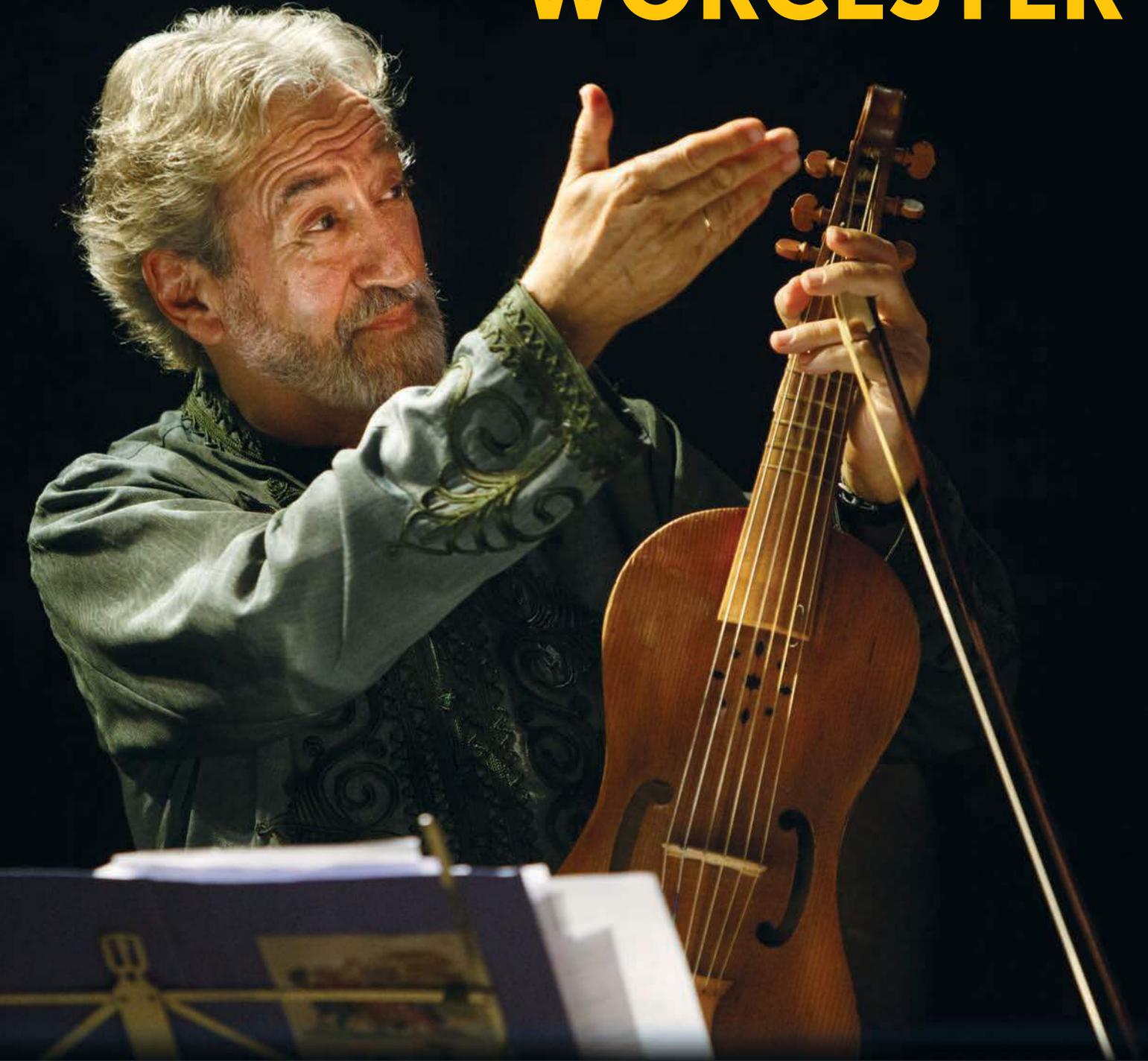


MUSIC WORCESTER



2025–2026 Season

Winter/Spring Edition

THE WORCESTER CHORUS

Chris Shepard, Director



© Brandon Johnson

Frederick: A world premiere Cantata on the Life of Frederick Douglass

April 25 at 8 pm – Mechanics Hall

Inset: Imo Imeh's portrait of Frederick Douglass
at Mechanics Hall

The Worcester Chorus Women's Ensemble & Cantilena

Mark Mummert, Conductor

May 8 at 8 pm
Trinity Lutheran Church

May 9 at 8 pm
First Parish of Arlington

THE WORCESTER
CHORUS
MUSIC WORCESTER



The Worcester Chorus Women's Ensemble joins Cantilena, a Greater Boston-based women's chorus, in a program featuring Reena Esmail's *I Rise: Women in Song*.

