

THE
DESSOFF CHOIRS
MALCOLM J. MERRIWEATHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Dessoff Dialogue: We Shall Overcome

Malcolm J. Merriweather, *music director & conductor*

The Dessoff Choirs

Monday, October 26, 2020

7 pm

Panelists

Patrice P. Eaton, *mezzo-soprano*

David Hurd, Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, *Director of Music*

Dennis Keene, Voices of Ascension, *Artistic Director and Conductor*

John Daly Goodwin, New York Choral Society, *Music Director Emeritus*

Program

We Shall Walk Through the Valley

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

Excerpts from *In Honor of Martin*

Undine Smith Moore (1904–1989)

Margaret Bonds (1913–1972)

David Hurd (b. 1950)

Guest Panelists

American *mezzo-soprano* **Patrice Eaton** is a versatile performer in various musical genres and is a frequent performer of premiere works. Ms. Eaton's career in opera began as member of the children's chorus of both the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera. As a young artist at the Caramoor International Music Festival in 2010 and 2011, she covered the roles of Hedwige in *Guillaume Tell* and Little Buttercup in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and was a featured artist in the Bel Canto at Caramoor concert series.



Ms. Eaton was a young artist at the Caramoor International Festival and has sung a variety of operatic roles with companies across the country. Her solo concert engagements have included performing with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in the U.S. tour of Wynton Marsalis' *Abyssinian Mass* (recorded live under the Blue Engine Records Label); in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Tchaikovsky's *Ode to Joy* with the Lehigh University Choral Arts; Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* at the Caramoor Festival, and Handel's *Messiah* with the Abyssinian Baptist Church Orchestra and Choir.

Patrice is a graduate of the University of Kentucky. She is a proud member of Sigma Alpha Iota Music Fraternity, and a Lifetime and National Board Member of the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM).



During a distinguished 31-year career, *conductor* **John Daly Goodwin** has led concerts in major venues around the world including 44 performances at Carnegie Hall, eight at Lincoln Center, as well as The Grand Theater in Shanghai, Sala Nezahualcóyotl and Ollin Yolitzli in Mexico City, the Cathedrals of Notre Dame and Chartres in France, and the Basilica San Marco in Venice.

Mr. Goodwin has also been selected to prepare choruses for such prominent conductors as José Areán, Marco Armiliato, Ankush Bahl, Charles Barker, Leonard Bernstein, Joseph Colaneri, Dennis Russell Davies, Robert De Cormier, Arthur Fagen, Asher Fisch, Lukas Foss, Yong Yan Hu, Fabio Luisi, Yehudi Menuhin, John Nelson, Daniel Oren, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Eve Queler, Corrado Rovaris, Julius Rudel, Gerard Schwarz, Robert Shaw, Leonard Slatkin, Robert Spano, Alberto Veronesi, Emmanuel Villaume, and Hugh Wolff. Beyond the concert stage, Mr. Goodwin has conducted or prepared choruses for 17 national

television broadcasts, including the 1998 Grammy Awards with Aretha Franklin, Celine Dion at Radio City Music Hall, the Richard Tucker Music Foundation Gala on PBS, *Today* on NBC, and Andrea Bocelli's 2001 concert from Liberty State Park.

With a strong personal commitment to music education, Mr. Goodwin has done extensive volunteer work with young aspiring musicians. Through Young Audiences, Artsgenesis, and NYCHORAL's Mini Maestros program, he has brought the gift of music to thousands of children in more than 50 New York City public schools.

From 2011 to 2016, Mr. Goodwin served as Music Director of Coro Filarmónico Universitario, Principal Guest Conductor with the Coro del Teatro de Bellas Artes, and taught master classes in conducting at the Escuela Nacional de Música, all in Mexico City. (Photo credit: Erin Baiano)



Dennis Keene is Artistic Director and Conductor of Voices of Ascension. Known internationally through his many concerts and recordings with Voices of Ascension, as well as his regular guest appearances as conductor and teacher, he is one of leading choral conductors in the world today.

Recognized early as an exceptional organist, Dennis Keene studied at The Juilliard School, where he earned his BM, MM, and DMA degrees, as well as the coveted Gaston Dethier Organ Prize as a student of Vernon de Tar. Dr. Keene also studied privately in Paris with Marie-Madeleine Duruflé, André Marchal, and André Isoir.

