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Media Contact:
Callie Sprague
WriteNow
callie@writenow.biz
706.577.5866

Darrin Hassevoort Named Artistic Director of Choral Arts

Chattanooga, TN—August 8, 2016, Choral Arts of Chattanooga announces its new conductor and looks forward to a season marked by musical excellence and educational outreach.

Choral Arts of Chattanooga, one of the city's premier choral groups, was founded on the cornerstones of vocal excellence and quality choral literature. Its new artistic director, Darrin Hassevoort plans to tap into the ensemble's deep roots while branching out to extend the organization's reach.

Established by Dr. John Hamm in 1985, Choral Arts has been a premier choral ensemble in Chattanooga for more than 30 years. Hassevoort succeeds conductor Michael Devine, who recently moved to Atlanta.

Hassevoort, who also conducts the CSO Chorus and leads the Chattanooga State choral program, is no stranger to Choral Arts. He sang with the group for several years and contributed to several of the choir's recordings, including one with jazz great David Brubeck.

"I'm just really thrilled to have the opportunity to come and work alongside the singers and the board," Hassevoort said. "I have always been a big supporter of Choral Arts."

Auditions for the 2016-17 season are scheduled for August 23, with rehearsals to start a week later. For the first concert of the season, Hassevoort is planning a slate of inspirational pieces, incorporating a wide variety of styles and eras. "I think it's great way to say, we're fulfilling the mission that John Hamm set out years ago," he explained.

The group will perform two concerts this fall, and may have the opportunity to premier a contemporary choral work. Board president and choir member Kim Thompson reports a renewed energy in the organization. "An exciting season lies ahead for lovers of great choral music this

1200 Mountain Creek Road, Suite 496
Chattanooga, TN 37405

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year, with Choral Arts of Chattanooga under the leadership of Darrin Hassevoort and Chattanooga's talented singers accompanied by John Wigal," he said.

But ambitions for Choral Arts reach far beyond programming a concert season. According to Thompson, the board of directors is currently developing plans for potential collaborations with other arts organizations in the area, including school music programs, in an effort to strengthen Chattanooga's arts community.

Hassevoort believes an education program is vital. "It's the future of choral music," he asserts. "When we look at the median age of church choirs, and even a lot of civic groups, the average age is 60 or higher."

Many high school and college students participate in school choirs, but after graduation they matriculate out of the choral community. And too few are finding their way into local choirs to sustain choral music long term. Along with choirs like the CSO Chorus and the Chattanooga Bach Choir, Choral Arts offers a vehicle to keep young vocalists involved and singing, ensuring the continuation of great choral performances for years to come.

"It is my heart and my passion to figure out a way that, along with the choir and board, we can accessibly help build the future of choral music in our city," Hassevoort said.

Auditions are open to all trained singers, from advanced high schoolers to professionals, and donations to the non-profit organization are welcome. For more information, contact Kim Thompson at 423.605.6068 or kthompson052@gmail.com.

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Choral Arts of Chattanooga is a premier choral ensemble comprised of professional musicians, music educators, and music lovers with a common love of singing choral music. The group was founded in 1985 by Dr. John Hamm to provide opportunities for professionally trained singers to perform a wide variety of literature from a cappella songs to symphonic masterworks.

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