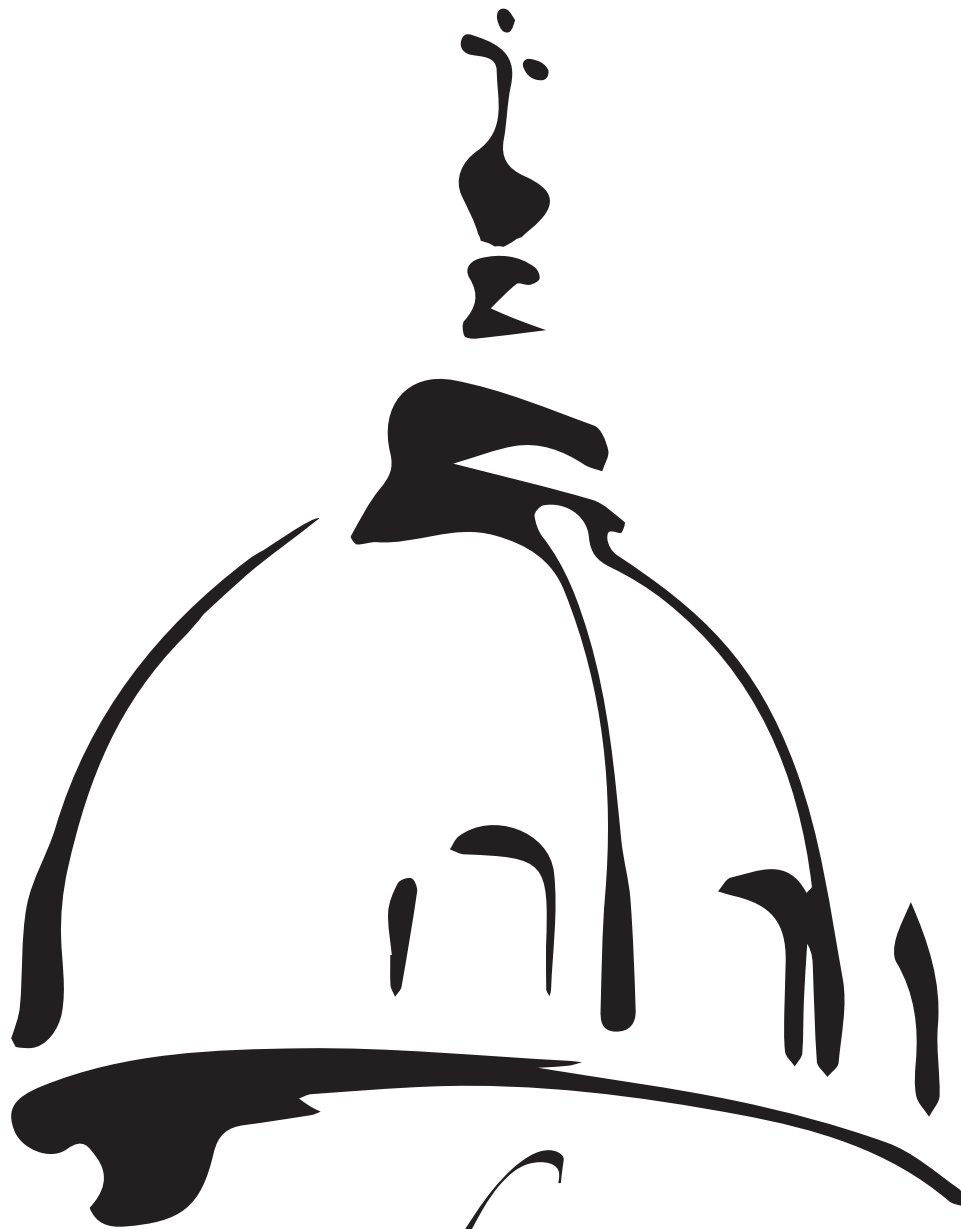


Concerts at the Cathedral Basilica

PRESENTS



Voices of Ascension
25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2015 | 7PM
CATHEDRAL BASILICA of SAINTS PETER AND PAUL
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

VOICES OF ASCENSION

DENNIS KEENE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

Tuesday, May 19, 2015 at 7:00pm
The Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul
Eighteenth and Benjamin Franklin Parkway
Philadelphia

THE VOICES OF ASCENSION RENAISSANCE CONCERT Audience Favorites from 25 years of Renaissance Concerts

The audience is urged at this time to make sure that all
cell phones, beepers, and alarm watches are turned off.
The use of cameras and recording devices is strictly prohibited.

