

Westchester Oratorio Society

Benjamin Niemczyk, Conductor

Presents

The lite *of* Spring

Brahms *Lass dich nur nichts*
Bach *Motet Lobet den Herrn*
Schubert *Mass No. 5 in A-Flat*

Bradley Brookshire, Organ

Michelle Serrano-Moeritz, Soprano
Elise Quagliata, Alto
Oliver Mercer, Tenor
Matthew Singer, Bass

Sunday, May 23, 2010

4:00PM

Presbyterian Church of Mount Kisco



Westchester Oratorio Society

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Presidents' Welcome

We are so happy you have joined us for this performance.

Today, Westchester Oratorio Society performs light works by the Classical heavyweights, Brahms, Bach and Schubert. Our gifted artistic director Benjamin Niemczyk will conduct the sublime *Geistliches Lied* by Johannes Brahms, followed by the sprightly *Lobet den Herrn*, Bach's sixth motet. Schubert's seldom-performed *Mass No.5 in A-flat Major*, sometimes known as the Solemn Mass, concludes the concert. Anything but solemn, this compact but challenging work displays Schubert's formidable creativity within the Romantic idiom of his age.

This performance is made possible by the dedication and hard work of every singer. WOS routinely considers beautiful and challenging pieces, both for our pleasure and for yours. We delight in bringing these masterpieces to the community and look forward to seeing you at every performance. We love to sing with and for each other, but we really love making music for you!

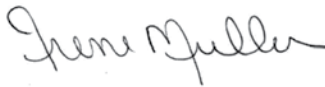
If you like what you see and hear, please join us. There are no auditions, just a preference that you have some choral experience.

If you would like to contribute other ways, please talk to our Conductor Ben Niemczyk, any board member or send us an e-mail through our website.

Simply put, you are the reason we survive and thrive.



Joe Spallina



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The Thirteenth season of
Westchester Oratorio Society
Benjamin Niemczyk, Conductor

Sunday, May 23, 2010
4:00 PM
Presbyterian Church of Mount Kisco

Bradley Brookshire, Organ

Michell Serrano-Moeritz, Soprano
Elise Quagliata, Alto
Oliver Mercer, Tenor
Matthew Singer, Baritone

~PROGRAM~

Geistliches Lied, Op. 30.....Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Motet VI, Lobet den Herrn.....J.S. Bach
(1685-1750)

~Intermission~

Mass No. 5 in A-Flat, D. 678.....Franz Schubert
Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus,
Benedictus, Agnus Dei (1797-1828)

Please no flash photography during the performance
Kindly silence all electronic devices



Westchester Oratorio Society

WOS was founded in 1997 when a few individuals in South Salem joined with their neighbor, the noted choral conductor, **Harold Rosenbaum**, in order to form a choral group that would create a high quality musical experience for audiences and singers in Northern Westchester and surrounding areas. Since its inception, WOS has made a significant contribution to the musical fabric of the county, performing early music, choral masterworks of the 18th to 20th centuries and contemporary works accompanied by professional soloists and orchestras. In 2007 **Benjamin Niemczyk** was appointed conductor and artistic director, only the second in WOS' history. That year he conducted the Oratorio Society in a Westchester premiere of James Bassi's *Wexford Carol*. He comes from a background strong in both contemporary and classical music and has made it his mission to preserve the music of the past while supporting that of the present. In '08-'09 Niemczyk led WOS and REBEL Baroque Orchestra in a performance of Händel's *Dixit Dominus* as well as works by Berlioz, Tavener and Mendelssohn. In 2010 he will present works by Schubert, Bach, Brahms and Händel.



Voted “Best Amateur Chorus in Westchester” by Westchester Magazine, the Westchester Oratorio Society has also distinguished itself in guest appearances at Carnegie Hall and the Performing Arts Center at Purchase, as well as in performances with the Brooklyn Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, the Brooklyn Academy of Music (in a production of Olivier Messiaen’s opera, *St. Francis of Assisi*, lauded by the New York Times), the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and at Carnegie Hall performing Verdi’s haunting Requiem.

In addition to providing major concert experiences for singers and audiences, the Society offers musical opportunities to the community. Its popular Summer Sings series, which is open to singers at all levels, involves reading sessions of choral masterworks under the direction of top-notch conductors. The Society’s Chamber Choir provides choral music on a smaller scale to local organizations and institutions, such as hospitals and nursing homes. The Society also affords the opportunity for young people, from middle school to college age, to participate. It encourages their individual membership in the chorus and involves youth choral groups in many of its concerts. Students are welcome.

