

The Metropolitan Opera

April 2011

The Stars of *Die Walküre*

New Productions
of 2011-12, Including
the *Ring Cycle*

James Levine:
40 Years at the Met

A Conversation with
Joyce DiDonato

Deborah Voigt in *Die Walküre*

PLAYBILL

Christoph Willibald Gluck

Orfeo ed Euridice

CONDUCTOR

Antony Walker

DEBUT

PRODUCTION

Mark Morris

SET DESIGNER

Allen Moyer

COSTUME DESIGNER

Isaac Mizrahi

LIGHTING DESIGNER

James F. Ingalls

CHOREOGRAPHER

Mark Morris

GENERAL MANAGER

Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR

James Levine

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Ranieri de'Calzabigi

Friday, April 29, 2011, 8:00–9:30 pm

First time this season

The production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* was made possible by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer J. Thomas, Jr.

The Metropolitan Opera

2010–11 Season

The 94th Metropolitan Opera performance of

Christoph Willibald Gluck's

Orfeo ed Euridice

Conductor

Antony Walker DEBUT

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Orfeo

David Daniels

Amore

Lisette Oropesa *

Euridice

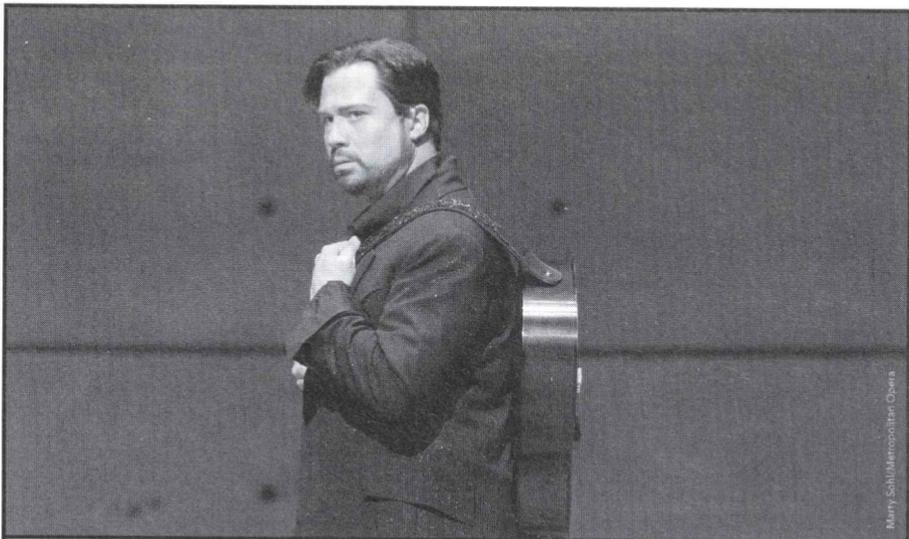
Kate Royal DEBUT

HARPSICHORD

Jonathan Kelly

Orfeo ed Euridice is performed without intermission.

Friday, April 29, 2011, 8:00–9:30 pm



Murry Schell/Metropolitan Opera

David Daniels as Orfeo in a scene from Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*

Chorus Master **Donald Palumbo**
 Musical Preparation **Steven Eldredge, Ransom Wilson, Hemdi Kfir, and Jonathan Kelly**
 Assistant Stage Director **David Kneuss**
 Stage Band Conductor **Gregory Buchalter**
 Assistants to Mark Morris **Matthew Rose and Joe Bowie**
 Associate Costume Designer **Courtney Logan**
 Scenery, properties, and electrical props constructed and painted in **Metropolitan Opera Shops**
 Costumes executed by **Metropolitan Opera Costume Department**
 Wigs executed by **Metropolitan Opera Wig Department**

Orfeo ed Euridice is performed in the Vienna version, 1762, edited for the *Gluck Complete Works (Gluck-Gesamtausgabe)* by Anna Albert and Ludwig Finscher; used by arrangement with European American Music Distributors LLC, sole U.S. and Canadian agent for Bärenreiter, publisher and copyright owner.

This performance is made possible in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Additional funding for this production was received from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Before the performance begins, please switch off cell phones and other electronic devices.

Yamaha is the official piano of the Metropolitan Opera.

Latecomers will not be admitted during the performance.

* Graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program

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Synopsis

Act I

SCENE 1 A lonely grove—Euridice's grave

Nymphs and shepherds lament the death of Euridice, who was bitten by a snake ("Ah, se intorno a quest' urna funesta"). Left alone, Orfeo, Euridice's husband, adds his voice to the rites ("Chiamo il mio ben così"). Only Echo replies. Orfeo vows to rescue Euridice from the underworld ("Numi! barbari numi").

SCENE 2

Amore, god of love, appears with word that Jove, pitying Orfeo, will allow him to descend into the land of the dead to retrieve Euridice. To make this trial more difficult, Orfeo must neither look at Euridice, nor explain why looking is forbidden. Otherwise he will lose her forever ("Gli sguardi trattieni"). Orfeo agrees and begins his voyage.

Act II

SCENE 1 The Gate of Hades

Furies and ghosts try to deny Orfeo's passage to the underworld ("Chi mai dell'Erebo"). His lament softens and placates them. He is eventually allowed to pass through to the Elysian Fields.

SCENE 2 Elysium

Orfeo is moved by the beauty of the landscape ("Che puro ciel, che chiaro sol"). Heroes and heroines bring Euridice to him ("Torna, o bella, al tuo consorte"). Without looking at her, he takes her away.

Act III

SCENE 1 A dark labyrinth

Orfeo leads Euridice toward the upper world, forbidden to look at her ("Vieni, segui i miei passi"). Orfeo can't explain ("Vieni, appaga il tuo consorte!"). Euridice panics at the thought of a life without the love of Orfeo ("Che fiero momento") and in desperation he turns to her. She dies, again. Grief-stricken, Orfeo wonders how he can live without her ("Che farò senza Euridice?"). He decides to kill himself.

SCENE 2

Amore appears and stays Orfeo's hand. In response to Orfeo's deep love and devotion, Amore revives Euridice for the second time. The three return to Earth.

SCENE 3 The Temple of Love

Orfeo, Euridice, Amore, the nymphs, and the shepherds all celebrate the power of love ("Trionfi Amore!").

In Focus

Christoph Willibald Gluck

Orfeo ed Euridice

Premiere: Court Theatre (Burgtheater), Vienna, 1762

The myth of the musician Orpheus—who travels to the underworld to retrieve his dead wife, Eurydice—probes the deepest questions of desire, grief, and the power (and limits) of art. The story is the subject of opera's oldest surviving score (Jacopo Peri's *Euridice*, 1600) and of the oldest opera still being performed (Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, 1607). Gluck and his librettist, Calzabigi, turned to this legend as the basis for a work as they were developing their ideas for a new kind of opera. Disillusioned with the inflexible forms of the genre as they existed at the time, Gluck sought to reform the operatic stage with a visionary and seamless union of music, poetry, and dance. Specifically, he wanted the singers to serve the drama, and not the reverse. The recent popularity of Handel's operas has shown that many operas written prior to Gluck's reforms have a power that still resonates. But there is no denying that *Orfeo ed Euridice*, with its score of transcendent and irresistible beauty, helped expand the public's idea of opera's theatrical potential. Mozart and Wagner were among the successors to Gluck who openly acknowledged their debt to his vision.

The Creators

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787) was born in Bavaria and studied music in Milan. He joined an orchestra and learned about the art of opera production in that city, where his first operas were produced. Gluck traveled extensively throughout Europe, attracting students and disciples to his philosophy of an all-encompassing operatic-theatrical experience. After notable successes in London, Prague, Dresden, and especially Paris, Gluck had his greatest achievements in Vienna, where he died in 1787. His librettist for *Orfeo ed Euridice* was the remarkable Italian poet Ranieri de'Calzabigi (1714–1795). Thanks to many years spent in Paris, he had been influenced by French drama and shared Gluck's zeal for an ideal musical theater. Calzabigi's preface to the libretto of their subsequent collaboration, *Alceste*, spelled out the pair's ideas for operatic reform.

The Setting

The opera is set in an idealized Greek countryside and in the mythological underworld. These settings are more conceptual than geographic, and notions of how they should appear can (and rightly do) change in every era.

