



The Sixty-seventh Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art

**Choral Festival celebrating
the reopening of the American Galleries**

Friday, April 17 through Sunday, April 19

1:30 pm and 3:30 pm

West Building, East Garden Court

Admission free

The Festival

Anthropologists agree that communal singing was present in the earliest stages of human civilization. When the first Europeans arrived at what eventually came to be called America, the singing and chanting that they encountered by native tribes was a continuation of a tradition that was already thousands of years old. Some of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish settlers were priests who had been trained in schools where the Renaissance polyphonic choral tradition was in full flower, and they incorporated some of the elements of that tradition into the curricula of the schools they set up in the New World. Music from some of their surviving manuscripts was heard at the National Gallery in 1992, when the National Gallery Vocal Arts Ensemble and the early music ensemble Hesperus performed a program of Spanish and colonial vocal music in honor of the exhibition *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*.

American choral music, as such, can be said to have had its beginnings in the congregational psalmody that was practiced by the English- and Dutch-speaking immigrants to the New England and New Amsterdam colonies. Congregational psalm singing in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was characterized by unison singing (with occasional haphazard harmony), slow, drawn-out elocution of the text, and improvised melodic ornamentation. In the 1720s, a reform movement emerged among some New England clergymen who were impatient with the irregularity of the singing in their congregations. They advocated rehearsals and classes separate from the church services, in which reading music, part-singing, vocal production, and deportment would be taught. The resulting “singing schools” evolved into church and community choral societies, the first of which was the Stoughton (Massachusetts) Musical Society, founded in 1786. The nineteenth-century inheritors of this tradition, led by composers William B. Bradbury, Thomas Hastings, and Lowell Mason, strove to improve the quality of singing in New England by adopting European styles and methods. One of the choral societies formed during this period, the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, continues to the present day.

German-speaking immigrants came to America with church and community choral singing as an integral part of their culture. The Collegium Musicum of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, formed by Moravian immigrants in 1744, was already two generations old by the time the Massachusetts Musical Society was founded. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the flood of German-speaking immigrants brought with it a proliferation of singing societies, among them the Deutsche Liederkranz (1847), the Männergesangverein (1854), the Mendelssohn Glee Club (1866), and the Apollo Musical Club (1872). National and international choral festivals, known as *Sängerfeste*, were a regular part of their activities and brought together hundreds and sometimes thousands of singers into mass choruses.

A good number of the painters whose works now hang in the American galleries were enthusiastic amateur singers, making it all the more fitting that the reopening of these galleries should be celebrated in choral song. The participating choirs have selected pieces from their repertoire that were either already in existence in nineteenth-century America, or that are based on tunes well rooted in the American tradition. The musicians will announce their selections from the stage.

2,719th Concert
April 17, 2009
Friday, 1:30 pm
West Building, East Garden Court

National Men's Chorus

Thomas Beveridge, artistic director and conductor

Thomas Pandolfi, pianist

Ten years ago, artistic director Thomas Beveridge founded The National Men's Chorus. The *Washington Post* music critic Joseph McLellan hailed the first concert as a "triumphant debut" in a performance displaying "exemplary polish, expression, and control." In its first concert season, the Chorus presented the infrequently heard combination of Cherubini's *Requiem* and Gounod's *Messe no. 2*, a program that was repeated by popular demand in 2003. In the years since, the ensemble has performed many other classics of the literature for male voices, as well as arrangements of traditional melodies composed especially for the group. It has appeared in the concert series in Waterford, Virginia, and in a variety of Washington area locations, including the George Washington National Masonic Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia. There, the Chorus presented a collection of the "Masonic Music" of Mozart together with Randall Thompson's *Testament of Freedom*, with full orchestra.

The National Men's Chorus has been honored with prestigious concert invitations, including the American Music Festival at the National Gallery of Art. In the spring of 2002, at the dedication of the George Mason Memorial near the National Mall, the group performed the cantata *Life and Liberty*, a Thomas Beveridge setting of texts by George Mason commissioned for the occasion. The Chorus has appeared twice at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center in Alexandria, Virginia, most recently with the Alexandria Symphony.

