

L O S A N G E L E S

MASTER CHORALE

Postpones 2020-21 Season to 2021-22

Extends Contract for Grant Gershon, Kiki & David Gindler
Artistic Director, through the 2024-25 Season

Promotes Jenny Wong to Associate Artistic Director

Releases Eric Whitacre's *The Sacred Veil* (Signum Classics)

Adopts 5-Year Strategic Plan; 50% of Future Programming to
Include Works by Historically Underrepresented Composers

(Los Angeles, CA) July 22, 2020 – The Los Angeles Master Chorale announced today that it will postpone the originally scheduled [2020-21 season](#) at Walt Disney Concert Hall to the 2021-22 season due to the pandemic. Because of the postponement, changes to the previously announced repertoire may be necessary; details about the concerts, including dates and times, will be announced at a later date.

The Master Chorale is pleased to announce a contract extension for Grant Gershon, Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director, through the 2024-25 season. “Grant is one of our generation’s greatest choral conductors,” said President & CEO Jean Davidson. “He has a fierce intellect and incredibly high emotional intelligence, which I believe is clearly conveyed in his music-making. We are thrilled that Grant will continue to build his legacy here, with us.”

Jenny Wong has also been promoted to Associate Artistic Director, a new role created especially for her, to recognize her leadership and dedication to the organization. She joins Gershon and newly appointed Swan Family Artist-in-Residence Reena Esmail in a new three-person artistic leadership team responsible for the direction of the Master Chorale.

To keep the sounds of the Master Chorale present in the ears of music lovers everywhere, the organization will release its recording of Eric Whitacre’s *The Sacred Veil*, which the chorus premiered in February 2019, on Signum Classics.



The Master Chorale's Board of Directors recently approved a new five-year strategic plan after a year-and-a-half-long process. As a result, the Master Chorale is poised to rise to the particular challenges facing choral organizations. The four pillars of the plan are to sharpen focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion; increase participation in choral music; ensure continued artistic success; and achieve greater financial stability.

2020-21 SEASON POSTPONEMENT AND FUTURE PLANS

The Master Chorale's previously announced 2020-21 season, which was to have begun on October 18, 2020, with a performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, is postponed for a year; the first concert will occur in Fall 2021.

Subscriptions for the postponed 2020-21 season will still be valid for 2021-22, and refunds are also available. If ticket buyers opt to keep their subscriptions for 2021-22, they will keep the seats they have been assigned and will be exempt from any price increases. Ticket holders may also donate the value of their subscription to the Master Chorale.

Specific programming details for Fall 2020 will be announced in September, but the Master Chorale has several initiatives in the works:

- The Master Chorale is continuing to develop its commission from Los Angeles-based artist Doug Aitken. A five-movement excerpt of the work was recently performed at the Elevation 1049 Festival in Gstaad, Switzerland, in February 2020.
- The Master Chorale's digital series, Sundays at Seven, will also continue in the fall.
- Reena Esmail, the organization's newly appointed Swan Family Artist-in-Residence, has been commissioned to create a full-length piece for the Master Chorale, which will premiere in a future season.

"Our art form is evolving at warp speed right now," said Jean Davidson, President & CEO. "This time out of the concert hall is a gift in some ways. While undeniably financially difficult—our 2020-21 budget has been reduced from \$6.3 million to \$2.9 million—we are focused on innovating within our art form and thinking deeply about our future. We will emerge a changed, stronger organization when we return to the concert hall."

The organization is working closely with the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) and the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) to mitigate the effects of the 20-21 season postponement on the singers and orchestra musicians, and to plan for a return to live performance.

The Master Chorale's 2020-21 season is made possible by the members of the Leadership Circle: Abbott Brown and Jerrie Paula Ortega-Brown, Kiki Ramos Gindler and David Gindler, Carol and Warner Henry, Terri and Jerry Kohl, Leeba R. Lessin, Lillian Pierson Lovelace, Jennifer and Evan Rosenfeld, Philip A. Swan, and Priscilla and Curtis Tamkin.

Sundays at Seven is made possible by the members of the Artistic Director's Circle: Alicia G. and Edward E. Clark, Judi and Bryant Danner, Dr. Annette L. Ermshar and Mr. Dan Monahan, Denise and Robert Hanisee, Courtland Palmer, Cheryl Petersen and Roger Lustberg, and Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting.



GRANT GERSHON'S PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Forging ahead in the pandemic presents both significant challenges and new opportunities. Gershon's future vision for the Master Chorale is one driven by community and collaboration, guiding the organization through the current turbulent climate and towards a sustainable future.

"I'm especially excited to be building our future in partnership with Jenny Wong and Reena Esmail, in their new leadership roles with the Master Chorale. These two artists are hugely inspiring to me and our singers, and their creative voices will greatly strengthen our organization", said Gershon. "Choral singing is a powerful unifying force that transcends our differences and fosters a sense of belonging. Moving forward, we will strive to ensure that all are welcome, in the concert hall and in our communities, to experience the beauty of choral music."

