

Downtown Voices | NOVUS NY





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# TRINITY CHURCH WALL STREET

# **ANTHEMS**

# **Downtown Voices**

# **NOVUS NY:**

Amy Schroeder and Jennifer Liu, *violins*Jessica Meyer, *viola*Michael Nicolas, *cello*Victor Caccese, *percussion*Mitchell Vines, *piano* 

Stephen Sands, director

NOVEMBER 13, 2022 3PM

**Trinity Church** 

# **PROGRAM**

the national anthems David Lang (b. 1957)

1. our land with peace

2. our hearts are glowing

3. fame and glory

4. keep us free

5. our common fate

Shabnam Abedi, soprano

Dark Night of the Soul Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

**Luminous Night of the Soul** 

Elizabeth Bates, soprano

Source Code Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

Tonight a Stolen Moment Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)

We Shall Walk through the Valley Undine Smith Moore (1904–1989)

LIGHTING BY TAKAAKI ANDO

In today's performance, Downtown Voices with NOVUS NY present works by Undine Smith Moore, Jessie Montgomery, Jenni Brandon, and David Lang in an array of selections that explore various composers' takes on an "anthem." Anthems have been historically recognized as musical representations of ideals, often these ideals being freedom and solidarity. For many, anthems can also evoke harsh reality of oppression and injustice. Our program explores a variety of anthems and musical journeys in search of the ideal: from displacement and alienation to patriotism, faith, and the passage from darkness into light.

We begin the concert with David Lang's the national anthems, a meditative reflection on themes of peace, war, patriotism, pride of place, and what it means to defend freedom that is ultimately fragile and delicate. the national anthems culminates in a powerful contemplation—the final movement, our fate—that we are all inextricably linked in our human experiences.

Ola Gjeilo's *Dark and Luminous Night* portrays the passage of the soul from mortality to its union with God. Based on the 16<sup>th</sup> century poem by a major figure of the Counter-Reformation, St. John of the Cross, the piece depicts a soul leaving its "still house" and venturing into the night. Seemingly fearless, the soul is guided out of the darkness by the light of love; *Luminous Night* reveals the soul's fulfillment.

Jessie Montgomery's stunning Source Code takes inspiration from spirituals and various anthems from African American artists prominent during the height of the Civil Rights era.

When asked about her inspiration for the piece, Montgomery expounded, "I experimented by re-interpreting gestures, sentences, and musical syntax (the bare bones of rhythm and inflection) by choreographer Alvin Ailey, poets Langston Hughes and Rita Dove, and the great jazz songstress Ella Fitzgerald into musical sentences and tone paintings. Ultimately, this exercise of listening, re-imagining, and transcribing led me back to the Black spiritual as a common musical source across all three genres. The spiritual is a significant part of the DNA of Black folk music, and subsequently most (arguably all) American pop music forms that have developed to the present day."

Jenni Brandon's setting of Bobbi Nicotera's poem Tonight a Stolen Moment portrays a displaced family who are forced out with only their memories to hold. On their journey to America, the stars become evocations and ease their fears of the unknown as they envision a new life ahead.

Nicotera writes, "In *Tonight a Stolen Moment*, I imagine what might have been. Here a family must abandon the only life they've known for a strange and unfamiliar new world. The unknowable future frightens the narrator, and yet the speaker finds solace in the immutability of the night sky. The piece is hopeful, though, as the narrator sees a life to come full of more memories."

The program concludes with Undine Smith Moore's arrangement of *We Shall Walk through the Valley*. Now known as the "Dean of Black Women Composers," Moore was a brilliant musician who devastatingly never thought she would be capable of being a composer. Her arrangement of Psalm 23 reflects the program's themes of faith, love, and light, guiding us to peace and living in hope to reach the ideal.

-Melissa Baker, Artistic Planning

# the national anthems Words and music by David Lang

Every country has a history —how it came to be, how its wars were won or lost, how strong its people are, or how proud, or how sad. We group ourselves into nations, but it has never really been clear to me what that means, or what we get out of it. Are we grouped together because we believe something together and are proud of associating with others who believe the same way? Or are we grouped together because our ancestors found themselves pushed onto a piece of land by people who didn't want them on theirs? It seems that all nations have some bright periods and some dark periods in their past. Building a national myth out of our bright memories probably creates a different character than if we build one out of the dark.

