

## Westchester Oratorio Society

**WOS** was founded in 1997 when a few individuals in South Salem joined with their neighbor, the noted choral conductor, Harold Rosenbaum, in order to form a choral group that would create a high quality musical experience for audiences and singers in Northern Westchester and surrounding areas. Since its inception, WOS has made a significant contribution to the musical fabric of the county, performing early music, choral masterworks of the 18th to 20th centuries and contemporary works accompanied by professional soloists and orchestras.

In 2007 Benjamin Niemczyk was appointed conductor and artistic director, only the second in WOS' history. That year he conducted the Oratorio Society in a Westchester premiere of James Bassi's *Wexford Carol*. He comes from a background strong in both contemporary and classical music and has made it his mission to preserve the music of the past while supporting that of the present.

In '08-'09 Niemczyk led WOS and REBEL Baroque Orchestra in a performance of Händel's *Dixit Dominus* as well as works by Berlioz, Tavener and Mendelssohn. In 2010 he will present works by Schubert, Bach, Brahms and Händel, the latter a 2:25 complete performance of *Messiah* with the esteemed REBEL Baroque Orchestra. Voted "Best Amateur Chorus in Westchester" by Westchester Magazine, the Westchester Oratorio Society has also distinguished itself in guest appearances at Carnegie Hall and the Performing Arts Center at Purchase, as well as in performances with the Brooklyn Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, the Brooklyn Academy of Music (in a production of Olivier Messiaen's opera, *St. Francis of Assisi*, lauded by the New York Times), the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and at Carnegie Hall performing Verdi's haunting *Requiem*.

In addition to providing major concert experiences for singers and audiences, the Society offers musical opportunities to the community. Its popular Summer Sings series, which is open to singers at all levels, involves reading sessions of choral masterworks under the direction of top-notch conductors. The Society's Chamber Choir provides choral music on a smaller scale to local organizations and institutions, such as hospitals and nursing homes. The Society also affords the opportunity for young people, from middle school to college age, to participate. It encourages their individual membership in the chorus and involves youth choral groups in many of its concerts. Students are welcome.