



T H E  
**S H E L D O N**  
Arts Without Borders

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 29, 2023

**THE SHELDON'S ALL-STAR CHORUS TO PREVIEW CARNEGIE HALL PERFORMANCE ON MAY 7**

**-- Ensemble to Perform Robert Ray's *Gospel Mass*, Celebrating St. Louis and Black Culture on National Stage --**

ST. LOUIS, MO – The Sheldon is pleased to present The Sheldon's All-Star Chorus Carnegie Hall Preview, Sunday, May 7 at 3 p.m. in the perfect acoustics of The Sheldon. The concert is free and open to the public, but donations will be gratefully accepted at the door. Proceeds will benefit the chorus travel fund, which will help support the ensemble's trip to Carnegie Hall in June 2023. Advanced donations can be made by texting "NYC" to 314-582-8848 or visiting <https://www.thesheldon.org/chorus/>.

Acclaimed conductor Maria A. Ellis leads The Sheldon's All-Star Chorus in a preview presentation of their Carnegie Hall repertoire with a very special performance of Robert Ray's *Gospel Mass*. Composed by the late, renowned St. Louis composer, the *Gospel Mass* takes the classical form of a choral mass and applies characteristics of American gospel music to the expressive and passionate text. The concert will open with solo performances by students who have been taking private voice lessons this semester.

Ellis was invited by the prestigious New York City venue to curate and conduct a program featuring almost 100 singers – of which, the All-Star Chorus will comprise 22. "When I was asked to conduct at Carnegie Hall, it dawned on me that if I were to perform the *Gospel Mass*, I could feature several components that are important to me," says Ellis. "A Black composer who is from St. Louis and was a professor at University of Missouri-St. Louis (which is where I received my music degree), Black soloists who are from St. Louis, and I could take the singers from my All-Star Chorus. On one of the biggest stages in the world, I could feature an authentic American genre of music as well as celebrate Black culture and St. Louis."

An inclusive opportunity for high school singers to learn music literacy, gain performance experience, and build a community of students who have a strong passion for music, the **All-Star Chorus** is unique in that it aspires to lessen the barriers required for chorus participation. The Sheldon's All-Star Chorus program is free for all students who are in 9th through 12th grades. The Sheldon provides transportation to and from rehearsal for those students who do not have access to regular transportation. The All-Stars share a meal before every rehearsal. This practice brings the choir members together to socialize and create strong bonds of friendship. These intentional relationships help foster social-emotional learning, self-awareness, social skills and inclusion within the community that the chorus creates.

MORE...

*The Sheldon's All-Star Chorus Carnegie Preview cont'd.*  
*March 29, 2023*

All-Star Chorus students represent school districts from across our region, from St. Louis Public Schools to Mehlville; Granite City, Illinois; New Haven High School; Kirkwood; Hazelwood; Grand Center Arts Academy; and Riverview Gardens.

**Maria A. Ellis** is a passionate educator and conductor who is an active clinician, adjudicator and presenter throughout the United States and abroad. She holds a B.M. in Music Education emphasis on Voice (K-12 Certified) Degree from the University of Missouri-St. Louis and is the host of the award winning-program *Bach and Beyoncé* on Classic 107.3. She serves as a host for the St. Louis Symphony "Live at Powell" broadcast, and is an active member of the American Choral Directors Association, National Association of Music Educators, Missouri Alliance for Arts Education, where she is chair of the RIDE (Race, Inclusion, Diversity & Equity) Committee.

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