Of particular importance to Gershon is creating access to the choral repertoire and increasing the representation of diverse voices. To that end he will lead the charge by reserving at least 50% of each future season for works by composers from historically underrepresented groups in classical music. This commitment to inclusion is a value that runs through the entire organization, whose recently ratified five-year plan commits to improving representation at the staff and board levels, continuing to build a more diverse roster of singers, and reaching a wider audience than ever through its concerts and education programs.

"I am so excited to more fully engage in the phenomenal creativity of choral composers from all backgrounds and experiences," said Gershon. "Classical music has a problem with both systemic racism and gender bias, which has discouraged voices that truly represent the full range of our fantastically complex communities. The Master Chorale's role and vision for its future is to lift up a multiplicity of voices in order to present the most vibrant mix of choral music imaginable."

Over the next five years, Gershon aims to increase participation in choral music by leading the expansion of the Master Chorale's education initiatives, to include a more comprehensive program that reaches students from nine years old through high school, building on the Master Chorale's already successful Voices Within, Oratorio Project, and High School Choir Festival.

Recordings will remain a priority for Gershon, as will increased touring, and multimedia and multi-disciplinary presentations like Handel's biblical oratorio *Israel in Egypt*, performed in 2018 with live animations by Syrian-Armenian visual artist Kevork Mourad, and composer Jeff Beal's new score for *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans*, performed in January 2020 in a live-to-picture event.

GRANT GERSHON'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Since his inaugural 2001-2002 season, Gershon has led the Master Chorale in over 200 performances, honing the ensemble into the premiere independent professional chorus in the United States. Under Gershon's leadership, the Master Chorale became a fully professional group in 2017.

A fervent advocate of new music from a wide range of composers, Gershon has led world premiere performances of major works by John Adams, Tania Léon, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Ellen Reid, David Lang, Billy Childs, Louis Andriessen, James Newton, Eve Beglarian, Chinary Ung, Christopher Rouse, Steve Reich, Gabriela Lena Frank, Morten Lauridsen, Ricky Ian Gordon, Shawn Kirchner and Daniel Catán, among many others. Gershon has also championed works by many L.A.-based composers,



including Dale Trumbore, Nilo Alcalá, Sharon Farber, Sidney Guillaume, Moira Smiley, Matt Brown and Jeff Beal, among others. Earlier this year, Gershon appointed composer Reena Esmail as the Master Chorale's new Swan Family Artist-in-Residence, following Eric Whitacre, who held that role for two terms from 2016-2020.

Gershon has also increased the exposure and enhanced the reputation of the Master Chorale worldwide through touring and recording. Since the 2018-19 season, the Master Chorale has been touring its production of Orlando di Lasso's *Lagime di San Pietro*, directed by Peter Sellars, earning rave reviews across the globe. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* called the 2019 Salzburg Festival performance "painfully beautiful," while the *Sydney Morning Herald* praised *Lagime di San Pietro* as "stunning ... Their voices soared to the heavens." After the Master Chorale performed in London, *The Stage* called *Lagime* a "balm for the soul."

The Master Chorale's esteemed discography includes seven recordings under Gershon, the most recent being *the national anthems / the little match girl passion* by David Lang on Cantaloupe Records. The Master Chorale is featured with Gershon on the soundtracks of many major motion pictures, including both *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* and *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*.

THE SACRED VEIL ALBUM RELEASE

On August 28, 2020, Signum Classics will release *The Sacred Veil*, a powerful, thought-provoking new 12-movement work scored for SATB choir, cello, and piano by composer Eric Whitacre and poet-lyricist Charles Anthony Silvestri. Silvestri's wife, Julie, died of ovarian cancer at age 36 in 2005, leaving two young children. His texts (written collaboratively with Whitacre) and the intimate, compelling score tell a story of courtship, love, loss, and the search for solace.

The 53-minute work, described by Gershon as Whitacre's Requiem, was commissioned by the Master Chorale, who premiered the piece in February 2019. In a review of that performance, the *Los Angeles Times* said that *The Sacred Veil* "memorably celebrate(s) the precarious beauty of life, offering the welcome consolation of art and a momentary stay against our collective fate."

Grammy® Award-winning composer and conductor Eric Whitacre is among today's most popular musicians. This work was commissioned during his time as the Swan Family Artist-in-Residence at the Master Chorale. His works have been programmed worldwide by millions of amateur and professional performers, while his ground-breaking Virtual Choirs have united singers from over 129 different countries.

The commission and recording of *The Sacred Veil* were made possible with generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Denise and Robert Hanisee, Linda J. Hodge, Kathleen and James Drummy, Faith Raiguel and Billy Weber, Nancy Revy Barber and Rocky Barber, Sonia Messer Randazzo, Dr. Bradley R. Straatsma, Susan Erburu Reardon and George Reardon, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Cindy and Gary Frischling, Dr. Marguerite Marsh, Courtland Palmer, Ann Graham Ehringer, Rosemary Schroeder, Arthur and Marjorie Fine in honor of Robert Hanisee, Lorri and Steve Benson, and Oren Hadar; and by donors to the Master Chorale's Artistic Innovation Fund: Philip A. Swan, Leeba R. Lessin, and Priscilla and Curtis Tamkin.

[ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE](#)



[ABOUT GRANT GERSHON, KIKI & DAVID GINDLER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR](#)

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High resolution photos available to download from the [online press room](#).

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