

Brooklyn Community Chorus

Spring Concert

Saturday, June 6, 2026

Brooklyn Community Chorus

Vesperae Solennes De Confessore, K. 339

W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Conductors: Catherine Aks & Steven Coburn

(Please hold applause until the end of the last movement)

Dixit (soloists: Alyssa Grieg, Kerri Marsteller, Alex Mulligan, Christopher Lake)

Confitebor (soloists: Danielle Dorter, Ashley Moran, Alexi Saldamando, Josh Lerman)

Beatus vir (soloists: Mariko Watt, Steph Gales, Matthew Robbins, Stanley Kushel)

Laudate pueri

Laudate Dominum (soloist: Danae Binder)

Magnificat (soloists: Corinne Grinapol, Erika Tullberg, Nathan Collins, Chris Lake)

BCC Chamber Chorus

Blackbird

Lennon/McCartney arr. Paris Rutherford

Conductor: Catherine Aks

Tanguendo

Oscar Escalada (b.1945)

Conductor: Steven Coburn

Brooklyn Community Chorus

For the Beauty of the Earth

John Rutter (b.1945)

Conductor: Catherine Aks

Pianist: Steven Coburn

The Rose

Ola Gjeilo (b.1978)

Conductor: Steven Coburn

Pianist: Catherine Aks

Hallelujah

Leonard Cohen (1934-2016) arr. Ethan Sperry

Conductor: Steven Coburn

Soloists: Jack Bales, Adam Murray, Cate Shirk, Nicole Boudreau

O! What a Beautiful City

Traditional Spiritual arr. Shawn Kirchner

Conductor: Catherine Aks

Pianist: Steven Coburn

Members of the Brooklyn Community Chorus

Soprano

Sarah Benesch
Cate Benioff
Danae Binder
Nicole Boudreau^
Alix Briggs
Jennifer Brilliant^*
Melissa Cabat
Danaya Chugunova
Laura Cox
Danielle Dorter
Marisa Frey
Steph Gales^
Teneille Garton Kinnard^*
Masha Gervits
Alyssa Greig^
Corinne Grinapol^
Ali Heron
Leah Kline
Kate Lazar Vargas
Jennifer Lehman
Samantha Lockhart
Susannah Matt^
Emily Merrick
Meryl Miller
Adina Shapiro^
Catherine Shirk
Leanne Siwicki
Sarah Sladek
Nicole Stansifer
Ella Steen
Jean Stevens
Maura Ward
Mariko Watt^

*Section Leader

^Member of Chamber Chorus

Chorus Leadership

Co-Artistic Directors: Catherine Aks, Steven Coburn
President: Emily Murdock Baker
Vice President: Nicole Stansifer
Treasurer: Kate Lazar Vargas
Secretary/Music Librarian: Nicole Boudreau
Concert Manager: Adam Murray

The Brooklyn Community Chorus is a 501(c)3 organization.

<https://brooklyncommunitychorus.org>

Facebook: facebook.com/BrooklynCommunityChorus

Instagram: @brooklyncommunitychorus

Alto

Catherine Aks^
Julie Baraz
Christalee Bieber
Kristin Borden^
Jude Calder
Emmeline Cardozo
Susan Clement
Marianne Clinton
Juliana Dutan
Anna Gagliardi^
Nancy Halfon
Liz Helbraun
Lindsay Hubert
Jennifer Johnson
Trynia Kaufman
Hee Sung Kim^
Alison Koch
Carolyn Kohli
Sophie Lanier
Louise Lippin
Aemiilia Madden
Samantha Maida
Kerri Marsteller^*
Kelsey McKeon
Jessica Miller
Ashley Moran^
Emily Murdock Baker
Caroline Newbery
Kathy Reiss
Kristen Rush
Laura Seburn*
Maia Sheinfeld
Nancy Sing-Bock
Emily Stowell
Vania Tseng
Jan Tuchman
Erika Tullberg^
Stephanie Tzeng
Mallory Weiss
Shelley Zipper

Tenor

Tina Advocat
Steven Coburn^
Nathan Collins^
Zac Covan^
Julian Falcon
Judith Hoffmann
Kristoff Modeste
Alex Mulligan^*
Matthew Robbins^
Debra Rothman
Alexi Saldamando^
Marc Schlesinger^
John Seneris
Sumi Soekawa
Luca Tsaboukas

Bass

Jack Bales^
Norman Bock^
Steven Collins^
Octavio De Leon^
Ray Dodd
Reuben Gelley Newman
Stanley Kushel^
Christopher Lake^
Josh Lerman^
Alan McGowan
Julian Meier-Viereck
Henry Miller
Adam Murray^*
Bennett Otten
Evan Rosson
Joseph Rosta
John Siddall
Frankie Simms
Anthony Vassallo

Guest Musicians

Grace Johnson, violin
Maeve Farrell, violin
Clarion Tung, cello



Brooklyn Community Chorus
2026 Spring Concert Program Notes

Vesperae Solennes De Confessore (*Solemn Vespers for a Confessor*), K. 339

This is a sacred choral composition written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1780. It is scored for SATB choir, soloists, and full orchestra. Today's performance will be with chamber orchestra.

The composition was written for liturgical use in the Salzburg Cathedral. The title "de confessore" was not Mozart's own, and was added to his manuscript later. This, along with "solennes," suggests that the work is a full-length version of the prayer service and was intended for vespers held on a specific day on the liturgical calendar of saints (confessors), rather than just a small-scale daily vespers service. However, the saint in question has not been conclusively established, and may not have existed. This was Mozart's last choral work composed for the cathedral.

It is divided into six movements; the first three are scored in a bold, exuberant manner, contrasting with the strict, *stile antico* counterpoint of the fourth movement, and the tranquility of the fifth movement. The Magnificat sees a return to the style of the opening three movements.