Dennis Keene was active as a recitalist until his interest in conducting led him to concentrate on that discipline. He subsequently studied conducting at the Pierre Monteux School for Orchestral Conductors, with Charles Bruck in Paris, and with John Nelson at The Juilliard School. His passion for the finest in professional choral music can be traced to his early work as organist with Gregg Smith, Roger Wagner, and Margaret Hillis.

In addition to his work with Voices of Ascension and The Dennis Keene Choral Festival, Dr. Keene continues as Organist and Choirmaster of Church of the Ascension in New York City.



David Hurd is widely recognized as one of the foremost concert organists, sacred music composers, and church musicians in the United States. Now Director of Music at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in New York City, he was educated principally at The Juilliard School, Oberlin College, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He directed chapel music and taught at The General Theological Seminary for nearly four decades. He has also taught at Duke University, Yale University, The Manhattan School of Music, and Westminster Choir College. He has been director of music at The Church of the Holy Apostles, All Saints Church, and The Church of the Intercession, and has served in various capacities in other New York churches.

Dr. Hurd's musical accomplishments have been recognized with four honorary doctorates and various other national and international awards. In 1977, he received first prizes both in organ playing and in improvisation from the International Congress of Organists. More recently he was awarded the 2010 Distinguished Composer Award of the American Guild of Organists. Many of his compositions are widely performed, and he is well represented in major church hymnals in the US and abroad.



Conductor Malcolm J. Merriweather is Music Director of New York City's The Dessoff Choirs, founded in 1924 and known for path-breaking performances of choral works from the pre-Baroque era through the 21st century. An Associate Professor, he is Director of Choral Studies and Voice Department Coordinator at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York, Artist-in-Residence at Union Theological Seminary, and Artistic Director of Voices of Haiti, a 60-member children's choir in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, operated by the Andrea Bocelli Foundation. He is also in demand as a baritone soloist, often performing throughout the United States.

Highlights of Merriweather's 2019-20 season included the release of two major recordings. With Dessoff, Merriweather conducted and performed selected songs on *MARGARET BONDS: The Ballad of the Brown King & Selected Songs* released by AVIE Records in November 2019; this



project is the premiere recording of the composer's *magnum opus*. In this new arrangement, Merriweather scored Bonds' 1954 work for orchestra for strings, harp, and organ. He is also featured as the baritone soloist in the Oratorio Society of New York's recording of Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell's *Sanctuary Road* released on the Naxos label.

During Dessoff's 95th season, Merriweather conducted the group in sold-out performances of Faure's Requiem, Rutter's *The Sprig of Thyme*, and Gregg Smith's *The Continental Harmonist*. He also conducted a variety of concerts and events at Brooklyn College and Union Theological Seminary. As a baritone soloist, he sang Britten's *War Requiem* at the Eastern Division American Choral Directors Association Conference in Rochester, NY; Bob Chilcott's Requiem, also in Rochester, NY; and *Sanctuary Road*, with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra in Columbus, Ohio, and the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra in Chautauqua, NY.

He is a recipient of the Lotus Foundation Prize and the Outstanding Full-Time Faculty Teaching Award from Brooklyn College. Dr. Merriweather has earned degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and Syracuse University (*summa cum laude*). Please visit malcolmjmerriweather.com for more information. Connect with him on Twitter and Instagram [@maestroweather](https://www.instagram.com/maestroweather).



The Dessoff Choirs, one of the leading choruses in New York City, is an independent chorus with an established reputation for pioneering performances of choral works from the Renaissance era through the 21st century. Since its founding in 1924, Dessoff's mission is to

enrich the lives of its audiences and members through the performance of choral music.

Its concerts, professional collaborations, community outreach, and educational initiatives are dedicated to stimulating public interest in and appreciation of choral music as an art form that enhances the culture and life of our times. With repertoire ranging over a wide variety of eras and styles, Dessoff's musical acumen and flexibility has been recognized with invitations from major orchestras for oratorios and orchestral works.

Past performances include Britten's *War Requiem* and Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with Lorin Maazel in his final performances as Music Director with the New York Philharmonic. Over the course of its 95-year history, Dessoff has presented numerous world premieres, including pieces by Virgil Thomson, George Perle, Paul Moravec, and Ricky Ian Gordon, as well as the first American performance in nearly 100 years of Montemezzi's opera *La Nave* with Teatro Grattacielo; and the American premieres of Philip Glass's Symphony No. 5, and Sir John Tavener's all-night vigil, *The Veil of the Temple*.