I had the idea that if I looked carefully at every national anthem, I might be able to identify something that everyone in the world could agree on. If I could take just one hopeful sentence from the national anthem of every nation in the world, I might be able to make a kind of meta-anthem of the things that we all share. I started combing through the anthems, pulling out from each the sentence that seemed to me the most committed. What I found, to my shock and surprise, was that within almost every anthem is a bloody, war-like, tragic core, in which we cover up our deep fears of losing our freedoms with waves of aggression and bravado.

At first, I didn't know what to do with this text. I didn't want to make a piece that was aggressive, or angry, or ironic. Instead, I read and re-read the meta-anthem I had made until another thought became clear to me. Hiding in every national anthem is the recognition that we are insecure

about our freedoms, that freedom is fragile, and delicate, and easy to lose. Maybe an anthem is a memory informing a kind of prayer, a heartfelt plea:

There was a time when we were forced to live in chains.

Please don't make us live in chains again.

-David Lang

1.

our songs

our land with peace our land with swords all of us are brave we have one wish we have one goal we swear by lightning and by our fragrant blood heaven gave us life and we alone remain we fight for peace our country calls us and we hear her call we hear the sound of our chains breaking we crown ourselves in glory and we die death is the same for everyone but dying for our land will make us blessed for we are young and free land with mountain land with river land with field if you need our death our blood, our heart, our soul we are ready we lift our heads up to the rising sun our peace our values our skies our hearts

# PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXTS

our tears our time our land our seed our pride

we have no doubts or fears

our faithful friends are faithful in the battle our land, we swear to you our blood is yours to spill keep watch, angels keep watch, stars

our parents knew how to fight the sun will shine on us forever

when the wicked come let them prepare for death for we would rather die than live as slaves

our land, you fill our souls with fire

our blessed land

keep watch, moon

our parents left this land to us our hearts defy our deaths

a vivid ray of love and hope descends

upon us and our land bless us with long life

our land is love and beauty without end

harvest our vows, which ripen underneath your

sun our land, to lead a peaceful life

we give our lives we were wounded we were bruised then we rose up

our past is sleeping in our forests

you are our garden and our grave

# 2.

our hearts are glowing sing brother, sister

our freedom must be sung

we were slaves we were scorned

but now, our future is ours

our flowers our fields our fertile soil

we will die before we let the wicked step upon them

we are not slaves

we are the seed that sprouts

upon the fields of pain we are one blood

on our land we were born our heads were bowed -

now raise them
we are wild with joy
and if we have to die
what does it matter?
our children know

the fight has made our faces glow

sweet shelter

kissed by our sun, our trees, our wind

we don't fear death die for our land and live we know our selves by our terrifying sword

ours is our land

ours is our beautiful land

our land is where our heroes rest our earth our peace
our blood
these are our gifts
we broke our chains
united, firm, determined
our face is brighter than our sun
we are our loyal guardian
in each of us the hero remembers how to fight
we walk the path of happiness
to our rightful place
with our last breath
we thank ourselves

### 3.

our sky

fame and glory
fame and glory
no valley
no hill
no water
no shore
the bloody flag is raised
the wicked howl

they come to cut our throats to throw us back in chains

no sorcerers no poison no deceivers no fear we strive we work we pray

our star rises up

and shines between two seas

our heart and hand

are the pledges of our fortune with mind and strength of arm

we recognize ourselves by our terrifying sword

with heads, with hearts, with hands we will die before we are made slaves our historic past

our sun, our sweat, our sea

our pain, our hope
the flower of our blood
branches of the same trunk
eyes in the same light

the sea, the land, the dawn, the sun are singing our parents never saw the glory that we see

we turn our faces up

there is a star, the clearest light bring us happier times and ways each day is like a thousand years

victory, victory, victory

long live our land, our people, our body, our soul the light in our eyes is the brilliance of our faith

will we see you? our woe or our wealth our eyes turn east we are awake

### 4.

keep us tree be our light

until pebbles turn to boulders and are covered in moss our light and our guide golden sun, golden seed fill our hearts with thanks when our hearts beat as one

