



**MASTEROICES ANNOUNCES DETAILS OF ITS 2024-25 SEASON  
FEATURING A RARELY PERFORMED GERSHWIN COMEDY, AN AMERICAN JAZZ OPERA,  
AND A BAROQUE MASTERPIECE REIMAGINED  
OCTOBER 29, 2024 – MAY 5, 2025**

**Season Opens with New Version of the Gershwins' *Strike Up the Band***

**New York City Premiere of the Opera *Blind Injustice*, with Music by  
Scott Davenport Richards, Libretto by David Cote**

***Bach Reframed: The B Minor Mass*, with New Texts and Visuals by Commissioned Artists**

**New York, NY, August 12, 2024** — **Ted Sperling**, Artistic Director of **MasterVoices**, announced details of the renowned chorus' 83rd season, celebrating the power of the human voice to unite, inspire and connect since 1941. The 2024-25 season opens on **October 29** and features a new version of **George and Ira Gershwin, George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind's** political musical satire ***Strike Up the Band***; the **New York City premiere** of the opera ***Blind Injustice***, with music by **Scott Davenport Richards**, libretto by **David Cote**, based on the book of the same name by **Mark Godsey** and casework by the **Ohio Innocence Project**; and Bach's sacred masterpiece, the **B Minor Mass** reimagined with new texts and visuals by commissioned artists.

*Strike Up the Band* at Carnegie Hall

On **October 29, 2024**, at Carnegie Hall, **Ted Sperling** leads the 120–member **MasterVoices Chorus** and guest soloists in a concert staging of ***Strike Up the Band***, with music by **George Gershwin** and lyrics by **Ira Gershwin**. With its soaring melodies, infectious syncopation, and lyrics that both provoke and delight, ***Strike Up the Band*** was the first of three political musicals that the **Gershwins, George S. Kaufman, and Morrie Ryskind** wrote together. MasterVoices has previously performed the other two, the Pulitzer Prize-winning ***Of Thee I Sing*** and its sequel, ***Let 'Em Eat Cake***.

Says Mr. Sperling, “Working with both the Gershwin and Kaufman estates, author Laurence Maslon and I will be creating a new edition of ***Strike Up the Band***, which contains the best of the 1927 and 1930 versions of the show, which I hope may prove to be the blueprint for future performances of this work. The MasterVoices concert staging will take full advantage of the wonderful dance music that follows so many of the songs, sometimes lyrical, other times comic, or military. We look forward to bringing these moments to life with dancers as we have done with pleasure so many times in our recent history.”

Some of the most famous songs from the show, in addition to its irresistible overture and title song, are ***The Man I Love***, and ***I've Got a Crush on You***.

### Blind Injustice at Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center

In March 2024, MasterVoices announced *Three in Six*, an initiative to present three contemporary American operas in six years, the first opera being the revival of Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath* this past April. **Blind Injustice**, with music by **Scott Davenport Richards** and libretto by **David Cote**, based on the book *Blind Injustice* by **Mark Godsey** and casework by the **Ohio Innocence Project**, is the next in the series. *Blind Injustice*, which tells the stories of actual people, explores the U.S. criminal justice system and how it can fail the wrongfully accused and their families and communities. The **New York City Premiere** with MasterVoices will take place on **February 3-4, 2025**, at the Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

*Blind Injustice* was originally commissioned and premiered by Cincinnati Opera in 2019 to a sold-out run and national critical acclaim. The live CD/Album was cited by *Opera News* as one of the 5 Best New Opera Recordings of 2022. In February 2024, the opera was presented by PEAK Performances at Montclair State University, with Ted Sperling conducting and Robin Guarino directing.

### Bach Reframed: The B Minor Mass at The Great Hall at The Cooper Union

The season ends on **May 5, 2025**, at The Great Hall at The Cooper Union with *Bach Reframed: The B Minor Mass*, a modern, multimedia public **preview performance** of excerpts from one of J.S. Bach's most popular works, the B Minor Mass, with texts and visuals by commissioned writers and artists.

