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Coro Allegro Presents “Lenten Meditations”

Sunday, March 15, 3:00pm at Church of the Covenant, 67 Newbury Street, Boston

March 4, 2015 (Boston, MA) — Coro Allegro, Boston's award-winning classical chorus for members, friends, and allies of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, and Artistic Director David Hodgkins present “Lenten Meditations”, 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 15, at Church of the Covenant in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood.

Concert Description

Performing in one of Boston's most beautiful churches, Coro Allegro marks the season of Lent with works of passion and redemption. Though recounting a story at the core of Christian belief, these works speak to universal human experiences of suffering, repentance, and forgiveness. Dubois' oratorio *The Seven Last Words of Christ* is a lushly scored, highly dramatic composition in the grand nineteenth-century Romantic vein. In striking contrast, Poulenc's motets communicate the same story in his distinctively angular 20th-century harmonic language. Brahms' charming set of Bach-like chorales honors the Virgin Mary in the style of German folk songs.

Ticket Information

Tickets to “Lenten Meditations” are \$22, \$35, and \$48 (**\$5 discount for students/seniors on \$22 tickets**) and can be purchased online at www.CoroAllegro.org or by calling 617-236-4011.

Concert Details

“Lenten Meditations”

Théodore Dubois: *The Seven Last Words of Christ*
Francis Poulenc: *Four Motets for a Time of Pénitence*
Johannes Brahms: *Marienlieder (Songs of Mary)*

Featuring:

Dana Varga, soprano
James DeSelms, tenor
Philip Lima, baritone
Susan DeSelms, organ
Darryl Hollister, piano

Artist Biographies

David Hodgkins, Artistic Director

Artistic Director David Hodgkins has delighted audiences in the greater Boston area for over 20 years with "creative programs, sung with enthusiasm and tonal beauty" (Ed Tapper, Bay Windows). Mr. Hodgkins is the Artistic Director of Coro Allegro in Boston, which Boston Globe critic Michael Manning deemed "one of Boston's most accomplished choruses," Artistic Director of The New England Classical Singers in Andover, Director of Music at The Commonwealth School in Boston, advanced conducting instructor at the Kodály Music Institute, and serves on the advisory boards of The Boston City Singers and the UMass/Amherst Music Department.

Mr. Hodgkins has performed with Coro Allegro at the ACDA and GALA music festivals, served as guest conductor with Chorus Pro Musica, Masterworks Chorale, and Emmanuel Music, and has made numerous festival appearances as guest conductor and clinician. His ensembles have collaborated with the Boston Celebrity Series, Boston Cecilia, Handel and Haydn Society, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, The New England String Ensemble, and the Boston Landmarks Orchestra. Mr. Hodgkins has conducted numerous world and Boston premiere performances of works ranging from Marianne Martinez to Arvo Pärt.

Mr. Hodgkins with Coro Allegro received the 2012 Chorus America Alice Parker/ASCAP Award for their collaborative premiere performance of Kareem Roustom's oratorio *Son of Man*, with The United Parish Church of Brookline and Music Director Susan DeSelms, a work commissioned by United Parish. That same year, Mr. Hodgkins with Coro Allegro released the critically acclaimed CDs *Awakenings* and *In Paradisum* on the Navona label, which feature contemporary composers Robert Stern, Ronald Perera, and Patricia Van Ness and soloists Sanford Sylvan and Ruth Cunningham. Gramophone magazine noted of *Awakenings* that "Coro Allegro, led by David Hodgkins, performs each score with fine balance and interplay."

Mr. Hodgkins has been featured in Choral Director Magazine, The Voice of Chorus America, UMass Amherst Magazine, and Haverhill Life. He has served as producer for three award-winning CDs by La Donna Musicale, Laury Gutiérrez, Artistic Director, *In the Style of...* for Terry Everson, trumpet, and Shiela Kibbe, piano on Albany Records, and a CD of trumpet concerti for the Boston University Wind Ensemble and Terry Everson, directed by David Martins.

David Hodgkins received his Bachelor of Music in voice, piano, and harpsichord from UMass/Amherst, a Masters in Choral Conducting from Temple University, and fellowships in choral and orchestral conducting at the Aspen and Sandpoint music festivals. His mentors include Wayne Abercrombie, Flora Contino, Alan Harler, James Roth, Gunther Schuller, and Paul Vermel. Mr. Hodgkins has served on the faculties of the New England Conservatory, UMass/Amherst, Temple University, and Clark University.

