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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEBRA L. KRAFT TO RETIRE FROM
THE CHORAL ARTS SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON AT THE END OF THE
2015-2016 SEASON AFTER TWELVE YEARS OF LEADERSHIP**

The Choral Arts Society of Washington (Choral Arts) today announced that its Executive Director, Debra L. Kraft will retire at the end of its 2015-2016 season.

“My own reflection on my time with Choral Arts has been one of great pride, privilege, inspiration and deep satisfaction,” said Debra Kraft. “This a new era for Choral Arts as the organization embarks on its 50th concert year—a grand 50 years, for sure, and yet a new 50 years beginning. It seems with Choral Arts so solid, the end of this season is the perfect time for me to retire. In looking back, we can honor the past, and as Norman Scribner said, embrace the future, and so we all shall. It has been my joy to be a part of Choral Arts and I look forward to the many wonderful concerts ahead.”

Choral Arts opens the 2015-2016 season with the Brahms Requiem, dedicated to the inspired legacy of founder Norman Scribner who passed away in March. The season will close with a performance by America’s own soprano, Renee Fleming and Tony nominated Norm Lewis.

“Choral Arts is strong and stable with an outstanding Artistic Director, Scott Tucker, creating beautiful music with our talented choristers,” said Debra Kraft. “The board is led by a team of enthusiastic individuals with diverse skills and generous resources. The staff is highly skilled, professional and committed to Choral Arts with the highest standards in running an excellent arts organization. Choral Arts has just finished an incredible year of successes, the finale being the sold out *Carmina Burana* concert in May and the tour to China reaching 10,000 Chinese audiences. Choral Arts ends the 2014-2015 season financially strong.”

“Words cannot begin to express the enormous skill and dedication Debra has brought to Choral Arts,” said Artistic Director, Scott Tucker. “Her way of connecting Choral Arts to people, collaborators and institutions has been invaluable, as has her firm hand in seeing that the organization is financially strong. All of us: staff, board and singers are in her debt.”

“On behalf of the Board I would like to thank Debra for her loving devotion to Choral Arts through the years,” said Board Chair, Nicholas R. Smith. “Among her many accomplishments, Debra productively led the organization through a tough financial environment and managed Norman Scribner’s retirement and Artistic Director transition with dignity. Her professionalism, wit and class will be sorely missed.”

Ms. Kraft has served as Executive Director since November 2004. During her tenure, Choral Arts has consistently operated in the black, remaining fiscally strong in spite of economic challenges. She successfully managed the two-year search and transition of the organization’s artistic leadership, shifting from Founder and Artistic Director Emeritus Norman Scribner (1936 – 2015) to Scott Tucker, the

organization's second Artistic Director. Not only did this process ensure a strong artistic and fiscal foundation for Tucker's arrival, it serves as model for nonprofit leadership transitions.

Long-standing relationships with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera and Washington Performing Arts remain a priority for Choral Arts. Kraft has developed strong relationships with artists, orchestras and organizations including the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Zhang Guoyong, Valery Gergiev with the London Symphony Orchestra and Mariinsky Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin and the National Orchestra of France, The Philadelphia Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra with Marin Alsop. Partnerships extend to American University with interdisciplinary programs focused on the unique role of the arts during the Holocaust, The Smithsonian Associates with lectures and regional high schools in a new program focused on young men's developing voices. The annual Choral Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. continues to recognize heroic leaders of Civil Rights through song and the Humanitarian Award. Under Kraft's leadership, recipients of the award have included Julian Bond, Marian Wright Edelman, Nelson Mandela and John Lewis.

Annual guest appearances continue with the nationally televised "A Capitol Fourth" (PBS) and The Kennedy Center Honors (CBS). The final collaborative project with founder Norman Scribner, the Wesley Hymn Project, was commissioned by the Wesley Heritage Foundation in Durham, NC. Scribner, as Artistic Director of the project, worked closely with Kraft to produce a compilation of the great hymns of Charles Wesley, selected by Scribner for a dual CD recording of hymns in Spanish and English due for release this month at a 25th Anniversary commemorative concert of the Foundation in Durham. The Choral Arts Chamber Singers completed the project after Norman's unexpected passing in March. Kraft's longtime friend and colleague J. Reilly Lewis is the featured organist for the recording and the concerts.

In addition to her leadership of Choral Arts, she is active in the local and national arts community as well as committed to international cultural collaborations. Locally, she serves on The Helen Hayes Awards Board of Governors, sitting on the committee for the John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company. Nationally, she serves on the advisory boards of Voci Maestri in San Francisco, which is led by Founding and Artistic Director Ragnar Bohlin and Gloria Musicae in Sarasota, led by Artistic Director Joseph Holt, formerly Choral Arts' Associate Music Director. She also serves on the Executive Committee of the National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs program of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

ABOUT CHORAL ARTS

In its 50 years The Choral Arts Society of Washington (Choral Arts) established and maintains a dedication to excellence. Led by Artistic Director Scott Tucker, Choral Arts' commitment to artistic excellence is demonstrated by frequent invitations to perform regularly with the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) and other world-class orchestras including London Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, and the Mariinsky Orchestra, as well as alongside legendary conductors such as Christoph Eschenbach, Valery Gergiev, Marin Alsop and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Choral Arts is committed to connecting choral music to the country's growing diversity and partnering with global organizations to develop inspiring programs. Choral Arts also stands on a secure and stable financial and governance foundation.

Founded in 1965 by Artistic Director Emeritus Norman Scribner (1936 – 2015), Choral Arts stands out as a leader among its peers, earning awards, not only for its artistic excellence, but its administrative leadership and educational portfolio. Under the executive direction of Debra L. Kraft, Choral Arts has consistently operated in the black since 2004, remaining fiscally strong in spite of recent economic challenges.

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