PROGRAM

NOTES BY DENNIS KEENE

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA 1548-1611

Victoria was born in Spain, but spent the bulk of his career in Rome. This is probably his most famous work, and typical of many of his greatest motets: mystical, highly emotional, and evoking strong and changing moods. It also displays his genius at composing for the choral instrument - how he groups together different voice parts to combine an ever-changing orchestration of choral timbres.

O magnum mysterium, et
admirable sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent
Dominum natum, jacentem
In praesepio. O beata Virgo cujus
Viscera meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum. Alleluia.

O great mystery, and
admirable sign, that animals should see
the Lord born
and laid in a manger. O blessed
Virgin, whose body merited
The bearing of the Lord Jesus
Christ. Alleluia.

JESU DULCIS MEMORIA

TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA

Victoria composed several famous motets – such as *Vere languores* and *O vos omnes* – which are intensely devotional, and which feature strong emotions often brought out through harmonic tension. Remember, he composed at the height of the Catholic Counter-Reformation when the church was trying to re-capture the people through the direct, personal appeal of great art. This motet is the most concise of this genre.

Jesu, dulcis memoria,
Dans vera cordis gaudia:
Sed super mel et omnia
Ejus dulcis præsentia.

Jesus, how sweet the very thought,
Giving true joy to the heart,
But sweeter than honey and all else
In His presence.

O QUAM GLORIOSUM

TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA

This piece couldn't be more different from *Jesu Dulcis Memoria*! Composed for the great feast day of All Saints, it is filled with joy, ceremony, and optimism.

O quam gloriosum est regnum in quo cum
Christo gaudent omnes sancti!
Amicti stolis albis sequuntur
Agnum quocumque ierit.

O how glorious is the kingdom
in which all the saints rejoice with Christ!
Clad in white robes they follow the
Lamb where ever he goes.

SICUT CERVUS

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA c.1525–1594

In my opinion, this work's fame and universal adoration are totally justified. It is an inspired piece of art, flawless in its construction – the quintessential Palestrina motet. Each phrase of text is given a melody which is sung in turn by each of the four voice parts, while the other parts are simultaneously engaged in other beautiful melodic material. In other words: perfect counterpoint. Then the next phrase of text arrives with a new melody, treated the same way, and so forth to the end. What makes this particular motet so special is that all the principal themes and all the accompanying counterpoint melodies are of an extraordinary beauty, and they all harmonize and balance together with the perfection of a great Raphael Madonna. Further, they perfectly portray the very special text which Palestrina has chosen to illuminate with his art.

Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes aquarum;
ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.

As the deer yearns for the flowing springs,
so longs my soul for thee, O God!

-Psalm 42:1

CRUCIFIXUS

ANTONIO LOTTI c.1667–1740

In the early part of the 17th century, as the Renaissance style was coming to a close and the new Baroque style was developing, there was a movement of composition which took great delight in the exaggerated use of dissonance. Followers of this style loved the clashing of two notes just a half-step apart, and of diminished chords and other harmonic “crunches.” This highly-charged style was used in instrumental music as well, and continued, here and there, straight through to Bach. In the early 17th century, the most famous choral example of this is the work we perform tonight. Lotti brilliantly contrasts moments of great tenderness with those of brutal harmonic crashing. Although not in the score, I feel it dramatically appropriate to have the low basses add a low C to the final chord.

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato,
passus et sepultus est.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered death, and was buried.

ASCENDO AD PATREM

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA

After a Crucifixus it seemed appropriate to go to an Ascension. And fortunately Palestrina composed one of his most appealing motets on that very text. The piece gives a terrific example of word-painting on the first word “Ascendo” (I ascend): the voice parts leap up an entire octave.

Ascendo ad patrem meum et patrem vestrum:
Alleluia. Deum meum, et Deum vestrum, Alleluia.
Et dum assumptus fuero a vobis,
mittam vobis Spiritum veritatis, et gaudebit cor
vestrum. Alleluia

I ascend unto my Father and your Father:
Alleluia! and to my God, and your God. Alleluia!
And when I am ascended from your midst, I shall
send unto you the Spirit of truth, and your heart
will rejoice. Alleluia.

