Montclair State University
JOHN J. CALI SCHOOL OF MUSIC
PRESENTS

2026 CHORAL FALL CONCERT

FEATURING

UNIVERSITY SINGERS + VOCAL ACCORD + WIND SYMPHONY

Dr. Heather J. Buchanan, *conductor*
Gregory A. Stout, *accompanist*

GUEST ARTISTS
Maegan Hoogerhyde BM '20*, soprano*
Wind Symphony
Dr. Thomas McCauley*, conductor*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1
3PM
ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER

Daniel Gurskis
Dean, College of the Arts

Shea Scruggs
Director
John J. Cali School of Music

John J. Cali
School of Music
MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

PROGRAM

VOCAL ACCORD

The Language of the Stars **Katerina Gimon**

Poem by Martha Lavinia Hoffman (1865-1900)

Anna Kodak & Brianna Coppolino, *sopranos*

A Ceremony of Carols **Benjamin Britten**

1. Procession
3. There is no Rose
6. This little Babe

Since I Laid My Burden Down **arr. Kyle Pederson**

Gospel/blues groove

Kathryn Radcliffe, Brianna Coppolino, Ben Silvesti, Dean Tarriff, *soloists*

Maegan Hoogerhyde '20, *soprano*

Gregory Stout, *accompanist*

La ricordanza **Vincenzo Bellini**

"Kuma's Arioso" from *The Enchantress* **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

"Mi chiamo Mimi" from *La Boheme* **Giacomo Puccini**

"The Jewel Song" from *Faust* **Charles Gounod**

INTERMISSION

SCAN QR CODE FOR TEXT & TRANSLATIONS + PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

UNIVERSITY SINGERS

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen **Michael Praetorius arr. Jan Sandström**

16th Century German Christmas carol

Jenna Ferrera, Anna Kodak, Kathryn Radcliffe, Léah Laguerre, Ben Silvesti, Samuel Sanchez, Dean Tarriff, Yadiel Rivera-Colon, Alan Pinzon, *Choir I*

Today **Lucy Walker**

Poem by Ozioma Ogbaji

The Music of Stillness **Elaine Hagenberg**

Poem: *There Will Be Rest* (Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

Signs of the Judgment (Judgment Day) **arr. Mark Butler**

Spiritual

Pseudo-Yoik **Morten Lauridsen**

Spiritual

UNIVERSITY SINGERS & WIND SYMPHONY

Dr. Thomas McCauley, *conductor*

***Vincent's Sky* (2025)** **Jake Runestad**

I. Olive Trees
II. Wheatfield with Crows
III. The Starry Night

NJ Premiere

The composer's attempt to capture Vincent Van Gogh's emotional state surrounding three of his paintings, influenced by the words of Walt Whitman. "Olive Trees" – sunlight, color and joy; "Wheatfield with Crows" – beauty overtaken by turmoil; "The Starry Night" – swirling darkness and hopeful stars.

Please join us on **Saturday, December 5th** at **8pm** for our

2026 CHORAL WINTER CONCERT!

Featuring the Vocal Accord, University Singers, and Chorale performing Dan Forrest's *Requiem For The Living.*

Tickets Are Available At The Box Office Now!

PROGRAM NOTE

VINCENT'S SKY

Jake Runestad (b. 1986)

Considered "one of the best of the younger American composers" *(Chicago Tribune),* Jake Runestad (b. 1986) holds a Master's in Composition from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University where he studied with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts. He has also studied with acclaimed composer Libby Larsen. An award-winning composer of "highly imaginative" *(Baltimore Sun)* and "stirring and uplifting" *(Miami Herald)* musical works, Runestad has received commissions and performances from leading ensembles and organizations such as the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Craig Hella Johnson and Conspirare, and many more.

Moved by the natural world, as well as the worlds of poetry and the visual arts, Runestad's music frequently weaves various sensibilities into his riveting, emotionally driven compositions. Whether drawing upon the indigenous Mayan poetry of Humberto Ak'abal in *Footprints*, or including immersive lighting in *The Ways of Stars*, Runestad treats inspirational sources as structural partners through his creative processes. An authentic intersection of artistic disciplines becomes integrally realized across several of his multimedia projects.

Case in point is Runestad's *Vincent's Sky.* Written in 2025, the work brings together music, painting, and poetry, showing that artists find muses whenever they open their eyes and hearts. For example, and by way of some background for this work, Vincent van Gogh felt inspired by the poetry of Walt Whitman, particularly in 1889 while conceiving and painting "The Starry Night." In fact, van Gogh read *Leaves of Grass* and the cluster of poems therein titled "From Noon to Starry Night" where the night sky serves as a manifestation of eternity and cosmic interconnections. Across *Vincent's Sky,* the composer invites the listener to an enveloping sensory voyage with evocative mindscapes and landscapes. As such, Runestad's score tackles both van Gogh's and Whitman's emotional worlds, those fraught with contradictions, extreme sensitivity, profound empathy, and drastic oscillations between luminous joy and crushing despair. Two autodidacts, both felt everything with raw, unfiltered force, they absorbed the suffering of the marginalized, possessed a romantic-cosmic feeling towards the beauty of nature, and experienced the pain of rejection. However, while van Gogh suffered such polarizing magnitudes as alienation and deep personal despair that reflected his tragic struggle with reality, Whitman felt them as an outward-facing, robust persona of public inclusion, exuberance, and psychological resilience.