The Music

Gluck consciously avoided the sheer vocal fireworks that he felt had compromised the drama of opera during the era of the castrati—male singers who had been surgically altered before puberty to preserve their high voices. Castrati dominated opera to such an extent that composers, Gluck felt, were compelled to compromise their own talents in order to display these singers' technical brilliance. He did not originally dispense with castrati, but the castrato role of Orfeo was given an opportunity to impress through musical and dramatic refinement (a "noble simplicity," in Calzabigi's words), rather than vocal pyrotechnics. This is immediately apparent in his two most notable solos, "Che puro ciel" and "Che farò senza Euridice?," heartrending arias without a single over-the-top moment. Even the dance music manages to be thoroughly convincing and subversively disturbing while retaining this notable simplicity.

Orfeo ed Euridice at the Met

Orfeo ed Euridice was presented early in the Met's history: on a single night on tour in Boston in 1885, sung in German, and for eight performances in the 1891–92 season. It appeared as the curtain-raiser for the Met premiere of *Pagliacci* on December 11, 1893. Arturo Toscanini was a great admirer of the opera and showcased it on its own, featuring the great American contralto Louise Homer, from 1909 to 1914. George Balanchine created a dance-intensive production in 1936 that was quickly replaced by another in 1938. Risë Stevens starred in a production in 1955 that also featured Hilde Güden and Roberta Peters, and Richard Bonyngé conducted a notable production in 1970 with Grace Bumbry as Orfeo; when it was revived two seasons later, Marilyn Horne sang the role. *Orfeo ed Euridice* is a masterpiece that has attracted top artists across time. In addition to Toscanini and Bonyngé, its conductors include Arthur Bodanzky, Walter Damrosch, Eric Leinsdorf, Charles Mackerras, Pierre Monteux, and Bruno Walter. The Met's current production had its premiere on May 2, 2007, with James Levine conducting, Maija Kovalevska as Euridice, Heidi Grant Murphy as Amore, and David Daniels as Orfeo—the first (and only) man to sing the role at the Met.

Program Note

"I agree with you that of all my compositions *Orphée* is the only acceptable one. I ask forgiveness of the god of taste for having deafened my audience with my other operas."

—Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787),
writing to Jean François de la Harpe in 1777

History often disagrees with a composer's assessment of his own output. And it's quite possible that Gluck, who was writing to a public enemy of his work, was deliberately being at least a bit facetious in denigrating his operas such as *Alceste* and *Iphigénie en Aulide*. But what is interesting about his statement is the revelation that even someone who was firmly in an opposing artistic camp could not help but admire Gluck's opera on the myth of Orpheus.

It's probably not going too far to say that Orpheus (or Orfeo, or Orphée) was the godfather of opera itself. According to Greek and Roman writers, he was the son of one of the muses and a Thracian prince, which makes him more than mortal, but less than a god. From his muse mother he received the gift of music. When his bride, Eurydice, died of a snake bite immediately after their wedding, Orpheus dared something no man had ever done before. He descended into the underworld and played for the gods, asking for Eurydice's return.

It was inevitable that a story combining the power of love with the power of music would appeal to composers. Though historians disagree about what, exactly, was the very first opera, Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, first given in Mantua in February 1607, intertwined music and poetry in a way that brought the familiar Orpheus myth to life with a dramatic impact quite new to its audience.

But the most famous of all Orpheus operas is Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. It was first given in the Burgtheater in Vienna on October 5, 1762. By then Gluck, who was born in Germany and had studied and worked in Italy and then London, had lived in Vienna (his wife's home) for about ten years. The director of the court theaters, Count Durazzo, admired Gluck's work and introduced him to two men who were determined to reform their own art forms: the poet Ranieri de'Calzabigi and the ballet master Gasparo Angiolini. The year before *Orfeo*, the three men had collaborated on a dance-drama entitled *Don Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre* that had surprised the Viennese public with its serious retelling of the Don Juan story. Their Orpheus opera was no less a surprise (though Gluck lamented the inevitable—at the time—happy ending by writing, "To adapt the fable to the usage of our theaters, I was forced to alter the climax").

Italian opera of the day had certain conventions that seemed carved in stone. Most operas were set to libretti by Pietro Metastasio or at least rigidly followed his formula: no chorus, six characters (including a first and second pair of lovers), and often extremely elaborate arias.