Blackbird

The popular Beatles song *Blackbird* is said to have been inspired by the 1963 Little Rock church bombing, where four little girls were killed. This 1968 composition addresses the racial injustice in the South during the Civil Rights movement and envisions a Black woman as a blackbird. Paul McCartney writes "I had in mind a Black woman, rather than a bird. Those were the days of the civil rights movement ... so this is really a song from me to a black woman experiencing these problems at that time. Let me encourage you to keep trying, to keep your faith; there is hope." This free-form arrangement by Paris Rutherford implies a sense of freedom with the lyric: "fly, just fly".

Doo, doo, doo ee ay... day oh ...

Blackbird singin' in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life you were only waiting for this moment to arise.

Yeah, yeah ...

The day you sing and take these old wings and fly.

Blackbird singin' in the dead of night

Take these sunken eyes and learn to see

All your life you were only waiting for this moment to be free.

Blackbird fly, blackbird fly ...

You were always waiting for the moment you could fly, fly, just fly.

Doo, doo, doo ee ay... day oh ...

Blackbird singin' in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life you were only waiting for this moment to arise.

Blackbird sing. Moment's here, blackbird sing.

Tangueando

Written by the renowned Argentine composer Oscar Escalada in 1990, this piece consists of 21 short sections with lyrics composed entirely of meaningless function words. These words layer upon each other in different rhythms, creating a unique choral sound. It is entitled *Tangueando* because its rhythms are inspired by Argentinian Tango, adapting a fast-paced dance beat and meshing it with overlapping lines of texts. The singers mimic the glissando of string instruments and the sound of plucking strings, suggesting the sound of a Latin orchestra.

For the Beauty of the Earth

For the Beauty of the Earth was commissioned in 1980 by the Texas Choral Directors Association. The poem was written by the hymnodist and poet Folliot S. Pierpont (1835-1917). In it, Pierpont wrote about his experience of feeling blessed when he looked at the English countryside and reflected on the beauty of the earth, of "each hour of the day and of the night", and of "the joy of human love".

*For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies
For the love which from our birth over and around us lies
Lord of all, to thee we raise this, our joyful hymn of praise.*

*For the beauty of the hour of the day and of the night
Hill and vale and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light
Lord of all, to thee we raise this, our joyful hymn of praise.*

*For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child
Friends on earth and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild
Lord of all, to thee we raise this, our joyful hymn of praise.*

*For each perfect gift of thine to our race so freely given
Graces human and divine flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n
Lord of all, to thee we raise this, our joyful hymn of praise.*

The Rose

Ola Gjeilo's *The Rose* is a lyrical setting of the poem by Christina Rossetti (1830–1894). It was commissioned by Chorus Angelicus & Gaudeamus and features on Gjeilo's 2017 album *Winter Songs*. The piece has been described as a "soaring," "meditative," and "intimate" composition, featuring a flowing piano accompaniment. The piece moves from a tender, introspective opening to a powerful, operatically influenced climax. It showcases Gjeilo's typical style: lush, harmonic, and cinematic.

*The lily has a smooth stalk, will never hurt your hand;
But the rose upon her brier is lady of the land.*

*There's sweetness in an apple tree, and profit in the corn;
But lady of all beauty is a rose upon a thorn.*

*When with moss and honey she tips her bending brier,
And half unfolds her glowing heart, she sets the world on fire.*

Hallelujah

Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*, released in 1984 on his album *Various Positions*, is a secular hymn blending biblical imagery with themes of broken love, despair, and redemption. Written after a difficult creative period, it required over 80 draft verses to create. The lyrics refer to a biblical musical progression (the “secret chord”)—"The fourth, the fifth, the minor fall, the major lift"—which aligns with the chords F major, G major, A minor, and F major used in the song. Cohen described the song as a "Hallelujah" to the world, a reconciliation with its inevitable mess and conflicts. The lyrics also mention King David playing for the Lord, Hagar in the night, and Bathsheba. This a cappella choral arrangement is by Ethan Sperry.

*Now I've heard there was a secret chord
That David played, and it pleased the Lord
But you don't really care for music, do ya?
It goes like this, the fourth, the fifth
The minor falls, the major lift
The baffled king composing Hallelujah.*

Hallelujah...

*Your faith was strong but you needed proof
You saw her bathing on the roof
Her beauty and the moonlight overthrew ya
She tied you to a kitchen chair
She broke your throne, and she cut your hair
And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah.*

Hallelujah...

*You say I took the name in vain
I don't even know the name
But if I did, well, really, what's it to ya?
There's a blaze of light in every word
It doesn't matter which you heard
The holy or the broken Hallelujah.*

Hallelujah...

*I did my best, it wasn't much
I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch
I've told the truth, I didn't come to fool ya
And even though it all went wrong
I'll stand before the Lord of Song
With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah...*

O! What a Beautiful City

This traditional Spiritual emerged from the African American experience of enslavement. Used for both religious expression and to build resilience, “Twelve Gates to the City” symbolizes entrance into Heaven as well as moving towards a better existence. Interpreted in the broader tradition of freedom songs, it was often used during the Civil Rights Movement and was popularized by artists such as folksinger and activist Pete Seeger.

Halleluia! Halleluia!...

O what a beautiful city...

Twelve gates to the city, Halleluia!

Have you heard about the city?

The streets are paved with gold!

Have you heard...

Twelve gates to the city, Halleluia!

Three gates in-a the east!

Three gates in-a the west !

Three gates in-a the north!

Three gates in-a the south!

See those gates of pearl,

Open to all the world.

Twelve gates to the city, Halleluia!

O what a beautiful city...

Twelve gates to the city, Halleluia! Halleluia!