Dear Members of the Yale singing community,

We hope you will join the Yale Alumni Chorus, directed by Jeff Douma, in Toronto, Canada from August 9 to 13 to explore a core part of the Yale singing tradition: Spirituals. From Wednesday evening through our Gala concert on Sunday afternoon, we will experience musical rehearsals and performance, academic enlightenment, and community engagement. We’ll learn about, hear, and (of course!) sing the music of the Underground Railroad.

If you have sung with us before, this “Spirit of Song” tour will be a new kind of tour experience. It’s international (but just barely!), all in one city, and lasts less than a full week. And, significantly, it is our first event that focuses on a thematic blending of history and performance practice. If you have not traveled with YAC yet, it’s a great way to give it a try; and if you are a “regular,” you will enjoy seeing your friends during a week that is “just right”: not too short, not too long, not too far from home, not too expensive ($775 per person* plus lodging and some meals on your own), yet certainly a new adventure.

We look forward to seeing you in Toronto!

Yours in Song,

John Rouse ’72  
Brian Wynn ’73  
Mark Alberta ’72

*Family-friendly alert: This event features reduced rates for those who do not sing and for children under 18! See below for details.
YALE ALUMNI CHORUS
2017 SPIRIT OF SONG TOUR – TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA
Wednesday, August 9 through Sunday, August 13, 2017

Theme and our Partners
The Spirit of Song Tour’s musical and intellectual theme is the Spiritual. We will trace the history of the Spiritual and its performance practice, both originally and among contemporary choirs specializing in Afro-centric music. We’ll learn about the role of Spirituals in the struggle of slaves in the American South to escape to freedom via the Underground Railroad. During our time together, we will explore our theme through a mix of experiences:

- **MUSICAL: A Workshop in Performance Practice for Spirituals**, given for YAC by Maestro Brainerd Blyden-Taylor. His Choir, The Nathaniel Dett Chorale (NDC) is a Toronto-based professional choir specializing in Afro-centric music of all styles, including classical, spiritual, gospel, jazz, folk, and blues. Check them out on YouTube.

- **ACADEMIC: Lectures, seminars, multi-media presentations, and other academic programming.** The Harriet Tubman Institute (York University, Toronto) is dedicated to capturing, studying, and telling the story of the migration of African peoples around the globe, from centuries ago to the present day, on the topics of African diasporas in general and the Underground Railroad in particular. We will have free access to their week-long symposium, bringing diaspora scholars to Toronto while we are there. Leading international scholars will create presentations covering the history of the Underground Railroad and the role that spirituals played in it.
• **OUTREACH: Community engagement activities**, in which YAC’s presence and resources are the catalyst for bringing us, and our musical and academic partners, together with members of the Toronto community to co-create memorable musical and educational experiences.

• **PERFORMANCE: Performing and hearing spirituals**, including Yale favorites and material that is new to us. We’ll hear the Nathaniel Dett Chorale perform, and we will rehearse and perform with them to wrap up our time together with a Gala Concert in Toronto’s spectacular Koerner Hall.

• **CREATURE COMFORTS: Celebrations!** As always, YAC will gather to celebrate, including a magical Welcome Dinner, an elegant post-Gala Concert Reception, other more casual meals, and, of course, the traditional YAC Breakfast Buffet (included in the tour price, wherever you are lodging.)

The Yale Alumni Chorus will be surrounded by and be a key participant in musical and scholarly events hosted by our two partners. The Harriet Tubman Institute (whose symposium is described above), and the Nathaniel Dett Chorale will present the launch of the **North Star Festival**, a collaboration of musicians and educators exploring Afro-centric music and history in Toronto.

**Musical Program**

Our two Maestri (Jeff Douma and Brainerd Blyden-Taylor of the Nathaniel Dett Chorale) are collaborating to choose the musical content for our experience – more on that later. We’ll bring to the festival some favorite Yale arrangements of spirituals, and also some works chosen specially for us by Maestro Blyden-Taylor. We are even exploring the possibility of commissioning a new work for our concert!

