



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 4, 2016

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The Washington Chorus Presents “Parisian Spring” at Kennedy Center

Washington (DC) - On Sunday, May 1, 2016, The Washington Chorus (TWC) will present a concert entitled “Parisian Spring” in which it will celebrate the French aesthetic through the music of French composers Maurice Duruflé, Gabriel Fauré and Louis Vierne, as well as a piece composed by TWC’s Music Director Julian Wachner. The concert will take place at 5:00 PM in the Concert Hall of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In addition, the program will feature the renowned organist and composer [Thierry Escaich](#) on the Kennedy Center’s Rubenstein Family Organ. Joining on the program will be the Washington National Cathedral Choir of Boys and Girls. Tickets for the concert are priced from \$18 - \$72 and may be purchased by calling The Washington Chorus Box Office at (202) 342-6221 or ordering securely online at www.thewashingtonchorus.org.

Two major works by Maurice Duruflé will bookend the evening. The concert will open with Duruflé’s *Messe Cum Jubilo*, performed by the men’s sections of the chorus and Mr. Escaich, and will close with the Duruflé Requiem, performed by the entire chorus, Cathedral choir, and Mr. Escaich. Both of these major works, written in 1966 and 1947 respectively, are, like all of Duruflé’s choral works, based on the French Catholic chant tradition which is the basis for the modern French aesthetic. The Requiem, for example, began as a set of organ improvisations based on the Gregorian chants used in the Mass for the Dead. When Duruflé later received a commission from his publisher Durand to write a Requiem, those improvisations and sketches provided him with the material to fulfill the commission. Duruflé wrote, “This Requiem is entirely composed on the Gregorian themes of the Mass for the Dead.... (It) is not an ethereal work which sings detached from worldly anxiety. It reflects, in the unchangeable form of the Christian prayer, the anguish of man facing the mystery of his last ending....”

In between the two major Duruflé works, the chorus will perform music contextualizing those works within the French aesthetic tradition. In the first half of the program, the chorus will perform Gabriel Fauré’s *Cantique de Jean Racine*, a small, much-loved work by Fauré, written in 1865 when he was just twenty years old, but which nevertheless possesses the tenderness and color heard later in Fauré’s famous Requiem, which was such a clear influence on the Duruflé Requiem. The text of the *Cantique* is a translation by the 17th-century French poet/playwright Jean Racine of a Latin hymn, “*Consorts paterni luminis*” (“O Light of Light”). To further contextualize Duruflé’s Requiem by illustrating its connection with the grand tradition of the Catholic Mass, the Chorus will perform the “Kyrie” from Louis Vierne’s *Messe Solennelle*, composed between 1898 and 1900. The Kyrie begins with a forceful organ introduction which softens as the chorus enters, voice by voice; the piece eventually builds to a huge statement of that grand tradition.

Finally, the chorus will perform *At the Lighting of the Lamps*, a 2001 composition by Music Director Julian Wachner. This piece was originally commissioned as a companion piece to an otherwise all-French program performed by the Seraphim Singers. Like the other pieces on this program, it features chorus and organ (plus flute), and displays the features of the French aesthetic—it is chant-based, and it is distinguishable by its French color and texture. The piece therefore serves as an appropriate piece for this program, as it brings the French aesthetic represented by Duruflé, Fauré and Vierne, firmly into the 21st

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century.

The concert will feature Thierry Escaich, the well-known French composer, organist and improviser. Mr. Escaich considers the three elements of his artistry to be inseparable: his career as a composer is closely linked to his career as an organist, which in turn has led him to be one of the ambassadors of the great French school of improvisation, represented in part in this concert by Duruflé, whom Mr. Escaich succeeded as organist of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont in Paris. Mr. Escaich will be performing on the Kennedy Center Rubenstein Family Organ with the chorus for all the pieces on the program; in addition, he will perform a series of improvisations to introduce the audience to the art and ancient French tradition of improvisation represented so well by Duruflé and others on the program.

About The Washington Chorus

The Washington Chorus (TWC), now in 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 is proud to have sung with the NSO in more than 250 performances, under the direction of many of the world’s greatest conductors. 2015-2016 season highlights include Vaughan Williams’s *A Sea Symphony*, five *Candlelight Christmas* concerts, the music of acclaimed composer Luna Pearl Woolf in the sixth installment of TWC's award-winning series *New Music for a New Age*, a program of the French masters that includes Duruflé’s *Requiem*, and guest appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra. The Washington Chorus is honored to be receiving the 2016 Margaret Hillis Award from Chorus America, awarded to a chorus that demonstrates both artistic excellence in the performance of standard repertoire and American and/or Canadian music, and a strong organizational structure with financial stability for a significant period of time. 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*. As a leader in its commitment to community, the Chorus offers numerous educational and outreach 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 Outreach Singers (presenting free concerts for 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.

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 *Turbæ 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 Gentæ Humanæ*; 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;

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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 Metropolitain 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.