

# VOCES NOVAE

*presents*

## *Composer Triptych*



Michael John Trotta

Ola Gjeilo

Jake Runestad

*Sunday, November 24, 3pm*

*St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville*

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Deborah Dierks	——	Collaborative Artist
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# VOCES NOVAE

A CHORAL RENAISSANCE

## *Composer Triptych*

Ola Gjeilo, Michael John Trotta and Jake Runestad

<b>Prelude</b>	Ola Gjeilo
<b>Peace Flows Into Me</b>	Jake Runestad
<b>I Celebrate Myself</b>	Michael John Trotta
<b>Wintertide</b>	Ola Gjeilo
<b>The Path</b>	Michael John Trotta
<b>Wild Forces</b>	Jake Runestad
<b>Ubi Caritas</b>	Ola Gjeilo
<b>Dies Irae</b>	Michael John Trotta <i>Shabnam Mockon and Katie Kraft, sopranos</i>
<b>Let My Love Be Heard</b>	Jake Runestad
<b>Across the Vast Eternal Sky</b>	Ola Gjeilo
<b>Where Peace Has Always Been</b>	Michael John Trotta <i>Katie Kraft, soprano</i>
<b>Your Soul is Song</b>	Jake Runestad

*Collaborative Artist: Deborah Dierks*  
*Violin: Isabella Christensen, Sarah Hill*  
*Viola: Melinda Odle*  
*Cello: Wendy Doyle*

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**Ola Gjeilo** was born in Norway in 1978 and moved to the United States in 2001 to begin his composition studies at the Juilliard School in New York City. He currently lives in Laguna Beach, California.

*Ola Gjeilo is one of the most frequently performed composers in the choral world. An accomplished pianist, improvisations over his own published choral pieces have become a trademark of his collaborations. Although Norwegian by birth, it is perhaps Ola's adopted country of America that has influenced the composer's distinctive soundworld the most, evolving a style that is often described as cinematic and evocative, with a lush, harmonious sound.*

*Ola grew up in a musically eclectic home listening to classical, jazz, pop and folk, a broad background he later incorporated into his classical composition studies at The Juilliard School, the Royal College of Music in London, and currently as a New York City-based freelance composer. He is especially inspired by the improvisational art of film composer Thomas Newman, jazz legends Keith Jarrett and Pat Metheny, glass artist Dale Chihuly and architect Frank Gehry.*

*Ola is an exclusive Decca Classics artist, and his Decca albums include Ola Gjeilo and Winter Songs, also featuring Tenebrae, Voces8 and the Choir of Royal Holloway, as well as the solo piano albums Night & Dawn. The recordings are available on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon, and all major platforms. He is currently composer-in-residence with DCINY.*

*-bio from the composer's website*

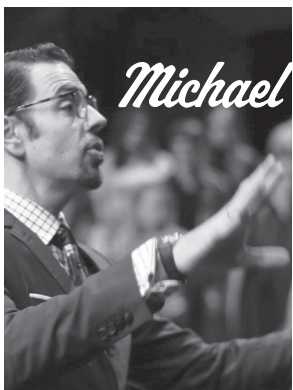


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*Michael John Trotta*

Fueled by a passion for combining tradition and innovation, American composer **Michael John Trotta** (b.1978) creates music that resonates with modern audiences around the world. From Carnegie Hall to cathedrals and concert halls around the world, he creates “elegant, singable music with a strong, spiritual heft” (Choir and Organ Magazine).

Seasoned by his experience as a conductor at the primary, secondary, and university levels – as well as a church music director – his works are infused with an “intimate knowledge of the human voice and a rare sensitivity to the capabilities of a choral ensemble” (Fanfare). The “dynamic interplay of time-honored musical gestures with present-day sonorities” (Choral Scholar) create “tender harmonies and a palette of glowing vocal and instrumental colors” (Gramophone).

In addition to a significant output of music for unaccompanied choir, he has written nine choral-orchestral works on a larger scale. His most recent work, “Requiem,” was recorded by Tenebrae Choir (Nigel Short, conductor). Recent collaborations include the London Voices and the London Symphony Orchestra.

His select concert and sacred music is distributed by Excelcia Music. For more information, a complete list of compositions, or to get in touch, visit his official website [www.mjtrotta.com](http://www.mjtrotta.com).

Passionate about removing barriers to new music and artistic excellence, Trotta has created and funded a new initiative that distributes grants to choir directors and scholarships to future choral directors.

Dr. Trotta resides in the New York City metro area and spends his time at the beach in New Jersey with his wife Rachel and his daughter Gabriella.