© Cole Parks

MUSIC WORCESTER

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Today’s Program and Notes Center Insert

Cover: April 11—Jordi Savall & Hespèrion XXI:
A World of Emotions. Photo by Hervé Pouyfourcat.

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Join us for **Prior Presents 2025–26**, part of an unforgettable season of visiting artist performances and arts presentations coming to The Prior Performing Arts Center at College of the Holy Cross.



Christine Sun Kim

The Berlin-based artist works with sound, language, and the complexities of communication through musical notation, infographics, and language—both in her native American Sign Language and written English—to create drawings, site-specific murals, paintings, video installations, and sculptures.

February 19



Sunny Jain
Wild Wild East

Composer, drummer and dhol player Sunny Jain celebrates cultural diaspora and the interconnectedness of global styles with his band in *Wild Wild East*, a raucous, powerful, and jubilant recognition of a truly American spirit.

March 12

SWING OUT

Acclaimed choreographer Caleb Teicher brings the best of the swing dance world to The Prior with live music by the Eyal Vilner Big Band in *SWING OUT*, featuring exciting Lindy Hop choreography and improvisation.

March 19



yMusic

The genre-leading American chamber ensemble is renowned for its innovative and collaborative spirit. Working on both sides of the classical/popular music divide, yMusic's iconic orchestral sound has been tapped for recordings and concert projects by a dizzying array of popular artists from John Legend to Paul Simon.

March 29



Explore the full season and reserve your tickets at priorperformingartscenter.org

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Nelson Goerner

THE 2025–2026 SEASON

Winter/Spring

Emmanuel Music: Bach Solo Cantatas February 21, Curtis Hall at Assumption University



Aaron Diehl Trio February 27, Prior Performing Arts Center

Refugee Orchestra Project March 1, Mechanics Hall

Nelson Goerner: Chopin, Liszt, Schumann, Albéniz March 5, Curtis Hall at Assumption University

Bach's Birthday Bash 2026

Mechanics Hall



- **The Sebastians: Brandenburg Concertos** March 20
- **Keyboards Up Close** March 21
- **Worcester Chamber Music Society: The Musical Offering** March 21
- **Cantatathon 2026** March 22



The Sebastians

Alexandre Kantorow



Catherine Russell & Sean Mason Jazz Duo March 26, BrickBox at JMAC

Jordi Savall & Hespèrion XXI: A World of Emotions April 11, Mechanics Hall

Alexandre Kantorow: Piano Recital April 17, Mechanics Hall

Frederick: Cantata on the Life of Frederick Douglass April 25, Mechanics Hall. World Premiere.

The Worcester Chorus Women's Ensemble & Cantilena May 8, Trinity Lutheran Church

Dance Theatre of Harlem May 9, The Hanover Theatre

Reena Esmail



Reena Esmail, composer of *I Rise: Women in Song*, Worcester Chorus Women's Ensemble & Cantilena concert, May 8.

SEASON SPOTLIGHT

Dance Theatre of Harlem

The return of the Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) closes Music Worcester's 2025–2026 Season in a co-presentation with The Hanover Theatre & Conservatory. A singular presence in the ballet world, the New York-based ensemble tours nationally and internationally, presenting a powerful vision for ballet in the 21st century.

This performance marks the third co-presentation of the season. Other partners have included the Prior Center for Performing Arts (American Patchwork Quartet) and Crocodile River Music (Ladysmith Black Mambazo).

Join us on May 9 at the Hanover Theatre for this imaginative performance featuring choreography by George Balanchine, Jodie Gates and DTH Artistic Director Robert Garland, and music by Donzetti, Dvořák, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, and others.





