



For Immediate Release

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Chorus America's 2018 Awards Recognize Outstanding Chorus and Individuals

Chorus America has announced the recipients of its 2018 awards program, recognizing a broad range of achievements in choral music, including artistic excellence, adventurous programming, innovative education programs, and lifetime service to the choral art.

Said president and CEO Catherine Dehoney, "Chorus America is excited to honor these choruses and choral leaders for their outstanding work that enriches their communities, inspires their colleagues, and lifts the entire field."

Independent panels selected the following individuals and choruses to receive awards, which will be presented at Chorus America's 2018 Conference in Chicago, Illinois held June 20-23.

Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence

This award honors the memory of Margaret Hillis, founder of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, for her more than 40 years of professional achievement and outstanding contributions to the choral field. The award is presented annually to a member chorus that demonstrates artistic excellence, a strong organizational structure, and a commitment to outreach, education, and/or culturally diverse activities.

The 2018 Hillis Award recognizes a professional chorus, and goes to the **Houston Chamber Choir**, led by founder and artistic director **Robert Simpson**. The Chamber Choir has excelled in presenting a daring breadth of repertoire at the highest level throughout its 22-year history, from historically-informed performance of Bach's *Mass in B Minor* to rich celebrations of Mexico's choral heritage to collaborations with jazz musicians Christian McBride and Dave Brubeck. Through commitments to commissioning new works and partnerships with guest conductors, the ensemble maintains a fresh approach to its art, while achieving steady organizational growth. In addition, the Chamber Choir's educational efforts in the Houston community have brought music back to three of the district's most disadvantaged schools and established an annual choral festival that is in its 19th year.

Chorus America Distinguished Service Award

The Chorus America Distinguished Service Award recognizes a member whose long-term service to the choral field significantly furthers Chorus America's mission "to empower singing ensembles to create vibrant communities and effect meaningful change."

Joshua Jacobson is the 2018 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award. A scholar, teacher, author, conductor, composer, and founder, Jacobson is widely recognized as one of the field's foremost authorities on Jewish choral music. In 1969, he founded the Zamir Chorale of Boston—dedicated to discovering and presenting music of Jewish traditions—which he continues to direct after 49 years, and in May 2018 will retire from Northeastern University, where he has directed the choral program since 1972. His publications have made clear, accurate scholarship on Jewish choral music accessible to every conductor, and his book, *Chanting the Hebrew Bible*, is considered the definitive work on the subject of cantillation. Jacobson has cemented a reputation as a sought-after guest teacher and conductor, and a champion of rediscovering unique, underperformed repertoire.

Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art

Named after one of the founders of Chorus America, this award was established in 1978 to honor an individual with a lifetime of significant contributions to the professional choral art.

Ragnar Bohlin is the 2018 recipient of the Korn Founders Award. Appointed as the director of the professional-core San Francisco Symphony Chorus in 2007 and earning a Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance in 2010, Bohlin has toured, guest conducted, and recorded with renowned fully professional choruses around the globe, including the Swedish Radio Choir, the Ericson Chamber Choir, the BBC Singers, Chanticleer, and others. In 2014, he founded the professional chamber choir Cappella SF, producing two recordings, premiering 10 new works, and establishing a composer-in-residence program with the ensemble in only four years.

Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal

The **Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal** was established in memory of Louis Botto for his artistry, selfless service to the choral art, and entrepreneurial spirit in founding the men's vocal ensemble Chanticleer. The award is given periodically to a mid-career choral leader who, through his or her work with a member ensemble of Chorus America, has demonstrated innovative action and entrepreneurial zeal in developing a professional or professional-core choral ensemble.

Vince Peterson is the 2018 recipient of the Botto Award. In founding New York City's groundbreaking choral ensemble **Choral Chameleon**, Peterson has focused on creating new and innovative repertoire for chorus, and stretching the perception of what a choral ensemble can be. In ten years, Peterson and the organization have established the Choral Chameleon Summer Institute for composers and conductors, inviting composers to take risks and receive supportive feedback while writing for the voice; offered four year-long composer residencies; and sought to continually redefine the concert experience through interdisciplinary and multi-sensory performances. In 2017, Choral Chameleon was named the first Vocal Ensemble-in-Residence at Brooklyn's innovative performance venue National Sawdust.

Dale Warland Singers Commission Award

Chorus America and the American Composers Forum partner to present this award in honor of Dale Warland's lifelong commitment to new music as embodied through his work with the Dale Warland Singers. The award is made possible by the Dale Warland Singers Fund for New Choral Music, a permanently restricted endowment fund established in 2004.

iSing Silicon Valley, a youth chorus dedicated to empowering girls in grades 1-12 led by artistic directors **Jennah Delp-Somers and Shane Troll**, is the 2018 recipient of the Dale Warland Singers Commission Award. iSing will partner with Grammy-nominated composer **Adam Schoenberg** to compose a 10-minute, multi-movement work for treble choir, string quartet, and percussion that sets excerpts from Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel's memoir, *Night*. In addition to the spring 2019, the piece will be offered at free daytime performances for middle and high school students, through webcasts, and via professional recordings. The structure of the scoring, including simpler unison or two-part sections and more complex sections, will allow the piece to be performed by a wide range of other choruses of various ages and levels of training.

Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award

The Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award honors the life and achievements of educator, conductor, and arranger Brazeal Dennard by recognizing individuals or organizations whose work builds upon his commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, and furthering African-American and other diverse choral traditions through performance, research, or the creation of new compositions of significance.

The 2018 Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award goes to the **Brazeal Dennard Chorale** of Detroit, Michigan. Founded by Brazeal Dennard in 1972, the Chorale continues to carry his legacy forward, now under the direction of **Alice McAllister Tillman**. The Chorale demonstrates a strong dedication to remembering, discovering, and preserving African American spiritual music, and educating its community on this tradition's history and cultural significance. In partnership with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Chorale has also developed a "Classical Roots" concert series that highlights the contributions of African American musicians in classical music.

Chorus America Education and Community Engagement Award

This award recognizes education and community engagement programs that expand a chorus's role in its community. Successful programs demonstrate mission-based program development, viable music education, effective management and fiscal integrity, a commitment to artistic excellence, and collaborations that are sustainable, beneficial, and meaningful for all partners.

The 2018 Education and Community Engagement Award honors the best program by a chorus with a budget over \$200,000, and goes to the **Cincinnati Children's Choir (CCC)**. In partnership with the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS), CCC enriches the lives of students who have limited access to school-based choral singing. Each year, the CPS Honor Choir brings children from 43 schools in the district together for an immersive experience singing choral music of diverse traditions, along with older CCC singers who mentor and welcome the participants, led by CCC founder and managing artistic director Robyn Lana and clinician Rollo Dilworth. A new initiative in its second year, the Cincinnati Choral Academy provides no-cost, El Sistema-based choral education and music literacy to students in CPS schools—80% of whom are low-income—who are receiving no other choral training in school.

Chorus America/ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming and Alice Parker Award

The **Chorus America/ASCAP Adventurous Programming Awards** recognize choruses that demonstrate a sustained commitment to adventurous programming through performances of choral music written in the last 25 years. The 2018 winners are:

Cantori New York, Mark Shapiro, artistic director

Volti, Robert Geary, artistic director

San Francisco Girls Chorus, Lisa Bielawa, artistic director; Valérie Sainte-Agathe, music director and conductor

The **Chorus America/ASCAP Alice Parker Award** honors composer Alice Parker, whose career has spanned six decades and has been devoted to the creation of works for the human voice. The award was established in 2003 to recognize a chorus for programming recently composed music that expands the mission of the chorus and challenges the chorus's audience in new ways.

The 2018 Alice Parker Award goes to the **Capitol Hill Chorale**, a Washington DC ensemble directed by **Frederick Binkholder**. Focusing on Eastern Orthodox liturgical music and the early American shape note and Shaker traditions, the Chorale has mounted major projects to deepen their audience's relationship to these lesser-known art forms. The Chorale embarked on a five-year research project to perform and record the masterwork *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* by Zakaria Paliashvili, who is regarded as the "father" of Georgian classical music. In its 2016-17 season, the Chorale commissioned and premiered two major works by composer-in-residence Kevin Siegfried—an expert in Shaker music and Sacred Harp—one of which was performed with one of the eight living players of the glass armonica.

Chorus America Awards for Philanthropy

Chorus America recognizes exceptional generosity philanthropy in the choral field with two philanthropy awards.

The **Michael Korn Founders Award for Philanthropic Contribution to the Arts** is given to an individual, corporation, or foundation whose financial support of Chorus America and the choral art has been especially significant. This award is nominated by the Chorus America board. The 2018 Award goes to **Distinguished Concerts International, New York (DCINY)** for its generous sponsorship of Chorus America programs, including being the lead sponsor of the 2017 and 2018 Conferences.

The **Chorus America Philanthropy Award** recognizes an individual, corporation, or foundation whose financial support has been especially significant and generous to the host choruses of Chorus America's Conference. The 2018 Award goes to **Colleen and Lloyd Fry and the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation** for support of Chicago Children's Choir and Grant Park Music Festival.

Chorus America is the advocacy, research, and leadership development organization that advances the choral field. We support and serve choral conductors, administrators, board members, and singers with tools, training, peer networking, and access so that choruses are better able to contribute to their communities.

More than 1,500 choruses, individuals, businesses, and organizations are members of Chorus America and have access to a wide array of programs, publications, research, and personal services developed for their benefit. These services strengthen their ability to build strong organizations that foster quality choral performances.

Chorus America is governed by a diverse board of accomplished arts leaders from across North America, and the executive staff is headquartered in Washington DC. Learn more at www.chorusamerica.org.

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