STABAT MATER (FOR DOUBLE CHOIR)

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA

One of Palestrina's most famous compositions, it is nonetheless atypical of his normal compositional style. Instead of the usual independent counterpoint of each voice part which we find in most of his pieces, the very long text of this piece called for a continuous, chord-like setting. It is remarkable that in this single movement, lasting a full 8-9 minutes, our involvement never slackens. He keeps our interest constantly, through his melodic inspiration and remarkable combinations of groups of voice parts (from one choir or the other or sometimes from both choirs.) The famous poem clearly inspired Palestrina to compose an amazingly direct illumination of the words. The piece has been famous and beloved for centuries. Even Richard Wagner considered it a unique masterpiece of antiquity, and made an edition with all his own interpretive marks. (We will not be using his version!)

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta Crucem lacrymosa,
Dum pendebat Filius.

Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam ac dolentem
Pertransivit gladius.

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta,
Mater Unigeniti!

Quae moerebat et dolebat,
Pia Mater, dum videbat
Nati poenas incliti.

Quis est homo qui non fleret,
Christi Matrem si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Quis non posset contristari
Matrem Christi contemplari
Dolentem cum Filio?

Pro peccatis suae gentis
Vidit Jesum in tormentis,
Et flagellis subditum.

Vidit suum dulcem Natum
Moriendo desolatum,
Dum emisit spiritum.

Eja, Mater, fons amoris
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam.

There stood the Mother grieving,
Beside the cross weeping,
While on it hung her Son.

Whose saddened soul,
Sighing and suffering,
A sword pierced through.

O how sad and how afflicted
Was that blessed Mother
Of the Only-Begotten!

Loving Mother, who as grieving
And suffering, while she beheld
The torments of her glorious Son.

Who is the man who would not weep
If he should see the Mother of Christ
In such great distress?

Who could not be saddened
If he should behold the Mother of Christ
Suffering with her only Son?

For the sins of his people,
She saw Jesus in torment
And subjected to stripes.

She saw her own sweet Son,
Whose dying caused His desolation,
While he yielded up His Spirit.

O Mother, fount of love,
Make me feel the force of your grief,
So that I may mourn with you,

Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum
Ut sibi complaceam.

Sancta Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Tui Nati vulnerati,
Tam dignati pro me pati,
Poenas mecum divide.

Fac me tecum pie flere,
Crucifixo condolere,
Donec ego vixero.

Juxta Crucem tecum stare,
Te libentur sociare
In planctu desidero.

Virgo virginum praeclara,
Mihi jam non sis amara,
Fac me tecum plangere.

Fac, ut portem Christi mortem,
Passionis fac consortem,
Et plagas recolere.

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Cruce fac inebriari,
Ob amorem Filii.

Inflammatum et accensum,
Per te, Virgo, sum defensus
In die iudicii.

Christe, cum sit huic exire,
Da per Matrem me venire
Ad palmam victoriae.

Quando corpus morietur,
Fac, ut animae donetur
Paradisi gloria. Amen.

Grant that my heart may burn
In loving Christ my God,
So that I may be pleasing to him.

Holy Mother, may you do this:
Fix the stripes of the Crucified
Deeply into my heart.

Share with me the pains
Of your wounded Son
Who deigned to suffer so much for me.

Make me lovingly weep with you,
To suffer with the Crucified
So long as I shall live.

To stand with you beside the cross,
And to join gladly with you;
This I long for and desire.

O Virgin all virgins excelling,
Be not inclement with me now;
Cause me to mourn with you.

Grant that I may bear the death of Christ;
Make me a sharer in His Passion
And ever mindful of his wounds.

Let me be wounded by His wounds,
Cause me to be inebriated by the Cross
For the love of your Son.

Lest I burn in flames enkindled,
May I, through thee, O Virgin,
Be defended on Judgment Day.

O Christ, when from here I must depart,
Grant that, through your Mother,
I may obtain the palm of victory.

When my body perishes,
Grant that my soul be given
The glory of Paradise. Amen.

EXULTATE DEO

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA

Exultate Deo is one of Palestrina's finest animated motets. Each section vividly expresses its phrase of text: notice in particular "Buccinate in nomenia tuba" ("Blow the trumpet.") This piece was on our wildly popular CD "Beyond Chant." And when the CD first came out and was at the top of the Billboard Charts, WQXR announcer Greg Whiteside played this piece on his show every morning for a week!

Exultate Deo, adiutori nostro, jubilate
Deo Jacob.

Rejoice greatly to God our helper, shout for joy to the
God of Jacob.

Sumite psalmum, et date tympanum psalterium
jucundum cum cithara.

Take up a psalm and bring the timbrel and the sweet
psaltery with the harp.

Buccinate in neomenia tuba insigni
die solemnitatis vestrae.