There will be two opportunities to get a head start on learning the music before the tour (both entirely optional). The **Milton Choral Festival** from March 24-27 in Milton, MA will include some of the music as we will sing in Toronto. You’re all invited to Milton; click [here](#) to go the YAC website’s Upcoming Events page for more information and to sign up. Also, there will be a rehearsal in New York City Saturday, May 13, 2017.

**Our Concert Venue**

Our Gala Concert will be at 2:00 pm Sunday afternoon, August 13, 2017 at Koerner Hall. Built in 2009 for the Royal Conservatory of Music, this award-winning, 1135-seat space, with its signature “veil” of undulating oak strings, is renowned for its beauty and acoustics. And of course there’s a Yale connection: the hall’s designer, Marianne McKenna, a leading Toronto architect who is currently a visiting professor at the Yale School of Architecture.
Preliminary Schedule (subject to change, and more details to be filled in)

**Monday through Wednesday, August 7-9**
Harriet Tubman Institute Symposium and North Star Festival events begin. YAC members who arrive early may attend symposium presentations, held at York University.

**Wednesday, August 9**
Arrive to midtown/Yorkville area. First rehearsal 5:00 to 7:00, followed by informal “Pub Night” dinners on your own at various downtown restaurants.

**Thursday, August 10**
Breakfast and Announcements at the Intercontinental Toronto Yorkville hotel, followed by a workshop in *Performance Practice in Spirituals* hosted by Maestro Blyden-Taylor. Lunch on your own downtown followed by rehearsals and community engagement activities. In the evening, we will gather for a magical twilight Welcome Reception and Dinner.

**Friday, August 11**
Breakfast and Announcements, followed by academic presentations focusing on the function of Spirituals in the Underground Railroad as the *North Star Festival* features scholars from the Harriet Tubman Institute. Friends and family, are invited to join their singing family members for this (and all other) academic events, and are also welcome to observe our performance practice workshop. Lunch on your own, afternoon rehearsals, and dinner on your own before attending the evening’s concert planned by the Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

**Saturday, August 12**
Breakfast and Announcements, followed by additional rehearsals or seminar presentations. We are working on plans for an informal “Singposium” concert involving YAC and the community. Saturday night we’ll all gather for our “Au Revoir” dinner. We are investigating a “Cabaret Night” if YAC is up for it!!

**Sunday, August 13**
Final Breakfast and Announcements, followed by free time and lunch on your own before we gather to warm up for out 2:00 pm Gala Concert at Koerner Hall. We’ll share the stage and sing jointly with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale. Our “Afterglow” reception (Champagne and “heavy Hors d’Oeuvres”) after the concert from about 4:00 to 5:30 pm will cap off the tour.
Pre- and Post-Tour Sightseeing in Toronto

As you can see, our schedule does not include much time for exploring the many attractions of Toronto and its environs. If you can take the time, we urge you to arrive early and/or stay on after Sunday to see the sights on your own or with small, self-organized groups of your fellow Yalies. To help you connect with friends to make plans ahead of time, we will be updating a list of the names of those who have signed up for the tour and posting it along with other tour information on the YAC website.

Travel and Lodging

You will be responsible for arranging your own transportation to and from Toronto. If any group ground transportation is needed during the tour, YAC will arrange buses and these are included in the tour price.

You will also be responsible for reserving and paying for your own lodging. Our home base will be midtown Toronto, in the shopping, gallery, and museum district, and our concert venue Koerner Hall. YAC has arranged for group rates in 2 different hotels, the Intercontinental Toronto Yorkville and the Holiday Inn Toronto Bloor Yorkville. Group rates will be available from Wednesday, August 9 through Saturday, August 12 (checking out Sunday morning August 13). The “main” hotel will be the Intercontinental, which is across the street from Koerner Hall. It will be the venue for our breakfast meetings and some of our other gatherings including rehearsals and academic presentations.