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2025/26
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1/31/26

Side by Side
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Project STEP*

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A Valentine
from
The Criers
Full Ensemble

3/14/26 | 3/18/26

Appalachian
Spring
*A Far Cry on
Tour!*
Full Ensemble

4/25/26

In the Making:
Land of the
Northern Frog
Special Project

5/9/26

Season Finale:
The Strangers'
Case
Full Ensemble
*featuring Karim
Sulayman, tenor*

Cross-Pollinations

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Saturday, October 25

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*Sunday, October 26

Old South Church, Boston

A Hive of Creativity

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*Saturday, March 14

First Parish, Wayland

Sunday, March 15

Old South Church, Boston

*Livestreamed performance

Christmas in the Bach Workshop

Celebrate the season with festive arias, cantatas, and instrumental works by J. S. Bach, his students, and family members!

*Saturday, December 13

First Unitarian, Worcester

Sunday, December 14

Old South Church, Boston

Ben Franklin's Musical Curiosity

Delve into Franklin's musical circles, at home in America and at the Paris soirées of composer Anne Brillon de Jouy.

*Saturday, May 2

Museum of Worcester

Sunday, May 3

Shirley-Eustis House, Boston



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CONTINUING THE MUSICAL TRADITION

MUSIC WORCESTER GENERATING NEW WORK

Performing and commissioning new works has long been a central component of Music Worcester’s programming, a practice it has maintained since its founding. Premiering new works began in 1858, Music Worcester’s very first year, with *The Burning Ship* by Boston-area composer Benjamin Archibald Baker. The current season includes two premieres: *Humanity* by Milad Yousufi, as part of the Refugee Orchestra Project concert on March 1, and *Frederick: Cantata on the Life of Frederick Douglass* by Brian Story on April 25.

Humanity

Humanity was co-commissioned by the Refugee Orchestra Project (Lidiya Yankovskaya, artistic director), Music Worcester, and the Oregon Bach Festival. Yousufi, an Emmy-Award-winning composer, draws inspiration from his own poetry and paintings that explore themes of humanity’s shortcomings. The work, scored for orchestra and choir, grows from a solo piano to full ensemble over eight engaging minutes. Yousufi states that *Humanity* reflects nostalgia and hope, drawing comparisons between how we interact with discomfort and resolution.



Yousufi, a pianist, composer, conductor, poet, singer, painter and calligrapher from Afghanistan, currently serves as the Refugee Orchestra Project’s Artist-in-Residence. A former student of Simone Dinnerstein, he was an active part of her tenure as Music Worcester’s first Artist-in-Residence.

Above: Refugee Orchestra Project conductor, Lidiya Yankovskaya
Left: Composer Milad Yousufi wins Emmy, 2024

Frederick: Cantata on the Life of Frederick Douglass

The premiere of Brian Story’s final composition will be performed by The Worcester Chorus and New England Repertory Orchestra with soloist Malcolm J. Merriweather and conductor Cailin Marcel Manson. Inspired by Nkeiru Okoye’s song cycle, “Songs of Harriet Tubman,” Story’s work uses speeches, newspaper articles, and sections from the Douglass’s autobiography to portray the orator and abolitionist’s life story. Preparing for world premieres brings unique challenges—musicians work only from a written score as there are no prior recordings. This process became even more challenging as the composer tragically passed away just days after finishing the cantata. Story, a beloved member of The Worcester Chorus, worked with Chris Shepard on components of the cantata in preparation for the premiere. Quite different from the rest of their season—Bach and Handel—this performance provides a unique opportunity for The Worcester Chorus to honor one of its members and contribute to the future of classical music.

*Once you fall in love with a work,
you want to advocate for it and see it
live beyond that first performance.*

—CHRIS SHEPARD
Artistic Director
The Worcester Chorus



SERENADE AND SOUVENIR – Tom Keil Memorial Concert

Guests: Tracy Kraus, flute; Pascale Delache-Feldman, double bass

Sept 27 7:30 PM Mechanics Hall, Worcester
Hoffmann, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky

THE JOY OF YOUTH

Guest: Tracy Kraus, flute

Nov 7 7:30 PM Unitarian Universalist Church, Harvard
Nov 9 4:00 PM Jeanne Y. Curtis Hall, Assumption University
Boulanger, Mozart, and Brahms

BAROQUE ON FIRE

Guests: Tracy Kraus, flute; Moisés Carrasco, double bass; John McKean, harpsichord