Blow the trumpet on the new moon, on the notable
day of your solemnity.

SUPER FLUMINA BABILONIS

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA

This is one of Palestrina's most evocative motets. The psalm text tells of the Children of Israel who have been captured, exiled from Jerusalem, and made slaves. With great poetry Palestrina depicts them on the banks of a river, longing to return to their homeland.

Super flumina Babylonis, illic sedimus et
flevimus dum recordaremur tui, Sion: in
salicibus in medio ejus, suspendimus
organa nostra.

By the waters of Babylon we sat down
and wept, when we remembered thee,
Zion. On the willows there we hung up
our lyres.

EXALTABO TE

GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA

This is one of my very favorite works of Palestrina. The first phrase ("I will exalt you, O Lord") is set to a beautiful rising melody of praise. "For you have lifted my soul up" depicts, in more hushed tones, both the former despair and the new optimism. "Nec delectasti" becomes quite animated with new rejoicing. As "I cry out to thee" ("Domine, clamavi ad te") all the voice parts swell wide open in their upper registers. "For you have healed me" ("Et sanasti me") ends the piece with its wonderful downward sweeping scales, depicting unending gratitude and optimism.

Exaltabo te, Domine, suscepisti me, nec delectasti
inimicos meos super me: Domine, clamavi ad te, et
sanasti me.

I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up,
and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord
my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

- Psalm 30:1-2

Intermission

TU PAUPERUM REFUGIUM

JOSQUIN DES PREZ c.1450-1521

In tonight's program, this is the only piece from the Early Renaissance; and it represents an entirely different world than all the other works in this concert. It is one of the greatest masterpieces of Josquin des Prez, a composer I would place as one of the very few greatest composers of all time – right up there with Bach. One could go through this magnificent motet measure by measure, showing miraculous details – such as when the sopranos and tenors almost seem lost when they sing "via errantium – the road or the way of the erring people," or at the end when the text implores that our souls not be left to death, and all the voice parts descend to their lowest pitch levels. For us performers, we are in constant awe of this great composer, because every single phrase, every single chord setting is tied to a word, a thought, an emotion. But there is another element of Josquin's music that even goes beyond this perfection: his music simply dwells in another world than the one we live in.

Tu pauperum refugium, tu languoris remedium spes
exulum, fortitudo laborantium, via errantium,
veritas et vita. Et nunc redemptor Domine, ad te
solum confugio, te verum Deum adoro, in te spero,
in te confido, salus mea, Jesu Christe, adjuva me, ne
unquam obdormiat anima mea.

Thou refuge of the poor, helper of the sorrowful,
comforter, thou that strengthens the laborer, the way
for erring people, the truth and the life. And now,
Redeemer God, I will take refuge in thee. I adore
thee, true God, in thee I hope, in thee I confide. My
salvation, Jesus Christ, aid me, so that my soul shall
not sleep (in death).

JUSTORUM ANIMÆ

ORLANDUS LASSUS 1532-1594

This motet concerns the souls of our loved ones who have died. With tender confidence it depicts a life after death as being beautiful and comforting. When there are notes of doubt, they are soon resolved. Notice the extraordinary ending. On the words "they are in peace," all the vocal counterpoint suddenly ceases as each voice part enters a chord-like texture in a luminous major key, hovering in peace.

Justorum Animæ, in manu Dei sunt,
et non tanget illos tormentum mortis:
visi sunt oculis insipientium mori:
illi autem sunt in pace.

The souls of the righteous are in the hand
of God, and there shall no torment touch
them: In the sight of the unwise they seemed
to die, But they are in peace.

O SING JOYFULLY

ADRIAN BATTEN 1591-1637

Renaissance England produced an almost limitless number of excellent choral composers. Batten is known today as one who crafted tightly-composed, appealing works which perfectly express their texts. This is probably his best piece, with wonderful contrasting sections, each one not a note too long. It is also the first piece in this program written in English. During the Renaissance, it would therefore correctly be referred to as an “anthem,” in contrast to a piece with a Latin text: a “motet.”

O sing joyfully unto God our strength: make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take the song, bring hither the tabret: the merry harp with the lute. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon: ev'n in the time appointed, and upon our solemn feast day. For this was made a statute for Israel: and a law of the God of Jacob.

O SACRUM CONVIVIVM

THOMAS TALLIS 1505-1585

Thomas Tallis and William Byrd represent the summit of late Renaissance English music. Both composers were Roman Catholics who lived in England during the period of history when the official church changed back and forth from Catholic to Anglican Protestant. Thus we have works by both of them in Latin and in English. This motet is one of the glories of Tallis's lofty works composed in Latin. It conjures up a world that is not meant to be human, but to draw the listener into a deeply spiritual realm.