Program Note CONTINUED

Gluck's *Orfeo* broke all those rules. The chorus is an integral part of the opera, which has only three characters: Orfeo, Euridice, and Amore. Orfeo does not first appear with a heavily embellished aria to show off his voice, but with three simple yet heartrending repetitions of "Euridice!" sung over a moving choral lament. The story of the opera is told with a directness that was revolutionary. Events unfold almost in real time, with a cumulative impact that even today can be overwhelming, which is why the Met's production is performed without an intermission.

In addition to forsaking elaborately decorated da-capo arias in favor of simple, poignant vocal music that goes directly to the listener's heart, Gluck did away with secco recitative accompanied by a harpsichord. Instead, the orchestra plays throughout, which also helps to unify the opera into a true musical drama.

Orfeo is often cited as an example of Gluck's intention to reform opera. But his famous letter to Grand-Duke Leopold, in which he declared, "I sought to restrict music to its true function, namely to serve the poetry by means of the expression without interrupting the action or diminishing its interest by useless and superfluous ornament," was written in 1769, as the preface to his opera *Alceste*. That was seven years after *Orfeo*'s premiere. But there is no doubt that in *Orfeo* Gluck, the composer, had truly anticipated Gluck the philosopher-reformer. At first, the Viennese public was cool to the new opera. But the work's undeniable power won them over, and it was soon thrilling audiences throughout Germany and Scandinavia as well as in London.

Twelve years later Gluck composed a new version of *Orfeo* for the Paris Opéra, *Orphée et Eurydice*, which was a huge success. Among other changes, the title role was rewritten for a high tenor (in Vienna it was sung by the alto castrato Guadagni). The composer Hector Berlioz used this 1774 French version as the basis for his own 1859 reworking of the opera for the great mezzo Pauline Viardot-Garcia, who wanted to sing the title role.

Many performances of *Orfeo* (or *Orphée*) are a combination of Gluck's two versions—depending on what the conductor and/or the singer portraying Orfeo feel is appropriate. The premiere of the current production in 2007 was the first time the Met had given Gluck's original 1762 *Orfeo*.

The Met first did the opera in Boston, in 1885, in German. The first time it was done at the Metropolitan Opera House was in 1891, when it ended after Orfeo's famous Act III aria, "Che farò." The opening of a new production on December 23, 1909, with Toscanini conducting Louise Homer in the title role, Johanna Gadschi as Euridice, and Alma Gluck as the Happy Shade, was one of the great evenings in Met history. Toscanini omitted the overture, and Homer added "Divinités du Styx" from Gluck's *Alceste* at the end of Act I. But even so, writing over half a century later Francis Robinson, an assistant manager of the Met, said, "It must have been as perfect a production as exists in the annals of opera."

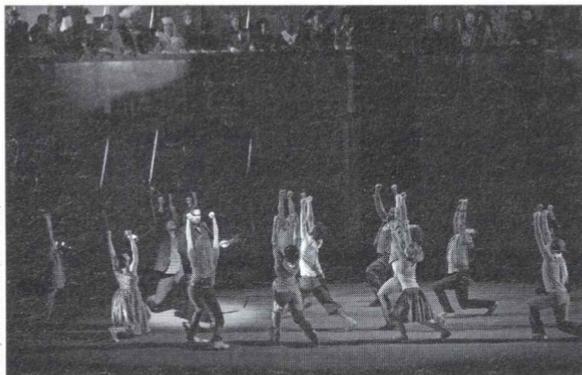
Toscanini went on to conduct *Orfeo* 24 times at the Met; Homer sang the title role 21 times. Both remain a company record. In Anne Homer's biography of her mother, *Louise Homer and the Golden Age of Opera*, she sums up the reason *Orfeo* has remained such a powerful work for almost 250 years:

One of the miracles of this opera lay in the stark range of emotions. Gluck had found a way of encompassing the heights and depths of human experience. Side by side he had arrayed the ugly and the sublime—the terrors of the underworld, the 'pure light' of ineffable bliss. With the genius of poetry and economy, he had pitted the most deadly and fearsome horrors against the radiant power of love, and then transfixed his listeners with music so inspired that they were caught up irresistibly in the eternal conflict.