show us the way

until the mountains wear away

and the seas run dry be safe and be glorious build our own fortune

move forward our sons sing

our daughters bloom

our parents and our children

await our call our peace our rain

# PROGRAM NOTES AND TEXTS

be green

we are your sacrifice fortunate and faithful the sun drives off the clouds we risk everything we sing new songs for you, for you, for ever our love, our zeal, our loyalty our land, where our blood spills our fields will flower with hope our land gives us our name and we will never leave we walk the path we have chosen we will die while we are on it our land, sweet is your beauty a thousand heroes our full measure of devotion our language is a burning flame our flag flies in the wind our unwavering land our rocky hills from where our lights rise up our name is freedom our blood waters it we pray for you woven from a hundred flowers we won't let the wicked wash their hands in this guiltless blood of ours may our blessings flow let nothing dim the light that's shining in our sky a single leap

into the dazzling sky

but we are enough

and may our land be happy

obey our call we are not many

be happy

interpret our past glorify our present inspire our future we are coming forth with strength and power our seas roar at our feet shout our name shout it again there is no middle ground between the free man and the slave may the light be denied us if we break our solemn vow the burning of the heart in our chests is alive our land will not die as long as we live the rays of the sun are a mother's kiss we swear by the sky by the spreading light now, or never we will make our fate ourselves it was, it is, it will always be at last, our pride is worth our pride

# 5.

our common fate

our brighter day
our loyalty and love and vow
our crown
our virtuous honor
our sacred hymn of combat
our light, reflecting guidance
our sword with no flaw
our sepulcher of ages
our only land
our voices on high
our noble aspiration
our thunders, wildly beating

our fire in every vein our tears, flowing down our cheeks our everlasting mountains our milk, our honey, our people working hard our different voices, our one heart our breath of life our death, our glory and our land our fight - there is a fight to fight our fair land, its hills and rivers our memories of days long gone our morning skies, grown red our sacred home, our suns that never set our future is the future, our meaning is the meaning our shields are wisdom, unity and peace our sacrifice of every drop of blood our love, our service, our untiring zeal our prayer for us, unseen our fires of hope and prayer our thunderbolts, our fire our star, and it will shine forever our light and song and soul our song forever more our own dear land our fate, which smiles once more our sacrifice, our blood, our souls our enemies, scattered and confounded our land, our home, our free, our brave our land, our grave our glory, for as long as the world shines our many ways before and our many ways today our rock, our beacon our scream out loud our steps, resounding on the long and tiring road our song - echoing over and over again our brothers and sisters under the sun

may the rains come

# Dark Night of the Soul Ola Gjeilo

One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
- ah, the sheer grace! I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.
In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
- ah, the sheer grace! in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.
On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.

- St. John of the Cross

# **Luminous Night of the Soul Ola Gjeilo**

Luminous Night of the Soul is the sequel to Dark Night of the Soul, which was published in 2011. Both are independent pieces that can be performed separately, but they were also conceived as two movements of one work. Part of the reason for the solo cello passage at the intro to Luminous Night is that I wanted a quiet respite from the saturated washes of sound that are a big part of Dark Night. The essential link between the two pieces is a theme that is featured towards the end of both, in very different ways; while the end of Dark Night is lyrical and romantic, the finale of Luminous Night is exuberant and relentless.

Luminous Night is set to words by Charles Anthony Silvestri, plus a stanza from St. John of the Cross' poem Dark Night of the Soul. It has a brighter, sunnier atmosphere than its predecessor, but with both I wanted to feature the piano heavily in a choral work, as an equal partner to the choir and unified by the string quartet sound.

Ola Gieilo

Long before music was sung by a choir, Long before silver was shaped in the fire, Long before poets inspired the heart, You were the Spirit of all that is art.

You give the potter the feel of the clay; You give the actor the right part to play; You give the author a story to tell; You are the prayer in the sound of a bell.

Praise to all lovers who feel your desire! Praise to all music which soars to inspire! Praise to the wonders of Thy artistry Our Divine Spirit, all glory to Thee.

-Charles Anthony Silvestri

O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the Lover with his beloved,
transforming the beloved in her Lover.

