

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday, March 28, 2024 1:15 pm
St. Malachy's Church – The Actors' Chapel in New York City
Live Streamed to midtownconcerts.org and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/)

Theotokos

The Sacred Music of Luca Marenzio

*Raha Mirzadegan & Elisse Albian ~ sopranos Elisa Sutherland ~ alto leiken ~ tenor
Emery Kerekes ~ baritone Doug Balliett ~ violone & direction*

Hymns, Psalms & Saints:

Luca Marenzio (1553–1599)

Christe Redemptor omnium ~ Levavi Oculos ~

Domine, quando veneris ~ O Beatum Pontificem ~ Caeciliam Cantate

Magnificat Antiphons:

Hodie Christus natus est (Christmas Day) ~ Hodie Beata Virgo (Feast of the Presentation)

Veni Sponsa Christi (Common of Virgins) ~ Princeps gloriosissime (Michaelmas)

O Quam Gloriosum (All Saints Day)

From the *Libro primo de madrigali spirituali* (1584):

Vergine saggia e pura ~ Signor cui già

Qual mormorio soave ~ Grazie Renda

Vergine Gloriosa

Salve Regina

Midtown Concerts are produced by Gotham Early Music Scene, Inc., and are made possible with support from St. Malachy's Church–The Actors' Chapel, The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; the Howard Gilman Foundation; and by generous donations from audience members.

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In 1622, the English poet Henry Peacham wrote a few words about a recently deceased Italian composer whom he particularly admired: "for delicious aires and sweet invention in madrigals, Luca Marenzio excelleth all others". It is a testament not only to the unique quality of Marenzio's madrigals (a form he did so much to advance during his lifetime), but also to his enduring international reputation, already in place at the time of his death. Marenzio's musical imagination had inspired a whole generation of English madrigal composers, as he had for many composers on the continent.

Although today Marenzio's image rests on his accomplishments and innovations in the secular madrigal, he was no stranger to sacred music. In addition to Antiphons for major liturgical feasts and Saints' Days, Marenzio composed hymns, items from the Divine Office, and even a Mass (which, sadly, has been lost). Fans of his madrigals are also in luck, because in 1584, Marenzio published a volume of *Madrigali Spirituali*. These works, so full of the contradictory language of madrigal poetry, are madrigals in every way, but with religious texts rather than the typical eros-infused poetry. All these works showcase the vivid musical language that so impressed Marenzio's contemporaries: evoking the psychological mood of the poetry, text-painting at every possible opportunity, and approaching his material with technical command, imagination, and dignity. While Marenzio's sacred music rarely strays into the chromaticism that characterized much of his secular work, the gravitas and depth of emotion on display in these works show their importance in the output of this master of vocal composition.

ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE AND ARTISTS

Theotokos is the living embodiment of a Baroque church ensemble. Founded in 2020 at the invitation of Fr. Andrew O'Connor, the ensemble is in residence at St. Mary's Church on the lower east side of New York City. Every week a new cantata is composed by director Doug Balliett and performed by the ensemble, based on and tightly linked with the liturgical readings assigned to that date. In addition, theologically relevant Baroque and pre-Baroque music is performed *in situ* during the Mass, from Josquin to Telemann, early American church music, and into Romantic masters. Theotokos has given concerts of sacred vocal music around New York City including performances of Telemann's *Harmonischer Dottesdienst* cantatas, Charpentier's *Leçons de Tenebre* by candlelight, and the operatic psalm settings of Benedetto Marcello. Driven by a special interest in early Christian music, Theotokos also runs a Gregorian Chant club, open to all, which regularly meets to chant the Latin Mass and the Divine Office. The passion, historical curiosity, and imagination of the Theotokos project has attracted visiting guests of extraordinary stature and variety including Davoné Tines, Karim Sulayman, Jonathan Woody, Nola Richardson, Jessica Niles, Majel Connery, Matt Aucoin, Jean Rondeau, Thomas Dunford, Myriam Rignol, and William Christie as well as many of New York's top choral soloists. In 2021, Theotokos began a fruitful collaboration with The Juilliard School's Historical Performance program in which interested students are given the opportunity to perform, compose music, and experience the Baroque sacred music tradition from within.