BENJAMIN NIEMCZYK, Conductor

At work both in front of and behind the camera, Benjamin Niemczyk is an artist of uncommon range. Balancing his time between photography, graphic design, singing and conducting, he gave his debut as conductor of the Civic Orchestra of the Chicago Symphony in a staged performance of Saint-Saëns Carnival of the Animals in 2000. Since that time, he has sung in the most admired concert halls of Chicago and



New York. Having studied under contemporary music gurus Cliff Colnot and Harold Rosenbaum, he gave his Town Hall conducting debut in 2004, his European debut in the south of France in 2004 and continues to participate in concert performances at such venues as Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall as well as on national television and in feature films. He can be heard on numerous commercial recordings, particularly those of early music. He is a founding member of C4 (Choral Composer/Conductor Collective, www.c4ensemble.org), the nation's largest new music choral ensemble. He is a strong advocate of the production and performance of new music of all genres and musical languages.

In addition to his musical interests, Mr. Niemczyk is an accomplished photographer and graphic designer, having created advertising materials for companies including Hal Leonard, G. Schirmer and Lyric Opera of Chicago and numerous small arts organizations. His design business, BDN Design (www.myspace.com/bdnndesign), specializes in advertising materials and art photography, particularly of and for the NYC area.

Mr. Niemczyk holds two degrees in composition from Wheaton College Conservatory of Music and the DePaul University School of Music. He resides in Brooklyn, NYC.



BRADLEY BROOKSHIRE, Organist
Hailed by New York Magazine as “a leading light of New York’s original-instrument scene,” Mr. Brookshire has emerged as one of the most noted Bach interpreters of his generation. His distinctive approach to Bach’s harpsichord music has led to sustained critical acclaim by the New York Times (his interpretation of Bach’s French Suites was named a New York Times “Critic’s Choice” Recording of 2001), Goldberg magazine, Stereophile magazine, and American Record Guide, among others.

As a soloist, continuo player, and chamber music partner, Mr. Brookshire has appeared with The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, The English Chamber Orchestra, Glimmerglass Opera, The Shanghai String Quartet, and many other leading artists, including David Daniels and Bejun Mehta. A noted conductor of baroque opera, Brookshire has served as Assistant Conductor at Glimmerglass Opera, Cover Conductor at Virginia Opera, and twice conducted concertante performances at New York City Opera. He is currently an assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera.

Brookshire has recorded for Sony Classical, BBC Records, Vox Classics, Opus 111 (Paris), Music and Arts, and has just completed recording the Flute Sonatas of Bach with Tara Helen O’Connor.

A member of the Purchase College (SUNY) faculty since 1998, Brookshire holds the position of Director of Graduate Studies in the Conservatory of Music, where he leads the Purchase College Camerata and teaches graduate courses in musicology and counterpoint. The State University of New York honored him with the Chancellor’s Award in 2004. Previous to accepting that full-time appointment, he was a visiting professor at Yale University, where he led the Yale Collegium Musicum.



MICHELLE SERRANO MOERITZ, 2005 First Place Regional Winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition, is a young Cuban-American soprano with unusual warmth and beauty of tone, which critics laud as “very reminiscent of the young Mirella Freni.” A musician of expansive artistry, she has received rave reviews as Verdi’s Desemona as well as Mozart’s Donna Elvira. Her concert schedule most recently led her to Italy where she appeared as the guest soprano at the famed Ravello Music Festival.

Ms. Serrano Moeritz holds a Masters of Opera Studies from the SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Music, and earned a degree in voice and theater from Catholic University of America. In 2008, Ms. Serrano Moeritz was a grant recipient of the prestigious Gerda Lissner Foundation Award and in 2006 was a finalist in the Altamura/Caruso International Voice Competition. She was named a grant recipient by the Schyuler Foundation for Career Bridges from 2003 through 2005.

Ms. Serrano Moeritz is also an accomplished solo and concert flautist

ELISE QUAGLIATA, mezzo-soprano, has recently garnered notice for her dynamic stage presence, theatrical range and musical intelligence. In 2008, Ms. Quagliata was heard at Florida Grand Opera as Cornelia in *Guilio Cesare* and *Carmen* in *La Tragedie de Carmen* with Opera Omaha. Her 2006 performance of *Carmen* with Pensacola Opera captivated the critics, one of whom pronounced her “one of the finest *Carmens* I

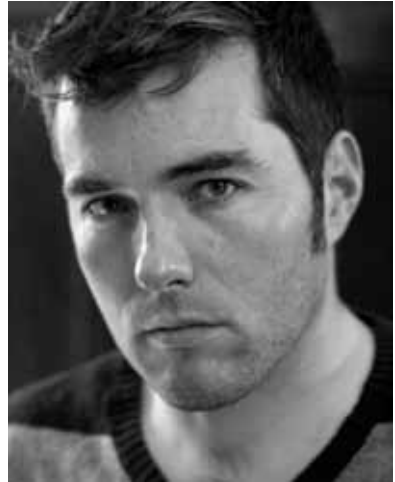
have ever seen” (*Mobile Register*) and another “simply riveting” (*Pensacola News Journal*).