Crafted in three sections, *Vincent's Sky* opens to the listener the inner and outer worlds of a creative mind and spirit. While the piece musically examines van Gogh's "sky"—an expansive canvas of possibility, vital aliveness, and emotional turbulence—through pathos, Runestad's music helps to celebrate dualisms found within the artist himself and across his paintings: the swirling, roiling brushstrokes through woodwind and percussion murmurings project a powerful sense of inner psychological playfulness and unrest; the heavy, rhythmic loops of ultramarine and cobalt blue

paired with glowing yellow stars of the brass and vocals capture a dynamic tension—reconciling the chaos of his mental state with a search for visual and spiritual harmony; the journey to the stars by way of wind chimes and voice, which, as van Gogh stated to his brother Theo in a letter, that just as humans take a train to reach a destination on earth, it "takes death to go to a star."

Runestad sonically paints, juxtaposing the artist's brushstrokes with some of Whitman's iconic verse alongside lines from van Gogh's letters to his brother. Much of the music for the 17-minute work for choir and wind ensemble takes shape from incorporating a musical cryptogram—assigning pitches that spell out "VINCENT"—to help anchor the narrative of the piece, the journey of which explores iconic paintings as guided by words from van Gogh and Whitman.

The first painting, "Olive Trees"— illuminating rows of gnarled, twisted olive trees set against an intense, radiant yellow sky with a glowing central sun; painted in November 1889 while staying at the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France—vibrantly celebrates sunlight, yellow hues, and joy. As van Gogh looked out his window in the asylum, he found deep spiritual connection and peace in nature, viewing the stark reality of the olive trees as a vital source of personal strength. Because of this, Runestad's music "shines" by pairing the silvery hues of high winds and mallet percussion with the warmer golden shades of the brass, and as the full wind ensemble undulates and flows, the choir pulses with vitality and jewel-filled wonder.

The second, "Wheatfield with Crows"—painted in July 1890 near Auvers-sur-Oise in France—van Gogh filled the canvas with "sadness and extreme loneliness," yet also sought to include the vital, "healthy and fortifying forces" of the countryside. To do this, he used high-impact complementary colors, such as deep blues against blazing yellow-oranges, and electric greens against earthen reds, to generate visual tension and movement. Given this, the music emotes an almost far-away, ever-reaching appreciation of earth's beauty alongside ever-present chaos, ghostly voices, and unrest.

The third, "The Starry Night"—a day-time memory from a pre-sunrise view painted in June 1889 from his room at the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole asylum—illustrates a dazzling, swirling exploration of inner turmoil and hopeful transcendence. The painting depicts a quiet, orderly town resting in the rolling hills. It features small cottages and a prominent church steeple inspired by Dutch memories rather than an exact French landscape. And while van Gogh's imagery and colorations conjure admiration of nature as well as psychological chaos with motifs of hallucinations, darkness, and symbols of death across his canvases, the music, in the end, evokes Whitman's resilient openness, the hopeful twinkling of stars pushing back against the dark.

Commissioned by a Consortium of which Drs. Buchanan and McCauley of the John J. Cali School of Music were a part, a portion of the proceeds from this commission will be donated to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

– Dr. Marissa Silverman

VOCAL ACCORD

Dr. Heather J. Buchanan, *conductor*
Gregory Stout, *accompanist*

Soprano I
Megan Huber
Sabina Kunze
Negin Saidian
Paige Stewart

Soprano II
Ava DeFebbo
Jenna Ferrera*
Amanda Guach
Anna Kodak+
Deborah Myhren

Alto I
Elinet Brito
Brianna Coppolino
Melanie Gilbert
Karina Kilbashian
Kathryn Radcliffe*

Alto II
Gabrielle Cintrón ^
Jelena Diaz
Taylor Kitzman
Emily Piccola
Olivia Willms

Tenor I
Samuel Sanchez
Xavier Pesante

Tenor II
Damon Dellanno
Jayson Greengold
Gordon Rowan
Benjamin Silvesti*

High Baritone
Luis Grados
Mason Insana
Dean Tarriff*

Bass Baritone
Ryan Avallone
Alan Pinzon
Matteo Barahona

^ - Graduate Assistant **^^ - Teaching Assistant** *** - Section Leader** **+ - Manager**

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SINGERS

Dr. Heather J. Buchanan, *conductor*
Gregory Stout, *accompanist*

Soprano I
Makayla Albert
Emily Cugini
Megan Huber
Helen Makus
Crystal Maoga
Olivia Meyer
Mckenzie Miller
Hailey Morin
Negin Saidian
Ava Tirri

Soprano II
Ava DeFebbo
Jenna Ferrera *
Drew Hinz
Anna Kodak +
Deborah Myhren
Camille Pajonas
Olivia Pellizzon
Brooks Seibold
Aizhan Soltanova
Taryn Spoto

