook* series. Blumberg has performed recitals with the New York Festival of Song, Marilyn Horne Foundation, and Mirror Visions Ensemble. His 2014–2015 season includes a European tour with the Boston Early Music Festival and debuts with Hawaii Opera Theatre and Atlanta Opera. Jesse Blumberg is also the founder and artistic director of Five Boroughs Music Festival, which brings chamber music of many genres to every corner of New York City. [www.jesseblumberg.com](http://www.jesseblumberg.com)

#### Kristen Dubenion-Smith, *mezzo-*

*soprano*, enjoys an active performing career in oratorio, opera, and sacred vocal chamber music, particularly specializing in music of the medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque eras. She has been praised for her "plush" voice by the *Baltimore Sun* and voice of "sweet clarity" by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Recent notable engagements include performances with the Folger Consort, the Washington Bach Consort, the Cathedral Choral Society, the Evolution Contemporary Music Series, and the Mark Morris Dance Group. Dubenion-Smith is also the cofounder of the award-winning medieval ensemble Eya, based in Washington, D.C., in addition to serving as cantor at the Washington National Cathedral. Originally from Michigan, Kristen Dubenion-Smith graduated from Alma College before moving to Baltimore to complete her studies in voice at the Peabody Institute.

**Oliver Mercer**, *tenor*, has been hailed by the *New York Times* as "excellent," "particularly impressive," and "sterling." Recent opera roles include Eurimaco in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with Iford Arts Festival, conducted by Christian Curnyn, Acis in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with Mid Wales Opera, and Don Pelagio in Haydn's *La canterina* with Bampton Classical Opera. The works of Monteverdi have continually played a large part in his repertoire, and he has received critical acclaim for past performances of the title role in *L'Orfeo* for

Opera Theater Company Ireland and Silent Opera, London, multiple performances of *Vespro della Beata Vergine*, as well as performances of excerpts from the books of madrigals. Future Monteverdi projects include a production of *L'Orfeo* with English National Opera in the spring of 2015. Early French repertoire is also an area of specialty, with past performances including operas by Charpentier, Rameau, and Grétry. A frequent guest artist with Apollo's Fire, Oliver Mercer is an active concert soloist, specializing in the works of Handel, Mozart, and Bach.

**Molly Quinn**, *soprano*, has captivated audiences with her "radiant" soprano, possessing an "arresting sweetness and simplicity" (*New York Times*) in repertoire ranging from Monteverdi to the Rolling Stones. As a member of New York's TENET, Quinn has been featured in many acclaimed projects, including *UNO + One: Italia Nostra* (Avie Records). She is a soloist on the Choir of Trinity Wall Street and Trinity Baroque Orchestra's 2013 Grammy-nominated recording of Handel's *Israel in Egypt* (Musica Omnia) and has appeared with the ensemble in London, Moscow, Paris, and New York's Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall. In 2012, Quinn also sang backup for rock legends the Rolling Stones. Recently, she has appeared with the Clarion Music Society, the Connecticut Early Music Festival, the Folger Consort, and the Mostly Mozart Festival and with conductor Joshua Rifkin. Molly Quinn was a 2013 season Virginia Best Adams Fellow at the Carmel Bach Festival. She attended the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

**Nell Snaidas**, *soprano*, has been praised by the *New York Times* for her "beautiful soprano voice, melting passion," and "vocally ravishing" performances. Of Uruguayan-American descent, Snaidas is recognized for her specialization in historical performance practice, in particular for the repertoire of Italy and Spain. She began her career singing in *zarzuelas* in New York City's Repertorio Español. Favorite projects include

her many appearances with the Boston Early Music Festival, singing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, recording the movie soundtrack of *The Producers* with Mel Brooks in the booth, and codirecting/creating *Sephardic Journey* with conductor Jeannette Sorrell for Apollo's Fire. Snaidas was featured on CBC radio as one of the leading interpreters of Spanish Renaissance/Sephardic song and has recorded for Sony Classical, Sono Luminus, Koch International, and Naxos. In addition to serving as a Spanish/Latin American language coach to many of the leading early music ensembles in the United States, Nell Snaidas is the coartistic director of GEMAS, a new concert series devoted to early music of the Americas. Her latest recording, *The Kingdoms of Castille*, was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2012. She is also one of a small number of early music performers currently serving on the Board of Directors of Early Music America.

**Karim Sulayman**, *tenor*, is consistently praised for his sensitive musicality, vivid portrayals, and beautiful vocalism. With a vast repertoire that spans Renaissance to contemporary music, the young tenor has firmly established himself as a sophisticated and versatile artist of his generation. This season he records and debuts the role of Eurillo in Scarlatti's *Gli equivoci nel sembiante* with Haymarket Opera, performs *Messiah* with the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, and has multiple return engagements with Apollo's Fire. Recent highlights include three seasons at the Marlboro Music Festival and engagements at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, New York City Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Cité de la Musique, Apollo's Fire, the Casals Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, and the International Bach Festival. His growing discography includes the title role in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and two releases for Naxos in works of Philidor and Grétry, as well as forthcoming releases on the Avie and Furious Artisans labels. Karim Sulayman's musical education began with violin studies at age three, followed by years

as a boy alto soloist, including performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Sir Georg Solti and the St. Louis Symphony under Leonard Slatkin. He holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Rice University. He also studied improvisation at the Second City Training Center in Chicago.

**Jonathan Woody**, *bass-baritone*, is a sought-after performer of early and new music in New York and nationwide. Equally comfortable as a soloist and an ensemble member, Woody is a member of the Grammy-nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street, giving featured performances in works by Handel and Bach and earning praise as "charismatic" and "riveting" from the *New York Times*. He performs regularly across the United States; recent engagements include the Oregon Bach Festival Vocal Fellowship, the Carmel Bach Festival Virginia Best Adams Fellowship, the Green Mountain Project, the Clarion Music Society, the Antioch Chamber Ensemble, TENET, Ensemble Signal, the Prototype Festival, Brooklyn Baroque, and Gotham Chamber Opera. Jonathan Woody has recorded with the Choir of Trinity Wall Street under the Musica Omnia label, most recently being featured on the premiere recording of Ralf Yusuf Gawlick's *Missa Gentis Humanae* for Eight Voices. Upcoming engagements include performances with BAM's Next Wave Festival, the Bach Collegium San Diego, the Handel and Haydn Society, and the Nashville Symphony and a tour with Pegasus Early Music. ❁