-St. John of the Cross

# Tonight a Stolen Moment Poem by Bobbi J. Nicotera

In *Tonight a Stolen Moment* we are introduced to a family forced from their home with nothing with them but the memories of their former life. They leave seeking a better life on the shores of America. I wanted to reflect this idea of searching, of travel and displacement in the opening of the

piece through the wave-like music in the instruments as the family travels across the ocean.

There is a sense of urgency in these lines that gives way to reflecting on all that is lost: "a piano, the photographs, a gold and opal ring. The broken branches of a family tree."

We move from the ocean then to travel by train with the idea of the train lurching into the unknown. This is represented through the harsh, chromatic lines that represent train whistles, and I imagine the journey from all that was familiar into a new land to be an exhausting, frightening trip.

Despite this sense of fear, there is hope.
Throughout the piece there is a single pitch that is repeated, usually several times, by the glockenspiel. I wanted a way to represent the stars in the skies which have now become the holders of memories for our immigrant family. It continues to reappear throughout the piece as a reminder that no matter where they are in the world, they can always look to the stars for their memories and add new ones as they create a new life.
One of my favorite lines in the poem is

"Sailing to a city of millions, floating in a galaxy of people" which represents the arrival in America, possibly at Ellis Island in New York. I imagine what an immigrant family must have felt as they arrived in this huge city - the crowds, the opportunities, and the dream of a new life must have been overwhelming and exciting. In this section of the work the poetry and musical lines begin to overlap and interrupt each other, representing the way it would sound in a city with many voices all speaking at once.

-Jenni Brandon

Tonight a stolen moment while
My family sleeps below deck.
A long gaze upward into inky darknessLike the night we left, a sky so full of stars.

We had to leave quickly. We had to leave quietly.

A whole life swept up, stuffed into a few small bags.

Too sudden a leaving to think of what we left-A piano, the photographs. A gold and opal ring. The broken branches of a family tree.

Those things that we can replace. Those things that we cannot.

Memories flung out an open window
As the train lurched forward into darkness. The
dimming lights of home so small in the
distance.

My mind too full of the necessary things.

No room for luxuries. No room for memories.

That night I bequeathed them to the stars-Those pictures in my mind's eye. I will need to find them again someday, for Tomorrow we reach the great harbor.

Sailing to a city of millions. Floating in a galaxy of people.

To them I pray, then:
You stars, the only jewels I now possess,
Protect them, keep them in the only sky I
know.

I will come back for them, I will add new ones.

# We Shall Walk through the Valley Undine Smith Moore

We shall walk through the valley in peace; We shall walk through the valley in peace; If Jesus Himself shall be our Leader, We shall walk through the valley in peace

There will be no trials there;
There will be no trials there.
If Jesus Himself shall be our Leader,
We shall walk through the valley in peace.



Trinity Church Wall Street's new music orchestra, NOVUS NY, is a key player on the contemporary music scene and has formed strong partnerships with many of today's leading composers. Its "expert and versatile musicians" (New Yorker) perform new music from all corners of the repertoire, meeting "every challenge with an impressive combination of discipline and imagination" (New York Classical Review). In its annual appearances at Prototype, NOVUS NY has helped pioneer several major new operas including the Pulitzer Prize-winning operas Ellen Reid's prism (2019) and Angel's Bone by Du Yun (2017) as well as Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's Breaking the Waves, named "Best New Opera for 2016" by the Music Critics Association of North America.

NOVUS NY's recordings include Luna Pearl Woolf's GRAMMY-nominated *Fire and Flood*, Ellen Reid's *p r i s m*, Paola Prestini's *The Hubble*  Cantata, Du Yun's Angel's Bone, Trevor Weston Choral Works, Elena Ruehr's Averno, Philip Glass's Symphony No. 5, Edward Thomas's opera Anna Christie, and Am I Born by David T. Little.

