

THE DUKE
ELLINGTON

SACRED CONCERT



SUNDAY
APRIL 30
5 PM





TrinityEvents

Did you know that Trinity Church Boston offers an in-person Children's Homily during 10 am Sunday worship, and childcare from 8:30 am - 12:30 pm every Sunday?



To learn more about Children's Ministries, scan the QR code or email Cathy Portlock Pacitto at cportlock@trinitychurchboston.org

TODAY

Easter Formation For Adults

Sundays through May 14, 11:15 am, Forum & Commons

Building on our Holy Week sermon series (online at trinitychurchboston.org/sermons), join us on Easter Sundays for small-group discussions of 'The Will of God':

Sun., April 30: The Circumstantial Will of God

Sun., May 7: The Ultimate Will of God

Sun., May 14: Discerning the Will of God

Following presentations by Rector Morgan Allen, we will gather at round tables for prompted conversations. PDF copies of Leslie Weatherhead's *The Will of God* can be found online, and many versions of the text are in print. Presentation page numbers and references will be drawn from Abingdon Press' 1999 edition.

NEXT SUNDAY

Community Breakfast: It's Taco Time

Sun., May 7, 9 am, Undercroft

Join the Trinity Community on the first Sunday of the month for a hot breakfast between the morning services. All are welcome!

Sign up to help out at the breakfast by scanning the QR Code or at trinitychurchboston.org/calendar



SAVE THE DATE

Celebration of New Music Ministry Concert

Sun., May 21, 2-4 pm

Join us for a 2 pm concert and 3 pm reception to celebrate our new Director of Music, Colin Lynch. We will welcome Sophie Michaux and Adam Simon as our guest artists at 2 pm in the church and then join us for a reception in the Commons following the concert.



THIS WEEK

T-n-T Evensong + Holy Happy Hour

Wed., May 3, 5:45 pm, Church & City Table

Join T-n-T (Twenties & Thirties) to hear the choral service of Evensong and then join us for fellowship after the service at City Table, just a short walk across Copley Square at 65 Exeter St.

Habitat for Humanity Build Day

Sat., May 6, 9 am

Join a few of your fellow Trinity parishioners (ages 16+) as we work with Habitat for Humanity and a partner family to help build a home. No prior construction experience is necessary.

For more info and/or to volunteer, contact Pam Waterman via the listing at trinitychurchboston.org/calendar



MUSIC

Be a Chorister For a Day!

Thurs., May 11, 5 pm, RSVP for location

Do you know a child aged 7-10 who might be interested in singing? Learn more about what it's like to be a Trinity Chorister. Children will have the opportunity to join in fun musical activities while parents learn more about the life in the choir. No previous musical experience is necessary, and all children are invited to this free event.

The Chorister program offers an extraordinary opportunity to learn music, singing, leadership, teamwork, responsibility, commitment, have fun, and to see the world! To sign up for this event or to learn more about the Chorister program email Colin Lynch, Director of Music at clynch@trinitychurchboston.org

Trinity Church

in the City of Boston

206 Clarendon Street, Boston, MA 02116

617-536-0944 + trinitychurchboston.org



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WELCOME

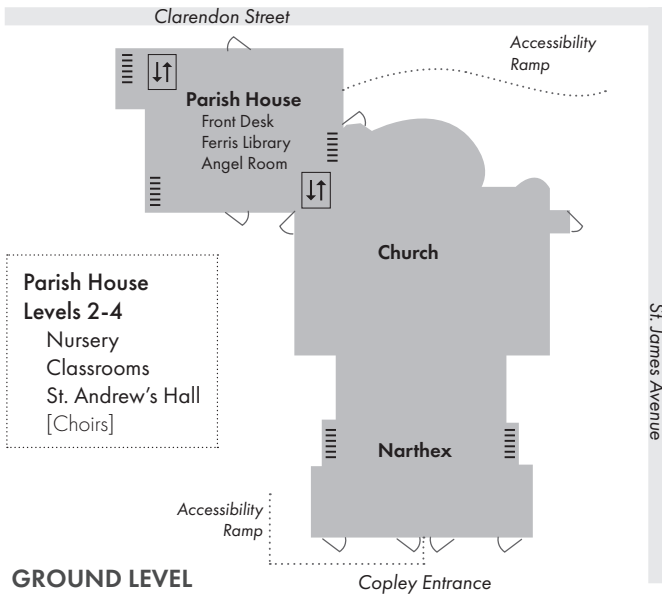


Whether you're new among us or you've been worshipping here for years, we look forward to helping you make a home for faith at Trinity.

