

EMBARGOED PRESS RELEASE: provided to select partners as of February 4, 2020
Embargoed until 11 am EST on Thursday, February 6, 2020

For more information, contact:

Stephen Marc Beaudoin, Executive Director
617.281.8569 or stephen@thewashingtonchorus.org
High-res print and web ready images available on request

THE WASHINGTON CHORUS ANNOUNCES EUGENE ROGERS AS FIFTH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

One of The Most Acclaimed Next-Generation Conductors and Musical Thought Leaders Working Today, Dr. Eugene Rogers – Director of Choirs at the University of Michigan and Founding Director of Exigence Vocal Ensemble – Succeeds Christopher Bell Starting Summer of 2020 as Artistic Director of D.C.’s Only Two Time Grammy Award-Winning Choral Ensemble

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On the eve of launching into its 60th anniversary season starting in the fall of 2020, **The Washington Chorus announced today that it has appointed acclaimed conductor Dr. Eugene Rogers as its fifth Artistic Director**, succeeding Christopher Bell beginning in July of 2020. Dr. Rogers’ appointment was unanimously approved by the Washington Chorus board of trustees on unanimous recommendation from the Chorus’ Artistic Director Search Committee, following an eight-month global search which yielded more than 80 highly qualified candidates.

Through his work with Exigence Vocal Ensemble, the University of Michigan, guest conducting, published arranging, and service to the field, **Eugene Rogers is widely regarded as one of the most acclaimed next-generation conductors and musical thought leaders today working at the intersection of classical music and social change.** A 2015 Grammy Award nominee, 2017 Sphinx Medal of Excellence winner, and recognized in 2017 by *Musical America* magazine as one of the field’s “Movers and Shapers,” Washington Chorus Search Committee Chair Kara Morrissey notes the extraordinary combination of experience and skills that make Eugene Rogers the ideal next Artistic Director for The Washington Chorus:

“We are excited to welcome Eugene Rogers to the TWC family: **he brings such musical expertise and precision, as well as enthusiasm, energy and vibrancy to his work,**” says TWC Search Committee Chair Kara Morrissey, who also serves as a board member and soprano with the ensemble. “His experience nationally and internationally in the choral world, his creative and ambitious programmatic visioning, his interest in connecting to the DC community, and his experience as a collaborator are all part of TWC’s hope and vision for the future.”

Building on The Washington Chorus’ 59-year legacy, Eugene Rogers will join The Washington Chorus (TWC) at a time of vibrant evolution and growth for this nationally acclaimed choral ensemble. When he begins in the summer of 2020, Dr. Rogers will only be TWC’s fifth Artistic Director, following **Christopher Bell** (current Artistic Director through June of 2020), **Julian Wachner** (now Music Director at Trinity Wall Street in New York City), the legendary **Bob Shafer** (who served for 35 years in the role), and founding music director **Hugh Hayward** (who passed in 2008).

In response to his appointment, Dr. Rogers had this to say:

“I am overjoyed by this opportunity to lead and partner with one of America’s leading symphonic choruses. As a native of Virginia, I have admired The Washington Chorus’ rich legacy for years, making this appointment particularly meaningful. The Chorus’ commitment to championing the great historic choral works of the past while fostering new voices and works from women and people of color make

this a perfect fit and directly aligns with my life's work both as a conductor and teacher. I am thrilled beyond belief, and so look forward to collaborating with the chorus, staff, board and our metro-DC community partners as we enter this new decade and TWC's 60th year of singing together.

As Artistic Director of TWC, my vision is that through audacious, distinctive and inclusive programming, and in tandem collaborations with the amazing colleagues and artists in the Washington, DC region and beyond, **we will build on our rich musical legacy and foster a strong and diverse community of artists.** Creativity and collaboration will be at the heart of this work - whether it's launching new programs like a 'Mahogany' concert series exploring the rich musical traditions of Black, Latinx, and American Indian communities, or building TWC's community Connections programs to bring the power of singing to more people in more places.

I also want to **sincerely acknowledge and thank current TWC Artistic Director Christopher Bell, who has done incredible work in continuing to bring the Chorus to new artistic heights.** It is an honor to follow Christopher in this position."

Already, many TWC chorus and board members, staff, supporters, and community and artistic partners have had the opportunity in the search process to connect and engage with Eugene Rogers, and TWC Executive Director Stephen Marc Beaudoin says he is one of countless individuals thrilled to be welcoming Eugene Rogers to TWC and the DC regional creative community:

"Leadership is about many things – and love has to be at the heart of it," Beaudoin says. "In Eugene Rogers, The Washington Chorus has found a next artistic leader that brings abundant care and love to all parts of this work: a deep and abiding love of the unique power of choral music to inspire and change lives; a sincere love of creating connections; and an absolutely joyous love of teaching and learning. **Eugene is the kind of co-leader a nonprofit CEO often dreams about but rarely finds,** and frankly I'm honored to have the opportunity to collaborate with him and our entire universe of singers, partners, and friends."

Dr. Rogers comes to The Washington Chorus at an incredibly exciting time for the organization: he will join as Artistic Director at the start of TWC's 60th anniversary season, at a time when there is considerable momentum afoot as TWC grows and evolves to ensure even more individuals across the DC regional community experience the transformative power of singing together. The board of directors, which is also growing to welcome new talent, is especially excited by Eugene's arrival.

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees of The Washington Chorus, I can say with confidence that we could not be more enthusiastic about Eugene Rogers as the next Artistic Director of the organization," says Chorus Board Chair Chris Denby. **"It is an honor to bring such accomplished choral leadership to Washington** and we can't wait to see what the combination of a two-time Grammy winning chorus and one of the most distinguished choral directors in the country will create in a city already known for its national leadership in choral music."

