

Los Angeles
 **Master Chorale**
Grant Gershon | Music Director

2007|08
Season

Don't miss
the final two
concerts of
the season!

GÓRECKI | *Lobgesang* 
(Song of Praise)
LAURIDSEN | *Nocturnes*
DAVID O | *A Map of Los Angeles*
WORLD PREMIERE
WITH SERGIO "CHECO" ALONSO,
MEXICAN FOLK HARP
ALSO FEATURING WORKS BY
ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, ERIC WHITACRE,
AND STEVEN STUCKY
MAY 4 at 7pm


"The Grapes of Wrath"
Choral Concert Suite
Ricky Ian Gordon, COMPOSER
Michael Korie, LIBRETTIST
WORLD PREMIERE
MORE GREAT OPERA CHORUSES BY VERDI,
PUCCINI, MASCAGNI, AND MUSSORGSKY
MAY 18 at 7pm



213.972.7282 WWW.LAMC.ORG



Grant Gershon MUSIC DIRECTOR

BORN: November 10, 1960, in Norwalk, California

AT THE CHORALE: Music Director, now in his seventh season. Grant has expanded the choir's repertoire considerably by conducting important

world premieres: *Sang* by Eve Beglarian, *You Are (Variations)* by Steve Reich, *Requiem* by Christopher Rouse, *Messages and Brief Eternity* by Bobby McFerrin and Roger Treece, *Broken Charms* by Donald Crockett, *Rezós (Prayers)* by Tania León, *Mother's Lament* by Sharon Farber, *Two Songs to Poems of Ann Jäderlund* by Esa-Pekka Salonen (U.S. premiere)

QUOTES: "Grant Gershon, music director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, has made the ensemble into an important part of the city's cultural life."

—Tim Mangum,
Orange County Register

OTHER APPEARANCES: Berkshire Choral Festival, San Antonio Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Houston Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, Utah Symphony and Opera, Juilliard Opera Theatre, Gustav Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Finnish chamber orchestra Avanti! and music festivals in Edinburgh, Vienna, Helsinki, Ravinia, Rome, Madrid and Aspen; Music Director of the Idyllwild Arts Festival Chorus

NEW ASSIGNMENT: Appointed Associate Conductor/Chorus Master for Los Angeles Opera in July, 2007

PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENTS: Assistant Conductor — Los Angeles Philharmonic, Berlin Staatsoper, Salzburg Festival

MEMBER OF: the USC Thornton School of Music Board of Advisors

ON FILM/TV: played keyboards on *Matrix Revolutions* film score; conducted choral sessions for films *Lady in the Water*, *License To Wed*, *I Am Legend* and *Charlie Wilson's War*; twice appeared as a pianist on *Cheers*; accompanied Kiri Te Kanawa and Jose Carreras on the *Tonight Show*



© Steve Cohn

Los Angeles Master Chorale

FOUNDED: 1964 as one of three founding companies at the Music Center; now in its 44th season

MUSIC DIRECTORS:

Grant Gershon, since 2001;
Paul Salamunovich, 1991–2001;
John Currie, 1986–1991;
Roger Wagner, 1964–1986

AWARDS: ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming

PRESS: "The Los Angeles Master Chorale is 'not your grandfather's choral group'"

—James Taylor,
Performances Magazine

"When the stars align and the programming manages to both soothe and challenge, the Los Angeles Master Chorale's current Grant Gershon-era can suggest a high-water mark in choral aesthetics."

—Josef Woodard,
Los Angeles Times

ON DISC: with Music Director Grant Gershon featuring Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Two Songs to Poems of Ann Jäderlund*, Philip Glass' *Itaipú* and Steve Reich's *You Are (Variations)* and *Daniel Variations*.

