



Oratorio Society of New York

A BIOGRAPHY

Founded in 1873 by Leopold Damrosch, The Oratorio Society of New York is the city's second oldest cultural organization. The faces have changed, but the chorus has remained the same—singers from all walks of life who volunteer their time for the joy of making music together.

From its earliest days, the Society has played an integral role in the musical life of the city, presenting its own concerts and performing at musically and historically significant events throughout the city. In 1891, singing under Tchaikovsky's baton, it helped inaugurate the concert hall that Andrew Carnegie, the Society's president for 30 years, built in recognition of the group's need for a suitable creative home. It has performed there ever since, except for 1960 when the Hall did not accept bookings because demolition seemed imminent. On its 100th anniversary, the Society was presented with the Handel medallion, New York City's highest cultural award, in recognition of its many contributions to the city's cultural life.

The Society made its European debut in 1982 and has since performed in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. In March 2003, it received the UNESCO Commemorative Medal and the Cocos Island World Natural Heritage Site Award from the Friends of Cocos Island Foundation for its series of benefit concerts in Costa Rica. In October 2011 it travelled to Rome to participate in the International Festival of Sacred Song and Art, performing in St. Peter's Basilica.

In 1977, the Society inaugurated a solo competition to encourage the art of oratorio singing and give young singers an opportunity to advance their careers. In 2006, it was renamed the Lyndon Woodside Oratorio Solo-Competition in honor of the Society's long-time music director, Dr. Lyndon Woodside, who had guided the competition since its creation. International in scope, nearly 4,000 singers have competed, and it is supported in part by a generous grant from the Sam and Anna Lopin Foundation and judged by a distinguished panel.

The Society's commitment to the next generation's involvement in choral music includes other programs. The Choral Scholars program provides financial support and coaching experience to young professionals who work with the chorus on a weekly basis. The Society sponsors a high school teaching program that includes free tickets to its concerts. It also donates tickets to High 5, which in turn sells them to teens for \$5. The Society's website is www.oratoriosocietyofny.org