The Washington Chorus completes its 59th season with a range of performances this February to June, led by current Artistic Director Christopher Bell, including a St. Patrick's Day Celebration Concert (Friday, March 13, 2020, 8 pm – Music Center at Strathmore); "The Future is Female" collaborative concert with the Heritage Signature Chorale (Saturday, April 4, 2020, 4 pm and 8 pm – Live! @ 10th and G); the Rachmaninoff Vespers (Saturday, May 2, 2020, 7 pm – National City Christian Church); two installments of Rob Kapilow's "What Makes it Great?" series at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (Sunday, Feb. 23 and Sunday, May 17, 6:30 pm) and our season-ending appearances singing Beethoven Symphony no. 9 with the National Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Gianandrea Noseda, June 12-14, 2020 at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall.

(continued next page)

Washington, D.C.-Based and National Leaders Praise the Appointment of Eugene Rogers as The Washington Chorus' Next Artistic Director:

Aaron Dworkin, MacArthur Fellow and founder of the Sphinx Organization:

"This extraordinary appointment brings Eugene's artistic excellence combined with his unwavering commitment to audiences and diverse communities into a leadership organization with a rich legacy in our nation's capital. **Together they are poised to transform not only their audiences and community but also the trajectory of our art form.**"

Catherine Dehoney, President and CEO of Chorus America:

"Congratulations to the Washington Chorus on this announcement, and to our board member Eugene Rogers on this next chapter in his growing career. **We're excited to see what Eugene's leadership and vision will bring to a chorus that contributes so much to its community and the choral field.**"

David Gier, Dean, University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance:

"We are thrilled that Dr. Eugene Rogers has been appointed as the next Artistic Director of The Washington Chorus, bringing a world-class choral conductor together with a world-class chorus. Eugene is an inspiring artistic and creative force here at Michigan, and **we are excited to see both how his leadership will transform the Washington Chorus, and how his experience in Washington will influence his work with our students here in the School of Music, Theatre & Dance.**"

Greg Watkins, Washington D.C. based conductor and music educator:

"It is with complete joy that I celebrate Maestro Eugene Rogers as the newest addition to The Washington Chorus family. What a gem he is and will surely stand to be as the new Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of this Grammy Award winning choir. **He brings such inspired vision and necessary vibrancy, eagerness, merited skill set, collaborative will, defined intent, and strong partnering abilities** that are guaranteed to impact the DC regional cultural community in an explosive way."

Peter Clunie, Washington Chorus Council President and TWC tenor section member:

"On behalf of the entire community of Washington Chorus singers, I am so excited to welcome Eugene Rogers as the Washington Chorus's next Artistic Director. **In rehearsal with the Chorus, Eugene's incredible energy, experience, and warmth were amazing to experience.** I see him as a leader that can readily build on the Chorus's musical excellence. The Chorus is ready for Eugene Rogers!"

ABOUT EUGENE ROGERS

- 47-year-old acclaimed choral-orchestral conductor
- Grammy award nominated for his chorus preparation on Darius Milhaud's "L'orestie d'Eschyle" (Naxos release, 2014; nominated for a Grammy Award in 2015 for Best Opera Recording)
- Currently serves as Director of Choirs and Associate Professor of Conducting at the University of Michigan, positions in which he will continue while in the Artistic Director role with TWC
- Has guest conducted dozens of professional vocal, choral, and orchestral ensembles in an enormous range of music in his career, including guest conducting appearances with the Flint Symphony Orchestra, Sphinx Symphony Orchestra, VocalEssence, the State Choir of Latvia, and – as a leader fiercely dedicated to fostering the next generation of singers and musicians – countless collegiate and high school honors ensembles
- Founding Director of EXIGENCE vocal ensemble, a professional vocal ensemble housed within the lauded Sphinx organization
- 2017 Sphinx Medal of Excellence winner, recognizing his outstanding contributions to the field of classical choral music

(continued next page)

- Noted in 2017 by *Musical America* magazine as one of the field's Top 30 Movers and Shapers
- Highlights of service to the field include serving as National Co-Chair for Diversity Initiatives with the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and as a member of the board of directors with Chorus America
- Published and much-performed choral music arranger, including through the Eugene Rogers Choral Series published by Mark Foster Publishing
- Dr. Rogers is married, and he and his husband, Mark, intend to hold a part-time residence in the Washington, D.C. metro community
- Holds a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) in Choral Conducting from the University of Michigan

ABOUT THE WASHINGTON CHORUS

- The Chorus is a longtime artistic partner and collaborator with many of the nation's leading organizations and artists, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO), and TK. It will participate in a live recording project of Beethoven Symphony no. 9 with the NSO under music director Gianandrea Noseda this June of 2020.
- Founded in 1961 as the Oratorio Society of Montgomery County, The Washington Chorus is poised to enter its 60th anniversary season in 2020-21 as one of the premier choral ensembles in the United States.
- The Washington Chorus is D.C.'s only two time Grammy award-winning choral ensemble (for "Of Rage and Remembrance/Symphony no. 1" with the National Symphony Orchestra, Best Classical Album Grammy Award, 1997 and for "Benjamin Britten's War Requiem" produced by The Washington Chorus with soprano Christine Goerke and members of the National Symphony Orchestra, Best Choral Performance, 1999).
- TWC's commitment to the greater Washington community is evidenced by its Connections Programs, including the Side-by-Side high school program; the DC Honor Chorus in partnership with DC Public Schools; and its new partnership with Arts for the Aging, offering therapeutic life enrichment interventions for memory-loss patients in Washington, D.C.
- 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.
- TWC has appeared at the invitation of leading orchestras including the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. 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, Sir Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, 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 in 2013 and 2014 for President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama.

###