



The Washington Chorus announces programming for 2018/19 concert season

Artistic Director Christopher Bell's second season includes Requiems by Brahms and Duruflé, a St. Patrick's Day Celebration, and the annual Candlelight Christmas concerts

The Washington Chorus begins its 58th season on Sunday, November 18, 2018 with performances of Johannes Brahms' magnificent *A German Requiem*, Op. 45 and Benjamin Britten's *Ballad of Heroes* at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. Brahms' beloved work looks to console the living, while Britten's *Ballad* urges the listener to remember the sacrifices made on their behalf by soldiers killed in war. Artistic Director Christopher Bell conceived the program to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day (November 11, 1918), which marked the end of World War I, now recognized as Veterans Day in the United States. Christopher Bell conducts the Chorus and orchestra. Soloists include Laura Choi Stuart, soprano and Rob McGinness, baritone.

December brings the return of the Chorus' enormously popular holiday program, A Candlelight Christmas, which features traditional carols, contemporary compositions, and sing-alongs, accompanied by a brass ensemble and organ, and infused with Christopher Bell's audience-pleasing combination of reverence and revelry. These holiday concerts continue to grow in popularity, with last season's six concerts drawing more attendees than ever, including three sold-out performances. Performances take place at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on December 7, 16, 22 and at the Music Center at Strathmore on December 20 and 21. Brand new in 2018 is a Christmas concert geared toward children and families, so carol-singers of all ages can join the fun. The inaugural Special Family Concert will take place at George Mason University's Center for the Arts on December 23.

For the twenty-seventh year in a row, The Washington Chorus is inviting a local high school choir to join them on stage during these holiday concerts through its Side-by-Side program. The students will sing their own repertoire center stage, then join the Chorus for the duration of the concert. This season's participating school will be announced at a later date.

What better way to celebrate St. Patrick's Day than with The Washington Chorus and its Irish conductor Christopher Bell? On Sunday afternoon March 17th, the stage of the Kennedy Center Concert Hall will feature an Irish band, fiddlers, dancers, pipe players, and choral arrangements of Irish classics in a one-of-a-kind concert. A special homage to Christopher Bell's homeland, this concert is not to be missed.

The Washington Chorus ends its 2018-19 season on June 9th with a concert at National Presbyterian Church featuring two deeply moving choral works from the 20th century: Maurice Duruflé's *Requiem* and James MacMillan's *Cantos Sagrados*, both with organ accompaniment.

Duruflé's spellbinding Requiem bears the influences of French modernist composers, but its melodies, according to the composer, are "based exclusively on themes from the Gregorian funeral mass." The work's luxuriant tone has made it one of the most popular choral compositions written during the last century. It was published in 1948 and dedicated to his father's memory.

By his own account, MacMillan's goal in composing *Cantos Sagrados* was "to compose something which was both timeless and contemporary, both sacred and secular." The text combines Latin liturgy with poems by Ariel Dorfman and Ana Maria Mendoza addressing political repression in Latin America. *Cantos Sagrados* was written in 1989 from a commission by the Scottish Chamber Choir (a group with whom The Washington Chorus' Artistic Director Christopher Bell has extensive experience). The work received its premiere in 1990 and the composer created an orchestrated version in 1997. The Chorus will perform the original version in this concert.

Throughout the 18/19 season, The Washington Chorus continues its role as major collaborator with the National Symphony Orchestra. In December, the Chorus joins the NSO for the annual *A Holiday Pops!* at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. This year's edition features Ashley Brown, the original Mary Poppins on Broadway, making her debut with the NSO on Friday, December 14, and Saturday December 15.

Later in the season, the Chorus and the NSO present the world premiere of Lera Auerbach's *Arctica* at the Kennedy Center on March 30. A co-commission by the NSO and The National Geographic Society, *Arctica* was inspired by Auerbach's travel to the Arctic and her conversations with Enric Sala, a *National Geographic* Explorer-in-Residence. This concert is part of the Kennedy Center's Direct Current Festival, which began last season with a mission to present contemporary, cutting-edge performers and repertoire. Teddy Abrams will conduct the NSO. During the inaugural Direct Current Festival in 2018, The Washington Chorus performed *Koyaanisqatsi* at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall with the Philip Glass Ensemble, receiving critical acclaim from the Washington Post.

Audiences can save up to 20% off season tickets by purchasing a customizable subscription by purchasing any two or more concerts. Benefits include 15% off additional season tickets, free ticket exchanges, and early access to preferred seats. Patrons may call TWC's Box Office at (202) 342-6221, ordering securely online at www.thewashingtonchorus.org. Single tickets are priced from \$18 to \$75, and go on sale August 27th.

About the Washington Chorus:

Under the direction of Artistic Director Christopher Bell, **The Washington Chorus** (TWC) recently completed its 57th season. One of the foremost symphonic choruses in the nation, TWC is noted for the superb artistry of its performances and recordings of the entire range of the choral repertoire and widely recognized as a cultural leader in the nation's capital. A three-time nominated and two-time Grammy Award winner, the 180-voice Washington Chorus presents an annual subscription series at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, regularly performs at the invitation of the National Symphony Orchestra, and appears annually at the Music Center at Strathmore in Maryland and Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts in Virginia. In addition to its own programming, this past season saw TWC perform Verdi's Requiem with the NSO, *Koyaanisqatsi* with the Philip Glass Ensemble, and Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the LA Phil conducted by Gustavo Dudamel.