*–bio from the composer’s website*



*Jake Runestad*

Considered “one of the best of the younger American composers” (Chicago Tribune), EMMY®-winning and GRAMMY®-nominated composer and conductor **Jake Runestad** (b. 1986) has received commissions and performances from leading ensembles and organizations such as VOCES8, Washington National Opera, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the Munich Radio Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, the Pacific Symphony & Chorale, True Concord Voices & Orchestra, the National Chorus of Korea, the Bavarian Radio Choir, the Netherlands Radio Choir, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Seraphic Fire, the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and many more.

“The Hope of Loving,” the first album dedicated to Jake’s choral music, recorded by professional American choir Conspirare, received a GRAMMY® nomination. In 2019, Jake became one of the youngest composers ever awarded the prestigious Raymond C. Brock commission by the American Choral Directors Association.

“Earth Symphony,” Jake’s ground-breaking choral symphony written with librettist Todd Boss, earned a 2022 EMMY® Award for musical composition. Jake’s visceral music and charismatic personality have fostered a busy schedule of commissions, residencies, workshops, and conducting engagements, enabling him to share his passion for creativity, expressivity, and community with musicians around the world.

Dubbed a “choral rockstar” by American Public Media, Jake is one of the most frequently performed composers of concert music. His thoughtful and compelling works “that speak to some of the most pressing and moving issues of our time” (Star Tribune), have been heard in thousands of performances across the globe. Jake Runestad holds a Master’s degree in composition from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University where he studied with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts.

*–bio from the composer’s website*



## *Program Notes*

### **Prelude (2006)**

Gjeilo writes of this composition...

Named *Prelude* despite its Latin text, I conceived of this piece as a concert opener, a type of introductory or entrance music. Of simple ABA form, its joyful and celebratory starting and closing sections frame a more serene middle part. *Prelude* synthesizes ideas from two of my earlier choral works, *Nya Vägar* and *Exsultate, Jubilate*. I reworked my favorite parts from each of those compositions and created a new and what I hope is a strong and moving piece of music.

*Rejoice, resound with joy. O you blessed souls, Rejoice, resound with joy,  
The Great Trinity is revealed And everywhere adored;  
Give glory, Give It glory, The Great Triad is adored,  
Give It glory.*

*You, o crown of virgins, Grant us peace,  
Console our feelings, From which our hearts sign.  
Alleluia.*

---

### **Peace Flows Into Me (2013)**

Opening with a unison melody over rapid, flowing runs in the piano, this setting of Sara Teasdale's *Peace* is beautiful in its simplicity. The text shines amid the sparse texture.

*Peace flows into me As the tide to the pool by the shore;  
It is mine forevermore, It ebbs not back like the sea.*

*I am the pool of blue That worships the vivid sky;  
My hopes were heaven-high, They are all fulfilled in you.*

*I am the pool of gold When sunset burns and dies, —  
You are my deepening skies, Give me your stars to hold.*

---

### **I Celebrate Myself (2020)**

Walt Whiman's *Song of Myself* is the text Trotta adapted for this short, but exciting work. Trotta writes...

This unaccompanied work contrasts a simple unison motif with quick ostinato in the lower voices. The homophonic refrain declaims, "all forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me." After building to a high point with a soaring descant for soprano, the work recedes in intensity with a harmonic restatement of the opening motif.

*There is never more than now.  
I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul.  
I see, I dance, I laugh, I sing.*

*All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me,  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.  
I celebrate myself, and I sing myself,  
Every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.*

*There was never any more inception,  
Any more youth or age than there is now,  
And there will never be any more perfection than there is now.  
Never more than now.*

---

### **Wintertide (2016)**

Often drawing upon his Norwegian heritage in his compositions. Gjeilo set the melody of one of his favorite Norwegian folk songs to new English lyrics by Charles Anthony Silvestri. His mastery of texture is evident in this piece as he moves the melody around the choir while other voices provide a waltz-like accompaniment.

*Stillness comes when snow is falling, Cov'ring all in solemn white;  
Lines of grey from hearth-fires rising, Gath'ring all in restful night.*

*Spirit dwells in deep reflection, Autumn cares to lay aside,  
Finding signs of new direction In the still of Wintertide.*

*While outside the cold wind blowing, Swirling, restless raw and rime,  
Here inside a wave is growing, Biding, silent, all in time.*

*After Winter's meditation Gates of nature burst apart;  
Comes the Springtime's inspiration, Flowing from the ready heart.*

### **The Path (2024)**

This moving text by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) is an inspirational reminder that many have to struggle on their path to fully experiencing all that life has to offer. Trotta's setting keeps the text in the forefront while enhancing it with prepared dissonances and sonorous harmonies.

