



JULIAN WACHNER

CONDUCTOR AND COMPOSER

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AND THE ARTS,
TRINITY WALL STREET

MUSIC DIRECTOR, THE WASHINGTON CHORUS

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR, OPERA MCGILL

THE SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MUSIC
AT MCGILL UNIVERSITY

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JULIAN WACHNER PRESS HIGHLIGHTS



And [Trinity's weeklong musical commemoration of 9/11] was far from the only highlight of the program in a year of glowing promise and stellar achievement. In fact, **having installed Julian Wachner as its director of music and arts in September 2010, Trinity Church, the major spiritual center of the financial district, was bidding fair to become its major cultural center as well.** – *The New York Times*

As usual, Julian Wachner, the church's director of music, led **vital, energetic performances**, particularly impressive for the rich expressivity of the choral singing.
– *The New York Times*

Trinity's [*Messiah*], largely on the strength of its extraordinary choir, **pierced the heart...** Dense yet light, with biting diction and dramatic dynamic shadings, the Trinity choir [under the direction of Julian Wachner] was particularly revelatory in the great, dark numbers of the oratorio's second part. They sang a furious "Surely he hath borne our griefs" and an "All we like sheep have gone astray" of **rollicking, almost celebratory intensity**, egged on by a muscular, unrelenting orchestra.
– *The New York Times*

[*Messiah*]...**it's rare to come across one that makes you hear this well-worn piece anew. The Trinity Wall Street version, featuring the superb Trinity Choir and Baroque Orchestra, conducted by Julian Wachner, did just that.**
– *The Wall Street Journal*

Wachner's own piece [*Come, My Dark-Eyed One*], an ambitious secular oratorio of sorts charting love and loss...**Deftly orchestrated, with winning touches** for percussion...presents a mash-up of 20th-century styles — from Mahler-like muscularity and jazzy Bernstein to Britten's chromaticism and shades of minimalism. Soprano Arianna Zukerman and baritone David Kravitz gave committed performances, as did [the Washington Chorus], especially in the a cappella movement "Shall we, too, rise," music fine enough to stand on its own.
– *The Washington Post*

[*Wachner: Complete Choral Music, Vol. 1*]It's difficult to be a Renaissance man in American society...But Julian Wachner is no Johnny-come-lately and he refuses to become a brand. **The only thing predictable about him is his versatility and prodigiousness as a conductor and composer.** This CD, the first in a series of three CDs representing his complete choral works, demonstrates how difficult it might be to pigeonhole a man who is as comfortable writing a benediction as he is a sensual chorale. – *Fanfare Magazine*

[*St. Matthew Passion*] **It was an experience akin to one's first exposure to the young Peter Sellars. There was genius here and no mistaking it.** – *The Boston Globe*

[*Messiah*] **It was quite an introduction to the Hollywood-born conductor...Blending scholarship and expressivity, he was an illuminating presence...a sonorous success, worthy of the standing ovation it received.**
– *San Diego Union-Tribune*

[*Wachner Evangeline Revisited*] The music of Julian Wachner was responsible for most of the applause...at **turns stentorian and lyrical, but always direct, and splendidly wrought...he was also a good conductor...superb in the pit.** – *The Montreal Gazette*

[Mozart/Merryman] **Wachner has shown the kind of technical command, large-spiritedness, and fiery imagination that all but shout to the skies: "Major Talent!"** But for all of Wachner's alertness to authentic performance—practice niceties, there seems to be a fire-breathing Verdi conductor in him, too...Wachner **brought this one to blazing life...**
– *The Boston Globe*

The sheer sense of a peace at the conclusion of [Wachner's] *At the Lighting of the Lamps* is one of the most magical moments I have experienced in a contemporary choral work.. – *Fanfare Magazine*

PRESS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

... a striking choice...he is something of an exotic bird: a conductor who has, and plans to keep, a career in opera and the orchestral repertory as well as choruses. It was certainly refreshing to see a choral conductor who knows how to handle an orchestra so well. **Wachner is at home on the podium...** – *The Washington Post*

[*Orphée et Euridice*] Wachner's focus is on mood, and **one is swept up in the grandeur of the music** that so magnificently depicts place and character. – *The Globe and Mail [Toronto]*

[Spoleto Festival USA Recital]... featured the **supreme skills and musicianship of Julian Wachner** in an unforgettable recital...Wachner **is truly one of the most versatile musicians to grace the Spoleto Festival in recent years.** This recital left no doubt as to his extraordinary abilities...the chance to hear an improviser of such gifts as Wachner's was no doubt an **unprecedented thrill for the audience...**The final result had discernable form, development and calculated effect – something we usually expect only from finished works. **This stupefying wizardry was the hit of the recital, and it had to be heard to be believed.** – *The Post and Courier [South Carolina]*