Alto I
Elinet Brito
Melanie Gilbert
Emily Gramley
Karina Kilbashian
Léah Laguerre
Lara Miranda
Kathryn Radcliffe *
Jasmin Ramos
Sephora Santiago
Leah Schwing-Krompholz
Olivia Willms

Alto II
Alexandra Amiths
Anamika Bachoo
Gabrielle Cintrón ^
Elena Cuesta^^
Jelena Diaz
Taylor Kitzman
Emily Piccola
Layla Santos

Tenor I
Milo Berntsen
Eddie Morel
Xavier Pesante
Samuel Sanchez
Charlie Valdez
Jamie Yermish

Tenor II
Donnie Chenel
Damon Dellanno
Felipe Espinosa
Atlas Planas-Borgstrom
Gordon Rowan
Benjamin Silvesti

High Baritone
Brian Corona
Raymond Del Gaudio
Luis Grados
Mason Insana
Greyson Lobb
Jackson Miller
Yadiel Rivera-Colon
Dean Tarriff*
Christopher Vasquez

Bass-Baritone
Ryan Avallone
Matteo Barahona
Darren Butler
Jake McCreery
Amir Nassar
Alan Pinzon
Ezra Snyder
Michael Vespignani

^ - Graduate Assistant **^^ - Teaching Assistant** *** - Section Leader** **+ - Manager**

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY WIND SYMPHONY

Dr. Thomas McCauley, *conductor*

Flute
Julianna Taveras-Garcia
Jules Zeajoya
Milo Berntsen

Oboe
Iva Verba
Bailey Coon

Bassoon
Jonathan Hart
Darren Butler

Clarinet
Emily O'Brien
Quinton Benner
Hailey Guerra
Amanda Haussmann
Nick Derderian
Hunter McDonald

Bass Clarinet
Naji Abdeldayem

Alto Saxophone
Noah Barr
Frank DiBari

Tenor Saxophone
Katie Sorrentino

Baritone Saxophone
Ariana Giammanco

French Horn
Ellyn Eivers
Jose Zapata
Shayla Mcphee
Faith Santana

Trumpet
Mario Correa
Christopher Bailey-Robinson
Gianna Ciaburri

Trombone
David Laird
Marin Cowell

Bass Trombone
Hairo Cesar

Euphonium
James Quinn

Tuba
Isaac Galang James Quinn

Double Bass
Sydni Fields

Percussion
Hannah D'elia
Fenglin Zhang
Alexandros Pothos
Metehan Karaaslan
Elena Cuesta
Logan Mather
Daniel Giermanski
Owen Lenger

SPECIAL THANKS

Maegan Hoogerhyde '20, alumna soloist, for sharing your artistic gift with a new generation of Red Hawks

Dr. Marissa Silverman for your thought-provoking program note

Cali SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Social Media Information

Cali School: @Montclair_Cali
@John J. Cali School of Music

Choral Activities: @MontclairChoral
@Montclair State Choral Activities
@Montclair.Choral

UPCOMING CHORAL PERFORMANCES

Choral Winter Concert
University Singers + Vocal Accord + Chorale

Saturday, December 5, 2026 @ 8pm
Alexander Kasser Theater

Messiah
University Singers + New Jersey Symphony
Friday, December 18, 2026 @ 7:30pm - Richardson Auditorium, Princeton
Saturday, December 19, 2026 @ 7:30pm – Alexander Kasser Theater, Montclair
presented by Montclair State Arts & Cultural Programming – tickets from University Box Office.
Sunday, December 20, 2026 @ 7pm – Cathedral Basilica, Newark

Use Discount Code MONTCLAIR35 for 35% discount
applies only to Dec 18 and 20 performances presented by NJS.

Choral Showcase *#Inspired!*
Jake Runestad*, guest conductor*
University Singers + Vocal Accord
Mt. Olive HS: Mr. Matthew Vanzini*, director*
The Celia Cruz Bronx HS of Music: Ms. Jacqueline Bergland, *director*
Saturday, February 27, 2027 @ 8pm
Alexander Kasser Theater

Cali Large Ensembles Gala Concert
Featuring: Wind Symphony, University Singers, Jazz Ensemble + Symphony Orchestra
Presenting the world premiere of our Jake Runestad choral commission
Saturday, March 20, 2027 @ 7pm
Prudential Hall, NJPAC

Off-Campus Choral Concert
University Singers + Vocal Accord
Saturday, April 10, 2027 @ 4pm
Saint Peter's Church - Manhattan, NY
Alexander Kasser Theater

Poulenc Gloria + Ravel Daphnis and Chloé Suite No.2
Chorale + New Jersey Symphony
Thursday, April 15, 2027 @ 1:30pm – Prudential Hall, NJPAC
Saturday, April 17, 2027 @ 7:30pm – Prudential Hall, NJPAC
Sunday, April 18, 2027 @ 2pm – State Theater, New Brunswick
Ludovic Morlot, *conductor*

Use Discount Code MONTCLAIR35 for 35% discount

MSU Spring Concert
University Singers + Vocal Accord + Symphony Orchestra
Saturday, April 24, 2027 @ 8pm
Alexander Kasser Theater