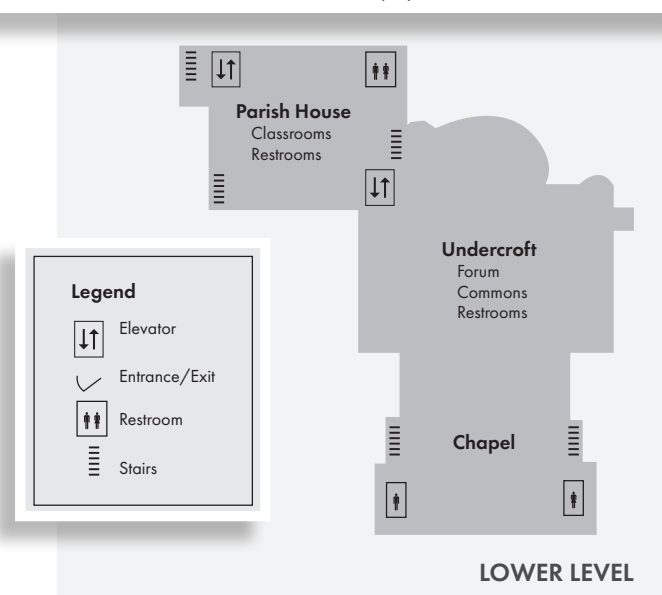
Complete the short Welcome Form at trinitychurchboston.org/welcome (or scan the QR code) so we can get to know you better.



FINDING YOUR WAY



GROUND LEVEL



LOWER LEVEL

Statement of Affirmation

Trinity Church in the City of Boston is a congregation of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and welcomes and honors everyone. In accordance with our baptismal covenant, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We strive to include all persons without regard to sexual orientation, race, nationality, gender, family configuration, ethnic background, economic circumstances, difference in ability, culture, or age. Our love and acceptance of each other embody our commitment to unity with God and each other in Christ.

HOURS & INFORMATION

Sunday Schedule

- 8 am** Holy Eucharist, Rite II, *spoken*
- 9 am** Coffee & Community Hour, full "Community Breakfast" on the first Sunday of most months
- 10 am** Holy Eucharist, Rite II, with organ, choristers, and choir. Includes Children's Homily & Nursery. Morning Prayer last Sunday of most months. online at trinitychurchboston.org/live-worship and facebook.com/trinitychurchboston
- 11:15 am** Formation for All Ages
- 5 pm** Holy Eucharist, Rite II

Weekday Worship at Trinity

- Tues/Thurs.**
- 8:30 pm** Online Compline
join us on Zoom at bit.ly/tcbTTcompline
☎ or dial in with 1-646-558-8656 and enter Meeting ID 206 654 379
- Weds.**
- 5:45 pm** Choral Evensong
in the Church, led by the Trinity Choristers

Vestry

Chris Allen ('27) • Christine Arcese ('26) • Christopher Atwood ('26) • Barbara Dortch-Okara ('25) • Josh Fiala ('27) • Richard Henderson ('26) • Vincent W. James ('24) • Tim Martin ('27) • Niven Narain ('26) • Chuks Chijioke Okoli ('25) • Constance Perry ('24) • Peter Renner ('25) • Mary Roetzel ('27) • Olaf J. Thorp ('24) • Pam Waterman ('25) • Katie Wisley Shelby ('24)

Clergy

The Rev. Morgan S. Allen, *Rector* • The Very Rev. Dr. Michael Battle, *Theologian-In-Community* • The Rev. Dr. Karen Coleman, *Assisting Priest* • The Rev. Paige Fisher, *Associate for Community Life* • The Rev. Kit Lonergan, *Priest for Welcome and Care* • The Rev. Abigail W. Moon, *Senior Associate*

Vestry can be reached at
bit.ly/TrinityVestry

Clergy and Staff can be reached at
bit.ly/TrinityStaff



Tours

Tues - Sat
10 am - 4:30 pm

Trinity Church offers self-guided, docent-led, and audio tours. Considered one of ten buildings that changed America, Trinity Church is an architectural masterpiece including its unique collection of stained-glass windows by designers such as Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, and John La Farge, its murals, wood carvings and more. The price is \$10. Children younger than 12 are free.