[Wachner *Triptych for Organ & Orchestra*] “Logos” is a **sonic tour de force**, making full use of colors, dynamics, and rhythmic energy characteristic of organ and orchestra. “Agape,” which opens with an organ solo in which one feels **bathed in love**, is a welcome contrast to the surrounding movements. The concluding section, “Angelus,” **demanding the utmost from all the players**, is filled with complex rhythms and textures and brings the extended work to a **stunning climax.** – *The American Organist*

[Wachner *Rilke Songs*] ...the settings are text driven and **completely immersed in the descriptive color** of the native tongue in which the Rilke poems are set. Thick and dense textures give way to unison and simple four-part homophony. Wide tessitura are explored but not exploited. Bi-tonality permeates much of his writing style. Performed in its entirety, or two or three as a set, **they are an outstanding contribution to choral literature.** – *Choral Journal*

[Beethoven/Brahms] **Wachner led a fiery performance** of Beethoven's “Egmont” Overture and a compelling account of Brahms's Third Symphony...Wachner's **handling of the limpid and sighing third movement was masterly.** – *The Boston Globe*

[Tchaikovsky/Stravinsky/Vivaldi] No doubt a good deal of the credit for the **group's amazing polish** must go to the **brilliant and enthusiastic** Wachner... – *Santa Barbara Independent*

[Verdi *Requiem*] We have Julian Wachner to thank for this **masterful and moving** Requiem. It was quite obvious that Wachner had studied the score in depth. This Requiem was one of **reflection**, with **profound and unexpected detail** from the very beginning of the piece, approaching “il più piano possibile” (Verdi's marking), and even slower than prescribed. Quickly, the mood was set. Further on, in unrelenting contrast, the repeated orchestral and choral fortissimos, the whistling of the woodwinds cutting through the blaring calls of the brass, never ceased to **express an infinite grandeur.** – *La Presse (Montréal)*

[*Albert Herring*] Julian Wachner has **musical intelligence and personal charisma...** Britten is one of Wachner's passions, and the conductor **led the performance with skill, gusto, humor, and warmth.** – *The Boston Globe*

[Chicago Orchestra Hall] **Formidable, prodigious, extravagant...**Julian Wachner is a **master at the podium** with clarity of beat and a **complete command of the intricate scores.** – *The American Organist*

[Monteverdi *Vespers of 1610*] **A master of balancing diverse elements**, Wachner deserved even more credit for the rhythmic exactitude of his conducting. – *The Montreal Gazette*

[*Candide*] Wachner so **adroitly highlighted the abundant humor** of parody and exaggeration in the score that Bernstein's wit moved repeatedly **moved the audience beyond smiles to laughter.** – *Opera News*

[*L'enfant et les sorteliges/Gianni Schicchi*]... **perfect leadership** of the conductor, Julian Wachner who conducted with a crisp bite. – *Le Devoir*



BIOGRAPHY

Julian Wachner is one of North America's most exciting and versatile musicians, sought-after as both conductor and composer. In 2010, he was named the inaugural Director of Music and the Arts for Trinity Wall Street, the historic Episcopal parish in lower Manhattan. The same summer, he made New York City Opera history by being selected as both conductor (*With Blood, With Ink* by Daniel Crozier; *Zolle* by Du Yun) and composer (*Evangeline Revisited*) for the company's annual VOX festival of contemporary opera. He is Music Director of the Grammy Award-winning Washington Chorus, and associate professor of music at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University in Montréal, Québec, where he serves as principal conductor of Opera McGill.

Wachner regularly appears on the world's leading stages, including engagements with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Glimmerglass Opera, Montréal Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops Orchestra, Portland Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Toledo Symphony, Honolulu Symphony, Spoleto Festival USA, Music Academy of the West, Berkshire Choral Festival, Calgary Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Handel & Haydn Society, Pacific Symphony, and L'Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal. He will make his conducting debut at Hawaii Opera Theatre in February of 2012 with George Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*.

