



Christopher Bell
Artistic Director

4301 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 360
Washington, DC 20008

Tel. 202.342.6221
Fax 202.342.8208
thewashingtonchorus.org

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Executive Director

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For more information, contact:
Stephen Marc Beaudoin, Executive Director
stephen@thewashingtonchorus.org

THE WASHINGTON CHORUS ANNOUNCES ARTISTIC DIRECTOR CHRISTOPHER BELL INTENDS TO COMPLETE HIS TENURE AND MOVE ON FROM TWC AT THE CLOSE OF THE CHORUS'S 2019-20 SEASON

To attend to the needs of his family, who are overseas, Bell will complete his three year contract with TWC in June of 2020. The Chorus will embark on a search process to find and select its next Artistic Director, which it aims to complete by December of 2019

WASHINGTON, DC – The Washington Chorus, the DC regional community's only two time Grammy award-winning symphonic chorus, **announced today that its board of directors will seek a new Artistic Director for the ensemble, as Christopher Bell intends to complete his tenure with the Chorus in June of 2020**, so that he can turn his time and attention to the needs of his family overseas.

"The Washington Chorus is a strong and healthy organization, and our 2019-20 season marks our 59th as one of the country's premier symphonic choruses," says TWC board chair Chris Denby. "We're looking forward to a great season of concerts and programs in our 2019-20 season, which we'll be announcing in early June, and then are excited to accelerate into our 60th anniversary season in 2020 under a new Artistic Director. The future for The Washington Chorus is bright indeed."

To support The Washington Chorus through a seamless transition, the board has appointed board member and chorister Kara Morrissey, who has been part of the organization for 16 years as a singer and volunteer, as Chair of the Artistic Director Search Committee.

"We have been through transitions before, including the recent hiring for our new Executive Director," Ms. Morrissey says. "We are confident in our ability to recruit and attract an exceptional pool of candidates for the Artistic Director position, thanks in large part to the strength of our exceptional Chorus. This will be a very desirable opportunity to help shape the future of The Washington Chorus, and to work with a top-flight chorus, world-class artistic partners, a deeply dedicated board and staff, and valued community partners, all in the context of our richly diverse Washington, DC regional community that we call home."

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The Chorus will soon begin its recruiting process for the next Artistic Director and hopes to find and announce this person by December of 2019. **The Chorus' 2018-19 season concludes with Durufle's Requiem and James MacMillan's "Cantos Sagrados" in one performance on Sunday, June 9, 2019, 5 pm at National Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC.**

Additionally, Mr. Denby offered his enthusiastic reflections on Mr. Bell's tenure:

"I speak for all of us on The Washington Chorus board when I express my incredible gratitude and appreciation to Christopher Bell for all that he and the Chorus have accomplished together during his time with us. Christopher is one of the most talented choral conductors working today, and a fabulous showman. The Chorus has benefited in countless ways from his leadership."

Some highlights of The Washington Chorus during Christopher Bell's tenure as Artistic Director are:

- Charles T. Downey and the *Washington Classical Review* recognized Bell's debut concert with TWC, a command performance of Walton's "Belshazzar's Feast," as one of the ten best classical music events of 2017, noting: "As he showed in a daring, incendiary rendition... Bell is shaking up this large choral ensemble, with an incisive style at the podium."
- Recognition by audience, orchestras, and critics alike, for his very high level preparation of The Washington Chorus
- Critically acclaimed performances of a wide range of works, including performances of the Verdi *Requiem* in collaboration with the National Symphony Orchestra under Gianandrea Nosedà, and Philip Glass' "Koyaanasqatsi" in collaboration with the Philip Glass Ensemble, noted by critics at the *Washington Post* and *Washington Classical Review* as among the best classical music performances of 2018
- Launching the new Washington Chorus "Arts in the Aging" program, to support aging individuals in increasing memory and engagement with family members through interactive choral music-based programs
- Giving the world premiere of composer Lera Auerbach's groundbreaking "Arctica," a new choral-orchestral work meditating on the impacts of global climate change, as part of a collaboration between TWC and the National Symphony, the Kennedy Center, and National Geographic
- Exploring new creative concert concepts, including a highly interactive and engaging "Candelight Christmas," and a new St. Patrick's Day Celebration concert with international collaborations. Both, conducted and presented by Bell, have become signature events for the Chorus

Bell will be going out on a high note, as the final project of his tenure is leading the preparation of the Chorus for a weekend of performances of Beethoven's *Symphony no. 9* with the National Symphony Orchestra under NSO Artistic Director Gianandrea Nosedà. These performances, June 12-14, 2020 at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, will be recorded live for release as part of a major NSO project, "Beethoven at 250," in which the entire Beethoven cycle of symphonies will be performed, recorded, and released.

When asked to reflect on his time with TWC, Bell had this to say:

"I am incredibly proud of all that we've accomplished together during my time with The Washington Chorus, and will be forever grateful for having had the opportunity to collaborate and help lead one of America's shining star symphonic choruses. At the same time, I am aware that even at the end of this term it will have been a rather short tenure, and I wish it could have been longer. Unfortunately, because of the needs of my family, that is simply not possible. Until my departure, I am focused on ensuring that our standards of excellence and adventurous spirit in all our concerts, education, and community programs continues unabated. I so look forward to seeing everyone at our Sunday, June 9 concert at National Presbyterian Church, featuring Durufle *Requiem* and James MacMillan's fiery "Cantos Sagrados," and to our entire 2019-20 season of concerts, which we'll be announcing shortly. I am excited for the future ahead for The Washington Chorus!"