A CONCERT OF DUKE ELLINGTON SACRED MUSIC

Band Overture

Prologue from 'Tone Parallel to Harlem' ♦ The Telecasters ♦ 'Rockin' In Rhythm'

♦ ♦ ♦

Come Sunday ♦ Renese King, *Alto*

Will You Be There ♦ Trinity Choir ♦ Dir Colin Lynch, *Speaker*

Ain't But The One ♦ Daon Drisdome, *Baritone* ♦ Choir & Band

Heaven ♦ Dominique Eade, *Soprano*

♦ ♦ ♦

In The Beginning God

Daon Drisdome, *Baritone* ♦ George Russell, *Piano* ♦ Brian Landrus, *Baritone Sax*

Father Forgive ♦ Trinity Choir

Tell Me It's the Truth ♦ Renese King, *Alto*

David Danced ♦ Thomas DeFrantz, *Tap Dance*

♦ ♦ ♦

Psalm 100

♦ ♦ ♦

Almighty God

Dominique Eade, *Soprano* ♦ Shannon Le Claire, *Clarinet Solo* ♦ Choir

Something 'Bout Believing ♦ Daon Drisdome, *Baritone* ♦ Choir

♦ ♦ ♦

Prayers of Thanksgiving

♦ ♦ ♦

An Ellington Reflection ♦ George Russell, *Solo Piano*

♦ ♦ ♦

Praise God and Dance

Brian Landrus, *Baritone Sax* ♦ Renese King, *Alto* ♦ Dominique Eade, *Soprano*

Daon Drisdome, *Baritone* ♦ Choirs and Band

All we have and all we are is of God, and everyone has a faithful offering to make. All gifts received today will support Trinity's ministry, empower our service to the community, the arts, and sustain our historic buildings.

To make a gift online, please [click here](#) or use the QR code below to be taken to the secure form on our website.



Alternatively, you may also give in-person via the basket passed during the Piano Solo.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Dominique Eade ♦ Soprano



Poetic and passionate, American vocalist, composer and improviser Dominique Eade blends musical virtuosity with a songwriter's straightforward emotional sensibility, creating music that has garnered critical acclaim, inspired audiences, and served as a creative signpost for generations of singers. The New York Times called Eade "an exceptional singer" with a "wide vocal range and a grasp on the intricacies of style," one "who weighs a chanteuse's coolness against a jazz musician's exploratory instincts." The Atlantic Monthly recognized Eade for her "rich voice and effortless delivery" while the Boston Phoenix called her music "sublime and daring." Eade's performances throughout the United States, Latin America and Europe include the Buenos Aires Jazz Festival, the Bell Atlantic Jazz Festival, Mountain Stage, the Rigas Ritmi Jazz Festival, the Panama Jazz Festival, the Molde International Jazz Festival, and the What is Jazz Festival, and clubs such as Los Angeles' The Jazz Bakery, New York's The Blue Note, The Five Spot and The Jazz Standard, D.C.'s Jazz Alley and Boston's RegattaBar. Eade was signed to RCA Victor in 1998, recording with jazz luminaries Dave Holland, Victor Lewis and Benny Golson.

Deemed "a fearless collaborator" by pianist Fred Hersch, Eade's musical associations have ranged from Alan Dawson and Stanley Cowell to MacArthur grant recipients Ran Blake and Anthony Braxton. In 2017, NPR Critic Nate Chinen listed Blake and Eade's performance of music from their critically acclaimed Town and Country (Sunnyside) at New York's Park Avenue Armory as one of the Top Ten Jazz Performances of the year. Eade has recorded and co-produced 7 CD's under her name, landing her on top ten lists at Billboard, NPR, Entertainment Weekly, DownBeat magazine, the Jazz Journalist Association, and elsewhere. Appearing as a guest in jazz and contemporary classical ensembles including the Either Orchestra and Boston Musica Viva, Eade is the featured vocalist on the 2020 Dave Douglas/Elan Mehler album, If There Are Mountains (Newvelle). Eade was nominated for Best Debut Artist in the 1998 First Annual Jazz Awards in New York City, and received the 2006 Outstanding Alumni Award at New England Conservatory, where as a teacher for over 3 decades, she has mentored an array of talented musicians including Roberta Gambarini, Michael Mayo, Rachel Price, Sofia Rei, Jorge Roeder, Sara Serpa, Sarah Jarosz, Darynn Dean, Luciana Souza, Akenya Seymour, Jo Lawry, Aoife O'Donovan, and many others.