The soprano **Raha Mirzadegan** is a Persian-American musician based in New York. A lover of sacred music and polyphony, her repertoire spans the medieval chant of Hildegard von Bingen to premieres of new works by living composers. In spring of 2022, Raha was a guest artist at Spoleto Festival USA where she made her operatic stage debut with "stylish elegance and intensity" (*Wall Street Journal*) as the featured soprano in the world premiere of *Unholy Wars* – a baroque pastiche created by Karim Sulayman. Acclaimed for her "stirring, soulful tones" (*The Post & Courier*), Raha started the 2023–24 season with her Opera Philadelphia debut in *Unholy Wars* this past September alongside Karim Sulayman, John Taylor Ward, and Coral Dolphin. Recent highlights include Handel's *Solomon* with Clarion, The English Concert and Harry Bicket, Handel's *Messiah* with the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, Guinevere in Doug Balliett's *Gawain and the Green Knight*, Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *Leçons de ténèbres du Mercredi Saint* (H. 96-98) with Theotokos, and a première of *Songs from Wild Earth* for voice and flute by Eric Pazdziora. Raha studied voice with Gran Wilson at the University of Maryland.

Praised by *South Florida Classical Review* as an “opulent soprano” with “rich tones, expressive phrasing, and warm emotion”, **Elisse Albian** enjoys performing as a soloist, choral artist, and recording artist. Elisse is passionate about the collaborative aspects of music-making and the importance of versatility and the instrumental qualities of the voice. As a professional singer, Elisse performs with choral ensembles including GRAMMY®-nominated Seraphic Fire, Artefact Ensemble, and The Benedict XVI Choir. Most recently, Elisse was featured as a soloist and chorister in Handel’s *Messiah* with Seraphic Fire. Later this season Elisse will perform as a soprano soloist in Kollektive366’s performances of Mozart’s *Coronation Mass* and *Vesperes Solennes di Confessore*, and in the choir of Teatro Nuovo’s production of Rossini’s *Maometto II*. Elisse completed a Bachelor of Music at the University of California, Los Angeles, is actively pursuing a Master of Music in Voice at Mannes (The New School) under the instruction of Amy Burton, and currently resides in New York City.

Mezzo-soprano **Elisa Sutherland** gives detailed, stylistic performances of early and new music with “soul-infused expressiveness and unselfconscious joie de vivre” (*New York Classical Review*). Highlights from this season include a performance of Jacquet de la Guerre’s *Judith* with TENET Vocal Artists, three appearances with Alkemie medieval ensemble, and a European tour with Ekmeles – a sextet dedicated to exploring microtonal tuning and extended vocal techniques – with which Elisa is a core member. She has appeared in art song recitals with the Brooklyn Art Song Society (BASS) and Philadelphia’s Lyricfest. In the realm of vocal chamber music, Elisa frequently appears with the top ensembles in the country including The Crossing, Roomful of Teeth, Lorelei, the Choir of Trinity Wall Street, Variant 6, and Seraphic Fire.

leiken is a singer and performance-maker based in Brooklyn. Both a medieval and new music specialist, leiken’s practice fuses these disparate worlds exclusively through collaboration. A sought-after vocalist for concert, opera, and theatre, leiken is a member of Sequentia, the world-renowned medieval collective as well as Fourth Wall, a new vocal ensemble based in New York, and can regularly be seen with iconic artists including Four Larks, Eve Beglarian, and Ran Blake. Their extensive performance experience has brought them all around the world to legendary venues including the Getty Villa Museum, Carnegie Hall, Hong Kong’s Queen Elizabeth Stadium, the Théâtre du Chatelet, and the Hirschhorn Museum. leiken.xyz

Emery Kerekes is a vocalist, music journalist, and arts administrator based in New York. Currently a staff singer at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Emery has also appeared with Theotokos and Downtown Voices. He was the recipient of the 2022 Rubin Prize in Music Criticism and contributes to publications including *Chamber Music* and *Early Music America*. Emery works for the Metropolitan Museum’s Department of Live Arts. When he’s not at his computer or in rehearsal, you can find Emery in the kitchen, at a concert, or singing madrigals with his friends.

Doug Balliett, violone and direction, is a composer, instrumentalist and poet based in New York. The *Los Angeles Times* recently wrote “Bassist Doug Balliett, who teaches a course on the Beatles at The Juilliard School and writes weekly cantatas for Sunday church services, as well as wacky pop operas, is in a class of his own.” *The New York Times* has described his compositions as “brainily bubble gum and lovable shaggy” (*Rome is Falling*), his poetry as “brilliant and witty” (*Clytie and the Sun*), and his bass playing as “elegant” (Shawn Jaeger’s *In Old Virginia*). Doug has been professor of Baroque bass and violone at The Juilliard School since 2017 and leads the Theotokos ensemble every Sunday at St. Mary’s Church on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He plays regularly with AMOC, Les Arts Florissants, Jupiter Ensemble, ACRONYM, Ruckus, BEMF, Alarm Will Sound, and other ensembles. Recent performances of his work include *Beast Fights* at Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony bass section, and the annual New Year’s Eve performance of his opera *Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Next Week: Jonathan Salamon
Beyond the Canon

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS – THEOTOKOS

Christe Redemptor omnium, ex Patre

Christe, Redemptor omnium,
ex Patre, Patris unice,
solus ante principium
natus ineffabiliter,

Tu lumen, tu splendor Patris,
tu spes perennis omnium,
intende quas fundunt preces
tui per orbem famuli.

