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CONTACT: Patty Laing

Press Representative

(703) 298-4453

pattylaing@verizon.net

**THE WASHINGTON CHORUS OPENS 55TH SEASON WITH “BEHOLD, THE SEA”  
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, AT THE KENNEDY CENTER CONCERT HALL**

Washington, D.C. – Grammy® Award-winner The Washington Chorus (TWC) opens its 55th Season Sunday, November 22, 2015 at 5 PM in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall with **Behold, the Sea**. The concert features two masterworks of the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century renaissance of English choral and symphonic music: Edward Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* and Ralph Vaughan Williams’ *A Sea Symphony*. In honor of the 260<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States Navy, TWC dedicates this concert to the great seamen, past and present, whom we honor for their service.

Julian Wachner will open the evening by conducting the full orchestra in a performance of Edward Elgar’s beloved and moving *Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma)*, Opus 36, popularly known as the *Enigma Variations*. The work, initially a product of Elgar’s humorous piano improvisations one evening in the company of his wife, was written between October 1898 and February 1899, and premiered in 1899. It comprises a theme and fourteen variations. As suggested by its dedication, “To my friends pictured within,” each variation depicts the way the pictured friend would present the theme; and each variation is prefaced in the manuscript by the initials, name or nickname of the friend shown. In 1911, Elgar wrote of the work that each “personage” pictured “comments or reflects on” the original theme and each one “attempts a solution of the Enigma, for so the theme is called.” The friends include Elgar’s wife, family, other musicians and music editors, and a dog. The final variation, which acts as the finale to the piece, represents Elgar himself.

The title “Enigma,” added late to the manuscript after submission of the piece to Elgar’s publisher, has caused much speculation. Elgar never fully explained the title, but dropped many hints about the nature of the “enigma” during his lifetime. A popular explanation deriving from these hints is that the stated theme is a counterpoint on some well-known other melody that does not appear in the work. Suggestions as to the identity of this hidden or unstated theme have occupied critics since Elgar’s death. Melodies such as “Auld Lang Syne” and “Rule Britannia,” excerpts from Mozart and Brahms, the theme of Beethoven’s *Pathétique* Sonata—all (and many others) have been proposed as the hidden theme. Whatever the solution to Elgar’s enigma, the *Enigma Variations* remains the most widely performed of his works, and the *Nimrod* variation is one of the best loved and most frequently performed pieces in the entire classical repertoire.

Following the Elgar, Wachner will conduct the chorus and full orchestra, together with soprano Colleen Daly and baritone Dana Whiteside, and the Washington National Cathedral Choir of Boys and Girls, in Vaughan Williams’ spectacular masterpiece *A Sea Symphony*. *A Sea Symphony* is Williams’ first symphony and his first large-scale work, composed during the 6-year period from 1903 to 1909. A late bloomer, Williams was relatively inexperienced when he began composing *A Sea Symphony*. The work was first conceived as a collection of “Songs of the Sea” for chorus and orchestra. However, during the extended period of its composition many influences combined to shape the work into something complex, powerful, and entirely new in the English choral and symphonic repertoire. Among these influences were the conventional English hymns Vaughan Williams was editing at the time, the English folk songs he was collecting, his growing appreciation of the music of Elgar and his study with Ravel, and the development of what would become his lifelong devotion to the American poet Walt Whitman.

*A Sea Symphony*, which premiered in 1899, takes its text from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* and *Passage to India*. The latter work, originally independently conceived by Whitman as the “song of the unseen Soul,” was eventually incorporated in the second half of *Leaves of Grass*, which Whitman called the “song of the Body and Existence.” Thus, the final version of *Leaves of Grass* moves generally from the body and human existence to a