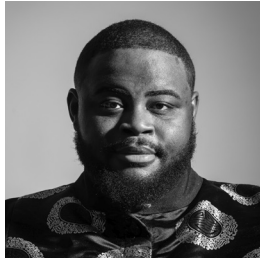
Renese King ♦ Alto



Renese King's array of musical talents has taken her from spiritual and gospel singing at the church podium to timpani playing on the Carnegie Hall stage. Her soulful, moving voice garnered her a Boston Music Award as Gospel/Inspirational Artist of the Year. Often singing her own arrangements, King has performed with many ensembles in the New England area and across the nation. Her voice is featured on the soundtracks of three award-winning PBS documentary films (Emmy, Peabody, and Sundance awards): Freedom Riders (2011), Freedom Summer (2014), and Tell Them We Are Rising (2018). Making her seventh Holiday Pops appearance with this season's concerts, King appears regularly with the Boston Pops, having been a featured and guest soloist in concerts at Symphony Hall and on the

Esplanade, in television broadcasts, and on the 2004 CD *Sleigh Ride*, alongside the Boston Pops Orchestra, Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and Boston Pops Gospel Choir. Renese King holds a position in Student Affairs, Diversity and Inclusion at Berklee College of Music and serves as music director at the Waymark Seventh Day Adventist Church in Dorchester and also of the New England Gospel Ensemble in Boston. She remains committed to the unifying and uplifting message at the heart of gospel music.

Daon Drisdorn ♦ Baritone



Praised for his rich tone and incredible stage presence, tenor Daon Drisdorn's classical credits include performances in the baritone and tenor repertoires. Portrayal's ranging from Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* to Fritz in Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz* are performances to his success.

His teaching credits include being Choral Director at the Jessye Norman School of the Arts in Augusta, Georgia and many years of private voice and piano teaching. Most recently he served as Music Teacher at the John F. Kennedy School in Somerville Public Schools.

He has been a featured soloist with notable names such as John Bucchino and jazz trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, as part of *Wycliffe Gordon and Friends* for a holiday performance on Georgia Public Broadcasting Radio in 2016. He can be heard on Funmilayo Ngozi's *Unconstrained* album as a background vocalist and as soloist on the track *Faith*. Drisdorn also has made notable contributions with YouTube inspirational group Trey McLaughlin & the Sounds of Zamar.

Currently, he is a J. P. Hunsaker soloist at the First Parish in Milton and serves as the new chorus teacher at the Boston Latin Academy with efforts to build a strong music program at the esteemed school.

Thomas DeFrantz ♦ Dancer



Thomas directs the SLIPPAGE laboratory, a research group that explores emerging technology in live performance applications. Before joining Northwestern, he was on faculty at MIT and Duke University, with side jaunts teaching at Yale, Stanford, Hampshire College, and NYU. Thomas believes in our shared capacity to do better and engage creative spirit for a collective good that is anti-racist, proto-feminist, and queer affirming.

The lab works on live-processing interfaces that can help us with theatrical renderings of alternative histories, and telling stories that might be less well known than others. They create performances that tour the US and beyond, including some favorites: *Queer Theory! An Academic Travesty* commissioned by the Theater Offensive of Boston and the Flynn Center for the Arts; *fastDANCEpast*, created for the Detroit Institute for the Arts; and *reVERSE-gesture-reVIEW* commissioned by the Nasher Museum in response to the work of Kara Walker, January, 2017.

Thomas also writes books about dance and theater, including the Routledge Companion to African American Theater and Performance (with Kathy Perkins, Sandra Richards, and Renee Alexander Craft, 2018), *Choreography and Corporeality: Relay in Motion* (with Philipa Rothfield, 2016), *Black Performance Theory: An Anthology of Critical Readings* (with Anita Gonzalez, 2014), *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (2002), and *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture* (2004).

Additionally, Thomas acted as a consultant for the Smithsonian Museum of African American Life and Culture, contributing concept and a voice-over for a permanent installation on Black Social Dance that opened with the museum in 2016. DeFrantz holds degrees from Yale, the City University of New York, and NYU.

