



MASTEROICES PERFORMS A NEW VERSION OF *STRIKE UP THE BAND*, GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN, GEORGE S. KAUFMAN, AND MORRIE RYSKIND'S POLITICAL MUSICAL SATIRE, ON OCTOBER 29 AT CARNEGIE HALL

Featuring Shereen Ahmed, Phillip Attmore, Victoria Clark, Lissa deGuzman, Claybourne Elder, Christopher Fitzgerald, Bryce Pinkham, and David Pittu; Choreography by Alison Solomon, Directed and Conducted by Ted Sperling



***New York, NY, September 18, 2024* — MasterVoices opens its 2024-25 season on Tuesday, October 29 at Carnegie Hall when MasterVoices Artistic Director Ted Sperling leads the 120-member MasterVoices Chorus, the MasterVoices Orchestra and guest soloists in a concert staging of *Strike Up the Band*, with music by George Gershwin and lyrics by Ira Gershwin.**

The performance features **Shereen Ahmed, Phillip Attmore, Victoria Clark, Lissa deGuzman, Claybourne Elder, Christopher Fitzgerald, Bryce Pinkham, and David Pittu**, with additional casting to be announced. The choreographer is **Alison Solomon**. The costume design is by **Tracy Christensen**, lighting design by **Shelby Loera**, and sound design by **Marc Salzberg**.

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* in 2017, and its sequel, *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, in 2019.

Says Mr. Sperling, “Working with both the Gershwin and Kaufman estates, author Laurence Maslon and I have created a new edition of *Strike Up the Band*, which contains the best of the 1927 and 1930 versions of the show; I hope this 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*.

This MasterVoices performance will be dedicated to the memory of Gershwin family member Michael Strunsky, who would have turned 90 years old the week of our concert. As steward of the Ira Gershwin Musical Estate, Mike was an essential supporter of so many of MasterVoices' projects, including *The Firebrand of Florence*, *Lady in the Dark*, *Of Thee I Sing*, and *Let 'Em Eat Cake*. He will be sorely missed.

[Strike Up the Band](#)

Tuesday, October 29, 2024, 7:00 pm

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, Artistic Director and Conductor

MasterVoices Orchestra

Directed by **Ted Sperling**

Choreography by [Alison Solomon](#)

Costumes designed by **Tracy Christensen**

Lighting design by **Shelby Loera**

Sound design by **Marc Salzberg**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

[Shereen Ahmed](#) JOAN FLETCHER

Phillip Attmore TIM HARPER

Victoria Clark MRS. DRAPER

[Lissa deGuzman](#) MISS MEADE

Claybourne Elder G. EDGAR SLOANE

Christopher Fitzgerald SPELVINI

Bryce Pinkham JIM TOWNSEND

David Pittu COLONEL HOLMES

DANCERS: Colin Bradbury, Fiona Huber, Masumi Iwai, Justin Keats, Cory Lingner, Derek Luscutoff

Tickets, priced from \$30, may be purchased online at carnegiehall.org, by calling CarnegieCharge at 212.247.7800, or in person at Carnegie Hall's box office at 57th and Seventh Avenue.

About *Strike Up the Band*

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." At Kaufman's suggestion, 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 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.

Details of MasterVoices' 2024-25 season can be found at mastervoices.org.

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 Sheelove'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. 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."

Images (from left to right): Shereen Ahmed, Phillip Attmore, Victoria Clark, Lissa deGuzman, Claybourne Elder, Christopher Fitzgerald, Bryce Pinkham, David Pittu, and Ted Sperling, courtesy of MasterVoices. Artwork created by Owen Gent.

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