Said Mr. Sperling, "For several years, I have been eager for MasterVoices to present the B Minor Mass, but in a new way that we hope will shed light on the original Latin Mass text through the addition of new text and visuals that bloom from the original. For those who know the piece well, this should be an exciting way to reframe it, and for those who might not normally come to hear a sacred piece like this, maybe this will be an enticing way to experience the piece for the first time."

The vision is for a new approach to Bach's exquisite music, using the repeated-text passages as opportunities to explore what the underlying sentiment might mean today. Rather than repeating the text, existing poems and newly-commissioned writings will be sung to Bach's music, which will remain unchanged. In addition, this reimagining of the work will feature the creativity of visual artists. As MasterVoices did with its acclaimed multimedia project *Myths and Hymns*, where each visual artist took on a chapter of the work, each artist will take on a section of the Mass.

### [Strike Up the Band](#)

**Tuesday, October 29, 2024, 7:00 pm**

**Carnegie Hall, Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage**

Music by George Gershwin

Lyrics by Ira Gershwin

Book by George S. Kaufman

Book revised by Morrie Ryskind in 1930

New adaptation by Laurence Maslon and Ted Sperling

**MasterVoices Chorus**

**Ted Sperling**, director and conductor

**Tracy Christensen**, costume designer

**Tickets**, priced from \$30, are on sale on August 16, 2024, and may be purchased online at [carnegiehall.org](https://www.carnegiehall.org), by calling CarnegieCharge at 212.247.7800, or in person at Carnegie Hall's box office at 57<sup>th</sup> and Seventh Avenue.

The original 1927 version of *Strike Up the Band*, with a book by George S. Kaufman, was a biting anti-war satire. It was the Gershwins' first fully integrated score for a book musical, strongly influenced by Gilbert and Sullivan. It closed in Philadelphia, prompting Kaufman's famous remark, "Satire is what closes on Saturday night." With Kaufman's blessing, the Gershwins turned to Morrie Ryskind to revise it. Songs were cut. New songs were added, with swing rhythms dominating. The politics were replaced by silliness and a happy ending. It opened on Broadway in 1930 and ran for 191 performances.

The basic plot of the show centers on a Babbitt-like businessman who offers to sponsor a war with Switzerland if it is named for him. In the 1927 version, the war was about cheese, and in the 1930 version, it was about chocolate. Complications arise involving espionage and star-crossed lovers, but all is resolved by the final number. The show has not been performed in New York since the 1998 Encores! Revival at City Center.

### [Blind Injustice](#)

**Monday, February 3, 2025, 7:30 pm**

**Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 7:30 pm**

**Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center**

Music by Scott Davenport Richards

Libretto by David Cote

Based on the book *Blind Injustice* by Mark Godsey and casework by the Ohio Innocence Project

**MasterVoices Chorus**

**Ted Sperling**, conductor

**Robin Guarino**, director

**Jason Flamos**, lighting designer

**Tickets**, priced from \$30, are on sale on November 11, 2024, and may be purchased online at [jazz.org](http://jazz.org), at the Jazz at Lincoln Center box office, Broadway at 60<sup>th</sup> Street, or by calling 212-721-6500.

This 90-minute opera tells the true story of six people, still living, who were unjustly accused and convicted of crimes they didn't commit. The exonerees are Rickey Jackson, who spent 39 years in prison for a crime he did not commit; Nancy Smith, a Head Start bus driver falsely accused of molesting children and who spent more than 14 years in prison; Clarence Elkins, convicted of the murder of his mother-in-law and rape of her young granddaughter; and the East Cleveland 3: Laurese Glover, Eugene Johnson, and Derrick Wheatt, witnesses in a shooting who, despite tainted evidence, were convicted. Only through the efforts of the Ohio Innocence Project (OIP) were they ultimately cleared of these accusations and set free. The OIP is one of the most active and successful innocence projects in the country and, to date, has secured the freedom of 42 innocent Ohioans who together served more than 900 years in prison for crimes they didn't commit.

