

Saturday, October 28, 2023, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Music to Accompany a Departure

Grant Gershon
Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director

Los Angeles Master Chorale
Grant Gershon, *conductor*
Peter Sellars, *director*

James Ingalls, *lighting designer*
Danielle Domingue Sumi, *costume design*
Pamela Salling, *stage manager*

Lisa Edwards, *portative organ*
Eva Lymenstull, *viol de gamba*

Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)
Musikalische Exequien

I.

Concert in Form einer teutschen Begräbnis-Missa
Concerto in the form of a German Funeral Mass

II.

Motette: Herr, wenn ich nur dich habe
Motet: Lord, if I only have you

III.

Canticum B. Simeonis: Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener in Frieden fahren
The Song of Simeon: Lord, let your servant now depart in peace

Tonight's program will be performed without intermission and last approximately 80 minutes.

*Music to Accompany a Departure is made possible by generous support from
Lillian Pierson Lovelace, Patrick R. Fitzgerald, and Ron Myrick.*

*The touring production is supported by the Joan and Jeff Beal Artistic Innovation Fund,
the Andrea and Gregory Williams Collaborating Artists Fund, and Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.*

This performance is made possible, in part, by Nadine Tang.



Above: Brett McDermid and Sunmi Shin. Photo by Brian Feinzimer.

Below: Company. Photo by Brian Feinzimer.



Reimagining the Requiem

by Thomas May

On February 4, 1636, the funeral services of Prince Heinrich II Posthumus of Reuss took place with musical accompaniment composed by his younger friend (and namesake) Heinrich Schütz. Prince Heinrich, an admired and enlightened ruler during an era of almost unimaginable devastation in Central Europe, had prepared meticulously for his own death.

Nascent Lutheran tradition allowed the personal selection of religious texts for one's funeral, but the scope of Prince Heinrich's arrangements was unprecedented. At least a year before his death, he secretly ordered a copper coffin to be made, on which an array of 25 quotations—sourced from the Bible together with various church hymns—was inscribed on all sides, surrounded by exquisite painted decorations. This collection of texts also served as the basis for the *Musikalische Exequien* that Schütz was commissioned to compose—a sonic “translation” and amplification of the message embodied by this unique sarcophagus and an integral part of the process of saying goodbye.

“Over the last two and a half years, we have experienced the trauma of losing loved ones and oftentimes not being able to be there with them during their last weeks, days, hours. So we saw this piece as a perfect way to explore what it means to say goodbye and what it means to have faith that the departed's presence will still be with us.” For director Peter Sellars, the goal is “to create a gathering that could acknowledge the passing of so many people from our lives across these last two years” through music that “touches the emotional depth that we've denied ourselves.”

A well-educated humanist with a special passion for music—he liked to take part in performances at his court by singing bass—Prince Heinrich had largely managed to keep the ravages of the Thirty Years War at

bay from his domain, which was centered around Gera in the heart of Germany. Schütz, born within his sovereignty in nearby Köstritz in 1585, had recently been forced by the chaos of the war to interrupt his longtime position as Kapellmeister in Dresden and to find other courts where he could continue his life as an artist.

Although the Prince commanded only a fraction of Dresden's resources, his policies brought economic prosperity. He had earlier consulted with Schütz to improve musical life at the court and churches and seems to have developed a close friendship with the composer. Whether the commission for the *Musikalische Exequien* came directly from Prince Heinrich or from his widow following his death—some accounts contend that the Prince actually heard performances of the music in his final months—Schütz constructed an innovative requiem memorial that remains a landmark of music history.

In his preface to the *Exequien*, which he published at roughly the midpoint of his career, the composer noted that he had “brought together and set to music in one concerted work” the scriptural quotations and hymn verses engraved all around the Prince's special coffin. The texts in question, which encompass the Old and New Testaments, convey a theological message of overcoming the bitterness of death through the consolation and hope of the promise of eternal life.

But instead of the cosmic, metaphysical journey of the departed soul mapped out by the Latin Requiem, the carefully culled German texts of the *Exequien* suggest something more personal and intimate—the assurance of salvation for the departed meant to provide solace to the grieving left behind on earth, in this “vale of tears.” And Schütz has found a way to express this in music that, as described by director Sellars, is “quiet, sober, beautiful, tender, heartfelt,

and very modest”—at a far remove from sentimentality as well as from the “historionics” of our own time.

If that sounds familiar, it may because Brahms achieves something comparable in his early masterpiece *A German Requiem*, which sets a similarly bespoke juxtaposition of scriptural texts. But Schütz, the most important German predecessor of J.S. Bach, got there more than two centuries before, in a time rent by plague as well as horrific warfare, indelibly marked by tragic losses in his personal life that gave him a very deep understanding of death as a process of living,” according to Sellars.