Dana Varga, soprano

Praised for her "stunning voice", soprano Dana Lynne Varga (formerly Dana Schnitzer) continues to amass accolades for her numerous operatic roles that include Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Anna Murrant in *Street Scene*, and Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*, Ms. Varga has sung with Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Boston, and

Boston Baroque, amongst others. Active on the concert stage, highlights of Ms. Varga's concert and oratorio performances include the Beethoven *Mass in C* in Tanglewood's Ozawa Hall, the Dvořák *Te Deum* in NEC's Jordan Hall, and Handel's *Messiah* with the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra. Ms. Varga was awarded the 2012 St. Botolph Emerging Artist Grant for excellence in music. She was a finalist in the lieder division of the 2009 Liederkrantz Competition. Highlights of Ms. Varga's upcoming engagements include the Bach *B Minor Mass* with the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra, excerpts from Beethoven's *Fidelio* with Grand Harmonie, the role of Liu in Puccini's *Turandot* with PANopera, and the Fauré *Requiem* with the Springfield Symphony. Ms. Varga holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Boston University, the Master of Music degree from the New England Conservatory, and the Bachelor of Music degree from UMass Amherst.

James DeSelms, tenor

James DeSelms has performed with many ensembles in the Boston area, including the Handel + Haydn Society, Boston Early Music Festival, Coro Allegro, and the Cantata Singers. In addition to his chorus work, Jim's solo work includes Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Pinkham's *Fanfares* and several Bach cantatas. Jim studied voice at Indiana University with Dale Moore and is currently a member of the United Parish Chancel Choir.

Philip Lima, baritone

Philip Lima's performances regularly are marked by critical praise: "His singing was glorious" (The Boston Globe) – "vibrant baritone and a commanding presence" (Cleveland Plain Dealer) – "keen musicianship along with total dramatic intention" (Opera News ONLINE). He has sung a wide array of leading operatic roles, including world premieres, for the international Kurt Weill Festival in Dessau, Germany; Lyric Opera Cleveland; Opera Theater of Pittsburgh; Opera Columbus; El Paso Opera; Boston Academy of Music and Opera Boston; Handel + Haydn Society; Granite State Opera; Cape Cod Opera; and Boston's Prism Opera and Opera-by-the-Bay. In concert, Mr. Lima has appeared as soloist with the Daejeon (Korea) Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Philharmonic of Ukraine, Boston Ballet, Boston Landmarks Orchestra, and more than fifty orchestras and concert series across the United States. Mr. Lima's performance of Schubert's *Winterreise* with pianist Beverly Orlove was described by The Boston Phoenix as one of Boston's "Unforgettable Classical Events of 2005." Mr. Lima is a native of New Bedford, MA, and an alumnus of Yale University. He studied at the Tanglewood Music Center and with Richard Conrad. More information about Mr. Lima is available at www.philiplima.com.

Susan DeSelms, Organist

Susan Rogers DeSelms received her Bachelor of Music degree in organ performance at Birmingham-Southern College, her Master of Music in choral conducting and organ performance at Indiana University, and continued her graduate studies in choral conducting at Boston University. Susan has served as music director/organist and concertized at churches in Tennessee, South Carolina, Alabama, Indiana, and Massachusetts. She has performed as organist with Coro Allegro and several other Boston-area choruses. Susan is Music Director and Organist of the United Parish in Brookline.

Darryl Hollister

Darryl Hollister received his B.M. from Michigan State University where he studied with Ralph Votapek and Deborah Moriarty, and his M.M. from New England Conservatory of Music where he studied with Patricia Zander. He is an active accompanist and performer in the Boston area. He serves as accompanist and assistant conductor to the Dedham Choral Society, Coro Allegro, the Framingham Choral Society, and Commonwealth School Chorus and Chorale.

About Coro Allegro

Founded in 1990, Coro Allegro is a chorus for members, friends, and allies of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities that strengthens and enriches the lives of its members and the greater Boston community through its performances of outstanding classical choral repertoire and recordings. It is dedicated to its mission to provide broad audiences access to choral music and perform works by diverse composers. Serving as a model of a successful and valued LGBT community group through artistic excellence and visibility, the ensemble creates an affirming, welcoming, and supportive environment for its membership. An advocate of contemporary music, Coro Allegro was the recipient of the 2012 Chorus America/ASCAP Alice Parker Award for exposing its audience to brand new works. With Artistic Director David Hodgkins, Coro Allegro has released four critically acclaimed commercial recordings: *In Paradisum* and *Awakenings* on the Navona Records label, as well as *In the Clearing* and *somewhere i have never traveled*.

Coro Allegro is supported in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

For more information, electronic images, and interviews, please contact:
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