Dec 4 7:30 PM First Congregational Church, Princeton
Dec 5 7:30 PM Museum of Worcester
Geminiani, Rameau, Scarlatti, Telemann, and Vivaldi

SHADOW AND LIGHT

Guests: William Kirkley, clarinet; Jensen Ling, bassoon; Clark Matthews, French horn; Edwin Barker, double bass

Feb 1 4:00 PM Jeanne Y. Curtis Hall, Assumption University
Gubaidulina, Clarke, and Beethoven

FAIRY TALES AND FABLES – ANNUAL FREE FAMILY CONCERT

Guests: Leslie Amper, piano; Lilit Hartunian, violin
Mar 8 3:00 PM Mechanics Hall, Worcester
Ravel – Mother Goose Suite
Navok – Beauty and the Beast – world premiere

WOVEN STRANDS – part of The Complete Bach Project in collaboration with Music Worcester

Guest: Tracy Kraus, flute
Mar 21 8:00 PM Mechanics Hall, Worcester
Bach

LA FÊTE FRANÇAISE

Guests: Franziska Huhn, harp; Tracy Kraus, flute; William Kirkley, clarinet
Apr 10 7:30 PM Fitchburg Art Museum
Apr 12 4:00 PM Shapiro Hall, Joy of Music, Worcester
Ravel, Saint-Saëns, and Chausson

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Nov 2 12:00-2:30 pm *Brahms - Piano Quartet in A Major*
Mar 29 5:00-7:30 pm *Chausson - Piano Quartet, Op. 30*



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Year 2: THE COMPLETE BACH



The 2025–2026 season marked the start of Year 2 of THE COMPLETE BACH. By spring 2035, Worcester audiences will have heard every known work composed by J.S. Bach. Music Worcester is very likely the first presenter of an entirely live-performance project like this since Bach’s lifetime, and programming reflects how Bach heard his own music performed—by everyone. With professional court ensembles and orchestras, amateur choirs, annual regroupings like the BACHtoberfest Choir, and a growing roster of performers in the Worcester Bach Collective, Music Worcester aims to activate every type of musician.

Bach101

Learn about all things Bach. From the background of his life, the forms of music he wrote, and historical context, this series provides insights to get even more out of the repertoire of THE COMPLETE BACH. The most popular episodes are “Intro to Bach, terms, and genres” and “Chronological history of Bach.”

musicworchester.org/podcasts

ChatJSB

Many performers and conductors appearing during THE COMPLETE BACH have a history with Bach that goes back decades. In this podcast series Chris Shepard interviews them about their relationship with Bach’s catalogue of works. Interviewees include Kevin Deas, Jeremy Denk, Simone Dinnerstein, and more.

Unlocking Bach

In this series, Chris Shepard records audio program notes that dive deeper into the music, exploring the context of the work on stage.



THE
COMPLETE
BACH

THE SEBASTIANS PERFORM THE COMPLETE BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS

THE COMPLETE BACH continues this spring with a monumental performance of the complete *Brandenburg Concertos*. The set was originally a gift from Bach to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt in 1721. Bach was looking for a job when he sent this collection of works to the Margrave. It’s likely he’d written most of the works earlier in his career for musicians he worked with closely at different churches.

Each of the six concerto grosso maintains an entirely different character and certain movements shine a particular spotlight on instrumentation: inclusion of a virtuosic harpsichord (the early keyboard concerto), solo violin, and string sextet and continuo.

Because of the unique instrumentation of each concerto, the set is rarely performed in its entirety. Headlining Bach’s Birthday Bash Weekend, The Sebastians will perform all six works in one night for the first time in the group’s history. While the ensemble has included the concertos as staples in their repertoire for years, presenting them in one program is not only a nod to the brilliant musicians Bach wrote these works for, but also to the brilliant musicians performing them.



Perform this October in the 3rd annual BACHtoberfest Choir!