With Music Director Emeritus Paul Salamunovich includes the Grammy Award®-nominated *Lauridsen – Lux Aeterna*, *Christmas*, and a recording of Dominick Argento's *Te Deum* and Maurice Duruflé's *Messe "Cum Jubilo"*

ON FILM: motion picture soundtracks with Grant Gershon include *Lady in the Water*, *Click* and *License To Wed*

Soundtracks with Paul Salamunovich include *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *The Sum of All Fears*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Waterworld*

WEBSITE: LAMC.org



Los Angeles
Master Chorale

Grant Gershon | Music Director

The Rena Waltz Pierson Music Directorship, a gift of the Pierson
and Lovelace families to honor Lillian Lovelace's mother

Sunday, April 6, 2008, at 7PM

WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

Los Angeles Master Chorale
Grant Gershon, CONDUCTOR
Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

Zdrowas badz Maryja
(Five Marian Songs)

HENRYK MIKOLAJ GÓRECKI (b. 1933)

An die Sterne (To the Stars)

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)
POEM BY FRIEDRICH RÜCKERT

Talismane (Talismans)

SCHUMANN
POEM BY JOHANNN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

INTERMISSION

Theresienmesse (Theresa Mass)

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)

Kyrie
Gloria
Credo
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei

Risa Larson, SOPRANO
Leslie Inman, MEZZO SOPRANO
Jon Lee Keenan, TENOR
Steve Pence, BARITONE

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Tonight's *ListenUp!*
pre-concert discussion is
co-hosted by Music
Director Grant Gershon
and KUSC's Alan Chapman
in BP Hall at 6PM.

Latecomers will be seated at the
discretion of House Management.
Use of tape recorders, telephones,
pagers, and/or cameras is prohibited
in the auditorium. Program, prices
and artists subject to change.



Haydn and Górecki: Mass(ive) Prayers for Peace, One Note at a Time

By Victoria Looseleaf

The distinguished English writer Aldous Huxley once remarked, “After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.” Few, one might add, have done it as deftly and industriously – creating compositions that include 104 symphonies, 50-some concertos, 84 string quartets and 12 masses – as Franz Joseph Haydn.

Affectionately dubbed “Papa Haydn” by his friend and protégé Mozart, the prolific composer, who was born the son of a wheelwright in Austria in 1732, continues to fill concert halls, radio airwaves and, yes, even downloadable ringtones, with some of the most glorious sounds ever heard. And while it is one of history’s ironies that Haydn, himself trained as a singer, became celebrated as a composer of instrumental music, the power, beauty and grace of his vocal works endure. Indeed, as the Los Angeles Master Chorale, under the stellar direction of Grant Gershon, continues to showcase all six of Haydn’s famous final Masses in its “Homage to Haydn” initiative (the project culminates in 2009, the 200th anniversary of the composer’s death), this concert features the “Maria Theresa Mass” (*Theresienmesse*) in B-flat major. Considered the most personal of Haydn’s late masses, it was commissioned by Prince Esterhazy II to celebrate the name-day of his wife, Empress Maria Hermenegild. Written in the summer of 1799, the opus is thought to have been premiered on

September 8 in Begkirche, near the Esterhazy family seat in Eisenstadt. Scored for solo quartet, chorus, strings, two clarinets, two trumpets, timpani and organ continuo, the mass is notable for its reduction of winds. The absence of oboes, bassoons, horns and flutes, due to a dearth of wind players in Eisenstadt at that time, had Haydn turn a deficiency into an asset, as the unusual orchestral timber infused the work with a burnished glow of the B-flat instruments. The most lyrical of Haydn’s late masses, this austere scoring is complemented by ample solos, both individually and as quartets. Here is Haydn at the height of his powers. His choral writing teems with robust variety, rhythmic propulsion and contrapuntal finesse, while his vigorous work ethic had him composing this mass between the writing of two astonishing oratorios, *The Creation*, performed in 1798 and *The Seasons*, which premiered two years after *Maria* in 1801. Setting the tone of the entire Mass with a chamber-like quality that begins with the Kyrie, the sense of serenity in the opening *adagio* is