### **NOVUS NY Roster:**

Amy Schroeder and Jennifer Liu, *violins*Jessica Meyer, *viola*Michael Nicolas, *cello*Mitchell Vines, *piano*Victor Caccese, *percussion* 

# **DOWNTOWN VOICES**



Praised by *The New York Times* for its "incisive, agile strength," Downtown Voices is a semi professional choir made up of volunteer singers and Grammy-nominated members of The Choir of Trinity Wall Street. Directed by Stephen Sands since its 2015 inception, Downtown Voices has performed works by Beethoven, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Pärt, Webern, Ginastera, Janáček, James MacMillan, and Philip Glass, in addition to premiering *Spire and Shavdow* by Zachary Wadsworth, a large-scale commission for the 250th anniversary of St. Paul's Chapel.

In October, the group performed with The Buffalo Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, garnering wide praise from members of the press: "... outstanding, with clear diction and articulation, coupled with ensemble balance and intonation that was exceptional..." (New York Concert Review) and "...a marvel of well supported tone, [and] lucid diction..." (New York Classical Review).

Recently, Downtown Voices performed Orff's Carmina Burana at The Ross Farm, Compline by Candlelight and Lux Aeterna concerts at St. Paul's Chapel, Beethoven's 9th Symphony at the Church of St. Paul & St. Andrew, and members of Downtown Voices were featured alongside The Choir of Trinity Wall Street in Handel's L'Allegro: a highly acclaimed collaboration with Mark Morris Dance Group. The group has also performed several Community Carol Sing concerts, Arvo Pärt's Passio, Beethoven's Mass in C, a celebration of the past hundred years of Estonian composition, a program featuring Dvořák's rarely performed Mass in D and Britten's Hymn to St. Cecilia, and a virtual performance of works by Adolphus Hailstork. Downtown Voices has been featured several times in concert with Andrea Bocelli at Madison Square Garden, most recently alongside Jon Batiste, and can be heard on the epic recording Philip Glass: Symphony No. 5 released by Orange Mountain Music.

# DOWNTOWN VOICES Stephen Sands, Director Mitchell Vines, Accompanist

### **SOPRANO**

Shabnam Abedi \*

Elizabeth Bates \*

Alice Belshaw

Ximena Borges

Aani Bourassa \*

Marella Briones

Carolyn Burns

Meg Dudley \*

Hannah Landes

Luana K. Lewis

Victoria Meneses

Melanie Milton

Pamela Mosley

Rachel Nicastro

Hillarie O'Toole

Julie Reumert Dichiacchio

Erin Schwab

Katherine Sebastian

Carrie Sheeran

Mithuna Sivaraman

Sandy Sobey

Kate Theis

# **ALTO**

Charlotte Bergmann

**Emily Bergmann** 

Mary Kathryn Bessinger

Tiffani Burgess

Sharon Byrne \*

Astrid Cook

Elise Crull

**Emily Drossell** 

Catey Esler

Landy Guzman

Heather Jones \*

Mckenzie Kitchen

Amy Lifland

Sarah Longstreth

Clifton Massey \*

Monique Pelletier

Pamela Terry \*

Nicole Wakabayashi

Mary Rose Yong

Laurie Yorr

### **TENOR**

Paul Berryman

Sam Coxon

Eric Daffron

Chris Dolci

Brian Giebler \*

Timothy Hodges \*

Nick Karageorgiou \*

Jeff Lunden

Gavin B Mackie .

Hannes Manell

Kev Schneider

Martin Schreiner

Theron Smith III

Erol Tamerman

David Vanderwal \*

Tommy Wazelle \*

# BASS

Blake Burroughs \*

Dominic Inferrera \*

Stanley Figaro

Jalen Hicks \*

Steven Hrycelak\*

Kevin Hu

Ryan John

Tom O'Toole

Peter Stewart \*

William Theuer

<sup>\*</sup>Member of The Choir of Trinity Wall Street



## Stephen Sands, director

A GRAMMY-nominated "crystalline tenor" (Backstage) who was praised by *The New York Times* as "a tenor with a focused, powerful tone" who sings with "subtlety" and "poignancy", Stephen Sands is highly sought after as a soloist, conductor, music educator and ensemble member by some of the most prestigious institutions and conductors in the United States. A NJ Excellence in the Arts winner, Sands holds his Bachelors and Masters degrees from Westminster Choir College.