In today's concert, the Chorus presents a sampling of its wide-ranging repertoire of American patriotic music, some traditional, some historic, and some seldom-heard. Much of that music is available on the recently released CD *Life and Liberty*, www.nationalmenschorus.org/CDSales.htm which also features the Washington Symphonic Brass and organist Paul Skevington.

2,720th Concert
April 17, 2009
Friday, 3:30 pm
West Building, East Garden Court

Columbia Collegiate Chorale
James Bingham, artistic director and conductor
Daniel Lau, pianist

Established in 1994 by its present director James Bingham, The Columbia Collegiate Chorale draws its membership largely from the student body of Columbia Union College. Incorporated within the chorale is a smaller select chamber choir, the ProMusica of Columbia Union College, which was established in 1967 by the late Paul Hill, director of the famed Paul Hill Chorale, now known as the Master Chorale of Washington.

Under the leadership of its present director, the choir has undertaken a heavy schedule of services and concerts, traveling extensively both nationally and internationally. It has appeared in numerous prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, the National Gallery of Art, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, as well as in other leading concert halls and cathedrals both within the United States and abroad. The choir has recorded a number of CDs for the Ethereal Records label and has received acclaim for its recording of Louis Vierne's *Messe Solennelle in C Minor*. Of its recording, *O Jesus Sweet: Music for a Christmas Night*, which includes *Dancing Day* by John Rutter, the composer has written, "I could not wish for a finer interpretation of my piece."

Columbia Union College was founded in 1904 as part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's educational system in North America. As a tertiary level institution, it attracts an international coeducational student body, and offers undergraduate and graduate, traditional and non-traditional, programs in

liberal arts, sciences and selected professional fields. Its location in Takoma Park, Maryland, just outside of the nation's capital, enables its students to interact with many national and international cultural, religious, and multi-ethnic organizations. The mission of the Columbia Collegiate Chorale is to represent the best of American culture and the finest of Christian culture through the study and performance of the sacred music of the great masters.

2,721st Concert
April 18, 2009
Saturday, 1:30 pm
West Building, East Garden Court

Master Singers of Virginia

Erik Reid Jones, artistic director and conductor

The Master Singers of Virginia is one of the Washington area's premier choral ensembles. Now in its fourteenth year, the group has performed major works by Barber, Britten, Bruckner, Copland, Poulenc, and Rachmaninoff. Directed by its founder, Erik Reid Jones, it has also performed original works and modern adaptations of Baltic regional music, including folk music of the "forgotten peoples." The ensemble performs at several venues in Northern Virginia, and in recent years has performed at National Harbor and the National Theater as well as in the Alden, St. Luke, and Waterford concert series.

This year's concert repertoire has included Britten's *A Boy Was Born*, one of the most challenging and rewarding a cappella pieces of the twentieth century; Poulenc's *Mass in G Major*, *Prayers of St. Francis*, and *Petites Voix*; and William Byrd's *Mass for Five Voices*. The Master Singers have adapted their 2008–2009 programming to include a number of works from the "American Songbook" by Robert Shaw and Alice Parker, which serve as the basis for their concert in honor of the reopening of the American galleries at the National Gallery of Art.