Memento salutis auctor,
quod nostri quondam corporis,
ex illibata Virgine
nascendo, formam sumpseris.

Sic praesens testatur dies,
currens per anni circulum,
quod a solus sede Patris
mundi salus adveneris;

Hunc caelum, terra, hunc mare,
hunc omne quod in eis est,
auctorem adventus tui
laudans exsultat cantico.

Nos quoque, qui sancto tuo
redempti sanguine sumus,
ob diem natalis tui
hymnum novum concinimus.

Gloria tibi Domine,
qui natus es de Virgine,
cum Patre et almo Spiritu,
in sempiterna saecula. Amen.

Levavi Oculos

Levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium
mihi.

Auxilium meum a Domino, qui fecit caelum et terram.
Non det in commotionem pedem tuum, neque
dormitet qui custodit te.

Domine, quando veneris

Domine, quando veneris judicare terram,
ubi me abscondam a vultu irae tuae?
Quia peccavi nimis in vita mea.

Commissa mea pavesco et ante te erubesco,
Dum veneris judicare, noli me condemnare,
Quia peccavi nimis in vita mea.

O Beatum Pontificem

O beatum pontificem,
qui totis visceribus diligebat Christum regem,
et non formidabat imperii principatum.
O Martine, dulcedo, medicamentum et medice.
O sanctissima anima,
quam etsi gladius persecutoris non abstulit,
tamen palmam martyrii non amisit.

Jesu, the Father's only Son

Jesu, the Father's only son,
whose death for all redemption won,
before the worlds, of God most high,
begotten all ineffably.

The Father's Light and Splendor Thou,
their endless Hope to Thee that bow:
accept the prayers and praise today
that through the world Thy servants pay.

Salvation's author, call to mind
how, taking the form of humankind,
born of a Virgin undefiled,
Thou in man's flesh becamest a Child.

Thus testifies the present day
Through every year in long array,
that Thou, salvation's source alone
proceedest from the Father's Throne.

Whence sky, and stars, and sea's abyss,
and earth, and all that therein is,
shall still, with laud and carol meet,
the Author of thine Advent greet.

And we who, by Thy precious Blood
from sin redeemed, are marked for God,
on this, the day that saw Thy Birth,
sing the new song of ransomed earth.

All honour, laud, and glory be,
O Jesu, Virgin-born, to Thee;
whom with the Father we adore,
and Holy Ghost forevermore. Amen.

I Lift Up My Eyes

I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where does my help
come?

My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven
and earth. He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

O Lord, when thou comest

O Lord, when Thou comest to judge the world,
where shall I hide myself from the face of Thy wrath?
For I have sinned exceedingly in my life.

I dread my sins, I blush before Thee:
When Thou comest to judge, do not condemn me,
For I have sinned exceedingly in my life.

O Blessed Pontiff

O blessed pontiff,
who loved Christ the King with all his heart,
and he did not fear the leadership of the government.
O Martin, sweetness, medicine and healer.
O most holy soul, which though the sword of the
persecutor did not remove
yet he did not lose the palm of martyrdom.

Caeciliam Cantate

Caeciliam cantáte p̄i,
cantáte pudíci.
Cármina cum módulis
carminibúsque fáveant.
Organa Caeciliam résonent,
stridulaéque cámenae
Suávia deléctant
órgana Caeciliam,
Argútaque júvant
dúlcis modulámina vócis.

Hodie Christus natus est

Hodie Christus natus est
hodie Salvator apparuit:
hodie in terra canunt Angeli,
laetantur Archangeli:
hodie exsultant justí, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo, alleluja.

Hodie Beata Virgo

Hodie beata Virgo Maria
puerum Jesum presentavit in templo,
Et Simeon, repletus Spiritu Sancto,
accepit eum in ulnas suas,
et benedixit Deum in aeternum.

Veni Sponsa Christi

Veni sponsa Christi, accipe coronam
quam tibi Dominus praeparavit in aeternum.

Princeps gloriosissime

Princeps gloriosissime, Michael Archangele, esto
memor nostri:
hic et ubique semper precare pro nobis Filium Dei.
Alleluia.