—Paul Thomason

Dance in *Orfeo*

In 1761 Gluck was busy composing both comic operas and ballet music for the Viennese theaters. One of his projects that year was a ballet based on *Don Juan*, which became the composer's first collaboration with the revolutionary choreographer Gasparo Angiolini and the librettist and poet Ranieri de'Calzabigi. It was an inspired partnership. The trio wanted to overhaul artistic forms that had come to be seen as theatrically inert—in ballet it was the high



Marty Sohl/Metropolitan Opera

French dance style and in opera the often stilted conventions of Baroque opera seria. The first of their "reform operas," *Orfeo ed Euridice*, in 1762, is considered to be the starting point of an artistic movement.

For the Met's production of *Orfeo ed Euridice*, director and choreographer Mark Morris and Music Director James Levine (who conducted this staging when it was new, in 2007) returned to Gluck's 1762 version from Vienna, written in Italian for an alto castrato and later revised for Paris productions. Their intent was to stay true to the composer and librettist's

original ideas by stripping away additions from later revisions, including *The Dance of the Furies*, which Morris feels breaks the flow of the opera. *The Dance of the Blessed Spirits*, which was part of the original 1762 version, will be heard but without accompanying choreography.

"We're using as much of the original reading of this piece as possible," Morris says. "None of the later music from Paris is being used, so there might be some familiar scenes missing—in particular, a huge fury dance that occurs between the two sides of the underworld." He feels that scene was meant to diminish and disappear; a big dance number would ruin the end of the scene dramatically.



Witnesses from history: The Metropolitan Opera Chorus in *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

Twenty-two dancers appear as characters throughout the opera. Morris explains that the chorus is installed in the set as witnesses from history. "They're involved personally and there's a gesture language that they perform, but the real action of the chorus is done by dancers. They aren't just dancing to the dance music, of which there is plenty, but also to the choruses. I want it to be a little ambiguous, a little bit confusing who's doing what, so that the union of chorus and dancers feels inevitable and inseparable." —*Charles Sheek*

The Cast



Antony Walker

CONDUCTOR (SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA)

THIS SEASON *Orfeo ed Euridice* for his debut at the Met, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and Haydn's *L'Anima del Filosofo* with Opera Australia, *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *Werther* with Washington Concert Opera, and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *Turandot* with Pittsburgh Opera.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS He is currently music director of the Pittsburgh Opera, artistic director of Washington Concert Opera, and co-artistic director of Sydney's Pinchgut Opera. Operatic credits include performances with the Welsh National Opera, Bologna's Teatro Comunale, Rome Opera, New York City Opera, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Orchestral credits include appearances with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and Paris's Orchestre Colonne.



Lisette Oropesa

SOPRANO (NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA)

THIS SEASON *Amore* in *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Woglinde* in *Das Rheingold* at the Met, *Leïla* in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* with New Orleans Opera, the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, and *Ismene* in Mozart's *Mitridate* for her debut with Munich's Bavarian State Opera.

MET APPEARANCES *Susanna* in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Lisette* in *La Rondine*, *Woglinde* in *Götterdämmerung*, the Woodbird in *Siegfried*, the Priestess in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, the Dew Fairy in *Hansel and Gretel*, the Madrigal Singer in *Manon Lescaut*, a Cretan Woman in *Idomeneo* (debut, 2006), and a Lay Sister in *Suor Angelica*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include *Konstanze* in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Welsh National Opera, *Nannetta* in *Falstaff* in Bilbao, and *Gilda* in *Rigoletto* with the New Orleans Opera and Arizona Opera. She was a 2005 winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



Kate Royal

SOPRANO (LONDON, ENGLAND)

THIS SEASON Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice* for her debut at the Met and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at Covent Garden.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Pamina, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Glyndebourne Festival, the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Helena at Madrid's Teatro Real, Poppea in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with English National Opera, Miranda in Thomas Adès's *The Tempest* at Covent Garden, and Handel's *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed Il Moderato* at the Paris Opera. She has also appeared in concert with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (in London and Baden-Baden), and Los Angeles Philharmonic.



David Daniels

COUNTERTENOR (SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA)

THIS SEASON Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Met and for his debut with the Minnesota Opera, Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Lichas in Handel's *Hercules* with Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Roberto in Vivaldi's *Griselda* with the Santa Fe Opera.

