



WELCOME YULE!

Dessoff Dialogue:
Welcome Yule! &
Carol Sing

The Dessoff Choirs
December 7, 2020
7 pm



Monday, December , 2020 • 7:00 pm

The Dessooff Choirs
Malcolm J. Merriweather, *Music Director*

Dessooff Dialogue:
Welcome Yule! & Carol Sing

Special Guest – Laquita Mitchell, soprano

Steven Ryan, piano

Carol: O come, all ye faithful (c. 1751)

John Francis Wade (1711–1786)
Arr. David Willcocks (1919–2015)

Selections from *The Ballad of the Brown King* (1954)

Margaret Bonds (1913–1972)

I. Of the Three Wise Men
Noah Stewart, *tenor*

IV. Mary Had a Little Baby
Laquita Mitchell, *soprano*

VI. Could He Have Been an Ethiope?
Laquita Mitchell, *soprano*
Noah Stewart, *tenor*
The Dessooff Choirs and Orchestra
Malcolm J. Merriweather, *conductor*

Carol: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (1961)

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809–1847)
Arr. David Willcocks

O Holy Night (1847)
Laquita Mitchell, *soprano*
The Dessooff Choirs and Orchestra
Malcolm J. Merriweather, *conductor*

Adolphe-Charles Adams (1803–1847)

Carol: Silent Night (1818)

Franz Gruber (1787–1863)

Hallelujah from *Messiah* (1741)

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Meet the Artists



Soprano **Laquita Mitchell** consistently earns acclaim on eminent international opera and concert stages, including performances with Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, Opéra Comique in Paris, and the New York Philharmonic, to name a few. Notable engagements include Bess in *Porgy and Bess* with San Francisco Opera, Margaret Island Open-Air Theatre in Budapest, and the Polish Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra; Violetta in *La traviata* with New York City Opera and Opera Memphis; Coretta Scott King in *I Dream* with Opera Grand Rapids and Opera Carolina; and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Florentine Opera and Portland Opera. Other notable appearances include Micaela in *Carmen* at the New York City Opera; Leonora in *Il trovatore* in South Carolina as well as with Nashville Opera; the role of Sharon in Terrance McNally's *Master Class* at the Kennedy Center; Musetta in *La bohème* in a return to the Los Angeles Opera; and Mimì in *La bohème* with Cincinnati Opera and at the Utah Symphony and Opera.

As an active concert artist, Ms. Mitchell most recently performed Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Louisville Orchestra, the world premiere of Steven Stucky's *August 4, 1964* with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra under Jaap Van Zweden, her Boston Symphony Orchestra debut as the soprano soloist in Wynton Marsalis' *All Rise* under Kurt Masur, and the soprano solo in Tippett's *A Child of our Time* with the Washington Chorus at the Kennedy Center. She has also sung in the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *Sanctuary Road* at Carnegie Hall, and performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, the Princeton Symphony Orchestra, the New York Symphonic Ensemble at Alice Tully Hall, with Branford Marsalis and the Garden State Philharmonic, and with the New York Festival of Song's "Salute to Arlen" at Carnegie Hall. Ms. Mitchell made her debut with the New World Symphony in Alberto Ginastera's *Cantata para la America Magica*.

Ms. Mitchell is a Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Grand Prize Winner and was awarded a 2004 Sara Tucker Award. She was also the First Prize Winner of the Wiener Kammer Oper's 2003 Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition, and the First Prize Winner of the Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers, as well as the winner of the Audience Choice award. Ms. Mitchell is an alumna of the San Francisco Opera's Merola Program and the Houston Grand Opera Studio. She completed her Master's and the Professional Studies Certificate at the Manhattan School of Music, and completed her Bachelor's at Westminster Choir College.



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.