Her “striking, bold tone, superb diction and excellent acting” (*Des Moines Register*) was also noted in her performance of *Nicklausse* in *Les contes d’Hoffmann* for Des Moines Metro Opera. In 2007, Ms. Quagliata was among four winners in the Liederkrantz Society’s Lieder Competition. She was also the 2005 winner of the Metropolitan Opera’s District Auditions for New York City.



Graduating *summa cum laude*, Ms. Quagliata trained at the University of Michigan and the University of Connecticut.

Tenor **OLIVER MERCER** is quickly gaining repute in the concert and early music scenes in the United States, Europe and the Far East. A native of England, Oliver studied music at Portland State University and Trinity College, Cambridge, receiving his Master's Degree from Florida State University. His operatic roles include Albert Herring, Little Bat, Sesto, Don Ramiro, Fenton, and Ralph Rackstraw. Recent solo appearances include The Oregon Bach Festival and International Bachakademie with Helmuth Rilling, the Portland Baroque Orchestra, The Tallahassee Symphony and The London Philharmonic. In conjunction with the Glyndebourne Opera Jerwood Development Scheme, he toured Japan and South Korea with The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, performing Bach's St. John Passion. Oliver is currently a member of the Choir of Men and Boys at St. Thomas' Church, Fifth Avenue, New York.



Critically acclaimed for his creation of Pierchon de la Rue (Narrator) in the 2003 World Premiere of Robert Zuidam's *Rage d'Amours* at the Tanglewood Music Festival, Baritone **MATTHEW SINGER** has performed numerous leading operatic roles throughout the United States. His favorites include Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Tonio in *I Pagliacci*, Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus*, Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* as well as the title role in Rossini's opera buffo *Il Signor Bruschino*. Recent solo appearances have been with the Seattle Opera in conjunction with their Young Artist Program, the Salt Marsh Opera, the Asheville Lyric Opera, the Buffalo Philharmonic and the Master Chorale of North Carolina.



Westchester O

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Masami Morimoto
Stanley Rinehart
Clay Smith
Joseph Spallina
Gil Zicklin

Conductor

Benjamin Niemczyk

Accompanist

John Lettieri

*Not singing in this concert

Program Notes
by Caroline Walker

Geistliches Lied, Op.30

Johannes Brahms

Geistliches Lied is a sacred song that Brahms wrote for mixed chorus and organ in 1856. Brahms began it modestly as an exercise in constructing counterpoint during a period when he was studying the canon form. He far surpassed his initial goal, producing an exceedingly expressive, beautiful and enduring composition. The work is a setting of a poem by the early seventeenth century writer Paul Fleming whose theme is the consolation that God provides in times of difficulty. The four voice parts provide a contrapuntal chorus offering words of solace to one bereaved. The piece abounds with word painting with its sudden admonishments to silence, its upward motives when referring to God, and its soaring Amen. Brahms's choice of this poignant text and emotionally expressive music grew out of the sadness in his own personal life at this time. The date of the composition coincides with the final months when Robert Schumann hovered near death and the piece may have been a way for Brahms to express his sympathy to Clara. The distance of imitation in Brahms's counterpoint is an unusual interval, a ninth. Its virtuosity derives from its setting as a double canon, with two thematic lines divided between the soprano/tenor and bass/alto parts. After opening, these pairs intertwine and the organ interludes provide further quasi-canons at the ninth. Only 67 measures long, Opus 30 is the smallest numbered work of Brahms's repertoire, but it is a densely brilliant gem whose compositional complexities make it a work of exceptional and haunting beauty.