MET APPEARANCES Giulio Cesare and Sesto (debut, 1999) in *Giulio Cesare*, Oberon, and Bertarido in *Rodelinda*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent performances include Arsamene in Handel's *Serse* with Houston Grand Opera and Orfeo with the Atlanta Opera. He has also sung Giulio Cesare at the Glyndebourne Festival, Ottone in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with the Los Angeles Opera, the title role of *Orlando* with Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Arsace in *Partenope* and Orfeo with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Arsamenes in *Xerxes* with New York City Opera, and Bertarido with San Francisco Opera.

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James Ognibene

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Bernadette Zirkuli

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Frank Hosticka

Trombone

Larry Witmer

Tuba

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Benjamin Harms

Celeste/Armonica

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Susan Jolles

Organ

Bruce Norris

Guitar/Lute

Fred Hand

Mandolin

Joyce Rasmussen

Balint

*new artist

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Chorus Director
The William D. Rollnick
Chair, in honor of
Fred Rollnick

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Dance Director
Andrew Robinson
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Linda Gelinias
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Rebecca Hermos
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Griff Braun
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Julie Blume*
Aylsia Chang*
Selina Chau
Alison Clancy
Elisa Clark

Annette Spann-Lewis
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Juhwan Lee
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David Lowe
Craig Montgomery
Jeffrey Mosher
Stephen Paynter
Marc Persing
Kurt Phinney
Irwin Reese
Salvatore Rosselli
Marty Singleton
Daniel Clark Smith
John Smith
Bernard Waters
Dennis Williams

BASSES

Roger Andrews
David Asch
Garth Dawson

Scott Dispensa*
Kenneth Floyd
Jason Hendrix
Sven Leaf
Robert Maher
Seth Malkin
Brandon Mayberry
Timothy Breese Miller
Joseph Pariso
Earle Patriarco*
Richard Pearson
Randolph Riscal
John Russell
John Shelhart
Joseph Turi
Danrell Williams

EXTRA CHORISTERS

Julianna Anderson
Katie Bolding*
Erika Buchholz
Laurel Cameron
Lianne Coble*
Andrea Coleman*
Melissa Collom*
Aixa Cruz-Falu
Maggie Finnegan*
Christina Girvin
Ginger Inabinet*
Elizabeth Kennedy
Joule Ladara*
Sarah Limper*
Mary Petro
Elizabeth Pojanowski*
Jennifer Powell*
Julia Spanja-Hoffert

Jane Thorgren
Abigail Wright
Sun A Yeo
Edward Albert
Paul An
Jeremy Aye
Nathan Bahny
Ross Benoliel*
John Bernard
John Burton*
Nathan Carlisle
Kevin Courtemanche
Steven Fredericks
Robert Garner
Alexander Gounko
Wayne Hobbs*
Nicholas Houhoulis
Daniel Hoy
Robert Hughes
Richard Lippold*
Chester Pidduck*
Michael Reder
Yoonsoo Shin
Vladimir Shvets
Byron Singleton
Erik Sparks*
Mark Sullivan*
Scott Tomlinson
Maksim Zhdanovskikh*

Lisa Rumbauskas
Melissa Sadler
Sara Sato*
Alexandra Sawyier
Jennifer Sydor
Hsiao-Jou Tang*
Yara Travieso
Jaime Verazin
Mandarin Wu*
Haruno Yamazaki
Kotono Yamazaki
Marie Zvosec
Cesar Abreu
Hollis Bartlett*
Matthew Branham
Gregory Brown
Kelby Brown
Yon Burke*
Josh Christopher*
Ryan Corrison
Kfir Danieli
Seth Davis
Eric Dunlap
Miguel Edson
James Graber
Jean-Rene Homehr*

Willis Johnston*
Kentaro Kikuchi*
Adam Klotz
Brian Lawson*
Patrick Leahy*
Justin Melvin*
Mark Mindek
Hanan Misko*
Luke Murphy*
Loic Noisette
Lonnie Poupard Jr.*
Carlos Renedo
Andrew Robinson
Christopher Rudd*
Avichai Scher
Kanji Segawa
Kim Se-Yong
Justin Sherwood
Ian Thatcher
Kei Tsuruharantani*
Oscar Valero
Scott Weber
Michael Wright*

STAFF PERFORMERS

Brian J. Baldwin
Frank Colardo
Florencio Cora

Anne Dyas
Mike Gomborone
Richard Guido

Ed Harrison
Zephyr Kernisky*
Matthew White

*new artist