



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – SEPTEMBER 30, 2010

Press Contacts

For Palladium Musicum: Marie Williams

203.661.6856 | apalladio@mac.com

For Robert Sirota: Christina Jensen PR

646.536.7864 | christina@christinajensenpr.com

PALLADIUM MUSICUM PRESENTS



St. Bede's Chapel South Window, James Powell & Sons, London, 1921. Photo by Joanne Bouknight available in high resolution at www.christinajensenpr.com

HOLY WOMEN: LIVES OF THE WOMEN SAINTS IN THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL

COMPOSED BY ROBERT SIROTA

LIBRETTO BY VICTORIA SIROTA

RESEARCH BY JAMES LEMLER

WORLD PREMIERE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2010, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL

270 LAKE AVENUE, GRENEWICH, CT

ON THE CAMPUS OF THE WESTCHESTER FAIRFIELD HEBREW ACADEMY

TICKET INFORMATION: \$50 (PERFORMANCE ONLY);

\$100 (WITH POST-CONCERT CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION

AT THE GREENWICH FIELD CLUB)

FOR RESERVATIONS OR INFORMATION:

203.661.6856 OR WWW.PALLADIUMMUSICUM.ORG

RESERVATIONS ARE ADVISED DUE TO THE CHAPEL'S INTIMATE SIZE.

Greenwich, CT – **Palladium Musicum, Inc.**, a non-profit Greenwich, CT organization is pleased to announce the world premiere of a new musical work it has commissioned, entitled *Holy Women: Lives of the Women Saints in the Stained Glass Windows of St. Bede's Chapel*, composed and conducted by **Dr. Robert Sirota** with a libretto by the **Reverend Canon Victoria Sirota**. The premiere will take place on **Saturday, November 6 at 7:30 pm** at the historic St. Bede's Chapel, located on the campus of the Westchester Fairfield Hebrew Academy (the original Greenwich, CT campus of the former Rosemary Hall School for Girls). *Holy Women* is a Cantata for nine singers and chamber ensemble, which tells the stories of the nine women saints represented in St. Bede's Chapel's magnificent stained glass windows. The performance will take full advantage of the excellent acoustics of the landmark Chapel, a stunning 1909 architectural jewel designed by Theodore T. Blake, partner in the firm Carrère and Hastings. Palladium Musicum is leading a Greenwich community effort to revive St. Bede's Chapel as a performance venue.

A year in preparation, the Cantata is a collaboration between Dr. Robert Sirota, President of the Manhattan School of Music, the composer, and his wife, the Reverend Canon Victoria Sirota, Cathedral Church of Saint

John the Divine, the librettist. The **Reverend Dr. James B. Lemler**, Rector, Christ Church Greenwich, undertook research on the lives of the women saints as part of the project. The Cantata was expressly commissioned by Palladium Musicum, Inc. with support from local patrons of the arts to honor St. Bede's Chapel.

The subjects of *Holy Women* are the nine women saints represented in the stained glass windows of the Chapel, where individual windows tell the story of each saint, whose figure is rendered resplendent with specific images and symbols emblematic of her life. Each woman was misunderstood in her own time, but despite the fact that their lives span sixteen centuries, they have much in common with each other, namely courage, faith and joy. This Cantata is a conversation with these holy women.

Saint Theresa of Avila provides the prologue, after which the saints appear in procession to a hymn. The women are arranged in three groups of three moving chronologically backwards. The first group, the Mystics (*Saints Walburga, Catherine of Sienna and Theresa*) sing a trio that points out the commonalities in their profound spiritualities and committed lives as religious. The second group, the Martyrs (*Saints Ursula, Barbara and Agnes*), each tell their courageous stories with the chorus of saints replying. The third group, the Mothers (*Saints Anne, Elizabeth and Mary*), return us to the beginnings of Christianity with the story of salvation as described in a duet between *Saints Anne* (Mary's mother) and *Elizabeth* (Mary's cousin and the mother of John the Baptist), followed by the *Magnificat* sung by *Mary*, the mother of Jesus. The work ends with the hymn.

In St. Bede's Chapel, the two main walls of stained glass windows containing the women saints – the north (e.g., chancel) wall and the south wall – were designed by two prominent London firms. The windows in the north wall were designed by the influential London artist, Christopher Whall and his daughter, Veronica, and reflect the influence of the arts and crafts movement in England at the time and were installed in 1915. The windows in the south wall were designed by the highly regarded London firm of James Powell & Sons and installed in 1921.