breached by chorus basses, trumpets and timpani – all *forte* – with the opening movement a palette for slightly varied recurring motifs. The lively choral fugue is also interrupted, if you will, with the “Christe”. Based on material from the opening, this musical dichotomy reconciles the somewhat harsh interludes with a text that begs for mercy. Moving to the spirited Gloria for chorus and orchestra, which is in three extensive sections that mirror the text, Haydn theatrically reiterates the Latin word “Te” (Thee) before being temporarily stilled by the minor-keyed “et in terra pax” and veering to C major which heralds the solo quartet’s “Gratias.” An agitated ostinato triplet announces the chorus’ “qui tollis,” after which the haunting *a cappella* “miserere nobis” bleeds into an optimism from the chorus on the “Cum sancto,” where radiant string melismas are followed by the liquid cadence of a coda, also heard at several points during the Mass. The Credo then cracks open, with a lowering of pitch and dynamics on the words “descendit de caelis,” and the “et incarnatus est” for soloists alone is



a thoughtful meditation. This celestial quality takes us towards the “Crucifixus,” one devoid of the drama found in other Haydn masses. But the ecstasy of the life to come is ultimately celebrated in the lively fugue, “et vitam venturi,” bringing this exuberant section to a close. An intimate opening of the Sanctus cedes to vigor on, “Pleni sunt coeli,” with Haydn traversing easily from the minor mood before blazing back to the tonic in a joyful, if rather restrained, “Osanna.” The moody but pastoral Benedictus proceeds gently until trumpets and drums vamp, with the section built around a central choral climax. Characterized by powerful choral unisons and wild dynamic fluctuations – *subito fortes* becoming hushed *pianos* – the Agnus Dei features wailing violin figures that conjure a veritable *Sturm und Drang* before the return of a more rustic soundscape of the home key. Vital, tender and above all, hopeful, the movement draws to a magnificent close on the words “Dona nobis pacem,” a prayer for peace both sumptuous and solemn – one needed now more than ever.

This, of course, is the stuff Tolstoy may have been referring to when he said, “Music is the shorthand of emotion.” Another kind of shorthand to passion is the sound universe fashioned by eminent Polish composer Henryk Górecki. Born in 1933 and catapulted to fame with his haunting Symphony No. 3 (*Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*), Górecki was the first living classical music composer to top the Billboard charts, when, in 1992, the 52-minute recording began its unprecedented 93-week run, eventually selling over a million copies. The symphony, composed in 1976 and

bowing at an avant-garde music festival in France in 1977, belies the notion of overnight fame, with Górecki continuing to be known for music possessing an intensely spiritual quality sometimes dubbed “holy minimalism.” His *Five Marian Songs, Op. 54* were written in 1985, when fame had not yet brought him worldwide attention (including that of filmmaker Peter

And while it is one of history’s ironies that Haydn, himself trained as a singer, became celebrated as a composer of instrumental music, the power, beauty and grace of his vocal works endure.

Weir, who made use of the first movement of the symphony in his movie *Fearless*). Górecki was also the first Polish composer to write for the first Polish Pope, as Cardinal Wojtyła had commissioned an oratorio in 1997 before becoming Pope John Paul II in 1978, with the work performed the following year. But Górecki’s signature – slow, contemplative, homophonic music – had been forged, the exemplary *Marian Songs* serving as lullabies and heartfelt pleas to the Virgin Mary, with its words speaking of God, death, peace and prayer. The 28-minute *a cappella* song cycle, scored for 60 singers, shifts in tempi from moderate to very slow, with the simple harmonic structure becoming more complex as additional layers are piled on, voice by voice. The power of Górecki’s music, as with Arvo Pärt and John Tavener, the trinity of “holy minimalist” composers (who had all initially begun composing in

modern idioms, emulating, for example Stravinsky and Schoenberg), lies in the rejection of intricacy in favor of simplicity. Allowing the silence between the notes to become as important as the music also characterizes the *Marian Songs*. The first, “Mother of Heavenly Lord” – dynamically fuller than the others – glides from *mezzoforte* to *forte*; the

others are slower, quieter and more intimate. “Holy Mary,” the second, barely rises above a murmur, while the third, “Hail Mary,” marked *lento dolcissimo* – as sweet as possible – blossoms in a radiant D major. The unhurried nature of the fourth, “Oh, how sad it is to part,” yields to the *fortes* of the final song, “Forever we will worship you,” which ends, however, in hushed tones. Górecki’s profoundly exquisite composition, where the listener lingers between moments alive with delicate and rapturous vocalese, can rightly be called music from the heart for the heart.

Victoria Looseleaf is an award-winning arts journalist and regular contributor to the Los Angeles Times, La Opinión and Performances Magazine. In addition, she is the producer-host of the long-running cable access television show on the arts, “The Looseleaf Report.” This is her fourth season with the Los Angeles Master Chorale.



Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

GUEST ORCHESTRA

FOUNDED: 1968 as an artistic outlet for the film and record studios' most gifted musicians

MUSIC DIRECTORS: Jeffrey Kahane since 1997; first four music directors were Sir Neville Marriner, Gerard Schwarz, Iona Brown and Christof Perick.

RAVES: "America's finest chamber orchestra" — Jim Svejda, KUSC
"LACO has never sounded better than it does these days..." — Mark Swed, *Los Angeles Times*

"At keyboard or on podium, [Kahane] has brought his L.A. Chamber Orchestra into a Golden Age." — Alan Rich, *L.A. Weekly*

AWARDS: First Place Award for Programming of Contemporary Music, offered by the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) and the American Symphony Orchestra League.

PERFORMS: 15 concerts per season at two historic theaters, the Alex in Glendale and UCLA's Royce Hall, plus Baroque Conversations at Zipper Concert Hall

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

INCLUDE: two-week European tour in spring 2008 with concerts in Paris, France; Vienna, Austria; Berlin, Hanover and Hamburg, Germany; Ferrara and Treviso, Italy; and San Sebastián, Spain.



WEB SITE: www.laco.org

Risa Larson

SOPRANO

SEASONS WITH CHORALE: Rookie Year

ORIGINALLY FROM: Japan

EDUCATION: BA in Vocal Performance from UCLA

PREVIOUS CHORALE SOLO: Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*

OPERA AND MUSICAL THEATRE PERFORMANCES: *Keepers of the Night*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Don Giovanni*, *Barber of Seville*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Mikado*, *City of Angels*, *Pajama Game*, *Kiss Me Kate*

HAS RECORDED: a national commercial for Ivory Soap

HAS PERFORMED AS A SOLOIST ON: the Los Angeles Philharmonic Green Umbrella Series



Leslie Inman

MEZZO SOPRANO

SEASONS WITH CHORALE: 12

PREVIOUS CHORALE SOLOS:

Handel's *Messiah*, Brahms' *Liebeslieder Walzer*, Haydn's *Paukenmesse* and *Creation*, Bach's *B Minor Mass*

OPERA PERFORMANCES: Opera Pacific (*Madame Butterfly*, *Turandot*, *Otello*, *La Bohème*, *I Pagliacci*, *Die Fledermaus*), Opera Pacific Outreach Program, Dame Quickly from *Falstaff* (Festa Italiana at the Irvine Bowl), Southland Opera

RECORDINGS: *Lux Aeterna*, *Christmas*, *Argento Te Deum*, *Glass-Salonen* — with the Los Angeles Master Chorale; Mahler 3rd Symphony with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; *Cristal: Glass Music through the Ages* and *A Merry Little Christmas* with Linda Ronstadt; *These Are Special Times* with Céline Dion

AWARDS AND HONORS: Los Angeles Artist of the Future, Miriam Oppenheim Scholarship (USC), Orange County Opera Guild