focus on the soul. Although he sifted Whitman's verses, using what he wanted and cutting what he didn't, Williams remained true to this general movement from body to soul in *A Sea Symphony*. The first three movements of the work--"A Song for all Seas, all Ships," "On the Beach at Night Alone," and "The Waves"--portray a wide spectrum of moods evoked by physical human experience with the sea, from calm thoughtful intimacy to the jaunty of a sea-shanty, from exhilaration inspired by the sight of "separate flags of nations" to thoughts of bodily death, from awe of the "vast similitude" of all things in the universe to the sense of power and joy evoked by the sight of a huge vessel cleaving the ocean, throwing off sunny specks of foam. The fourth movement, "The Explorers," moves the audience beyond physical sensation and bodily experience to the human soul as it has evolved in history, and as it journeys on to where "mariner has not yet dared to go." Throughout the four movements, passages alternate for chorus, children, and soprano and baritone soloists. But the overarching movement of the piece is from bodily existence and sensory experience to a song of the ever-exploring human soul.

The concert will be preceded by an *Inside the Score* symposium/exploration of the works to be presented, led by Mr. Wachner. *Inside the Score* is open, free of admission, to anyone with a ticket to **Behold, the Sea**, and will be held on November 19 at The National Presbyterian Church, 4101 Nebraska Ave., Washington, D.C. (free parking, Metro accessible).

Tickets for the concert are priced beginning at \$18. Active military personnel and retired veterans may purchase up to two tickets per person at a 50% reduced price in select seating areas. These military discounts may only be received by calling the TWC Box Office at 202-342-6221. All other tickets may be purchased by calling the TWC Box Office or ordering securely online at [thewashingtonchorus.org](http://thewashingtonchorus.org). Tickets may also be purchased by calling the Kennedy Center at 202-467-4600 or online at [kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org).

### About The Washington Chorus

The Washington Chorus (TWC), now entering its 55th season, is noted for its critically-acclaimed performances and recordings of the entire range of the choral repertoire. A three-time nominated and two-time Grammy Award-winner, TWC is widely recognized as a cultural leader in the Washington area. The Chorus presents an annual subscription series at the Kennedy Center, the Music Center at Strathmore, and other major venues throughout the Washington, D.C. area. TWC has appeared at the invitation of leading orchestras including the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. TWC is proud to have sung with the NSO in more than 250 performances, under the direction of many of the world's greatest conductors, including Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Seiji Ozawa, Sir Neville Marriner, Charles Dutoit, Kent Nagano, Marin Alsop, and many others. In February 2015 the chorus traveled to Carnegie Hall in New York City for a special performance of *Turbae ad Passionem Gregorianam* by Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera, in partnership with Choirs of Trinity Wall Street, the Washington National Cathedral Choir of Boys and Girls, and NOVUS NY. In the summer of 2013 the Chorus sang with the legendary Rolling Stones in the final concert of their "50 and Counting Tour." TWC has sung for numerous prestigious events throughout its history--for inaugurations, for papal visits, and, for the past two Christmases, at the White House for the President and First Lady. TWC is committed to the performance of contemporary music and was proud to receive Chorus America's 2011 ASCAP Alice Parker Award, recognizing a chorus programming significant, recently-composed music that expands the mission of the chorus and challenges the chorus' audience in a new way. Other awards include the 2000 Grammy Award for "Best Choral Performance" for the live-performance recording of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*. Additional recordings include Christmas with The Washington Chorus, *Glorious Splendor, Sing Noel!*, and the Berlioz Requiem (Gothic Recordings); Dvorák's *Stabat Mater* and *Psalms 149* (Naxos International); Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (nominated for a Grammy Award in 1988); and the Grammy Award-winning *Of Rage and Remembrance* by John Corigliano with the National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leonard Slatkin. As a leader in its commitment to community, the Chorus offers numerous educational programs, including the Junior Washington Chorus for teens ages 16-18, the Side-by-Side High School Program (now in its 24th year), Conductor in the Classroom, and others. TWC's Outreach Singers present over twenty free concerts each year throughout the greater Washington area for special needs groups who may not be able to attend concerts in the traditional concert hall setting. For further information about TWC, concerts, and recordings, visit [thewashingtonchorus.org](http://thewashingtonchorus.org).

