

Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center

Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 7:30 pm

Manhattan School of Music presents

Bach and Beyond

MSM Chamber Choir
MSM Camerata Nova

Deborah Simpkin King, *Conductor*
Nancy Chamberlain, *Collaborative/Rehearsal Accompanist*

The MSM Chamber Choir and MSM Camerata Nova present an evening of reflection and musical beauty centered on Johann Sebastian Bach's *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit (Actus Tragicus)* and Raphael Fusco's *An American Requiem*. Though separated by more than three centuries, these works share a profound engagement with themes of mortality, remembrance, and hope. Together they demonstrate music's enduring ability to illuminate human experience and offer consolation across generations.

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106, (Actus Tragicus)

- I. Sonatina
- II. Chorus - Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit
- III. Ariosi and Ensemble -

Ach, Herr, lehre uns bedenken, *tenor*
Bestelle dein Haus!, *bass*
Es ist der alte Bund, *choral fugue*
Ja komm, Herr Jesu, *soprano*

- IV. Ariosi and Chorale -

In deine Hände, *alto*
Heute wirst du mit mir, *bass*
Mit Fried' und Freud', *chorale*

- V. Chorale - Glorie, Lob, Ehr und Herrlichkeit

SOLOISTS

Riley Craig, *soprano*
Emma Kristin Batchvarov, *mezzo-soprano*
Gabriel Legros, *tenor*
Ziyang Zeng, *bass*

Raphael Fusco
(b. 1992)

An American Requiem

- I. Introitus
- II. Kyrie
- III. Sequentia, with solo quartet
- IV. Domine Jesu, *tenor*
- V. Sanctus
- VI. Agnus Dei, *bass*
- VII. Lux Aeterna, *soprano*
- VIII. Pie Jesu - Libera me, *alto and ensemble*
- IX. In paradisum

SOLOISTS

Ashley Sallaway, *soprano*
Szilvi Cimino, *mezzo-soprano*
Augustus Robinson, *tenor*
Ziyang Zeng, *bass*

QUARTET

Cecilia Soheily, *soprano*
Emma Kristin Batchvarov, *mezzo-soprano*
Gabriel Legros, *tenor*
Ziyang Zeng, *bass*

With gratitude to Barry Brewer for the loan of his Klop 2 organ for this performance.

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TEXTS

Johann Sebastian Bach

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106, (Actus Tragicus)

II.

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit.

*In ihm leben, weben und sind wir,
so lange er will.*

In ihm sterben wir zur rechten Zeit, wenn er will.

God's time is the very best time.

In him we live and move and have our being as long
as he wills.

In him we die at the right time, when he wills.

III.

*Ach, Herr, lehre uns bedenken,
daß wir sterben müssen, auf daß wir klug werden.*

Bestelle dein Haus!

denn du wirst sterben und nicht lebendig bleiben.

Es ist der alte Bund: Mensch, du must sterben.

Ja komm, Herr Jesu, komm.

Lord, teach us to remember that we must die, that
we may become wise.

Set your house in order,
that you may die, and yet remain alive.

This is the Old Law: Man must die.

Yes, come, Lord Jesus.

IV.

*In deine Hände befehl ich meinen Geist, du hast
mich erlöset.*

Heute wirst du mit mir im Paradiese sein.

Into your hands I commend my spirit, for you have
redeemed me.

Today you will be with me in Paradise.

V.

*Glorie, Lob, Ehr und Herrlichkeit, sei dir, Gott,
Vater und Sohn bereit,*

Dem heil' gen Geist mit Namen!

Die göttlich' Kraft, mach' uns sieghaft,

Durch Jesum Christum. Amen

Glory, praise, honor, and splendor to you, God the
Father and the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly power makes us victorious.

Through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Mark your calendar!

Monday, May 11 at 7:30 pm

MSM Chorale and Chamber Choir in Concert

Neidorff-Karpati Hall, MSM campus

PROGRAM NOTES

Johann Sebastian Bach

Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106, (Actus Tragicus)

Composed around 1707, the *Actus Tragicus* is among the most profound works of Bach's early career. Written for a funeral service, the cantata reflects on mortality through biblical texts and Lutheran chorales. It is often referred to as a "motet" by scholars, given its fluid continuation through changes of scoring, meter and tempo. Written for two recorders, two viola da gamba, and continuo, the work possesses remarkable intimacy and clarity.

The cantata contrasts warnings of mortality with assurance of redemption, with this drama reaching its apex in the third movement, with the soprano solo line bringing redemption into obvious dramatic relief against the "old way," represented by the choral fugue. A bass aria admonishes, "Set your house in order," while the alto soloist sings Christ's words from the cross: "Into your hands I commend my spirit." The chorus echoes Christ's promise to the penitent thief: "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

Despite its modest forces, and the youth of the composer (age 22!), the work reveals extraordinary expressive depth and spiritual serenity.

Raphael Fusco

An American Requiem

Raphael Fusco's *An American Requiem* reimagines the traditional Mass for the Dead through contemporary musical language (a fusion of Gospel, Romanticism, pop idioms, serialism and Renaissance counterpoint) and English texts. The composer began working on *An American Requiem* in 2016, following the tragic mass shooting at an Orlando nightclub. In it, he seeks to offer hope in times of pain and darkness, and is dedicated "to all victims of senseless acts of violence."

Moments of quiet introspection alternate with luminous choral textures, allowing the ensemble to serve both as narrator and communal voice. Themes central to the requiem tradition – pleas for mercy, the promise of eternal rest, and visions of paradise – are presented through a contemporary perspective.