*There are no beaten paths to Glory's height,  
There are no rules to compass greatness known;  
Each for himself must cleave a path alone,  
And press his own way forward in the fight.  
Smooth is the way to ease and calm delight,  
And soft the road Sloth chooseth for her own;  
But he who craves the flower of life full-blown,  
Must struggle up in all his armor dight!  
What though the burden bear him sorely down  
And crush to dust the mountain of his pride,  
Oh, then, with strong heart let him still abide;  
For rugged is the roadway to renown,  
Nor may he hope to gain the envied crown,  
Till he hath thrust the looming rocks aside.*

---

### **Wild Forces (2015)**

Fiery and rhythmic, *Wild Forces* is a movement from the extended work, *The Hope of Loving*. The string quartet and choir are equal partners in creating momentum as the melodies are passed back and forth. The text is by St. Francis of Assisi.

*There are beautiful, wild forces within us.  
Let them turn millstones inside filling bushels that reach to the sky.*

---

### **Ubi Caritas (2007)**

Gjeilo's beautiful, intimate setting of *Ubi Caritas* utilizes chant-like qualities of text-based metrical shifts and melodic rise and fall. The stepwise melody is introduced simply, first by the sopranos, then the altos, followed by all voices in unison. Cadence points are enhanced by contemporary harmonies, with every phrase reflecting the theme of the text.

*Where there is charity and love, God is there.  
The love of Christ has gathered us together.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Let us revere and love the living God.  
And from a sincere heart let us love one another. Amen.*

---

### **Dies Irae (2020)**

Utilizing a 13th century chant, Trotta created an ominous and dramatic setting for a cappella chorus. Reminiscent of *O Fortuna* (Carmina Burana), this piece was a favorite of our singers and audience members when Voces Novae performed it earlier this year.

*Day of wrath and doom impending.  
David's word with Sibyl's blending,  
Heaven and earth in ashes ending.  
Death is struck, and nature quaking,  
All creation is awaking,  
To its Judge an answer making.  
Think, kind Jesu! – my salvation  
Caused Thy wondrous Incarnation;  
Leave me not to reprobation.  
  
Day of wrath and doom impending.  
David's word with Sibyl's blending,  
Heaven and earth in ashes ending.*

---

### **Let My Love Be Heard (2014)**

Runestad's setting of *A Prayer* by Alfred Noyes is a stunning outpouring of grief. The gorgeous middle section of the piece features the women in a relay of triplets depicting the singer's voice traveling to the heavens, while the men repeat the phrase "Let My Love Be Heard" building to a dramatic climax of pitch, dynamic and emotion.

*A Prayer by Alfred Noyes  
Angels, where you soar Up to God's own light,  
Take my own lost bird On your hearts tonight;  
And as grief once more Mounts to heaven and sings,  
Let my love be heard Whispering in your wings.*

### **Across the Vast Eternal Sky (2013)**

As in *Wintertide*, Gjeilo collaborated with master lyricist, Charles Anthony Silverstri, to create this cinematic depiction of the phoenix. Silverstri writes, “The line, ‘Across the vast, eternal sky,’ was the starting point of a discussion which eventually came around to the idea of a phoenix, a twist on the theme of rebirth... The legend of the firebird offered creative opportunities to explore the themes of spiritual growth and renewal.” The music Gjeilo crafted to set this text is captivating and picturesque, allowing the audience to imagine the phoenix flying across a sun-bathed sky.

*Sunlight shines on my face;  
This is my grace, to be  
Restored, born again,  
In flame!*

*When I was young I flew in the velvet night;  
Shining by day, a firebird bathed in light!  
Grey now my feathers, which once were red and gold;  
My destiny to soar up to the sun.*

*Sunlight shines on my face;  
This is my grace, to be  
Restored, born again,  
In flame!*

*Do not despair that I am gone away;  
I will appear again  
When the sunset paints  
Flames across the vast, eternal sky.*

---

### **Where Peace Has Always Been (2018)**

Quoting themes from Sibelius’ *Be Still My Soul* (Finlandia), Trotta mixed an anonymous 19th century hymn text with original words to create this beautiful a cappella selection. Beginning in a hymn style with expressive harmonies, the piece is enhanced with the addition of a soaring soprano descant. The themes of hope and comfort permeate every note.

*Be still my soul!  
Release from deep within;  
Find in his loving will  
Where peace has always been.  
For little do you know,  
For little can you see,  
Unfoldings of the plan  
That grasps eternity.  
Be not afraid,  
My love for you, shall never fade.  
Look all around you, and deep within.  
And you will find where peace has always been.  
As flowers blossom in the field,  
And soaring birds shall eat their fill,  
The harvests you shall yield,  
Shall be much greater still.*

---

### **Your Soul is Song (2019)**

Runestad writes of the story behind this piece –

When Germán Aguilar passed away unexpectedly in the summer of 2014, it was a huge loss to our world. Germán had a warm, kind personality and a love for life, teaching, and the people around him. He was a choral conductor, had a beautiful tenor voice, and was deeply engaged in the music community.