Conditions had altered drastically since his youthful years, early in the 17th century, when Schütz studied music in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli. “Imagine how spectacular it must have seemed when he arrived: the 360-degree, immersive sound universe of choruses amid the blazing golds and incredible mosaics of San Marco—music not as presentation, but as immersive,” Sellars observes.

Upon returning to Germany and receiving his appointment to the court in Dresden, Schütz proceeded to combine stylistic currents from Northern Europe with these Italian influences—the latter represented,

above all, by the polychoral splendor of Gabrieli, but also the subtle word painting of Monteverdian madrigal.

Aspects of both inform the *Musikalische Exequien*, albeit on a far more modest scale in comparison with the extravagant resources called for in earlier works of Schütz. He limited himself in this funeral music to a *tutti* choir scored for six to eight parts (these can have more than one voice to a part), which alternates with varying configurations of soloists. From the ensemble of 24 singers performing as the choir in this even’s performance (three or four on a part), as many as 18 take the solo parts at various points in the piece in order to convey the “sense of communal grieving and also of the sharing of personal stories” that characterizes the work, as Gershon explains.

The *Musikalische Exequien* comprises three parts, offering a personalized, Protestant alternative to the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass. The first, which Schütz calls “Concerto in the Form of a German Funeral Mass,” is several times longer than the other two combined and corresponds to the Kyrie and Gloria movements of the traditional Latin liturgy. “Concerto” is used here in the contemporary Italian sense of a composi-

Los Angeles Master Chorale

Grant Gershon, *conductor*

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Kelci Hahn*	Lindsay	Casey Breves*	Derrell Acon*
Elissa Johnston*	Patterson Abdou*	Matthew Brown	James Hayden*
Anna Schubert*	Mindy Ella Chu*	Adam Faruqi*	Luc Kleiner*
Sunmi Shin*	Shabnam Kalbasi	Dermot Kiernan*	Chung Uk Lee*
Addy Sterrett*	Laura Smith Roethe*	Joey Krumbein*	Ben Lin
Andrea Zomorodian*	Niké St. Clair		Brett McDermid*
	Ilana Summers		

*soloists

The singers of the Los Angeles Master Chorale are represented
by the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO, James Hayden, AGMA Delegate.

tion for voices accompanied by basso continuo (rendered in all three parts by a portable organ and viola da gamba).

The six-part choir sings the Lutheran equivalent of the Latin rite's tripartite Kyrie plea, interspersed by settings of Biblical verses for changing groups of soloists. This pattern of alteration continues in the much longer, symmetrically constructed, 16-part section that paraphrases and entirely rewrites the Latin Gloria using verses from contemporary chorales (sung by the choir) and scriptural passages (sung by an ever-changing assortment of soloists).

After this would have followed the sermon. Part Two sets Psalm 73 (which also appears at the center of the Gloria section) in the manner of a motet for double choir: the exchange between each choir is a nod to what Schütz had absorbed from the polychoral style of his mentor Gabrieli during his time at San Marco.

Part Three calls for an especially unusual scoring. A five-part choir sings the Song of Simeon from the Gospel of Luke—a quintessential prayer of peaceful leave-taking—while a trio of soloists responds with other scriptural passages and represents the “blessed soul” of the departed (baritone soloist) being escorted heavenward by two seraphim (soprano soloists). Schütz ingeniously makes use of the performance space to differentiate these musical forces and to suggest “the little group gathered around the coffin, singing to the person inside, being answered by the universe,” says Sellars.

The **Los Angeles Master Chorale** (LAMC) is “the finest major chorus in America” (*Los Angeles Times*) that turns “precision into wonder” (*The New Yorker*). Hailed for its powerful performances, technical precision, and artistic daring, the ensemble is led by Grant Gershon, Kiki & David Gindler Ar-

The Crowden School

Inspiring whole-child education for grades 3–8, rooted in the collaborative art of chamber music



crowdenschool.org

Symbolically, this setup encapsulates the message of the *Musikalische Exequien*—the term “exequies” deriving from the Latin word for a “train of followers.” In Schütz’s singularly moving dramaturgy, they/we are gathering, learning to accompany a departure. As Sellars puts it: “You feel there’s nobody in that coffin anymore: that being is now in the air and the sunlight and has re-entered the universe in every raindrop, in every bud on every tree.”

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

tistic Director; Associate Artistic Director Jenny Wong; and Interim President & CEO Terry Knowles. Its Swan Family Artist-in-Residence is Reena Esmail.