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American Spiritual Ensemble



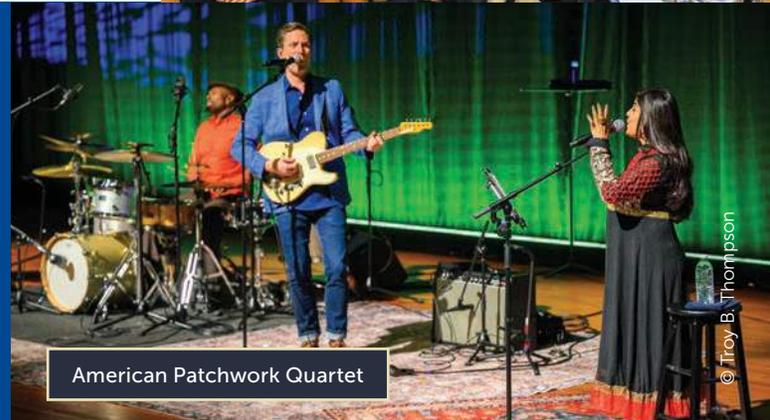
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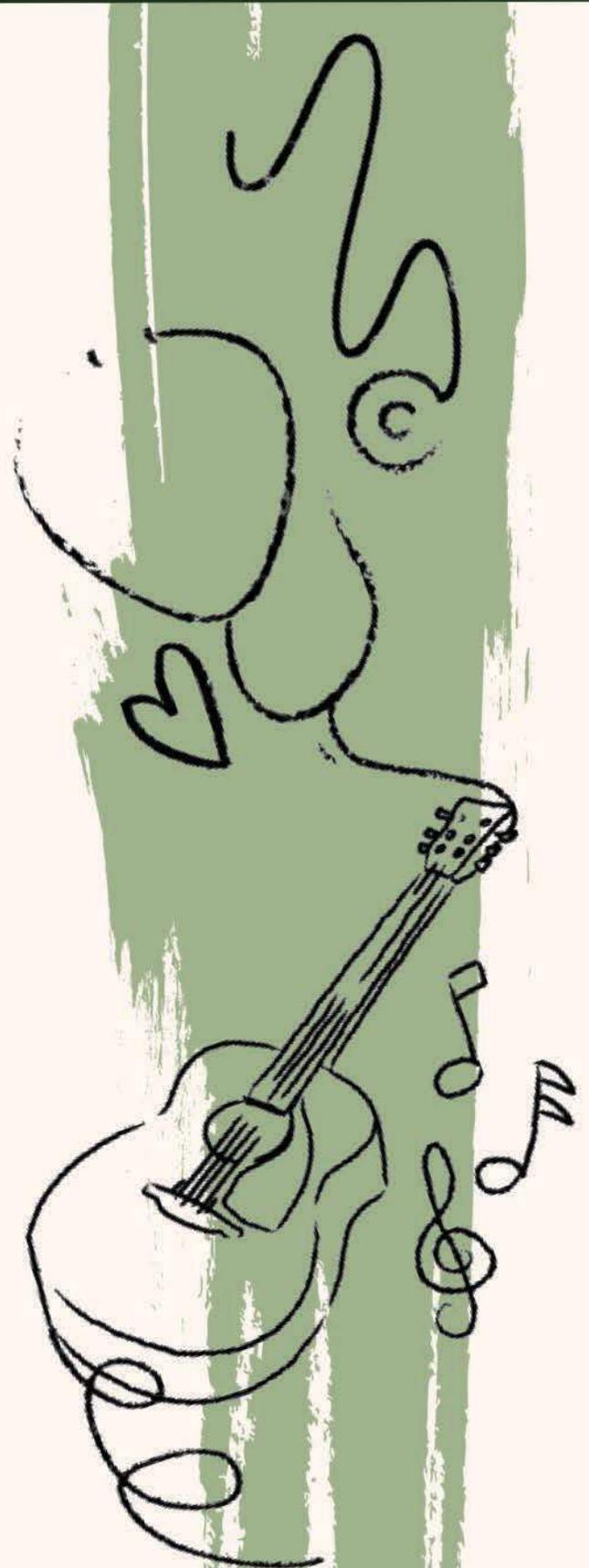
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EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

EVERETT MCCORVEY: 2026–2027 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Everett McCorvey’s tenure as Music Worcester’s new Artist-in-Residence has officially begun! The noted musician, conductor, impresario, and educator launched his 2026–2027 residency in January with concerts at Mechanics Hall and Doherty Memorial High School by the American Spiritual Ensemble (ASE), the group he founded and directs.

Everett was introduced to the Music Worcester community when ASE performed here in April 2024. Executive Director Adrien Finlay quickly identified Everett as an exciting prospect for the next residency and reached out to start conversations.