After a difficult time in his life, Germán wrote this poem — a plea to the power of song and weathering the storms of life. Germán died of a massive aneurism in the middle of a concert, while he was singing, and I can’t move beyond that image and the meaning it brings to these words. Life is not easy, and is never perfect, but there is so much beauty and joy to be found in song.

*Sing!  
When the seams burst,  
and the traps ensnare,  
and your body breaks,  
and the light flees—  
Sing then!  
For then, your soul is song.*



## *Members*

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Shabnam Mockon  
Sandra Vaughn  
Elizabeth Weaver  
Jennifer Weber

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Catherine Cleveland  
Stacey Herp  
Courtney Kaelin  
Katie Kennedy  
Allison LaRoy  
Anissa Marshall  
Danielle Revert  
Kathy Van Ryzin  
Beth Wade

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Sara Alvey  
Tamara Becker  
Susan Brooks  
Patty Fitzgerald  
Taylor Hannon  
Lisa Holm  
Lori Perkins  
Hannay Shafer  
Christie Tompkins

### **Alto II**

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Linda Harris  
Kim Hoover  
Karen Jones  
Dawn Knapp  
Carrie Li  
Kristina Morgan  
Julie Nicholson  
Amy Shir

### **Tenor I**

Brand Austin  
Alex Elslager  
Kevin Love  
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### **Tenor II**

Scott Burress  
Patrick Haynes  
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Chris Haulter  
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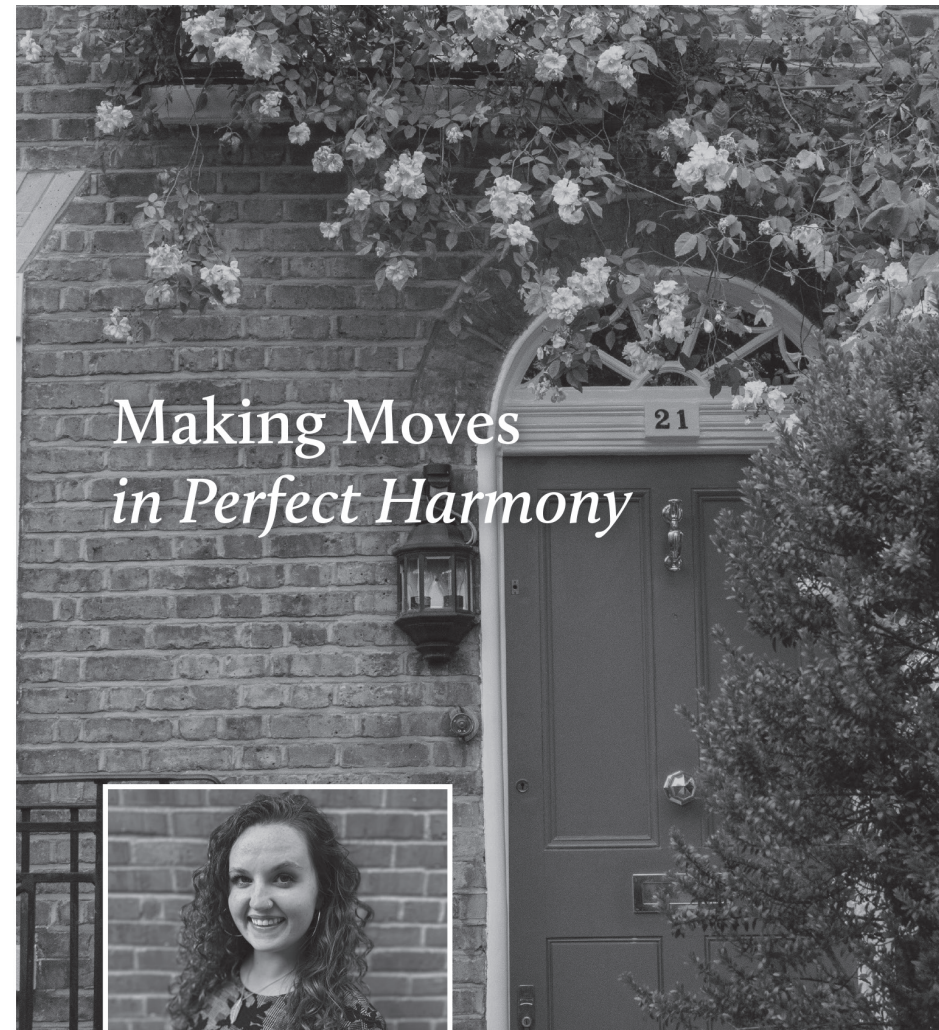
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