O Quam Gloriosum

O quam gloriosum est regnum,
in quo cum Christo gaudent omnes Sancti!
Amicti stolis albis,
sequuntur Agnum, quocumque ierit.

Vergine saggia e pura

Vergine saggia e pura,
Tra l'anime beate illustre eletta,
Angelica di mortal macchia netta;
Ti rinchiudesti in cella
Per Dio servir ancella.
Trionfa in terra hor sotto oscuro velo,
Poscia lieto di te gioisca'l cielo.

Sing of Cecilia

Sing of Cecilia, devout folk,
sing, modest folk.
May songs with melodies
and songs favor her.
Let organs resound to Cecilia,
and the loud-voiced Muses'
Sweet organs
delight Cecilia,
And the harmonious melodies
of their voices please her.

Today is Christ born

Today is Christ born;
today the Savior has appeared;
today the Angels sing,
the Archangels rejoice;
today the righteous rejoice, saying:
Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia!

Today the Blessed Virgin

Today the Blessed Virgin Mary
presented the child Jesus in the temple
and Simeon, full of the Holy Spirit,
took Him in his arms,
and blessed God for evermore.

Come, Bride of Christ

Come, bride of Christ, receive the crown
which the Lord has prepared for you for all eternity.

O most glorious Prince

O most glorious Prince, Michael the Archangel, be
mindful of us:
here and everywhere pray always unto the Son of God
for us. Alleluia.

O How Glorious

O how glorious is the kingdom
in which all the saints rejoice with Christ,
clad in robes of white
they follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

Virgin sage and pure

Virgin sage and pure,
elected among the illustrious blessed spirits,
angelic, undefiled by earthly filth;
you enclosed yourself in your chamber
to serve God as maid.
Triumph now on earth below this obscure veil,
then heaven will rejoice in you.

Signor cui già

Signor cui già fu poco
 formar i cieli e insieme
 spiegar l'aria, la terra, il mare e'l foco:
 L'alma che plora e geme
 ne le sue angoscie estreme,
 piacciati ancor gradire
 e pietoso riguarda al mio fallire.

Qual mormorio soave

Qual mormorio soave
 D'aura tra frond'et fronde,
 Dolc'armonia d'angelico concerto,
 Quetasi l'aere e'l vento
 Che tace il tutto et risonar sol Ave.
 S'ode et sola risponde
 Candida virginella:
 Ecco, Signor, l'ancella
 A cui per obedir nulla gli è grave.
 O che lieta novella
 Perche pareggi homai la terra e'l cielo:
 Vergine Donna a Dio di se fa velo.

Grazie Renda

Grazie renda al Signor, meco la terra,
 poi ch'è sgombro da me l'interno ghiaccio:
 gioisca il mio desir, gioisca l'alma,
 e seco abbondi di letizia il core.
 Piovan in copia i maggior ben del cielo,
 che non più van, ma divino è'l mio foco.
 (Benedetto Guidi)

Vergine Gloriosa

Vergine, vergine gloriosa e lieta,
 o quanto allegro e fatto il tuo doglioso stato.

Salve Regina

Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae,
 vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve
 Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ
 Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
 in hac lacrimarum valle.

Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
 misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
 Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
 nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
 O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Oh Lord, for whom

Oh Lord, for whom it was easy
 To concurrently close the heavens,
 To lay out the air and the earth, the sea and the fire,
 The spirit, that weeps and laments
 In his extreme anguishes,
 May you still accept
 And look mercifully at my failure.

Like the sweet murmur

Like the sweet murmur
 of a breeze from branch to branch,
 sweet harmony of angelic concord,
 the air and wind grow quiet
 so all is silent but the sound "Ave".
 Humbly and alone, the
 chaste virgin responds:
 "Behold, Lord, the handmaiden
 to whom obedience is never heavy."
 O what happy news,
 for earth and heaven are made equal:
 a virgin makes of herself a veil for God.

Thank you, Give [the Lord]

Thank you, give the Lord the earth with me,
 then the internal ice is clear of me:
 may my desire rejoice, may my soul rejoice,
 and with it may your heart abound with joy.
 The greatest blessings in the sky rained down in
 copious amounts,
 that no longer travel, but my fire is divine.

Virgin Glorious

Virgin, glorious and happy virgin,
 or how cheerful and happy your sorrowful state is.

Hail, holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
 Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.
 To Thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;
 To Thee do we send up our sighs,
 Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate,
 Thine eyes of mercy toward us;
 And after this our exile,
 Show unto us the blessed fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.
 O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.