Dessoff's discography includes its newest CD, *MARGARET BONDS: The Ballad of the Brown King & Selected Songs*, released in November 2019, along with its other CDs, which include *Reflections*, featuring music by Convery, Corigliano, Moravec, and Rorem, and *Glories on Glories*, a collection of American song featuring composers ranging from Billings to Ives.

The Dessoff Choirs is supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Also, Dessoff's season is made possible in part by funds from The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Please visit dessoff.org for more information.

Notes on the Program

***In Honor of Martin* by David Hurd**

In Honor of Martin is a five-movement work commissioned by *Rejoicensemble*, and dedicated to its Artistic Director, Carl MaultsBy. It was premiered under Dr. MaultsBy's direction at the 20th Anniversary Concert of *Rejoicensemble* on April 10, 2005 at Saint Philip's Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, New York. The original scoring, specified by Dr. MaultsBy, was for vocal quintet, piano, string bass, and percussion. The Dessoff Choirs, under the direction of Dr. Malcolm J. Merriweather, commissioned the composer to complete a full orchestration of *In Honor of Martin*, which they premiered in their concert *We Remember* at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, on November 7, 2016. The heart of the text for *In Honor of Martin* is the poem *Standing Tall*, written in 1982 by Jamie McKenzie. The author kindly gave his permission for David Hurd to set his poem to music.

The first movement of *In Honor of Martin* is a setting of *Wisdom 3:1-3*, part of a Biblical passage often read at memorial services. The music can be described essentially as variations over a repeating harmonic progression. The closing instrumental portion of this first movement returns to end the fifth movement where it provides support for the choral return of the same *Wisdom* text.

McKenzie's narrative poem *Standing Tall* begins the second movement. The poem cites instances of race discrimination and characterizes King's non-violent response as a path to freedom. The movement ends with voices ringing out the phrase "Free at last."

The third and shortest movement continues the text of McKenzie's poem. It begins "When some yelled for violence," and is in an energetic 5/4 meter. This movement juxtaposes calls for violent protest with King's powerful commitment to peaceful engagement.

The fourth movement, which begins "And when some spit out hate," is the most extended of the five. Musically it is largely a set of variations over recurring harmonic progressions. It moves from the theme of peaceful resistance to a one of optimism and hopefulness, but then it records the

shock of King's assassination and continues with a brief instrumental and wordless choral epilogue.

The fifth and final movement, beginning "But this king / even in death / even today / stands strong / stands proud / stands tall," concludes McKenzie's poem and remembers the ongoing potency of King's legacy. The final section of this movement confidently revisits the *Wisdom* text quoted in the first movement: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God..."

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Texts

In Honor of Martin (2005)

Wisdom 3:1-3 (I); "Stand Tall" (1982) by Jamie McKenzie (II-V)

I.

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
 and there shall no torment touch
 them; in the sight of the unwise they seemed to die,
 but they are in peace.

II.

Some kings rule their kingdoms sitting down
 Surrounded by luxury, soft cushions and fans
 But this King stood strong
 stood proud
 stood tall

When the driver told Rosa
 "Move to the back of the bus!"
 When the waiter told students
 "We don't serve your kind!"
 When the Mayor told voters
 "Your vote don't count!"
 And when the sheriff told marchers
 "Get off our streets!"
 using fire hoses, police dogs and cattle prods
 to move them along
 This King stood strong
 stood proud
 stood tall
 Speaking of peace
 of love
 and children
 hand in hand
 free at last
 free at last

III.

When some yelled for violence
 For angry revenge
 An eye for an eye
 And a tooth for a tooth
 He stood his ground
 Preaching peace

IV.

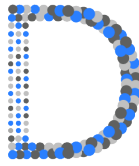
And when some spit out hate
 He stood there smiling
 Spreading love
 Until it tolled like the sea across the land
 Sweeping away Jim Crow
 Breaking down the walls
 Ringing the bell
 Joyfully
 For Freedom

Until

Standing on the mountain top
 They shot him
 Coldly
 Hoping to see him fall
 Hoping to put him away
 To bring him low

V.

But this King
 even in death
 even today
 stands strong
 stands proud
 stands tall
 And we remember



We Shall Walk Through the Valley

Negro Spiritual, Arr. by Undine Smith Moore

Lord, we shall walk, shall walk in peace.
We shall walk through the valley in peace.
If Jesus himself shall be our leader,
We shall walk through the valley in peace.

There will be no trials there.
If Jesus himself shall be our leader,
We shall walk through the valley in peace.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers (1921)

Text by Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
 flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
 went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
 bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.



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