Wachner's original music has been described as "bold and atmospheric" by the *New York Times*, "jazzy, energetic, and ingenious" by the *Boston Globe*, "highly enjoyable, touching, clever, and inspiring" by the *Deseret News*, and "upbeat, jazzy, glittering, and poignant" by the *Providence Journal*. His complete catalogue of music, containing over 80 works, is published by E. C. Schirmer. He is also an award-winning organist and improvisateur. At the Spoleto Festival USA; his improvised finale at his solo recital led one reviewer to report that "this stupefying wizardry was the hit of the recital, and it had to be heard to be believed." As a collaborative pianist, Julian Wachner has twice toured South America with countertenor Daniel Taylor and the Theatre of Early Music. Wachner's recordings are with the Chandos, Naxos, Atma Classique, Arsis, Musica Omnia, and Titanic labels. Born in Hollywood, California, Wachner began his musical education at age four with cello and piano lessons at the University of Southern California, and studied under Gerre Hancock while a boy chorister at the St. Thomas Choir School in New York City. He earned a doctor of musical arts degree from Boston University's School for the Arts, where his teachers included David Hoose and Lukas Foss.

Tracing the Gospel With Renewed Vigor and Drama

December 15, 2011

By [HEIDI WALESON](#)

The Wall Street Journal

The holiday season inevitably brings a cascade of performances of Handel's "Messiah," and it's rare to come across one that makes you hear this well-worn piece anew. The Trinity Wall Street version, featuring the superb Trinity Choir and Baroque Orchestra, conducted by Julian Wachner, did just that, and luckily those who missed it downtown at Trinity Church can catch it again at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall on Monday. (It's also available by streaming video from Trinity's website.)

With the rise of the historical-performance movement, performances of "Messiah" with 100-voice choirs and full symphony orchestras are no longer the norm, but a baroque orchestra and a small choir are no guarantee of excellence either. The Trinity "Messiah" demonstrated why historically informed performance makes a difference. It's more than the gut strings and the old-style instruments—it's the whole range of attitudes that go into phrasing and musical gesture and create a performance that's actually about something deeply meaningful.

Take the alto aria "He was despised." It can run 10 minutes or more, and feel endless with its many repeats. But with subtle details, countertenor Ryland Angel and the Trinity violins, led by concertmaster Robert Mealy (who was key to the spirit of this performance), turned it into a nuanced picture of the Passion of Christ. In the first part of the aria, the opening line, "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," is sung three times. The first time, the violins, delicately echoing the singer in brief phrases, sounded as though they were weeping. The second time, they were more emphatic; the third, soft and subdued. You heard the reason for the repetition: not to submerge the audience in misery—or worse, to bore them—but to explore and develop different characters of grief in the protagonist.

With those kinds of interpretive gestures, the Trinity performers constructed the architecture of the oratorio, tracing the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. It was operatic in its dramatic arc, yet also communal in the way that the excellent soloists, each with a different personality and vocal character, seemingly chosen to match that of their arias, stepped out of the choir for solos and then merged back into it. The 50 players and singers were so tuned in to each other that it felt like chamber music. They articulated the text with absolute clarity and shaped their words and phrases to create just the right feeling.

Demonstrating how a historically informed performance can reach the deeper meaning of this work, as if telling the story for the first time.

Part I began with a swinging overture and maintained sprightly tempi and bright colors throughout, befitting the optimism of its subject: the annunciation of the birth of Christ. "Oh thou that tellest" was a speedy, joyful exultation as Mr. Angel, the chorus, and the fierce violins threw themselves into its dancelike rhythms. The excitement built to "Rejoice greatly," sung with steely sparkle and almost impossibly fast, clean runs by soprano Melanie Russell. Then, in the can-you-top-this department, Eric Brenner, a male soprano, sang "Come unto him" with a vibrato-free, unearthly purity and some unusually elaborate but dramatic vocal ornaments. Finally, the chorus leaped in for a buoyant "His yoke is easy," letting the final words, "his burthen is light," float softly away.

For Part II, the Passion, the mood turned darker, with more sound from the bass instruments and the organ and more word-painting from the chorus (the weight on "iniquity" in "Surely he hath borne our griefs"; a knife-like slash on "deliver" in "He trusted in God"). In contrast to the choral savagery, tenor Geoffrey Silver brought a quiet lyricism to the recitatives and arias depicting Christ's sorrow. Part III, the Resurrection, moved toward affirmation; it opened with soprano Jolle Greenleaf's "I know that my redeemer liveth," a transparent declaration of faith sung with soaring simplicity. Then came the biggest surprise: the young bass Dashon Burton outshining the trumpet in "The trumpet shall sound," his enormous, thrilling voice seemingly capable of doing what he was singing about, that is, raising the dead. The members of the orchestra and the choir looked as delighted by it as the audience was.