TWC was the first major Washington area chorus to be founded independent of a church or college. In 1961 Hugh Hayward, a medical doctor and classically trained musician, founded the Oratorio Society of Montgomery County, which became known as the Oratorio Society of Washington, and is now celebrated under the name of The Washington Chorus. In 1971, Robert Shafer succeeded Hayward as music director, leading the chorus for more than three decades with great distinction, including two Grammy Awards. From 2008–2017 Julian Wachner led the organization, expanding its profile with education and innovation at the forefront of dynamic programming. In the fall of 2017 TWC welcomed Christopher Bell as its new Artistic Director, beginning a new era that has already met with critical and popular acclaim.

Chorus America, the national association for choruses, has honored The Washington Chorus with the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence and the ASCAP Alice Parker Award, which recognizes a chorus programming significant, recently-composed music that expands the mission of the chorus and challenges audiences in new ways. Other awards include the 2000 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance for the live-performance recording of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* and a 1996 Grammy Award for John Corigliano's *Of Rage and Remembrance* with the National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leonard Slatkin.

TWC is proud to have sung with the NSO in more than 300 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, Kent Nagano, Marin Alsop, and many others.

TWC has sung for numerous prestigious events throughout its history— inaugurations, papal visits, with the Rolling Stones during their 50th anniversary tour, and at the White House for the President and First Lady.

TWC's commitment to the greater Washington community is evidenced by outstanding education and community engagement programs, including the DC Honor Chorus in partnership with DC Public Schools; and TWC's Outreach Singers who bring music to underserved groups throughout the area.

About Artistic Director Christopher Bell:

During his first season as Artistic Director of The Washington Chorus, Christopher Bell received the same enthusiastic critical and popular acclaim that has followed him throughout his international career. Dr. Bell is also the Chorus Director for the Chicago Grant Park Music Festival, which he joined in 2002, where he conducts choral and orchestral performances, and is the Chorus Master of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, preparing them for concerts with visiting national and international orchestras and conductors. His Chicago successes include Chorus America's coveted Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence and glowing reviews from both critics and audiences alike. "It's as if he has some magic dust he sprinkles on his singers that gives them this incredible precision," wrote Andrew Patner of the *Chicago Sun Times*.

Dr. Bell was instrumental in the formation of the National Youth Choir of Scotland in 1996, serving as its Artistic Director ever since and performing at the BBC Proms, the Edinburgh International Festival, touring internationally, recording and broadcasting. He recently finished his 22nd season as Director of the RSNO Junior Chorus.

After graduating from Edinburgh University, Dr. Bell became the Associate Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. In 1988 he made his debut with the Ulster Orchestra in performances of Handel's *Messiah* and since then has appeared regularly with them conducting concerts across Northern Ireland. In 2009 he was appointed the Ulster Orchestra's first Associate Conductor.

As a conductor Dr. Bell has worked with many of the major orchestras in the UK and Ireland, including the Royal Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, BBC Scottish Symphony, Ulster Orchestra, Scottish Chamber, RTE National Symphony, and the Bournemouth Symphony. Concerts and recordings with professional choruses include Opera Australia Chorus (Melbourne), the RTVE Choir in Madrid, and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Choir.

Dr. Bell is well-known for his abilities working with young musicians. He was the founding conductor of the Ulster Youth Choir and director of the TOTAL Aberdeen Youth Choir for six years. Between 2001 and 2008 he was Artistic Director of the highly successful Children's Classic Concert series.

In 2001, Dr. Bell received a Scotsman of the Year Award for Creative Talent in appreciation for his work with singers, particularly his encouragement of young singers in Scotland. In 2003, he was awarded the Sir Charles Grove Prize for his contribution to cultural life in Scotland and throughout the UK.

COMPLETE CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF EVENTS

Johannes Brahms' *A German Requiem* & Benjamin Britten's *Ballad of Heroes*

Sunday, November 18, 2018, 2 pm

Kennedy Center Concert Hall

Christopher Bell, Artistic Director

Laura Choi Stuart, soprano

Rob McGinness, baritone

A Candlelight Christmas

Friday, December 7, 2018, 8 pm, Kennedy Center Concert Hall

Sunday, December 16, 2018, 4 pm, Kennedy Center Concert Hall

Thursday, December 20, 2018, 8 pm, Music Center at Strathmore

Friday, December 21, 2018, 8 pm, Music Center at Strathmore

Saturday, December 22, 2018, 2 pm, Kennedy Center Concert Hall

Sunday, December 23, 2018, 2pm, special family concert at George Mason University Center for the Arts

St. Patrick's Day Celebration

Sunday, March 17, 2019, 3 pm

Kennedy Center Concert Hall

***Arctica* (world premiere)**

Saturday, March 30, 2019, 8 pm
Kennedy Center Concert Hall

With the National Symphony Orchestra
Part of the Kennedy Center's Direct Current Festival

Maurice Duruflé's *Requiem* & James MacMillan's *Cantos Sagrados*

Sunday, June 9, 2019, 5 pm
National Presbyterian Church

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