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May 20, 2015

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## **Choral Arts Society of Washington Makes China Debut with 5-City Tour**

**Choral Arts to Perform Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with Qingdao Symphony Orchestra May 25-June 6; Beijing, Shanghai, Qingdao, Guangzhou, Hong Kong**

Washington, D.C. – The Choral Arts Society of Washington (Choral Arts) will depart later this month with more than 100 members of its chorus, guests, and staff for the China/USA Two Countries One Stage Tour of China, a five-city tour which runs from May 25-June 6, 2015. The performance of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* is Choral Arts' China debut and was made possible by an invitation from the China Arts and Entertainment Group.

The first performance on the tour will take place at the Qingdao Grand Theatre, home of the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra. From there, the tour leaves to perform at the National Center for the Performing Arts for the Meet in Beijing Arts Festival, a large scale international festival hosted by China's Ministry of Culture, Beijing Municipality Government and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television at the National Center for the Performing Arts. Following these two performances, the two groups will perform in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong.

"This tour of China is a cornerstone of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration," said Debra L. Kraft, Executive Director, Choral Arts. "It showcases Choral Arts' priority values, which include excellence, partnerships, innovation, and integrating cultures. This tour also represents the strength of cross-cultural relationships – another Choral Arts tenet."

The relationship between Choral Arts and the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra began in 2009 when the Orchestra traveled to Washington, DC for their North American debut. Choral Arts partnered with the Orchestra in the concert version of *Porgy and Bess* and developed a relationship with the goal of bringing the large symphonic chorus and repertoire to China. From this long relationship came an invitation with a specific request to perform *Carmina Burana* in China.

Choral Arts' Artistic Director, Scott Tucker proposed many different and interesting U.S. composers, however it was clear that *Carmina Burana* was the first choice of Maestro Zhang Guoyong, Artistic Director of Qingdao Symphony Orchestra, and seldom heard in the large concert halls throughout China. Additionally, the piece was last offered on the Choral Arts

season in November 2004, with Leonard Slatkin conducting the Choral Arts Chorus and Orchestra.

The Qingdao Symphony Orchestra has a strong desire to observe and learn from Choral Arts. The Orchestra's conductor Zhang Guoyong is also head of the Shanghai Opera, and head of conducting at the Shanghai Conservatory. He made a special trip to Washington for the rehearsals and performance of *Carmina Burana* at the Kennedy Center to discuss the work and observe Tucker's notes and style, taking these learnings back for the tour in China.

"It is exciting that the Choral Arts Chorus will be making its debut in Beijing, a sister city of Washington, D.C.," said Artistic Director, Scott Tucker. "This tour epitomizes the universality of the performing arts; music communicates across countries, cultures, and politics. We are excited to partner again with the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra, with which we performed in 2009 at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall for their U.S. debut."

This will be the fourth continent on which Choral Arts has performed over its 50-year history. Choral Arts has a long history of national and international tours. The Choral Arts Chorus has performed in 34 cities in 9 countries, including Argentina, Brazil, France, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

## **ABOUT CHORAL ARTS**

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In its 50 years The Choral Arts Society of Washington established, and now maintains, a dedication to excellence. Choral Arts measures its artistic excellence by numerous factors including its frequent invitations to perform regularly with the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) and other world-class orchestras, including London Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Mariinsky Orchestra. 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) and now led by Artistic Director Scott Tucker, 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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