Jon Lee Keenan

TENOR

SEASONS WITH CHORALE: Rookie Year

HOMETOWN: Las Vegas, NV

EDUCATION: BM in Vocal Performance, Music Education, and Jazz Studies from UNLV; currently pursuing a MM in Choral Conducting at CSULA

and a MM in Vocal Arts at USC

OPERA PERFORMANCES:

Tamino in *The Magic Flute* with Opera Nova (Santa Monica), Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Camille in *The Merry Widow*, Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*

RECORDINGS: Featured soloist with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale on *Christmas in Santa Fe*

ALSO KNOWN AS: an accomplished jazz bassist



Steve Pence

BASS

SEASONS WITH CHORALE: 3

EDUCATION: BM from Chapman University and two MM degrees from New England Conservatory

PREVIOUS CHORALE SOLOS: Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*; Handel's *Messiah*; Haydn's *Creation Mass* and *Lord Nelson Mass*

OPERA PERFORMANCES: Sciarone in *Tosca*, Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Nonancourt in Nino Rota's *Il Cappello di Paglia di Firenze*

HAS APPEARED AS A SOLOIST IN: Britten's *War Requiem* with Cypress Masterworks, Mozart's *Grand Mass in c-minor* with the Orange County Catholic Chorale, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with Lark Society



Photo by Gerry Hurkmans

Henryk Mikolaj Górecki
COMPOSER

BORN: December 6, 1933 in Czernica, Silesia, Poland

FOUND HIMSELF: at the forefront of the Polish avant-garde at the time of the post-Stalin cultural thaw (late 1950s)

INFLUENCES: Béla Bartók, Karol Szymanowski, folk music, his religious beliefs

BREAKTHROUGH

COMPOSITION: Symphony No. 3 (*Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*) (1976), recorded in 1992 by Dawn Upshaw and the London Sinfonietta, conducted by David Zinman

FOUNDED: *Die Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* ("New Journal in Music"), a publication of music criticism and the discussion of musical aesthetics, in 1834

SUFFERED FROM: depression and a suicide attempt before being institutionalized at the end of his life

IS KNOWN FOR: being especially attentive to the use of text and its relationship to music



Franz Joseph Haydn
COMPOSER

BORN: March 31, 1732 in Rohrau, Austria

DIED: May 31, 1809 in Vienna

ASSIGNMENTS: music director to Count Morzin, Kapellmeister to the Esterhazys

OPERAS: *Lo speziale*, *L'infedeltà delusa*, *Il mondo della luna*, *La fedeltà premiata*, *Orlando paladino* and *Armida*

IS REGARDED: as the father of the symphony and the string quartet



Robert Schumann
COMPOSER

BORN: June 8, 1810 in Zwickau, Saxony

DIED: July 29, 1856 near Bonn



Photos: © Steve Cohn

Los Angeles Master Chorale

SOPRANO

Tamara Bevard
 Karen Hogle Brown
 Claire Fedoruk
 Rachelle Fox
 Marie Hodgson
 Susan Judy
 Risa Larson*
 Joanne Lee
 Emily Lin
 Virenia Lind
 Deborah Mayhan
 Holly Shaw Price
 Winter Watson

ALTO

Nicole Baker
 Rose Beattie
 Leanna Brand
 Monika Bruckner
 Amy Fogerson
 Kyra Humphrey
 Leslie Inman*
 Adriana Manfredi
 Alice Kirwan Murray
 Hélène Quintana
 Niké Simor St. Clair
 Nancy Sulahian
 Kimberly Switzer
 Diane Thomas
 Kristen Toedtman
 Tracy Van Fleet

TENOR

Andrew Brown
 Daniel Chaney
 Pablo Corá
 Paul Gibson
 Jody Golightly
 J. Wingate Greathouse
 Jon Lee Keenan*
 Shawn Kirchner
 Charles Lane
 Michael Lichtenauer
 Dominic MacAller
 Christian Marcoe
 Sean McDermott
 Kevin St. Clair
 George Sterne

BASS

Joseph Bazyouros
 Mark Beasom
 Reid Bruton
 Kevin Dalbey
 Greg Davies
 Michael Freed
 Gregory Geiger
 Dylan Gentile
 Scott Graff
 Stephen Grimm
 Paul Hinshaw
 Lew Landau
 Bob Lewis
 Roger Lindbeck
 Steve Pence*
 Jim Raycroft
 Burman Timberlake

The Singers of the Los Angeles Master Chorale are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO, Leanna Brand, AGMA Delegate.