George W. Russell Jr. ♦ Piano



Prior to becoming chair of the Harmony and Jazz Composition Department, George W. Russell Jr. served as a professor of harmony and piano. He has been awarded the Ted Pease Award for Excellence in Teaching, along with the Curriculum Development Award for the Writing Division. He has also been recognized with the highest award that Berklee gives to faculty, the Most Distinguished Faculty Award. Russell's motto is, "I would rather inspire than require." He is known as a source of encouragement and inspiration to anyone who crosses paths with him.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Russell is a performer, composer, and educator. He began taking piano lessons when he was 7 years old. Along with studying formally, he had the fortune of growing up playing at his local church. There was no written music at church, so he was given the opportunity to develop his ear.

As he continued studying music in college, Russell discovered jazz and the harmonies that are used in jazz. It was then that he began to understand, from a theoretical viewpoint, what exactly he was playing, both in church and in his classical repertoire. In that period of time, his unique fusion of gospel and jazz began to form. His performances range from solo piano to a groove-oriented jazz trio to a soulful, fresh-sounding larger ensemble that arouses the listener's intellect and, most importantly, touches their soul. His playing is filled with passion, fire, soul, and spirit.

Greg Hopkins ♦ Conductor



Performer, composer, and arranger Greg Hopkins first picked up the trumpet as a boy in Detroit, and to this day it would be hard to spot him without his horn. Hopkins plays even when caught in traffic on commute to Berklee College of Music, where he's been teaching since 1974 - the year the London Times called him "a real find" for the Buddy Rich Orchestra.

That symbiosis of man and musical instrument is evident in Hopkins' solo performances by which he has served the orchestras of Louis Bellson, Billy Maxted, Rich, and Herb Pomeroy, as well as his own small ensembles and big bands. Hopkins began his professional career in 1965, freelancing in the Detroit area for such acts as the Temptations, Marvin Gaye, and Gladys Knight until 1969, when he graduated Michigan State.

From 1969 to 1974 he toured nationally and internationally, appearing at the Newport, Monterey, and other major jazz festivals. Hopkins has also performed with Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Stevie Wonder, Joe Williams, Tony Bennett, the Supremes, Burt Bacharach, Nancy Wilson, Lou Rawls, Mitzi Gaynor, Michel Legrand, Johnny Mathis, Shirley MacLaine, Marvin Hamlisch, and Lena Horne, as well as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Pops, and the Boston Brass Ensemble.

He recorded as soloist and arranger the “Roar of ‘74” and “Stick It” with the Buddy Rich Orchestra, “Afrodisia” with Lonnie Smith, “Pramlatta’s Hips” with Herb Pomeroy (Shiah). “Together” with Maggie Scott (MM and R), “Orange Then Blue” with George Adams (GM Recordings), “Jumpin’ in the Future” with Gunther Schuller (GM), “Dreams Come True” with Suzanne Dean (NOVA), and numerous others.

His theater work includes 42nd Street, Dancin’, Some Like It Hot, Annie, Tommy Tune Tonight, Catskills on Broadway, West Side Story, Porgy and Bess, My Fair Lady with Rex Harrison, The King and I with Yul Brynner, Into the Woods, Ragtime, and A Chorus Line.

His own 16-Piece Jazz Orchestra CD, “Okavongo”, is out on the Summit label, as is his quintet CD, “Quintology”, featuring Bill Pierce, Mick Goodrick, and Gary Chaffee. More recently released was the trio CD with Tim Ray’s chamber jazz group “Tre Corda”, featuring Tim on piano, and Eugene Friesen on cello. Hopkins is also featured on the new Grammy® winning jazz CD by composer Joel Pallson and his Septet, on the Icelandic label. He was trumpet soloist with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra on Arthur Welwoods composition for jazz trumpet and orchestra, on Albany Records. “Wind, Sky, and Clouds”.

Mr. Hopkins’ busy teaching and performing schedule takes him all over the world doing concerts, festivals, jazz club dates, and clinics. He has visited Italy, Iceland, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Alaska, Argentina, and many others areas.

A Professor of Jazz Composition at Berklee College of Music, Hopkins has developed and teaches several courses in composition and also directs the Berklee Concert Jazz Orchestra, one of the most prestigious performing ensemble at the school.

He has published arrangements and compositions with Kendor, Studio P.R., and Tom Crown Brass Publications. Hopkins continues to write and orchestrate, and is Professor of Jazz Composition at Berklee where the debut of his “Inner Voyage” for Herb Pomeroy’s tribute shook the Performance Center not long ago, with John Abercrombie and Abe Laboriel, Sr. soloing.