While portions of the work have been performed in various places since 2017, its only complete performance until now took place in 2022, sung by students of the University of Performing Arts Graz. Tonight is the American premier of *An American Requiem*.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Raphael Fusco, *composer*

Raphael Fusco is an Italian-American composer, keyboardist, and conductor, praised as “a lively player and fine improviser” (*Los Angeles Times*), “winning and accomplished” (*The New York Times*), “one of the most outstanding composers of his generation” (*El Mundo*), and “a leader in the opera world today” (*Operawire*).

As a harpsichordist and pianist, Fusco has performed with the New York Philharmonic, American Ballet Theatre, and on tour with GRAMMY Award-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis. He was awarded two artist residencies at the Piccola Accademia di Montisi, composing and recording on one of Europe’s finest collections of antique harpsichords. In 2019, he released his debut album *REMIXED*, featuring original solo piano compositions praised for their “stunning sonic ideas” (*Jazz Corner*).

A passionate educator, Fusco is the founder and artistic director of Opera Lucca’s Composer Institute and has given lectures and masterclasses at the Sorbonne, Manhattan School of Music, Boston University, Escuela Nacional de Canto in Madrid, Graz Technical University and Strasbourg Conservatoire. He has served as conductor and vocal coach at Classic Lyric Arts since 2017.

Fusco has received awards from the American Prize, NATS, Ruzickova Competition, Fyfe Choral Composition Award, Phoenix Boys Choir, and the Aliénor International Harpsichord Competition. His compositions are published by Universal Edition Vienna, Verlag Ries & Erler, Opus Imprints, Prima la Musica, Alfred, National Music Publishers, and Hinshaw Music.

He studied at Mannes College of Music, Conservatorio G. Verdi in Turin, and the École Normale de Musique de Paris, studying harpsichord and organ with Arthur Haas, Rita Peiretti, Jacques Van Ortmeersen, and Eduardo Bellotti, and composition with David Loeb, Robert Cuckson, Philip Lasser, Narcis Bonet, and Michel Merlet. He holds a doctorate from the Kunstuniversität Graz, where his research explored empathy and expressive agency in vocal composition. He currently lives in Vienna, Austria. www.raphaelfusco.com

Deborah Simpkin King, *conductor*

Deborah Simpkin King, Ph.D. is a conductor, new music advocate, and master teacher whose work bridges artistry, innovation, and mentorship. A dynamic presence in the vibrant Manhattan choral scene, she also serves the national and international music community through her guest conducting, thought leadership, and extensive body of published work.

King is a founding conductor with the 1,000-voice projects of Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, working closely with Simon Halsey. She recently assembled and trained the premiere choral forces for Jeanine Tesori’s opera *Blue* at Lincoln Center. Other conducting engagements have seen her with such as the Tlaxcala Music Festival in Mexico, with state honor choirs, and resident clinician with international choral travel programs.

In addition to serving as Director of Choirs at the Manhattan School of Music, King is Founding Artistic Director of Ember Choral Arts and its semi-professional ensemble Ember, and Director of Music and Arts at the historic Trinity Episcopal Church in Asbury Park, NJ.

As the founder of PROJECT : ENCORE™, the international advocacy initiative of Ember Choral Arts, King is recognized as a trailblazer in championing the life of new music beyond the premiere. PROJECT : ENCORE and the Ember Ablaze Composer Lab exemplify her forward-thinking leadership –

creating meaningful partnerships between composers, performers, and audiences, and ensuring that important new works continue to be heard.

Her deep commitment to arts education and the next generation of artists is evident in Ember Choral Arts' community and youth initiatives, her long-standing leadership of the NJ-ACDA High School Choral Festival, and her work as Chair of the New York Choral Consortium (NYCC), where she has expanded the organization's mission to include the Big Sing Jr., celebrating the voices of young singers across the region.

A respected thought leader and communicator, King serves as a monthly columnist for ACDA's *The Choral Journal* and as host of the public radio program *Sounds Choral* (syndicated through WWFM). Her frequent presentations at professional conferences on choral consortia and new music further amplify her impact across the global choral landscape.

MSM Chamber Choir / MSM Camerata Nova

The MSM Chamber Choir and MSM Camerata Nova are select vocal ensembles at the Manhattan School of Music composed of advanced undergraduate and graduate singers. Through challenging repertoire spanning early music to contemporary works, members develop the artistic and collaborative skills necessary for professional ensemble performance.

MSM Chamber Choir

Sopranos

Szilvi Cimino, *Fairfield, Connecticut*
Hadassah Coté, *Walnut Creek, California*
Riley Craig, *San Antonio, Texas*
Siobhan Gyulay, *Toronto, Canada*
Cecilia Soheily, *North Haledon, New Jersey*
Meadow Webb, *Camp Humphreys, South Korea*

Altos

Frances Bai, *Toronto, Canada*
Emma Kristin Batchvarov, *Antwerp, Belgium*
Aurelia Yutong Cai, *Beijing, China*
Iolanthe Demos, *Boston, Massachusetts*
Ashley Sallaway, *Prosper, Texas*
Emma Zanetti, *Rock Springs, Wyoming*

Tenors

Gabriel Legros, *Paris, France*
Timothy Morrow, *Basking Ridge, NJ*
Nicholas Ochoa, *Brownsville, Texas*
Augustus Robinson, *Westborough, Massachusetts*
Victor Schwartz, *Livermore, California*
Chase Teglas, *West Hills, California*

Basses

Charlie Klein, *Beacon, New York*
Parker Odom, *Jacksonville, Florida*
Willem Sainvil, *West Palm Beach, Florida*
Christopher Smith, *Port Jefferson, New York*
Daniel Wallace, *Sussex, New Jersey*
Henry Mauser, *Osage, Iowa*

MSM Camerata Nova

Flute

Sydney Weiler
Jaeyeong Park

Viola

Melis Turker
Yiyun Cao

Cello

August Schwob

Organ Continuo

Ziwei Zhou