*denotes soloist for Haydn

Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

Jeffrey Kahane, music director

VIOLIN I

Margaret Batjer
 CONCERTMASTER

 Tereza Stanislav
 ASSOCIATE CONCERTMASTER

 Jacqueline Brand
 Jennifer Munday
 Julie Gigante
 Tamara Hatwan
 Susan Rishik
 Searmi Park

VIOLIN II

Josefina Vergara
 PRINCIPAL

 Sarah Thornblade
 ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

 Ishani Bhoola
 Connie Kupka
 Joel Pargman
 Jennifer Levin
 Maia Jasper

VIOLA

Victoria Miskolczy
 ACTING PRINCIPAL

 Samuel Formicola
 ACTING ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

 Carole Castillo
 Karen Van Sant

CELLO

Armen Ksajikian
 ACTING PRINCIPAL

 Trevor Handy
 ACTING ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

 Giovanna M. Clayton
 Dane Little

BASS

Donald Ferrone
 ACTING PRINCIPAL

 Ann Atkinson
 ACTING ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

CLARINET

Joshua Ranz
 ACTING PRINCIPAL

 Helen Goode-Castro

BASSOON

Kenneth Munday
 PRINCIPAL

TRUMPET

David Washburn
 PRINCIPAL

 Darren Mulder

TIMPANI/PERCUSSION

Wade Culbreath
 ACTING PRINCIPAL

ORGAN

Patricia Mabee
 PRINCIPAL

PERSONNEL MANAGER

Steven Scharf

LIBRARIAN/ STAGE MANAGER

Robert Dolan

Los Angeles
 Master Chorale

Grant Gershon | Music Director

2008|09
Season

OCTOBER 12, 2008

RACHMANINOFF *Selections from The
Liturgy of St. John
Chrysostom*
HAYDN *Harmonie Mass*

NOVEMBER 9, 2008

HARRISON *La Koro Sutro*
UNG *WORLD PREMIERE*

DECEMBER 6, 2008

Holiday Wonders

DECEMBER 7, 2008

Messiah Sing-Along

DECEMBER 13, 2008

Holiday Wonders

DECEMBER 14, 2008

RESPIGHI *Laud to the Nativity*
PINKHAM *Christmas Cantata*
RUTTER *Gloria*
LAURIDSEN *O Magnum Mysterium*

DECEMBER 15, 2008

Messiah Sing-Along

JANUARY 25, 2009

MENDELSSOHN *Elijah*

FEBRUARY 22, 2009

BRUCKNER *Motets*
LISZT *Inno a Maria Vergine*
PÄRT *De Profundis*
CLEARFIELD *Dream Variations*
WORLD PREMIERE
SAMETZ *WORLD PREMIERE*
MUHLY *Expecting the Main
Things from You*

MARCH 29, 2009

BRAHMS *Zigeunerlieder*
BARTÓK *Slovak Folk Songs*
TORMIS *Forgotten Peoples Cycle*
POULENC *Chansons Françaises*
COPLAND *Old American Songs*

MAY 3, 2009

MESSIAEN *Trois petites liturgies*
HAYDN *Heilig Mass*

MAY 31, 2009

SIERRA *Missa Latina*

Performance dates, times, and repertoire subject to change.



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YOU ARE INVITED!

LAMC High School Choir Festival

FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2008

More than 900 of the Southland's most talented singers from 28 high school choirs join vocal forces for an extraordinary admission-free choral performance at the Los Angeles Master Chorale's High School Choir Festival on Friday, April 18, 2008 at the Walt Disney Concert Hall. Now in its 19th year, the Festival was founded by the Master Chorale Associates to celebrate the strong choral tradition of Southern California.

The Festival commences at 11 a.m. when four of the choirs, selected through a rigorous audition process, present individual musical showcases conducted by their directors. This year's featured choirs are Santa Monica High School Madrigal Ensemble, Louisville High School Ensemble Royale, Agoura High School Concert Choir and Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Concert Choir.

At 1 p.m., Los Angeles Master Chorale Music Director Grant Gershon conducts the massed choir in a varied program featuring, *Witness*, by Jack Halloran; *The Promise of Light*, by Georgia Stitt; *Libertango*, an Argentinian Tango by Astor Piazzolla, arr. by Oscar Escalada; *Cantique de Jean Racine*, by Gabriel Fauré; *Gloria: Quoniam tu solus Sanctus* and *Cum Sancto Spiritu*, by Vivaldi. The afternoon Festival performance will also feature

the LAMC Chamber Singers center stage under the direction of Assistant Conductor Ariel Quintana.

"The High School Choir Festival is one of the highlights of the Los Angeles Master Chorale's season," says Gershon. "The caliber of these young singers is simply amazing. The students and their choral directors work very hard all year to prepare for the performance, and it really shows."

The event is free and open to the public. There will be open seating on a first-come, first-seated basis in available sections. Tickets for the concerts will be distributed by the ushers prior to each show, and you will need a separate ticket for each performance.

We gratefully acknowledge the funders of this year's Festival:

- Aaroe Associates Charitable Foundation
- City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs
- Georges and Germaine Fusenot Foundation
- Master Chorale Associates
- Harold McAlister Charitable Foundation
- Metropolitan Associates
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**FREE
EVENT**



Photo by Craig Schwartz

LAMC High School Choir Festival

FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2008

10:45 AM

Auditorium opens for the public.

11:00 AM TO NOON

Showcase of Choirs Concert
Performances by four of the Festival's top ensembles

12:00 PM

Lunch break

12:30 PM

Hall reopens for seating for the 1 pm concert.

1:00 PM TO 2:00 PM
Festival Concert

Awards Ceremony recognizing participating schools and directors. Performances by the massed choirs and the Master Chorale Chamber Singers

For more information visit <http://www.lamc.org/community/highschool.cfm> or contact the Master Chorale at (213) 972-3113.



From Verdi to Gordon: An Epic Evening of Operatic Music

By Victoria Looseleaf

It's a heady time for composer Ricky Ian Gordon and librettist Michael Korie. Their three-act opera *The Grapes of Wrath*, based on the Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning John Steinbeck novel, was premiered to great acclaim last year at Minnesota Opera. Rave reviews followed, with the *Los Angeles Times*' Mark Swed writing, "...the greatest glory of the opera is Gordon's ability to musically flesh out the entire 11-member Joad clan."

Also lending his talents on the podium was Los Angeles Master Chorale music director, about whom Swed wrote, "Grant Gershon conducted a brilliantly cohesive performance."

With many new operas having short shelf lives, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which was sanctioned by the Steinbeck estate, seems the exception. Published in 1939 and set during the Great Depression, the story of a poor family of sharecroppers driven from their home by drought and economic hardship still resonates today. With future productions scheduled later this year at Pittsburgh Opera and at Opera Pacific in 2009, the work can also be heard on a three-CD recording that PS Classics releases this spring.

But for Angelenos eager to hear music from this instant classic on their home turf, a concert suite will be premiered by the Los Angeles Master Chorale May 18. New York-based Gordon, who has not only been dubbed the modern-day successor to

Leonard Bernstein and Steven Sondheim, but one of American opera's great new hopes, is, needless to say, very excited.

"The thing about the suite," says Gordon, "is that whole pieces are taken directly from the opera and some things are expansions. Consequently there are things that were never heard. It's like perfume – boiling the opera down to a stock. Hopefully upon hearing the suite you get a sense of what the opera is, what its concerns are, but without having to tell the entire Joad story."