Lobet den Herrn, Alle Heiden,

BMV 230

Johann Sebastian Bach

Lobet den Herrn is one of Bach's six surviving motets. Some musicologists have questioned Bach's authorship of the work, and scholars are unable to provide definitive chronologies for its composition or first performance. It is believed to date from around 1751, although the earliest printed copy of it was not discovered until 1821. The motet is one of the oldest genres of European music, its history dating back to the beginning of the 12th century. During Bach's lifetime, it was customary for the principle Lutheran churches in Leipzig to perform an introductory choral work referred to as an "Introit Motet", or entrance piece, after the organ prelude. While Sunday morning motets were generally based on conventional Latin texts, funerals and other special occasions warranted more elaborate scores and Bach's six motets were intended for such events. His motets are characterized by great complexity and intense vocal

demands and thus are not a standard part of current church choir repertoires. This particular motet is exceptional in that it is written for only four vocal parts with an underlying continuo. The music is a setting of the first two verses of Psalm 117, and is one of only two motets by Bach whose entire text derives from the Bible.

The style of the composition is primarily fugal, and the piece is divided into three main sections. The work opens with a double fugue, is followed by a middle section of homophony, and leads to a concluding triple fugue for the final Alleluia. The voices leap through triads and create scintillating effects as they interweave contrapuntally. Consummate in conception and difficult to perform, this motet presents an extremely challenging and exciting musical experience.

Mass in A-flat Major, D 678

Franz Schubert

Begun in November 1819 and completed in September 1822, Schubert's *Mass in A-flat Major* evolved over a three-year period of extensive rewriting, occupying him for a longer period than any of his other compositions. Schubert probably lavished such considerable time and effort on the process of polishing this composition because he intended to dedicate it to his Emperor, Franz I. The mass was first performed in the parish church in Lerchenfeld in late 1822 or early 1823, but even then it was not fully finished. Schubert made further revisions in 1825 and in April of 1826 submitted it to the Austrian Court as part of his application for the post of deputy kapellmeister, a bid for which he was unsuccessful.

In constructing this piece, Schubert severed himself from the conventional bonds that had characterized his previous four masses, intensifying his writing style and making it more sharply focused and original. Of his six Latin masses, the *Mass in A-flat Major* is his fifth, and the most ambitious in scale. In it, Schubert broke away from his earlier conformism and gave vent to increased expressivity and the use of contrasting styles. For instance, the *Kyrie* adds a romantic twist to traditional church counterpoint, whereas the *Gloria* is more symphonic in style with its large thematic recapitulations. Another noticeable contrast occurs between the styles of the chorales and the solos. The music for the full chorus embodies the institutional aspects of faith in a strong, solid, powerful God in that it is characterized by square melodic lines and firm and forthright harmony, whereas the music composed for the soloists is intimate, sensitive and nuanced, suggesting a more personal relationship to God. Despite the myriad styles and unusual sonorities found within the piece, Schubert manages to achieve a remarkable unity of purpose throughout. Overall, it is a dazzling tour de force and is considered by many to be his finest mass.

Johannes Brahms
Geistliches Lied, Op. 30

Laß dich nur nichts nicht dauern
Mit Trauern,
Sei stille!
Wie Gott es fügt,
So sei vergnügt Mein Wille.

Was willst du heute sorgen
Auf morgen?
Der Eine steht allem für;
Der gibt auch dir das Deine.

Sei nur in allem Handel Ohn Wandel,
Steh feste!
Was Gott beschleußt,
Das ist und heißt
das Beste.
Amen

Do not let anything distress you with
sorrow.
Be still.
(Things are) as God ordains,
so let my will be joyful!

Why would you worry today about
tomorrow?
The One who looks after all,
also gives you what is yours.

Only be steadfast in all your dealings;
stand firm;
for what God has ordained is
- and must be called -
the best.
Amen

J.S. Bach
Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden
BWV 230

Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden
und preiset ihn, alle Völker
seine Gnade und Wahrheit waltet über uns
in Ewigkeit

Alleluja

Praise the Lord, all heathens,
and exalt Him, all peoples!
For His grace and truth reign over us
for eternity.

Halleluja

Franz Schubert
Mass No. 5 in A-Flat, D. 678

KYRIE eleison
Chiste eleison

GLORIA in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe
deprecationem nostram.
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.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth
peace to people of good will. We praise you,
we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord
God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, 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; 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.

CREDO in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium, et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum. Et ex Patre natum ante omni saecula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero.

Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri, per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis.

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine. Et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, passus, et sepultus est.

Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas. Et ascendit in caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, iudicare vivos et mortuos, cujus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum, et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.

Qui cum Patre, et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unam, sanctam, catholicam, et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptismum in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum. Et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

SANCTUS, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

BENEDICTUS qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

AGNUS DEI, qui tolis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tolis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. And one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory
Hosanna in the highest

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest

Lamb of God, who take away sins of world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who take away sins of world, grant us peace.

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Concert Tickets	Irene Muller
Program Design, Proofing	Virginia Steinberg, Ben Niemczyk
Program Ads	Terry Harder
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