Stephen Sands is the conductor of Downtown Voices, part of the Trinity Church Wall Street music program which is in its seventh season. Downtown Voices is focused on bringing the best volunteer and professional singers in the NYC area together into one choir for high-level performances. Of his conducting in Britten's St. Nicholas, The New York Times said "In the sequences in which the adult choir sang at the front of the church, with the children's choir in the organ loft, the conductor Stephen Sands beautifully balanced the sound and maintained order. The singers and instrumentalists had incisive, agile strength." Performances have featured Britten's St. Nicolas. Beethoven's

Missa Solemnis, and Symphony Number 9, Spire and Shadow, by Zachary Wadsworth, which examines the rich history of downtown New York City and celebrates the 250th anniversary of St. Paul's Chapel. Sands also conducted Handel's Israel in Egypt with the Trinity Baroque Orchestra and prepared the choir for Philip Glass's Symphony Number 5, recorded and released by Orange Mountain Music. Rachmaninoff's All-Night Vigil, a grand Candlelight Christmas service and a concert of the beautiful Martin Mass and Howells Requiem and a concert of Estonian choral music, and Orff's Carmina Burana are some highlights of recent seasons. This season, the choir was featured at Carnegie Hall as part of the Buffalo Philharmonic's Lukas Foss Celebration. "Through it all the combined choirs, superbly prepared by Stephen Sands, were a marvel of well-supported tone, lucid diction, and (when called for) smart, détaché articulation."

-New York Classical Review

Stephen is a founding member and Executive Director of the internationally award-winning Antioch Chamber Ensemble, widely regarded as one of the finest professional vocal ensembles in the country. He has had the pleasure of coordinating international performing tours, producing commercial recordings, and staging many self-funded performances. Stephen has recently coordinated and participated in residencies and masterclasses with Antioch at Harvard University, Washington and Lee University and Vassar College. Antioch has recently released In Praise of Music, a recording of works by legendary choral composer Robert Kyr, produced by Soundmirror and released by Bridge Records.

# STEPHEN SANDS, DIRECTOR

As an Artistic Director, Stephen has successfully founded and raised funds from both individual and institutional sources for Music in the Somerset Hills, an organization dedicated to music education and performance in northern New Jersey. In prior seasons Stephen led a concert of Music of the Movies, featuring actor Peter Dinklage and a professional orchestra of Broadway players, led by Jonathan Dinklage, a concert of Mozart's Requiem and conducted a concert of Handel's Water Music on Ravine Lake in Far Hills, NJ. Recent seasons have featured The Glenn Miller Orchestra and Canadian Brass, a concert of works by Leonard Bernstein, The King's Singers in concert and an outdoor concert celebrating the 75th anniversary of Copland's Appalachian Spring, which was composed in the Somerset Hills.

In addition to a successful career as a musician and conductor, Stephen is also a respected music educator. He has taught choral music to thousands of students in grades 3-12 in the Somerset Hills School District for more than 24 years. Stephen has been heard as the evangelist and tenor soloist in numerous performances of Bach's and Handel's sacred oratorios, such as this performance with the The Choir of Trinity Wall Street and Trinity Baroque Orchestra of Comfort Ye and Every Valley from *The Messiah*. As an ensemble member, Stephen sings with the Carmel Bach Festival Chorale, TENET, Clarion Music Society, Pomerium, and is a full-time member of The Choir of Trinity Wall Street.



# From Bach to Brazil: NOVUS NY at Carnegie Hall

November 19, 2022, 7pm • Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium/ Perelman Stage • In-person only • Tickets can be purchased at carnegiehall.org

Sixty years after making his Carnegie Hall debut, Brazilian pianist and conductor João Carlos Martins returns to Carnegie Hall. He leads NOVUS NY in a program focusing on the music of Bach, as well as a world premiere by Brazilian composer André Mehmari and works by the pioneering Brazilian modernist Heitor Villa-Lobos.



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Voice of Crumb Part 2 | St. Paul's Chapel | 1pm

NOVUS NY, Sandbox Percussion, and The Choir of Trinity Wall Street

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Avi Stein, Organist and Chorusmaster
Stephen Sands, Downtown Voices Director
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The Rev. Phillip A. Jackson, Rector The Rev. Michael A. Bird, Vicar

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Learn more at trinitywallstreet.org/music