Created by legendary conductor Roger Wagner in 1964, the LAMC is a founding resident company of the Music Center and

choir-in-residence at Walt Disney Concert Hall. The fully professional choir is a diverse and vocally dynamic group that reaches more than 175,000 people a year through its concert series at Walt Disney Concert Hall, its international touring of innovative works, and its performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and others.

In 2022, the LAMC won a Best Choral Performance Grammy for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Deutsche Grammophon recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 (with the National Children's Chorus, Los Angeles Children's Choir, and Pacific Chorale). Other recordings include *The Sacred Veil* by Eric Whitacre (Signum Records) and *national anthems/the little match girl passion* by David Lang (Cantaloupe Records). The LAMC is featured on the soundtracks of many major motion pictures, including *Jungle Cruise* and the *Star Wars* films *The Last Jedi* and *The Rise of Skywalker*.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, the LAMC toured its production of *Lagrime di San Pietro*; directed by Peter Sellars, it earned rave reviews across the globe. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* called the 2019 Salzburg Festival performance "painfully beautiful," while the *Sydney Morning Herald* praised *Lagrime di San Pietro* as "stunning... Their voices soared to the heavens." After the ensemble performed in London, *The Stage* called *Lagrime* a "balm for the soul."

Committed to increasing representation in the choral repertoire, the LAMC announced in 2020 that it will reserve at least 50% of each future season for works by composers from historically excluded groups. This commitment to inclusion runs through the entire organization, which recently ratified a five-year plan to improve representation at the staff and board levels, to build a more diverse roster of singers, and to reach a wider audience.

The group's education programs include Voices Within residencies that encourage

students to write and perform their own songs, and an expansive Oratorio Project for high school students. The LAMC also presents an annual High School Choir Festival, which brings teenagers from around the Southland to perform at Walt Disney Concert Hall. In April 2023, the High School Choir Festival celebrated 34 years as one of the longest-running and widest-reaching arts education programs in Southern California.

Music to Accompany a Departure is the second collaboration between the Los Angeles Master Chorale and director Peter Sellars.



Grant Gershon

(Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director)

Hailed for his adventurous and bold artistic leadership, Grant Gershon celebrates his 23rd season with the Los Angeles

Master Chorale this year, an ensemble he has transformed into the "best-by-far major chorus in America" (*Los Angeles Times*).

Gershon is committed to increasing representation in the choral repertoire, and in 2020 announced that the LAMC will reserve at least 50% of each future season for works by composers from historically excluded groups. In 2022, his leadership in the field of choral music garnered him Chorus America's Korn Founders Award for his career-spanning leadership in the field of choral music. Also that year, Gershon and the LAMC received the Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance

In July of 2023, Gershon and the LAMC made a triumphant return to Germany's famed Salzburg Festival with *Music to Accompany a Departure* (Heinrich Schütz), directed by Peter Sellars. About the performances, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* declared "Everything is warmth, radiance, and

emotion,” and the *Augsburger Allgemein* wrote “And what a choir! Flawless intonation...light-flooded transparency and an almost unearthly tonal richness.” During the current season, the LAMC will tour this groundbreaking production to Northern California, Chicago, and Toronto.

Gershon has performed at Carnegie Hall and Trinity Wall Street, and on the Great Performers series at Lincoln Center. He has appeared at the Ravinia, Aspen, Edinburgh, Helsinki, Salzburg, and Vienna festivals; led the South American premiere of LA Opera’s production of *Il Postino* in Chile; and performed with the Baltimore Symphony and the Coro e Orchestra del Teatro Regio di Torino in Turin.

In New York, Gershon has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and at the historic Trinity Wall Street. He has been featured on the Great Performers series at Lincoln Center and the Making Music series at Zankel Hall. Other major appearances include performances at Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, the Barbican in London, and the Paris Philharmonie. He has also had the honor of working closely with legendary conductors including Claudio Abbado, Pierre Boulez, James Conlon, Gustavo Dudamel, Zubin Mehta, Simon Rattle, and his mentor, Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Lisa Edwards (*portative organ*) is a widely sought after pianist, keyboard collaborator and teacher, based in Los Angeles. She is the pianist/music assistant for the LAMC, under the direction of Grant Gershon. As a project collaborator, Edwards is frequently involved with preparing productions with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Such projects include John Adams’ operas *El Nino*, *Nixon in China*, *A Flowering Tree*, and *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*; Schumann’s *Das Paradies und die Peri*; Stravinsky’s *Persephone*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Symphony of Psalms*; Shostakovich’s *Pro-*