O sacrum convivium in quo Christus
sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis
ejus: mens impletur gratia, et futurae
gloriae nobis pignus datus.

O sacred feast wherein Christ dwells, the
memory of his passion is recalled, our understanding
is filled with grace, and the pledge of
future glory is given unto us.

IF YE LOVE ME

THOMAS TALLIS

See how different this English text-work is! There is a directness that is in complete contrast to the mysticism of the prior motet. Has any Renaissance composer written such a simple piece as this so successfully? It is truly amazing what a lovely, gentle world he creates with so few notes in such a short duration.

If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth.

- John 14:15-17

EXSULTATE JUSTI

LODOVICO VIADANA c.1560-1627

We leave Britain temporarily for the next two pieces for some programmatic contrasts! Viadana may not occupy a high tier in the Pantheon of composers, but he certainly composed a classic here. With its appealing buoyancy, freshness of melodies, and lively interplay between the voice parts, it is difficult to resist this joyous work.

Exsultate justi in Domino:
rectos decet collaudatio.

Rejoice in the Lord. O ye just:
Praise is fitting for the upright.

Confitemini Domino in cithara,
in psalterio decem chordarum psallite illi

Give praise to God upon the harp,
play upon the ten-stringed psaltery.

Cantate ei canticum novum,
bene psallite ei in vociferatione.

Sing to him a new song,
Sing skillfully with a strong voice

Schütz is generally acknowledged as the greatest Early Baroque composer from Germany; and this work has elements of both Renaissance and Baroque styles. It is scored for six vocal parts – three for women and three for men. Each section displays a unique combination of voices, of course always in service of expressing the meaning of the text. This is our only piece in German tonight. And it *must* be in German, because one of Schütz's great gifts was his setting of the rhythmic contours of the German words. The way he has set these words tells the performer how the phrase goes, which notes are more important or emphasized. And he clearly sets up differing sections, each one completely unique. Further, it was Schütz's great gift that he could combine all of this into an organic unity of such profound beauty.

Selig sind die Toten
die in dem Herren sterben
von nun an.
Ja, der Geist spricht:
Sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit,
und ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.

Blessed are they
who depart in the Lord,
from this time forward.
Yea, the Lord saith:
They rest now from all their labors,
and their works follow after them.

AVE VERUM CORPUS

WILLIAM BYRD c.1540–1623

We turn to William Byrd for our two final works. His *Ave Verum Corpus* is probably his most famous and often-performed work. It is certainly one of the most inspired creations of the late Renaissance in England. I may well have conducted this piece in concerts and religious services more often than any other piece of music. But it never fails to draw me into its sublime and deeply emotional world.

Ave verum corpus, natum de Maria
Virgine, vere passum, immolatum in
cruce pro homine; cuius latus perforatum
unda fluxit sanguine. Esto nobis praegustatum,
in mortis examine. O dulcis, O pie,
O Jesu, Fili Mariae: miserere mei. Amen.

Hail, true body, born of the Virgin Mary, who
truly died, sacrificed on the cross for mankind;
whose pierced side flowed with water and blood.
Be for us a foretaste, in the hour of our death.
O sweet, O pious, O Jesus, Son of Mary: have
mercy on me. Amen

PRAISE OUR LORD

WILLIAM BYRD

We end our Anniversary Renaissance journey in great celebration with this brilliant anthem. Byrd may start the work in a clear, simple manner. But soon the music explodes with some of the most complicated vocal counterpoint imaginable. We'll try to keep it from falling apart! We may even try to keep it as clear as possible, so you can hear all the lively interplay between the voices. Whatever happens, we'll all revel in the concluding "Amen" which starts quietly and, little by little, grows to a glorious conclusion!

Praise our Lord all ye Gentiles, praise him, all ye people: Because his mercy is confirmed upon us. And his truth remaineth forever. Amen.

DENNIS KEENE is Artistic Director and conductor of the Voices of Ascension Chorus & Orchestra. Known internationally through his many concerts and recordings with Voices of Ascension; his regular guest appearances as conductor and clinician; and his work as Artistic Director of The Dennis Keene Choral Festival, he has emerged as one of leading choral conductors in the world today.