Hopkins works often with his 16 Piece Jazz Orchestra, and also performs regularly with his quintet, and Tim Ray’s trio, Tre Corda.

MUSICIANS

The Greg Hopkins Jazz Orchestra

Gregory Hopkins ♦ Conductor, Trumpet ♦ Natick, MA ♦ **BF**

Soloists

Dominique Eade ♦ Soprano ♦ Newton, MA

Renese King ♦ Alto ♦ Boston, MA ♦ **BG**

Daon Drisdorn ♦ Baritone ♦ Boston, MA

Thomas DeFrantz ♦ Tap Dance ♦ Boston, MA

Reeds

Shannon LeClaire ♦ Alto Sax/Clarinet ♦ Boston, MA ♦ **BF**

Diane Wernick ♦ Alto Sax ♦ Boston, MA ♦ **BF/BG**

Gregory Groover ♦ Tenor Sax ♦ Boston, MA ♦ **BF/BG**

Fall Raye ♦ Tenor Sax ♦ **BSTU**

Brian Landrus ♦ Baritone Sax/Bass Clarinet ♦ New York, NY ♦ **BF**

Trumpets

Christian Marrero ♦ Lead Trumpet ♦ Miami, FL ♦ **BG**

Yibran Aponte ♦ Trumpet ♦ San Juan, Puerto Rico ♦ **BSTU**

Dave Burdette ♦ Trumpet ♦ Needham, MA ♦ **BG**

Carlos Ramos ♦ Trumpet ♦ Downey, CA ♦ **BSTU**

Trombones

Jeff Galindo ♦ Lead Trombone ♦ Worcester, MA ♦ **BG**

Jeremy Duke ♦ Trombone ♦ Birmingham, AL ♦ **BSTU**

Dorsey Minns ♦ Trombone ♦ Boston, MA ♦ **BG**

Peter M Cirelli ♦ Bass Trombone ♦ Andover, MA

Rhythm

George W. Russell Jr ♦ Piano ♦ Avon, MA ♦ **BF/BG**

Nick Isherwood ♦ Acoustic Bass ♦ **BG**

Ron Savage ♦ Drums ♦ Boston, MA ♦ **BF/BG**

BSTU=BERKLEE STUDENT

BF=BERKLEE FACULTY

BG=BERKLEE GRADUATE

Readers

Kirsten Cairns, Listo Fisher

Sound Engineers

Eric Engler, David Sexton

The Trinity Choir and Choristers

Colin Lynch ♦ Director

Manuel Piazza ♦ Interim Assistant Director

Choristers

Jacob Abbott
Lila Allen
Polly Allen
Olin Arcese
Simon Bays
Tyler Desmond
Didima Dicus
Miles Diver
Isabella Escobar
Sebastian Escobar
Edgerton Fiala
Violette Fiala
Lila Fogarty
Marc Haddad
Haley Jones
Fritz Koester
Perre Coleman Koester
Annaliese LoRusso
Olivia McLoughlin
Paul Narain
Aahana Ramanujam

Soprano

Eleanor Allen*
Anna Arcese*
Deirdre Callahan
Kristine Caswelch+
Elliana Clarkson*
Debora A. Compton
Kim R. Ellwood
Rhiannon Esposito*
Esme Flandro*
Shirley M. Fountain
Tara Gallagher
Dorsey Glew
Marguerite Haddad*
Emily Ide
Sophia LoRusso*
Jillian Lynch
Erin Matthews+
Katharine Moon
Paige Morss
Melissa Riesgo
Elizabeth Self
Olena Tsar
Louise Wager
Rachel Worsham

* TEEN SINGER

+ STAFF SINGER

Alto

Morgan Beckford+
Simran Chowdhry
Amanda Cooper
Karin Denison
Nicolle Diver
Elizabeth Eldridge
Ifeanyi Epum+
Kristen Gandek
Sarah Good
Mathilde Hutchings
Katrina Iserman
Lisa Jones
Lee Qing
Kirsten Lundberg
Diedre Matthews
Janet Powell
Mary K. Roetzel
Marcia L. Walsh
Mary Wolf