The work of **Robert Sirota**, composer of *Holy Women*, has been performed throughout the United States and Europe, at venues including Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall in New York, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Tanglewood Music Center, the Aspen Music Festival, the Yellow Barn Music Festival, Benaroya Hall in Seattle, and at The Juilliard School, the Shepherd School of Music, Peabody, Oberlin Conservatory, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory in Singapore, Royal Conservatory in Toronto, and the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. His commissions include works for the Empire Brass, American Guild of Organists, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, the Fischer Duo, the Peabody Trio, the Webster Trio, and the Chiara String Quartet. Of his music, *The New York Times* has reported, "Sirota's compositional voice has a distinctive tartness and rhythmic bite. Thick, astringent chromatic harmonies come in tightly bound chords to create nervous sonorities. Yet the textures are always lucid; details come through."

Robert Sirota has received grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the United States Information Agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, Meet The Composer, and the American Music Center. Among his awards are a First Prize in the Long Island Composers Alliance Competition and the Andrew White Medal from Loyola College in Baltimore. A native New Yorker, Mr. Sirota received his earliest compositional training at The Juilliard School, and received his bachelor's degree in piano and composition from Oberlin Conservatory where he studied with Joseph Wood and Richard Hoffman. A Thomas J. Watson Fellowship allowed him to study and concertize in Paris, where his principal teacher was Nadia Boulanger. Returning to America, Mr. Sirota earned a Ph.D. from

Harvard University, studying with Earl Kim and Leon Kirchner. In 2005, Mr. Sirota was appointed president of the Manhattan School of Music in New York, where he is also a member of the School's composition faculty. For more information visit www.RobertSirota.com.

Victoria R. Sirota, librettist of *Holy Women*, Episcopal priest, musician, lecturer and author, is Canon Pastor and Vicar of the Congregation at The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City. She holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Boston University and Harvard Divinity School, and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College. Former Vicar of Church of the Holy Nativity in Baltimore, she has taught at Yale Divinity School, Yale Institute of Sacred Music, The Ecumenical Institute of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary and University, and Boston University. Awards include the Bishop's Award for Outstanding Ordained Ministry, the Ecumenical Service Award from the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council, and the Newington-Cropsey Foundation Award for Excellence in the Arts. The author of hymn texts, articles and reviews, she is recorded on Northeastern and Gasparo Records. Her book *Preaching to the Choir: Claiming the Role of Sacred Musician* is available from Church Publishing. The Rev. Canon Sirota has been an Associate of the Society of Saint Margaret since 1996.



Reverend Dr. James B. Lemler, research contributor for *Holy Women*, Rector, Christ Church Greenwich, is a nationally known leader, educator, consultant, preacher and pastor. Prior to his appointment at Christ Church Greenwich he served as the Director of Mission for the Episcopal Church, USA and was the Dean and President of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, an internationally recognized institution of theological education and leadership. Additionally, his ministry has included service in a large and vital urban parish and Episcopal school, as a university chaplain and in two major cathedral churches.

He is widely called upon as a teacher, writer, conference leader, preacher, and consultant in areas of congregational development, leadership development, education, spirituality, and mission. Nationally recognized as a presenter and educator in congregational development, he helped to launch the 20/20 Vision for domestic mission and congregational life in the Episcopal Church, a movement which works towards embracing fully the stated mission of the Church and is a goal that General Convention adopted in July 2000 to contribute to the growth and vitality of the Church and its congregations.

Rev. Lemler has published various articles and essays, study guides for the Episcopal Media Center, trustee education materials, *Vestry Papers* contributions, and journals. His publications include, *Serving Those In Need*, *20/20: A Vision for the Church*, *God and Money*, *Groundwork: Resources for Congregational Growth and Transformation*, *Moving Ahead in Mission*, and *Groundwork II (Year B): Resources for Congregational Growth and Transformation*. Additionally, he is the editor of the Transformation Series (2008) from Church Publishing Group and the author of the third book in that series, *Transforming Congregations*.