Master Singers conductor Erik Reid Jones is currently the director of choral and vocal activities at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, as well as the founder and artistic director of the Master Singers. An active composer and clinician, Jones earned a doctor of music degree at the University of Maryland, College Park, a master's degree in choral conducting at the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

2,722nd Concert
April 18, 2009
Saturday, 3:30 pm
West Building, East Garden Court

Greater South Jersey Chorus
William Kinsey, artistic director and conductor

Established in 1992, the Greater South Jersey Chorus is a ninety-seven member, mixed-voice chorus that has earned widespread attention for its diverse repertoire, beautiful sound, and thoughtful interpretations. With a strong commitment to community outreach, the chorus has performed for the Camden County Park Commission, The Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsauken Community Center, and local Rotary clubs. It has lent its musical gifts to numerous fundraisers and ceremonies, including the Linda Creed Breast Cancer Foundation; several fundraisers for victims of Hurricane Katrina, including one held at Carnegie Hall for the Southern Chorale from the University of Mississippi; and a fundraiser for a New Jersey boy who is fighting Mitochondrial disease. In 2006, the chorus performed at a memorial service commemorating the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, held at Freedom Park in Medford. In addition, the Chorus was also honored to sing at the opening and closing ceremonies of the traveling Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall in the same park.

For its spring concert in 2008, the Greater South Jersey Chorus distributed free concert tickets and educational study guides to local German language teachers for their students to have an opportunity to hear Johannes Brahms' *Zigeunerlieder* (Gypsy Songs) sung in German. The Chorus has also performed at area grammar schools, demonstrating to young children that choral music is a life-long activity. In 2009, the Chorus received the second highest number of votes among all New Jersey choral groups for the Discover Jersey Arts People's Choice Awards. Next month, the Chorus will perform Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

2,723rd Concert
April 19, 2009
Sunday, 1:30 pm
West Building, East Garden Court

Central Bucks High School West Choir
Joseph Ohrt, artistic director and conductor

The five performing choirs of Central Bucks High School-West in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, comprise one of the most respected choral programs in the United States. Having presented close to 350 world premieres of works by composers from around the globe, West Choirs serve as pioneers of and advocates for contemporary composition. In addition to two previous appearances at the National Gallery, the choirs have performed frequently in Washington at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Cathedral of Saint Matthew the Apostle, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Lincoln Memorial, the National Cathedral, the Pentagon, and the White House. The choirs have also performed in major venues throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. They have given special performances for heads of state including President Clinton and Hilary Clinton, Presidents De Klerk and Mandela of South Africa, President Havel of the Czech Republic, and Prime Minister Perez of Israel. In honor of the reopening of the American Galleries, the Chamber Choir sings an all-world-premiere program of music by American composers Rene Clausen, David Conte, Richard Fitzgerald, James Mulholland, Francisco Núñez, Joseph Ohrt, Matthew Samson, and Brian Schmidt written specifically for this occasion.

Conductor and artistic director Dr. Joseph Ohrt studied under master teachers Joseph Flummerfelt, Frauke Hassemann, Margaret Hillis, Dennis Keene, Doreen Rao, and Gregg Smith. He is a prolific composer and is a contributing author to several texts on secondary choral music education.

2,724th Concert
April 19, 2009
Sunday, 3:30 pm
West Building, East Garden Court

18th Street Singers
Benjamin Olinsky, artistic director and conductor

In 2004 a small group of young people living, learning, and working in the Washington, DC, area set out to find a serious musical outlet that would fulfill the social needs and fit the time constraints of young adults in the District of Columbia. Having sung for most of their lives, they decided to form a choir. Thus was born the 18th Street Singers, named after the road along which many of them live and play.

The ensemble grew quickly to its current forty-voice membership. The singers have a wide range of musical backgrounds, from professional musicians to former school choir members, and they are bound together by dedication to musicality and passion for performance. As a new addition to the Washington choral scene, they intend to bring a fresh, spirited interpretation to traditional choral music. Their diverse repertoire ranges from classical to contemporary, from Maurice Durufle's *Ubi Caritas* to the American spiritual *Great Day* to folk and love songs such as *Shenandoah* and *Loch Lomond*.

This is the 18th Street Singers' first concert appearance at the National Gallery, but they have provided spirited and uplifting leadership for holiday caroling in the Rotunda on two previous occasions.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

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COVER: Erastus Salisbury Field, *Man with a Tune Book: Possibly Mr. Cook*,
c. 1838, Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch