

Great Choir: Immigrants – A Celebration of What Makes New York Great

MONDAY, APRIL 9, 2018
7:30 PM – 9 PM

A special pre-concert tour of the Cathedral's exquisite Chapels of the Tongues introduces this program, and celebrates the immigrant communities that have made New York City one of the greatest cities in the world. Instrumental ensemble Rose of the Compass will present music from the cultures represented by the cathedral's seven Chapels, while the Cathedral Choir will answer with pieces by immigrants who composed in America, sharing their culture and their art. Composers will include Vincent Persichetti, whose parents came from Italy and Germany; F. Melius Christiansen, the great founder of the St. Olaf Choir; Rebecca Clarke and Tarik O'Regan, who both emigrated from the British Isles; Jean Berger from Germany; and Igor Stravinsky from Russia. The concert will culminate with a world premiere by Robert Sirota, on a libretto by the Reverend Canon Victoria Sirota, celebrating New York's identity as a melting pot of humanity.

Immigrant Songs is commissioned by the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and Nina Stern, whose ensemble Rose of the Compass will perform the work, along with the Choir of the Cathedral of St. John The Divine, Kent Tritle, Music Director. It is dedicated to Nina Stern's mother, Marina Friedenbergn Stern, who immigrated to New York City along with her family in 1941. Scored for choir, soloists, organ, recorder, chalumeau, oud, kanun, harp and frame drum, the libretto of Immigrant Songs, by Victoria Sirota, celebrates the lives and work of three immigrants to New York:

Spanish builder and engineer **Rafael Guastavino**, whose distinctive method of tiling produced over 1000 vaults and ceilings in 40 states, including the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Grand Central Station and the New York Subway System.

Internationally renowned painter **Marina Friedenbergn Stern**, born in Venice of Jewish heritage, immigrating to New York in 1941 via England and Brazil. Her paintings are in the permanent collections of dozens of museums and galleries, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Hirshhorn Museum, and the National Portrait Gallery.

Trinidadian native **Ravi Ragbir**, Executive Director of the faith-based New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City, a hero for immigrants' rights who works courageously as an advocate for immigrants while himself under threat of deportation.