The principals in the production include nine vocalists: sopranos: **Maeve Høglund**, **Amy Justman**, **Michelle Repella**, and **Katarina Saporsantos**; mezzo sopranos: **Abigail Fischer**, **Laurel Masse**, **Margaret Peterson**, **Katya Powder**; and contralto: **Lisa Chavez**. Members of the chamber ensemble include **Christopher James**, flute; **Lauren Blackerby**, oboe; **Kathryn Brooks**, bassoon; **Jordan Dodson**, guitar; **Victoria Sirota**, organ; **Nicholas Mann**, violin; and **David Geber**, cello.

Tickets are priced at two levels: \$50 for general admission and \$100 for patron which includes a champagne reception post-event at the adjacent Greenwich Field Club. Reservations are advised, given seating limitations of 150 people in the chapel. Contact Palladium Musicum, Inc. at 203-661-6856 or www.palladiummusicum.org for ticket information and reservations.

2010 SEASON EVENTS

CELEBRATING SACRED MUSIC AT ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL, GREENWICH, CT ON THE CAMPUS OF THE WESTCHESTER FAIRFIELD HEBREW ACADEMY (WFHA) INTRODUCING THE ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL TO THE GREENWICH COMMUNITY

JANUARY 30, 2010, 7:30 PM – 9:30 PM INAUGURAL PROGRAM INTRODUCING ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL TO THE GREENWICH COMMUNITY AS A PERFORMANCE VENUE

The Choate Rosemary Hall Chamber Chorus under the direction of **Ralph Valentine**, Director of Music CRH and the Choate Rosemary Hall Chamber Orchestra, directed by **Philip Ventre**, Director of Instrumental Music CRH will present a festival program of choral and instrumental music. **Bruce Neswick**, Director of Cathedral Music and Organist, *Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine*, New York City, will rededicate the historic Ernest M. Skinner organ (Opus 863, 1931). **Annie Rosen**, mezzo-soprano, *Mannes College of Music*, will perform several solo vocal selections. A reception will follow the gala evening.

MAY 22, 2010, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM WEDDING MUSIC AT ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL: A HISTORICAL RETROSPECTIVE, CELEBRATING NOTABLE WEDDINGS HELD AT THE CHAPEL

In collaboration with the **Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich**, a varied program of outstanding wedding music for organ, strings, brass, and vocal ensembles, illustrative of memorable weddings held at St. Bede's Chapel throughout its history will be presented under the direction of **Bruce Neswick**, Director of Cathedral Music and Organist, *Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine*. Weddings of famous Greenwich families such as the **Twachtmans** and **Rosemary Hall alumnae** will be featured. Wedding gowns representative of the historic fashion of the original bride will be worn in a series of staged vignettes in the context of the music offered. A wedding reception in the chapel's courtyard with music by a string trio will conclude the occasion.

NOVEMBER 6, 2010, 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM HOLY WOMEN: LIVES OF THE WOMEN SAINTS IN THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL – WORLD PREMIERE OF A COMMISSIONED WORK

Through a dramatic presentation in a cantata setting, the stories of the women saints in St. Bede's Chapel stained glass windows – the Virgin Mary and Saint Anne, her mother, Saints Agnes, Barbara, Elizabeth, Theresa, Ursula, Walburga, and Catherine of Sienna – will be told as a series of conversations, sung by female vocalists representing the woman saints. Issues and topics relevant to their time in history will be discussed among them. The **Reverend Canon Victoria Sirota** of the *Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine* will be the librettist and **Dr. Robert Sirota**, President of the *Manhattan School of Music* and notable composer, will both compose and direct the cantata which will be performed by artists from the Manhattan School of Music. **Reverend Dr. James Lemler**, Rector, *Christ Church Greenwich*, will undertake research on the women saints as the basis for the cantata. A champagne reception for ticket patrons will be held at the Greenwich Field Club at the conclusion of the program.

2010 SEASON ANNUAL SERIES OF ORGAN CONCERTS AT ST. BEDE'S CHAPEL

Periodically throughout 2010, local churches and organists will offer sacred music programs, featuring the St. Bede's Chapel historic Ernest M. Skinner organ, in combination with vocal, choral, and instrumental ensembles. The organ concert series will be sponsored by Palladium Musicum, Inc.

Palladium Musicum, Inc., a non-profit organization, is devoted to celebrating classical music internationally as an expression of culture, the arts and the sacred, experienced in an intimate setting.