“Securing Dr. Everett McCorvey as Music Worcester’s next Artist-in-Residence has allowed me to witness some of the most invigorating and aspirational brainstorming concerning the organization’s future since becoming executive director,” said Finlay. “His unique position as a champion of living composers and expert knowledge of works by American composers will provide an utterly new and unique lens for Music Worcester to connect with its community.”

Everett already wears many hats—in addition to leading ASE, he also serves as the artistic director of the National Chorale, the Director of Opera at the University of Kentucky, and the inaugural Principal Guest Conductor at Opera Columbus—but looks forward to this project in Greater Worcester.

“Worcester has such a vibrant arts community,” McCorvey exclaimed. “I first noticed it when the American Spiritual Ensemble tour came to Worcester. And, when I attended the first BACHtoberfest weekend of concerts last fall I was truly impressed with the level of participation both on the stage



© Matt Wright

and in the audience. I’m excited to be a part of this lively musical community and create special memories for all.”

Audiences, students, and community members will be seeing much more of Everett over the course of his residency, which will extend through spring 2027. As his time as Artist-in-Residence evolves, we’re excited about the opportunity to bring new works into the classical music repertoire in addition to presenting iconic works that have shaped Black history in America. Works by Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Margaret Bonds, and more make up some of Everett’s programming. Specifics for these concerts and the full 2026–2027 Season will be announced in May.

Above: Everett McCorvey conducting ASE, January 2026

Below: Working with students at Doherty Memorial High School, January 2026.



© Heather MacFarlane

I'm excited to be a part of this lively musical community and create special memories for all.

—EVERETT MCCORVEY
Artist-in-Residence
Music Worcester

To learn more about the Artist-in-Residence program, visit musicworchester.org/residency

Everett McCorvey greets audience members at Mechanics Hall, January 2026.



THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

Music Worcester volunteers are an important part of our community and help provide a welcoming environment at each performance. We're grateful for the support they offer and for their commitment to making the concert experience enjoyable for all.

Many volunteers have been with us for close to a decade, returning season after season because of the flexibility and variety of musical offerings, allowing them to experience different artistic opportunities throughout Worcester.



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It is incumbent upon us as beneficiaries of this musical treasure to ensure Music Worcester's future potential.

—KATHY ROONEY
Former board member and
founding Legacy Society member

Above: Audience members at a performance by American Spiritual Ensemble, the launch to Everett McCorvey's 2026–2027 Artist-in-Residence.

Left: Simone Dinnerstein at a post-concert album signing.

It is so important to perform new compositions because each generation has something new to say.

—CHRIS SHEPARD
Artistic Director
The Worcester Chorus

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A LOOK BACK AT FALL 2025

GREAT PERFORMANCES

The first half of Music Worcester's 2025–2026 Season played to enthusiastic turnout in venues around the city, including Mechanics Hall, Trinity Lutheran Church and the Prior Performing Arts Center.

Photo credits

Juho Sin: Kyung-Wha Chung

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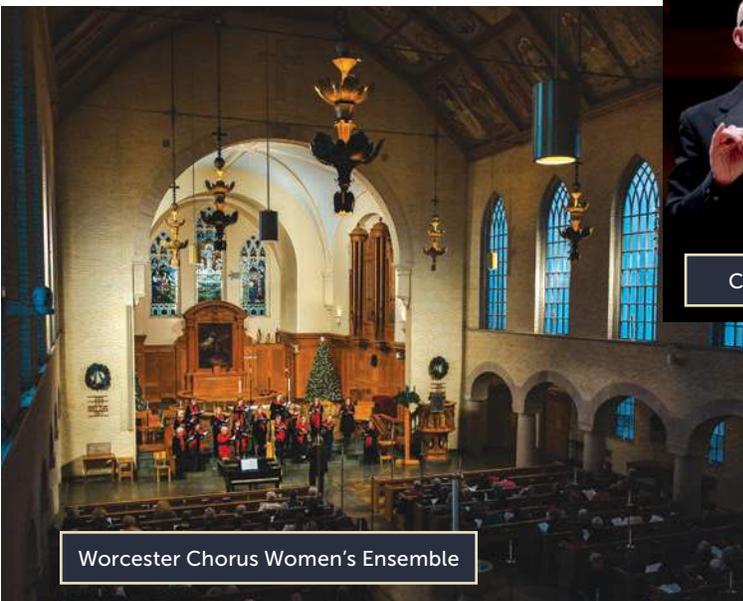
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The Worcester Chorus, *Messiah*