Steven Ryan, *piano*, has been Dessoff's accompanist and keyboard soloist since 1997, including featured performances in all of Dessoff's Midwinter Festivals. In February 2017, Dessoff's "French Fête" concert was a celebration of his 20th anniversary with the group. In recent years, Mr. Ryan has performed in Russia, Austria, France, and Italy. In 2014, he was featured in the Voices Across the Pacific festival in Sydney, Australia, playing a solo concert and working with choirs. He has performed several solos with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and the Greater Trenton Symphony Orchestra.

He has played celesta with the Berlin Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall; piano, harpsichord, and organ with Dessoff; and synthesizer with the Moody Blues. Conductors he has collaborated with include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Charles Dutoit, Neeme Järvi, Sir Neville Mariner, Gerard Schwartz, and Maxim Shostakovich.

Ryan is a regular accompanist at Montclair State University, working with the choirs and in both the voice and string studios. He participated in Montclair's 2015 concerts at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London and the Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall. In 2000, he won second prize at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition for Outstanding Amateurs, and in 2001 he took first place in the Concours des Grand Amateurs de Piano in France.



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*.



Dessoiff'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 Dessoiff Choirs is supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Also, Dessoiff '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 dessoiff.org for more information.

Don't miss our upcoming Dialogue...

**Dessoiff through the Ages:
From Madame Dessoiff to Maestro Merriweather
Monday, March 22, 2021
7 pm
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The Dessoiff Choirs
P.O. Box 1337
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All donations are fully tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Texts

O come, all ye faithful

Tune: John Francis Wade

Descant: David Willcocks (1919–2015)

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels.

Refrain:

*O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him.
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation.
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above,
Glory to God! Glory in the highest!

Refrain: *O come...*

3. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

Refrain: *O come...*

The Ballad of the Brown King

Text by Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

1. *Of the Three Wise Men*

Of the three wise men who came to the King
One was a brown man, so they sing
Alleluia, Alleluia

Of the three wise men who followed the star
One was a brown king from afar
Alleluia, Alleluia

4. *Mary Had a Little Baby*

Mary had a little baby
Jesus, that was His name
All the world became much brighter
when little Jesus, the Christ child, came



That was in a lowly manger,
Outside the night was cold
But within that lowly manger
Behold how warm His love is; oh, behold!

Mary had a little baby,
In the night a bright star shone
I, so lost, so lost and lonely
Nevermore shall be alone

6. Could He Have Been an Ethiope?

Could he have been an Ethiope
From an Ethiopian land?
I do not know just who he was
But he was a kingly man

Could he have been an Egyptian king
From the land where the sun shines bright?
I do not know just who he was
But he followed the star that night

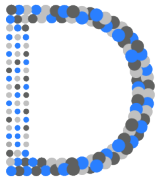
Could he have been a tall, dark king?
Maybe Arabian?
I do not know just who he was
But he was a wise, wise man

Of all the kings who came to call
One was dark like me
And I'm so glad that he was there
Our little Christ to see

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley (1739)

1. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"
2. Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity.
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"



THE
DESSOFF CHOIRS
MALCOLM J. MERRIWEATHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR

3. Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Risen with healing in his wings, light and life to all he brings,
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness! Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

O Holy Night

Text by Placide Cappeau (1808–1877);
translation by John Sullivan Dwight (1813–1893)

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;

Chorus

Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.
O night, O holy night, O night divine.

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming;
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand:
So, led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here come the wise men from Orient land,
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend;

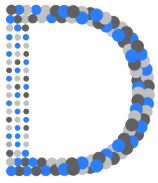
Chorus

He knows our need, To our weakness no stranger!
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!
Behold your King! your King! before Him bend!

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
And in His name all oppression shall cease,
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;
Let all within us praise his Holy name!

Chorus

Christ is the Lord, then ever! ever praise we!
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!
His pow'r and glory, evermore proclaim!



THE
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Silent Night

Text by Joseph Mohr (1792–1848);
translation by John Freeman Young (1820–1885)

Silent night, holy night,
all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night,
shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light;
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Hallelujah from *Messiah*
Revelation 19:6, 11:15, 19:16

Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!
The kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,
and He shall reign for ever and ever!
King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
Hallelujah!