Recognized early as an exceptional organist, Dennis Keene began musical studies and performing in his native Los Angeles. He moved to New York City to study at The Juilliard School, where he earned the BM, MM, and DMA degrees and the coveted Gaston Dethier Organ Prize as a student of Vernon de Tar. Dr. Keene also studied privately in Paris with Marie-Madeleine Duruflé, André Marchal, and André Isoir.

Dennis Keene was active as a recitalist until his interest in conducting led him to concentrate on that discipline. He subsequently studied conducting at the Pierre Monteux School for Orchestral Conductors, with Charles Bruck in Paris, and with John Nelson at The Juilliard School. His passion for the finest in professional choral music can be traced to his early work as organist with Gregg Smith, Roger Wagner, and Margaret Hillis.

In addition to his work with Voices of Ascension and The Dennis Keene Choral Festival, Dr. Keene continues as Organist and Choirmaster of Church of the Ascension in New York City. He served for many years on the Board of Directors of Chorus America, the national service organization for the choral field, which honored him with the first Louis Botto Award for “innovative action and entrepreneurial zeal in developing a professional ensemble of exceptional artistic quality.” He has also served on the Choral Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts and on the Music Panel of the New York State Council on the Arts.

From 1998 to 2003 Maestro Keene presented a major summer institute for the training of conductors and singers: The Dennis Keene Choral Festival, in Kent, Connecticut. In 1993 he began his recording association with Delos International, with which he has recorded such best-selling CD's as *Beyond Chant*, the *Duruflé Album*, and the Berlioz *Te Deum*. This series of highly acclaimed recordings with Voices of Ascension has secured international recognition for both conductor and chorus and become the standard for first-ranked ensembles worldwide.

VOICES OF ASCENSION, founded in 1990 and directed by conductor Dennis Keene, is one of the world's premier professional choral ensembles. Over the course of its 25 year history, Voices of Ascension has produced an annual concert series, released Grammy-nominated recordings, and engaged in artistic collaborations with

the San Francisco Symphony, Mostly Mozart Festival, José Limón Dance, the Mark Morris Dance Group, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and others. These performances have won acclaim for their ‘sheer musical excellence’ (NY Times), the chorus for being the ‘finest in American choral music’ (Stereophile), and Dr. Keene as the ‘leader most widely touted to pick up the mantle of Robert Shaw’ (NY Times).

Dennis Keene has blended this group of New York's 20-40 finest professional singers into a richly satisfying ensemble. The singers, most active as soloists themselves, are unique in their flexibility and artistic command of choral music of every period and style. Voices of Ascension evolved from a concert series of the Church of the Ascension in New York City in 1989. Dennis Keene and the Ascension Choir produced “Tribute to Duruflé,” the first complete retrospective of the music of French composer Maurice Duruflé. This major music festival drew international attention and was later broadcast across the U.S. on American Public Radio. The following year the startup group incorporated as Voices of Ascension and presented its first season of concerts to immediate critical success.

In 1993 Dennis Keene and Voices of Ascension began a long-term relationship with the major recording company, Delos International. Their first commercial recording received exceptional critical praise: *Mysteries Beyond: Songs and Chants in Praise of Mary*. The ensemble's second recording, *Beyond Chant: Mysteries of the Renaissance*, became one of the best-selling choral recordings in the country, climbing to the number 10 spot on Billboard's Classical Chart. The group's latest recording, *Song of the Stars, A Celebration of Catalan Music*, was released by Naxos in June, 2009. The next month it made Billboard's Classical Chart, and later was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Now, as the organization celebrates its 25th Anniversary season and looks to the future, Voices of Ascension plans to develop professional training programs to ensure the future of classical choral performance. These initiatives include the Voices of Ascension Young Soloist Program and the Voices of Ascension Conductor Academy led by Dr. Keene. The Young Soloist program works in partnership with institutions such as the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program, George London Foundation, Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Program and major music conservatories to create solo opportunities with the ensemble for talented young performers. The Conductor Academy will offer intensive training and conducting opportunities with Voices of Ascension for selected conductors as well as access to rehearsals and performances for additional conductors during the season.

VOICES OF ASCENSION

DENNIS KEENE

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

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Amy Goldin
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modern dance and choral presentations, as well as choreographers,
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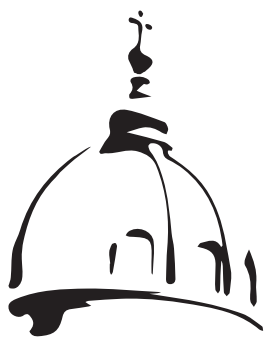
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2015

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