According to Ted Sperling, the work is well suited for MasterVoices, who regularly perform in a variety of musical styles; in *Blind Injustice*, these include opera, musical theater, jazz, and gospel. Maestro Sperling added that the use of a larger chorus in the **New York City premiere** will make its already-important role even more poignant. He says, "at times in this work, the chorus makes you feel like the whole world is against the six exonerees; and at other times, like the whole world is crying to set them free, supporting the six. With our large, diverse chorus, this should be very powerful."

**Scott Davenport Richards** is an award-winning composer/librettist whose creative works have resided at various addresses around the intersection of jazz, opera, and musical theater. Since 2005 he has been professor of Composition/Musical Theatre at Montclair State University's Cali School of Music. **David Cote** is a playwright, opera librettist, and arts journalist based in New York City. Later this season, his newest opera, *Lucidity*, created with composer Laura Kaminsky, and co-commissioned by On Site Opera and Seattle Opera, will premiere. His previous operas include *Three Way* (Nashville Opera and BAM); *The Scarlet Ibis* (Prototype Festival); and *600 Square Feet* (Cleveland Opera Theater).

### **[Bach Reframed: The B Minor Mass \(Preview Performance\)](#)**

**Monday, May 5, 2025, 7:30 pm**

**The Great Hall at The Cooper Union**, located in The Foundation Building. 7 East 7th Street

**MasterVoices Chorus**

**Ted Sperling**, director and conductor

**Tickets**, available on a Choose-What-You-Pay basis, are on sale January 22, 2025, and may be purchased online at [mastervoices.org](http://mastervoices.org).

Since the original setting of the B Minor Mass comprises very short Latin text snippets which repeat many times, Mr. Sperling's vision is for a new approach to support Bach's unparalleled music: using those repeated-text passages as opportunities to explore what the underlying sentiment (e.g., *Lord, have mercy*) might mean today. *Have mercy on whom? Who might be asking this today?* In those passages, rather than repeating the snippets of the same text, the idea will be to bloom into either existing, current poems or writings and/or commission new writing that will expand on that mass text passage and scan perfectly with Bach's music.

As a companion to this work, MasterVoices will commission artists to create a visual representation of individual movements. The production will be similar to MasterVoices 2021 production of Adam Guettel's *Myths and Hymns*, where each visual artist took on a chapter of the work. The completed reimaged version will showcase a modern text and multimedia approach to the timeless music of the B Minor Mass. Bach's setting of the Mass was completed in 1749, the year before his death.

The very thoughtful and extended creative process will be presented in a **public preview of excerpts from the work in progress**. This format will offer the unique opportunity for MasterVoices to describe—as part of the performance—the creative process and give a rare opportunity for the audience to provide feedback in advance of the presentation of the completed and reimaged work in an upcoming season.

Details of MasterVoices' 2024-25 season can be found at [mastervoices.org](http://mastervoices.org), and casting will be announced at a later date.

### **About MasterVoices**

MasterVoices (formerly The Collegiate Chorale) was founded in 1941 by legendary American choral conductor Robert Shaw. Under the artistic direction of Tony Award winner Ted Sperling since 2013, the group is known for its versatility and a repertoire that ranges from choral masterpieces and operas in concert to operettas and musical theater. Season concerts feature a volunteer chorus of 120+ members from all walks of life alongside a diverse roster of world-class soloists from across the musical spectrum, including Mikaela Bennett, Julia Bullock, Victoria Clark, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Renée Fleming, Santino Fontana, Nathan Lane, Kelli O'Hara, Take 6, and Vanessa Williams. Under Sperling's direction the group has created cross-

disciplinary collaborations with such diverse creative minds as legendary lyricist Sheldon Harnick, *Vogue* Editor-at-Large Hamish Bowles, fashion designer Zac Posen, Silk Road visual artist Kevork Mourad, illustrator Manik Choksi, stage designer Doug Fitch, and choreographers Doug Varone and Andrew Palermo. Roger Rees was the group's Artistic Associate from 2003–2015, and in 2021 the group received a New York Emmy Award nomination and a Drama League Award nomination for its multi-genre digital concert production of Adam Guettel's *Myths and Hymns*.