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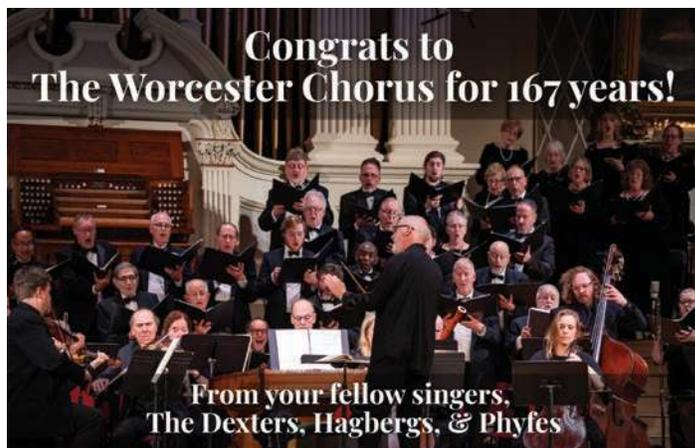


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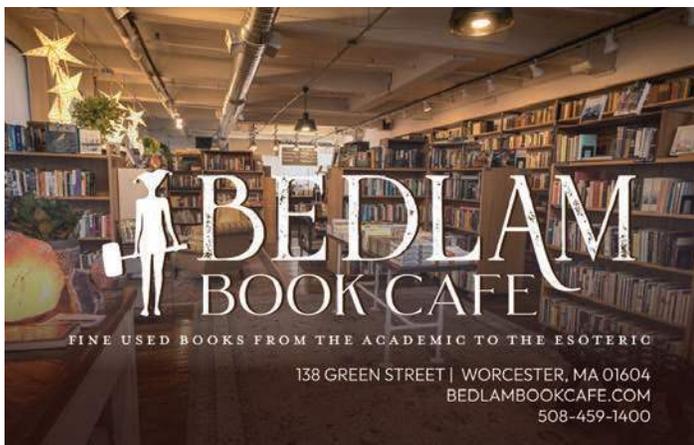
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We'll kick off the fall season with the return of The Knights, featuring legendary pianist Emmanuel Ax in what will be the biggest opening night we've had in several years.

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As Artist-in-Residence, Dr. Everett McCorvey will present several public concerts including a night of Ellington & Gershwin with selections from *Porgy & Bess* and *Rhapsody in Blue*.



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In addition to the return of some favorite artists during BACHtoberfest and Bach's Birthday Bash weekends, Year 3 of THE COMPLETE BACH will include the *St. Matthew Passion* on the 300th anniversary of its debut. This special performance will feature The Worcester Chorus and an international guest conductor.

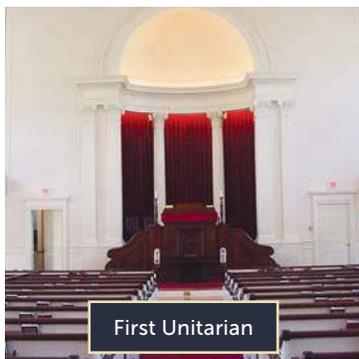
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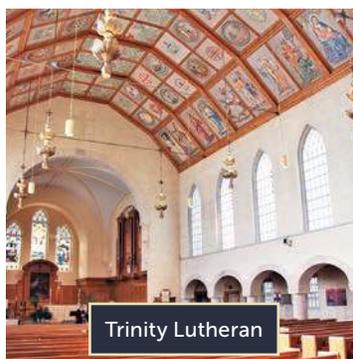
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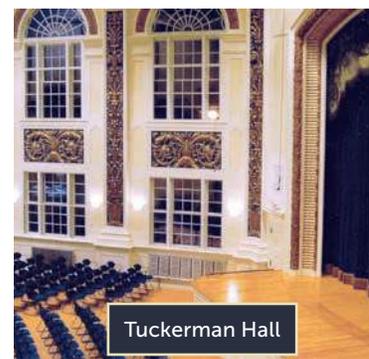
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