## About Julian Wachner

Grammy-nominated conductor Julian Wachner has been the Music Director of The Washington Chorus since 2008. He is also the Director of Music and the Arts at New York's historic Trinity Wall Street. Immediate past season highlights include his San Francisco Opera debut conducting Handel's *Partenope*; Ellen Reid's *Winter's Child* with the Prototype Festival; Handel's *Saul* in a new staging by director James Darrah; Handel's *Messiah* at Lincoln Center; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* at the Kennedy Center; Charles Ives' Fourth Symphony and Ginastera's *Turbae ad Passionem Gregorionam* at Carnegie Hall; Bernard Rands' *Vincent*; and Luna Pearl Woolf's *The Pillar* for Opera America; and orchestral performances with The Jacksonville Symphony, Philharmonia Baroque, and NOVUS NY.

Wachner's recent recordings include the Grammy-nominated *Israel in Egypt*; the world premiere of Ralf Galwick's *Missa Gentae Humanae*; the Complete Motets of J. S. Bach; and Elena Ruehr's *Averno* and *Gospel Cha-Cha*. Last season also saw the release of a 3-CD set of Wachner's original orchestral works on the Naxos label; Paola Prestini's opera *Oceanic Verses* for VIA Recordings and Julia Wolfe's oratorio *Anthracite Fields* with the Bang on a Can All-Stars for Cantaloupe Records. In addition, Atma Classique recently released Wachner's acclaimed *Triptych for Organ and Orchestra* with L'Orchestre Metropolitan of Montreal.

Wachner has made memorable guest appearances with Glimmerglass Opera, Hawaii Opera Theater, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Montreal, Pacific, Calgary, and Pittsburgh Symphonies, The New York Philharmonic, Carnegie Hall Presents, Juilliard Opera Theater, Lincoln Center Festival, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Spoleto Festival USA, the Handel and Haydn Society, and the Boston Pops. In 2010, he made New York City Opera history when he was selected as both conductor and composer at the company's annual VOX festival of contemporary opera.

His extensive catalogue of compositions have been variously described as "jazzy, energetic, and ingenious" (Boston Globe), having "splendor, dignity, outstanding tone combinations, sophisticated chromatic exploration...a rich backdrop, wavering between a glimmer and a tingle..." (La Scena Musicale), being "a compendium of surprises" (Washington Post), and as "bold and atmospheric", having "an imaginative flair for allusive text setting" and noted for "the silken complexities of his harmonies" (The New York Times.) The American Record Guide noted that "Wachner is both an unapologetic modernist and an open-minded eclectic – his music has something to say." The New York Times pronounced his Trinity Wall Street debut "superbly performed" and noted that the ensemble's annual Lincoln Center presentation of Handel's *Messiah* was "led with both fearsome energy and delicate grace...a model of what is musically and emotionally possible with this venerable score." Of his interpretation of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, according to the Boston Globe, "there was genius here and no mistaking it." Anne Midgette, of The Washington Post, declared recent Wagner and Verdi performances "exhilarating," commenting: "Julian Wachner knows how to draw maximum drama from a score," and noted that he was "emphatic and theatrical and so at home in opera that he could bring out the requisite sense of drama." For more information about Julian Wachner, visit [julianwachner.com](http://julianwachner.com).

### Behold the Sea

Edward Elgar *Enigma Variations*

Ralph Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony*

The Washington Chorus

Julian Wachner, music director

Colleen Daly, soprano

Dana Whiteside, baritone

The Washington National Cathedral Choir of Boys and Girls

Sunday, November 22, 2015, 5 PM

Kennedy Center Concert Hall

2700 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20566

Tickets beginning at \$18 available at The Washington Chorus 202-342-6221 or [thewashingtonchorus.org](http://thewashingtonchorus.org) or at the Kennedy Center 202-467-4600 or [kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org).