Known for its presentation of lesser-known artistic treasures, the group has received recent accolades for productions of rarely-heard works such as the 2023-24 season's acclaimed revival of Sondheim and Shevelove's *The Frogs*, the 2022-23 season's New York City premiere of Sheldon Harnick's full English translation of Bizet's *Carmen*, *Lady in the Dark* by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin, Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland*, the Gershwins' *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, Stephen Sondheim and Arthur Laurents's *Anyone Can Whistle*, and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. They also commission and premiere new works; recent examples include choral works by Ricky Ian Gordon, Marisa Michelson, Tariq Al-Sabir, and Randall Eng.

As one of the country's first interracial and interfaith choruses, MasterVoices (as The Collegiate Chorale) performed at the opening of the United Nations and has sung and recorded under the batons of esteemed conductors including Serge Koussevitzky, Arturo Toscanini, and Leonard Bernstein, among others. It has been engaged by top-tier orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Israel Philharmonic, and has appeared at the Verbier and Salzburg Festivals.

For more information, visit [mastervoices.org](http://mastervoices.org). Connect with MasterVoices on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) (@mastervoicesny), and [YouTube](#).

### **About Ted Sperling**

One of today's leading musical artists, Tony Award-winning Maestro Ted Sperling is a classically trained musician whose career has spanned from the concert hall and the opera house to the Broadway stage. Presently Artistic Director of MasterVoices, he has led such symphony orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Boston Pops, San Diego Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, the Iceland Symphony, Czech National Symphony, and BBC Concert Orchestra, as well as New York City Opera and Houston Grand Opera. Formerly Principal Conductor of the Westchester Philharmonic, he is a multi-faceted artist also known for his work as orchestrator, singer, pianist, violinist, violist, director, and music director.

With MasterVoices, Maestro Sperling has led acclaimed productions of rarely-heard gems as both director and conductor. These include Kurt Weill's *The Firebrand of Florence*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *The Road of Promise* (based on *The Eternal Road* and subsequently recorded on Navona Records), and the sold-out three-performance run of *Lady in the Dark* at New York City Center. Other notable productions with the group include the acclaimed recent revival of Stephen Sondheim and Burt Shevelove's *The Frogs*, Carnegie Hall performances of Stephen Sondheim's *Anyone Can Whistle*, George and Ira Gershwin's satirical musicals *Of Thee I Sing* and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, a reconstruction of Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland*, and *Song of Norway*; the New York City premieres of David Lang's *battle hymns* at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum; and Ricky Ian Gordon's operas *The Grapes of Wrath* at Carnegie Hall and *27* at New York City Center.

During the 2020-2021 season, Maestro Sperling spearheaded a filmed production of Adam Guettel's *Myths and Hymns* for MasterVoices, producing and music directing 24 short musical films and directing roughly half

of them. This project was nominated for a Drama League Award, and featured over 100 artists collaborating remotely, including Renée Fleming, Take 6, Jennifer Holliday and Julia Bullock. He has symphonic engagements in the U.S. and Europe and continues to teach at NYU, conducting three different orchestras and training the next generation of Broadway musicians and conductors.

Sperling has conducted multiple concerts for PBS's *Live From Lincoln Center*, the American Songbook Series at Lincoln Center, and the *Lyrics and Lyricists* series at the 92nd Street Y. He conducted Audra McDonald in a double bill of *La Voix Humaine* and the world premiere of *Send: Who Are You? I Love You?* at the Houston Grand Opera. He won the 2005 Tony and Drama Desk Awards for his orchestrations of Adam Guettel's *The Light in the Piazza*, for which he was also Music Director.

In addition to his directing work with MasterVoices, Mr. Sperling's work as a stage director includes the world premieres of four critically acclaimed original musicals Off-Broadway—including *The Other Josh Cohen* and *See What I Wanna See*—and a noted production of *Lady in the Dark* at the Prince Theater in Philadelphia, starring Andrea Marcovicci. He graduated *summa cum laude* from Yale University, and received the Faculty Prize at The Juilliard School. He made his Broadway stage debut as Wallace Hartley in *Titanic* and appeared as Steve Allen in the finale of Season Two of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel."

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