logue to *Orango*; and Bernstein’s *Mass*, among others. Performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Green Umbrella series include *War of the Worlds* by Annie Gosfeld and Lou Harrison’s opera *Young Caesar*. Other performances include, Steve Reich’s *You Are (Variations)* at Avery Fischer Hall, Stravinsky’s *Les Noces* at Walt Disney Concert Hall, and Ian Krause’s *Lorca, Child of the Moon* at the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts. In July 2023, she performed at the Salzburg Festival with the LAMC in Sofia Gubaidulina’s *Sonnenengesang* and in *Music to Accompany a Departure*. On disc, she can be heard on two Nonesuch recordings of Steve Reich’s music, *You Are (Variations)* and *Daniel Variations*, and Eric Whitacre’s *The Sacred Veil*.



Eva Lymenstull (*viola da gamba*) enjoys a varied career playing Baroque and modern cello and viola da gamba across the US and Canada. She has performed as concerto soloist and principal cellist with the Lyra Baroque Orchestra; guest principal cellist of the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, Apollo’s Fire, and Musica Angelica; and with Tafelmusik, Tesseræ, the Bach Collegium San Diego, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. A Voices of Music Bach Competition winner, Lymenstull plays at the Carmel Bach Festival and on concert series across North America. Recent recordings can be heard on the Brilliant Classics and Violet Ear labels. Lymenstull teaches Baroque cello and viola as a guest artist in residence at the University of Michigan, and has given master

classes at Michigan State, McGill, and USC. She holds degrees from the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, Rice University, and the University of Michigan, and a doctorate in historical performance practice from Case Western Reserve University.



Peter Sellars (*director*) has gained international renown for his groundbreaking and transformative interpretations of classics, advocacy of 20th-century and contemporary music,

and collaborative projects with an extraordinary range of creative and performing artists. He has staged operas at the Dutch National Opera, English National Opera, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Opéra National de Paris, Salzburg Festival, and San Francisco Opera, among others.

Sellars recently created a staging of the *Roman de Fauvel* at the Théâtre du Châtelet in collaboration with musicologist and founder of the Sequentia Ensemble, Benjamin Bagby, as well as composer Tyshawn Sorey's *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)* for the Park Avenue Armory. A revival of Sellars' acclaimed production of *Tristan und Isolde*, with videography by artist Bill Viola, was seen at the Paris Opera early in 2023.

Sellars is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA. He is recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the Erasmus Prize for contributions to European culture, and the Gish Prize, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has been awarded the prestigious Polar Music Prize and named Artist of the Year by *Musical America*. In 2021, he was honored with the EBU-IMZ Lifetime Achievement Award for his body of opera video recordings.



James F. Ingalls (*lighting designer*) made his LA Master Chorale debut with *Lagrime di San Pietro*, with which he has toured internationally. His work for the LA Philhar-

monic includes *Fidelio* with Deaf West Theatre and *Canata Criolla*, *El Niño*, and *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*. Designs for the Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group include *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *The Price*, and *A Parallelogram*. Recently for Peter Sellars he designed *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)* (Park Avenue Armory/NYC), *Oedipus Rex/Symphony of Psalms* (San Francisco Symphony), and *Le Roman de Fauvel* (Theatre du Châtelet/Paris).

Recent designs for dance include *Ibsen's House* (Singapore Ballet and Charlotte Ballet), *Raymonda* (Dutch National Ballet), and *Twyla Now!* (New York City Center). Recent theater includes *Once Before I Go* (Gate Theatre/Dublin) and *The Seagull* and *Three O'Casey Comedies* (Druid Theatre/Galway).

He often collaborates with The Wooden Floor dancers in Santa Ana, California.



Danielle Domingue Sumi (*costume design*) is a visual artist inspired by culture, spirituality, and humility. She is committed to promoting social well-being through costume design and expressive arts. Her creativity is ex-

pllicated through diversity and social justice principles with an increased understanding, recognition, and response to multiethnic heritage.



Grant Gershon. Photo by Brian Feinzimer.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

A graduate of Clark Atlanta University, FIDMLA, and Loyola Marymount University, with degrees in both design and art psychotherapy, Sumi is known for her ingenuity and leadership skills in theatrical, fashion, dance, and opera costume production.

She has created for the Fashion Institute of Design (LA), Theatre Forty, Los Angeles Opera, Music Academy of the West, Los

Angeles Philharmonic, Perm Opera and Ballet, Los Angeles Master Chorale, East West Players, Japanese American Community and Culture Center, Halau Hula Moani'a'ala Anuhea, and Company One Theatre. Sumi has also worked as Resident Costume Designer with Nobles Theatre Collective. She is currently Costume Director with New Orleans Opera Association.