Please make your reservations directly with one of the hotels listed below, or anywhere else you choose (e.g., friends in Toronto with comfy couches). Use the links to read up on the options; when you are ready to reserve please don’t book online, instead call one of the phone numbers below to request the Yale Alumni Chorus group rate.
Hotel | Phone | Website | Group Rate
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**NOTE:** As of March 2017, one Canadian Dollar (CA $1) equals approximately US$ 0.75.

As always on tour, we will begin each day by gathering everyone for breakfast. Wherever you are staying, plan to join us at the Intercontinental Hotel for breakfast plus important announcements, guest speakers, etc.

The “Spirit of Song” tour is being “self-produced” by YAC volunteer producers, our small but mighty YAC staff of Irma Garcia and Nicole Desrosiers, plus other volunteers from Toronto and the YAC community. Thanks in advance for all of your help!

**Tour Costs**
The cost for the tour is **US$775** per person for singers. It covers our costs for our musical and academic collaborators, concert hall rental plus production and marketing, music, community engagement activities, admission to Friday night’s concert, our meals together, and other costs. For your own budgeting, you should add in costs for travel to and from Toronto, lodging, lunches, and two on-your-own dinners (Wednesday and Friday).

Since it’s summer vacation time, you are welcome to bring your family or a friend with you. To make the event more family-friendly, the tour cost for adults who will not be singing is **US$600**, and for non-singing children ages 3 to 18 only **US$150**; these include all group meals and programming except singing. Singing teens pay full price, and children 2 and younger are free. Be sure to note that YAC will not be making any arrangements for supervision/child care at any time, so you will need to have someone available to supervise your children.

**Financial Assistance**
The Yale Alumni Chorus Foundation’s generous donors (yes, that’s all of you!) have made it possible for a limited number of singers to receive need-based financial assistance to offset some of the cost of the tour. This program helps to balance our our chorus and brings recent graduates into the Yale Alumni Chorus community. A committee of YAC members confidentially reviews your application, which involves a brief written application and possibly a telephone interview. If you are interested in applying for financial assistance, a $300 deposit is required along with your application. You can find the application within the online tour registration, or by clicking here.
Tour Fees:

Singers #_____ x $775 USD = _____
Non-Singers (traveling with a singer) #_____ x $600 USD = _____
Children 3-18 (non-singing; covers meals) #_____ x $150 USD = _____

Optional Designated Contributions:
Your tour producers work very hard to keep our costs to a minimum and make our tours affordable for a wide range of alumni, including families. To this end, we have included only a very modest funding for scholarships and for Outreach/Community Engagement projects on the tour. If you are able and willing to contribute a bit more to sustain these crucial aspects of our mission, please feel free to add your contributions below. Thank you so much!

Designated Contribution for Scholarships $_____
Designated Contribution for Outreach/Community Engagement $_____

Total submitted:

Important note: We accept payments via credit card or by check. If you choose to pay by credit card, you will have an option to add a small processing fee to your payment to offset YAC’s credit card transaction costs. Or, you may pay with an online check or mail a check to the address indicated on the application. Please include a paper copy of the first page of each participant’s online application along with your check.

How to Apply
Yale Alumni Chorus international tours are open to anyone who sang at Yale, plus their accompanying family and friends. If that doesn’t describe you but you have participated in a past Yale Alumni Chorus tour, you are also welcome. Please reach out to your Yale singing friends and encourage them to join you in signing up. Having more singers will make us better and build our community; and if you’re new to YAC it’s a modestly-priced, shorter, closer-to-home, and less-strenuous way to take an international tour with the Yale Alumni Chorus.

The application for the tour is online, and all communications related to the tour will come to you via email. You will also need to visit the Yale Alumni Chorus website, yalealumnichorus.org, from time to time to view and download information such as links to rehearsal recordings, pdfs of some of the music, etc. The website’s user ID is yacmember, password is Hendrie.
Please complete and submit a separate application for each person in your group, including each child of any age. If you would like to plan out your registration before using the online form, click here for a pdf of the application form.

Click HERE to go to the online application and get started!