



For Immediate Release

Contact: Liza Beth
202.331.7577 ext. 243
liza@chorusamerica.org

Chorus America's 2020 Awards Recognize Outstanding Chorus and Individuals

Chorus America has announced the recipients of its 2020 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.

"Through their outstanding work, these award winners are lifting the choral field to new heights of artistry and service," said president and CEO Catherine Dehoney. "Chorus America is delighted to recognize these accomplishments, and hope they provide inspiration and encouragement during this time of crisis and in brighter days to come."

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 2020 Hillis Award recognizes a children and youth chorus, and goes to **Young Women's Choral Projects of San Francisco (YWCP)**, led by artistic director **Susan McMane**. In only its eighth season, YWCP has gained widespread acclaim for its artistry and expressivity, earning recognition from The American Prize in addition to several Chorus America awards. YWCP's premier ensemble has drawn invitations to perform with Esa-Pekka Salonen, Ragnar Bohlin, the San Francisco Symphony, the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, Kronos Quartet, and others; and its adventurous collection of premieres and commissions includes an NEA-funded opera. The Kodály-inspired program provides a whole-child approach for young women ages 4-18 in six ensembles, and engages additional children through education initiatives in San Francisco Public Schools. Thanks to strong financial management which has grown the annual budget in each successive year, YWCP is able to offer substantive need-based financial aid to choristers while looking toward a bright future for the organization.

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.”

Former Chorus America board member **Philip Brunelle** is the 2020 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award. Since 1969, Brunelle has served as the founding artistic director of VocalEssence, building a pioneering organization with deep local engagement and global influence. His bold vision has brought unique events and collaborations bringing together artists and audiences, over 250 world premieres, and six ASCAP/Chorus America Adventurous Programming Awards. Through VocalEssence, Brunelle keeps finding innovative ways to engage the community, reaching over 20,000 people annually and fostering initiatives such as WITNESS, celebrating African American artistic contributions; ¡Cantaré!, exploring Mexico’s vibrant musical traditions; and VocalEssence Singers of this Age, a radically representative youth chorus of high school students in the Twin Cities. Brunelle’s service to the field has extended locally, nationally, and internationally, serving on the Minnesota State Arts Board, the National Council on the Arts, and the International Federation for Choral Music as its president, in addition to 18 years on Chorus America’s board of directors.

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.

Kent Tritle is the 2020 recipient of the Korn Founders Award for his elevation of professional choral music in the academic, faith, and community spheres. Tritle is in his 13th season as music director of Musica Sacra, the longest continuously performing professional chorus in New York, and one of the charter members of the Association of Professional Ensembles—the organization that became Chorus America. His work with Musica Sacra carries on the organization’s commitment to celebrate contemporary composers and large-scale works in the choral canon through live performance and recordings. As director of choral activities at the Manhattan School of Music, he established the school’s first doctoral program in choral conducting, and created high-profile collaborations for his student ensembles to perform with other New York musical institutions. Tritle also presented more than 150 concerts after founding the *Sacred Music in a Sacred Space* with the all-professional Choir and Orchestra of St. Ignatius Loyola, a tradition he has revived in his current position at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

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.

Ruben Valenzuela is the 2020 recipient of the Botto Award. Valenzuela has worked tirelessly to make professional early choral music a vibrant part of the San Diego community. Establishing Bach Collegium San Diego in 2003, Valenzuela has steadily expanded the musical activities and capacity of the organization through a focused vision and a commitment to developing a savvy presence both locally and digitally. The Collegium's engagements have provided many different entry points for community members, gained international attention through recordings and social media, and often allowed its audiences to hear the first historically-informed performances of works by Bach and his contemporaries in San Diego.

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.

National Lutheran Choir (NLC), led by artistic director **David Cherwien**, is the 2020 recipient of the Dale Warland Singers Commission Award. NLC will partner with composer **Steve Heitzeg** to create *Lament of the Earth*—a four-movement, 40-minute work for mixed chorus, children's voices, and instrumental ensemble with text from poet and hymnist Susan Palo Cherwien—to premiere on Earth Day 2021 in the Twin Cities. The new work draws inspiration from many faith traditions, and serves as a catalyst for NLC to expand beyond its predominantly Protestant Christian following and unite diverse worship communities and audiences in considering collective action to address climate change. The ensemble plans to take the commission on a Pacific Northwest tour in 2021, and is also exploring options for *Lament of the Earth* to be broadcast live and published.

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 2020 Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award goes to **Jacksonville Children's Chorus (JCC)**, under the artistic direction of **Darren Dailey**. The chorus's commitment to diversity begins with its membership—the singers in JCC's year-long program are more racially diverse than the city of Jacksonville, and a robust scholarship program reinforces the organization's intentional aspirations to reach children of all backgrounds. JCC has a long history of celebrating music of the African American tradition; including an annual, often sold-out Martin Luther King "Lift Ev'ry Voice & Sing" tribute concert with partner artists from Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and five commissioned works from African American composers including Rosephanye Powell and Rollo Dilworth. The chorus has presented further programs

that promote diversity and inclusion, including its “World Beat” series and a “Women In Song” concert, and singers learn to perform repertoire in an average of 10 languages a year in a culturally responsive manner.

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 2020 Education and Community Engagement Award honors the best collaborative program and goes to **Key Chorale**. Led by artistic director **Joseph Caulkins**, the Chorale has developed a suite of programs that serve a wide range of populations in its Sarasota, Florida-area community, many of whom are vulnerable. The organization’s “Tomorrow’s Voices Today” music education initiatives—which include a partnership with an academy for at-risk elementary school boys, a high school choral festival, and a scholar program for students to sing in the Chorale’s performance season—reach over 400 students annually. Key Chorale also provides choral outlets that contribute to the well-being of older adults living with Parkinson’s and memory loss, respectively, along with their caregivers and family members.

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, and fostering and promoting new music. The 2020 winners are:

Border CrosSing (Twin Cities, Minnesota), Ahmed Anzaldúa, artistic director

Tonality (Los Angeles, California), Alexander Lloyd Blake, artistic director

Cantabile Youth Singers of Silicon Valley, Elena Sharkova, artistic director

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 2020 Alice Parker Award goes to **Baltimore Choral Arts Society**, directed by **Anthony Blake Clark**. An organization that has primarily been dedicated to showcasing well-known large-scale works in the choral canon, Baltimore Choral Arts has taken on major contemporary works by living composers and presented them in striking contexts, while infusing elements of traditional repertoire that its community is familiar with. In 2019, the ensemble gave a performance of David Lang’s *little match girl passion*, interspersing chorales from J.S. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, and incorporating singer and audience movement throughout the presentation, as well as interactive digital artwork from students at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Later in the season, the organization mounted composer Jonathan Dove’s staged “community opera” *The Monster in the Maze*, a multi-generational collaboration in

partnership with several local arts organizations, contrasting the work by programming it after Felix Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*.

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.

###