Tenor

James Carter
Henry Diver*
Mary Jane Doherty
Nikola Goles
Elise Hannah
Boris Hasselblatt
Timothy M. Kelly
Alejandro Latorre*
Ann Lawthers
Paul B. Linn
David Sexton+
James Walsh+

Bass

Matthew Erikson
Richard L. Harris
Alan Hess
Matthew Hutchings
Raphael Laden-Guindon+
John Lemly
David Thomas Mather+
John Orrison
Simon Ready-Miller
Thomas D. Skehan
Aaron Soice
Scott Street
David Traugot
Henry Vidaver*
Anders Widding*
Honglai Theodore Yang*

ABOUT DUKE ELLINGTON

Trinity Church and its choir join joyfully with Berklee College of Music to perform Duke Ellington's "A Sacred Concert." Because of the extensive and diverse resources it requires, the entire piece has been presented only rarely since the composer's death in 1974.

It is uniquely American in its eclectic power, revealing Ellington's depth of faith, at once sincere and ingenious, but not well known. Much more familiar are the short songs recorded on 78 rpms from his early career playing clubs and epic tours in the US and Europe—"Mood Indigo," "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," and countless others. In the mid-1950s his band's appearances at jazz festivals in Newport and Monterey helped revive his popular appeal and redirect his art.

Years before, as his unique style had broadened, Ellington found himself in a critical crossfire: some critics accused him of giving up jazz for "serious music" (ie., "classical"), while others claimed his music not "serious" enough. This conflict led him increasingly to call his work "beyond category," rather than "jazz." There is no better testament to this expanding awareness than the exquisite tune "Come Sunday," first written for saxophone, then later in vocals sung by Mahalia Jackson.

Fusing jazz and classical styles, spirituals, gospel, blues, and dance, this bold and sprawling work serves as a culmination to Ellington's long and incomparable career. Commissioned in 1965 as part of the consecration of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral during the turbulence of the Civil Rights movement and the war in Việt Nam, these sacred works were played many times over the last decade of his life. For subsequent performances at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in 1968 and at Westminster Abbey in 1973, he reworked the score to accommodate other venues and performers, as well as his evolving artistic and spiritual vision.

This music is the most important thing I've ever done or am ever likely to do. This is personal, not career. Now I can say out loud to all the world what I've been saying to myself for years on my knees.

Ellington was hesitant to accept the invitation from Grace Cathedral (and its controversial Bishop James Pike), concerned that his worldly life as a bandleader made him too impious and that his big band idiom, rooted in a Baptist childhood, better suited Harlem's Cotton Club than sacred spaces or liturgies. But eventually he came to believe:

Every man prays in his own language, and there is no language God doesn't understand . . . no matter how highly skilled a drummer or saxophonist might be, if this is the thing he does best, and he offers it sincerely from the heart in—or as accompaniment to—his worship, he will not be unacceptable because of lack of skill or of the instrument upon which he makes his demonstration, be it pipe or tom-tom.

For the rest of his life Ellington devoted himself indefatigably and sincerely to doing his best. He revisited and borrowed from his past compositions, refashioning songs and orchestrations, reaching out to former collaborators like Jackson herself, the devout gospel singer, who reportedly said, “Baby, don’t you know the Devil stole the beat from the Lord?” And above all Ellington sought help from his longtime arranger, Billy Strayhorn, “my right arm, my left arm, all the eyes in the back of my head.”

The first part opens with an air of mystery, drums jamming with the piano (originally Ellington at the keyboard), before the baritone soloist intones, “In the Beginning, God,” and elaborates “*no earth, no heaven, no nothing . . . no night, no day, no bills to pay, no glory, no gloom, no poverty, no credit cards, no conference calls, no T.V. commercials, no headaches, no aspirin,*” cleverly intertwining the sacred and profane. Instrumental solos give way to the choir chanting the books of the Bible—an outpouring of wit, faith, and love in rhythmic harmony. Every part of the work offers moments of wonder and surprise, as familiar words are reborn in jazz licks full of joy.

The literal movement “David Danced,” where a tap dancer reenacts 2 Samuel, David “dancing before the Lord with all his might,” is particularly memorable. The buoyant rhythms of tap solo and percussion and chorus become an intricate call and response. Ellington closes like David himself in the words of Psalm 150: “*the organ, the cymbal, the loud high-sounding cymbal, let everything that has breath praise God, praise the Lord, praise God and dance, dance, dance!*”

In the spirit of that festive benediction we welcome you this evening.