Wachner is Trinity Church's new sound

Downtown Express / October 19, 2011



Julian Wachner (in back) conducting a rehearsal of the Trinity Choir and Trinity Baroque Orchestra in St. Paul's Chapel. Downtown Express photo by Terese Loeb Kreuzer

BY TERESE LOEB KREUZER | A bastion of church music in Lower Manhattan, the list of Trinity Wall Street's programming could formerly fit into one chalice: five evening concerts at Trinity Church between October and May, Sunday services and a sprinkling of midday concerts at Trinity (at Broadway and Wall Street) and its satellite, St. Paul's Chapel at Broadway and Fulton. But since Julian Wachner, who just turned 42, arrived a year ago with the title Director of Music and the Arts, that cup runneth over.

This year's catalogue of Trinity Wall Street's 2011-12 season is 40 pages long. Handel's "Messiah" is a holdover from the old scheduling as are Thursday concerts at 1 p.m. that bring a variety of music and instrumentalists to Trinity Church, but much else is new. Wachner's innovations include several multi-day festivals, Monday afternoon Bach performances in St. Paul's by the Trinity Choir and Trinity Baroque Orchestra and candle-lit Compline services of modern music in St. Paul's at 8 p.m. on Sundays.

"It's very expensive for the professional choir and orchestra to put on a concert, so I restructured the budget," Wachner explained. "I thought if we were to do a series of midday events with the Trinity Choir and Baroque Orchestra, we could probably do about eight of those for the cost of one evening concert and reach a wider audience and serve the purpose not only of providing beautiful music to Lower Manhattan, but also of touching people who are visiting. When I walked into St. Paul's Chapel at one o'clock on a Monday, I saw there were already several hundred people walking around in there. So I proposed that we do Bach at One, and the powers that be said, 'let's give it a try.' Within the first week, it was crazy successful. It's a reallocation of resources."

Wachner said that Trinity's "Messiah" was a keeper because it had always sold well. This year in December, it will be performed twice at Trinity Church and once at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center — another innovation. "The product here is so good, but I think the rest of the city doesn't quite know what it is," Wachner said, explaining the outing at Alice Tully.

Though the schedule includes the work of many old masters such as Handel and Bach, Wachner, who is himself a composer as well as a conductor, is very interested in new music and in bringing contemporary music to the attention of a wider audience. On Friday, Oct. 14, for instance, he conducted "Songs for Eve" by Alice Parker at Trinity. Parker

was an associate of Robert Shaw's and a force in the evolution of church choral music. Her full-length work for string quartet and vocal quartet was a touching meditation on what it means to be human, and aware. A cycle of poems by Archibald MacLeish, mostly from Eve's point of view, provided the narrative. Parker, who is 85, was there to receive the audience's applause.

Between May 24 and June 3, 2012, Trinity will be presenting a Festival of New Music that will be performed at Trinity, St. Paul's and at Carnegie Hall. It will include symposia and two operas. Some events will be ticketed and some, free.

Another innovation this year, said Wachner, is that on Nov. 21 and 22, "We are presenting Tenet, which is one of New York's leading early music groups." This will be the first time that Trinity has presented the work of another arts organization.

Over the Christmas/New Year holiday, Wachner plans a Twelfth Night festival of early music that will include the Trinity Baroque Orchestra and Trinity Choir performing Bach's massive "Christmas Oratorio" also with performances by other music groups interspersed into the ambitious schedule.

What might seem like a full-time job for someone less energetic actually takes only part of Wachner's time. He just signed a five-year contract with the Washington Chorus and has a major piece called "Come, My Dark-Eyed One" that will be performed at the Kennedy Center in November. "It's a secular piece for big chorus and big orchestra and soprano and bass soloists," he said. "My music is being performed all over now, which is great."

Wachner lives in an apartment near St. Paul's Chapel, chosen in part because it enables him to get to his New York conducting appointments easily and then get to Penn Station, where he catches the train to Washington.

He was born in California to a Catholic mother and a Jewish father, (his mother, a concert pianist, still lives there), grew up in New York City, where he sang with the choir of St. Thomas Church and became an Episcopalian, and went to college at Boston University, where, at the age of 20, he became director of the music program at the Methodist chapel. For 10 years, he taught at McGill University in Montreal. A tenured professor, he is still technically on the faculty there — on an unpaid leave of absence.

He says that he is able to juggle his complicated life because he has "a very good support staff."

At the moment, he just has one apartment — the one in Manhattan — though he contemplates getting another one in Washington. "I feel like I've come home here," he said. "Most of my good friends are still in Montreal, but I also have a lot of good friends in Boston. Facebook is an amazing thing because you can maintain these virtual relationships with people. So much of my life has been spent on the road that just being able to be settled in one place feels kind of wonderful."