As Gershon points out, "You can look at this as 'the director's cut' – those few sections that ended up having to be cut from Minnesota. Our audience will hear, for instance, the complete square dance scene for the first time and a couple of other things. As a concert suite," adds the maestro, "it is hugely important and in the tradition of concert suites from *Der Rosenkavalier* and Berg's *Lulu* suite.

"It's also much easier," continues Gershon, "to create a concert performance of excerpts or a suite than it is to mount a fully-staged opera production. It's a great way for the music to become more widely known by a larger concert-going audience, but it makes a case for the music in its own right."

Gershon says the opera has about 18 principal roles, and, much like in *Boris Godunov*, the chorus plays a huge role. "Again, in terms of the kind of pure music of the show, that really falls upon the choral ensemble."

Fashioning a libretto from the Steinbeck classic was a daunting task for Korie who wrote the lyrics for the Tony award-winning *Grey Gardens* and had never before tackled an opera libretto. He was, he says, particularly concerned with length.

"Even when people get excited about epics, they still like to leave after Act 2 and have dessert. I didn't want anyone to leave," Korie recalls.

continued on next page



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continued from previous page

“It became a point of pride that I had to come up with an ending for Act 2 that would feel unresolved so no one would leave.”

And stay they did. Korie also admitted to taking liberties with the novel, changing, for example, cotton pickers to bean pickers, as well as making them all women. That scene, written in Spanish, features the chorus, “Dios te salve” (God have mercy), and will be heard as part of the concert suite that will be performed by a 60-piece orchestra and 117 singers.

As for the Joaks being faced with fear and prejudice when they crossed state lines, Korie says it parallels today’s issue of building a fence across our border. “It’s amazing,” enthuses the librettist, “but conservative opera people came up to me afterwards and they totally got it. The book,” adds Korie, “is 60 years old and could have been written yesterday. Being granted the rights from the estate was a blessing, and it may sound absurd

but I felt like we were guided by the spirit of Steinbeck.”

The concert, which also includes other great opera choruses such as “Va pensiero” from Verdi’s *Nabucco*, promises to end the 2007-08 season on a glorious note. As Gershon was also recently appointed associate conductor and chorus master at Los Angeles Opera, this musical melding is one he says he thoroughly enjoys.

“The world of opera is so different from the world of concert music,” observes the maestro. “As a conductor you have less control over what happens; there are far more variables in opera. But I think that sense of being on the edge of chaos is at the same time exhilarating. I also have tremendous respect for L.A. Opera’s music director James Conlon and am awed by his energy. It feels like a good combination with James and myself.”

That said, bring on the music.

NEWS FLASH

The L.A. Master Chorale is thrilled to announce the international release on April 8, 2008, of the Chorale’s newest CD *Daniel Variations* by Steve Reich on the Nonesuch label. This highly anticipated CD of sonic riches features 12 of the Chorale’s finest singers plus virtuoso instrumentalists – all under the baton of Grant Gershon. This is the Chorale’s second CD for Nonesuch. The CD also features Reich’s *Variations for Vibes, Pianos and Strings*.



This life-affirming work by Steve Reich – commissioned by the Los Angeles-based Daniel Pearl Foundation, an organization formed in memory of the slain journalist to

promote cross-cultural tolerance – received its West Coast premiere by the Chorale on January 28, 2007, just prior to its recording. Neither requiem nor eulogy, *Daniel Variations* is living, breathing, exhilarating music that embodies the humanity of its subject, and, as

an acoustic force, can shed grace on us all. CDs will be available for purchase through LAMC for \$20, including shipping and handling. To order, please call 213-972-3156 or visit www.lamc.org.

The Chorale’s other CDs currently available through LAMC are Argento – Duruflé, Glass – Salonen, Lauridsen – Lux Aeterna and Steve Reich – *You Are (Variations)*.



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