

San Francisco Girls Chorus

SAN FRANCISCO GIRLS CHORUS PRESENTS “OUT OF DARKNESS”

WITH GUEST ORGANIST PAUL VASILE

FEBRUARY 25 & 26



San Francisco, CA – January 26, 2017 – The San Francisco Girls Chorus, led by Music Director Valérie Sainte-Agathe and Artistic Director Lisa Bielawa, continues its 2016-2017 season with performances featuring virtuoso organist Paul Vasile. Making his Bay Area performance debut, Vasile continues an ongoing collaborative partnership with the ensemble, performing in a variety of major liturgical works for treble voices and organ as well as Herbert Howell’s rarely performed *Psalm Prelude*, Op. 32, No 1 for solo organ. “Out of Darkness” will be presented on **Saturday, February 25** (Mission Dolores, San Francisco) and **Sunday, February 26** (First Presbyterian Church, Oakland), and features works by Brahms, Mendelssohn, Poulenc, Grieg and Pärt.

Presented during the solemn Christian season of Lent, these performances highlight works written by many of the great Romantic composers as a means of reflecting on this spiritual time of inner contemplation. Many of these composers turned to the third book of the Hebrew bible, the Psalms, to meditate on the pre-Christian Yahweh, a god of awesome and even fearsome power. Previously serving in an accompanying role, the organ became increasingly significant during the Romantic era and provided a much richer, symphonic texture for devotional music. Paul Vasile will perform on two of the Bay Area’s most grandiose organs at Mission Dolores, San Francisco and First Presbyterian Church, Oakland, joining the San Francisco Girls Chorus for Brahms’ Psalm 13, Op. 27 “*Herr, wie lange willst du mein...*,” Mendelssohn’s Three Motets and Poulenc’s *Litanies à la Vierge Noire*. The San Francisco Girls Chorus will also be featured unaccompanied in Pärt’s *Peace Upon You, Jerusalem* and Grieg’s *Ave Maris Stella*, with Vasile showcased as soloist in Herbert Howells’ *Psalm Prelude*, Op. 32, No 1 for solo organ.



“These performances mark a significant moment for the San Francisco Girls Chorus,” said Artistic Director

Lisa Bielawa. “Over the past three seasons, the core sound of our members has been developing and growing towards an ideal that both Valerie and I set out to accomplish. This program features huge works in the repertory for treble voice which require a deep level of maturity and ability towards which our current group has been evolving. In many ways, these concerts mark the fruits of this growth, and audiences will undoubtedly experience this remarkable transformation. Working with Paul Vasile over the past year on a variety of different projects has been a joy for everyone and sharing the stage together is a welcome moment in our blossoming collaboration with this remarkable artist.”

A multitalented musician and worship leader, Paul Vasile maintains a varied career as an organist, pianist, composer, conductor and teacher. Through his interim position as a guest musician at First Presbyterian Church of Oakland in 2016, Vasile was connected with the San Francisco Girls Chorus and first performed with the ensemble on their June 2016 season-closing concert. Most recently, he served as rehearsal pianist for several episodes of Artistic Director Lisa Bielawa’s made-for-TV opera *Vireo*, which has featured San Francisco Girls Chorus choristers in multiple episodes. Other recent performance highlights include a collaboration with trumpeter and composer Frank London for historic performances of *The Merchant of Venice* within the Jewish Ghetto of Venice and serving as Artist-in-Residence at Judson Memorial Church in New York City. A prolific composer of sacred music, Vasile writes with the goal of enriching the existing church language of praise and prayer. His music is represented in *Glory to God*, the new hymnal of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and he has written hymns, choral anthems and service music for congregations around the country. Bringing over twenty years of ministry experience to his work, Vasile is committed to building, renewing and reshaping faith communities through music and liturgy. As Executive Director of Music that Makes Community, a non-profit that liberates spiritual life through singing, Vasile inspires leadership practices that help sustain the musical and spiritual life of faith communities. His work in this area also includes curating concert series, arts events and educational programs that intersect music and spirituality.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

San Francisco Girls Chorus

Valérie Sainte-Agathe, *Music Director*

Lisa Bielawa, *Artistic Director*

Out of Darkness

February 25 & 26, 2017

Featuring Paul Vasile, *organ*

Saturday, February 25, 2017, 8:00 p.m., Mission Dolores, San Francisco

Sunday, February 26, 2017, 4:00 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, Oakland

Felix Mendelssohn: Three Motets

Francis Poulenc: *Litanies à la Vierge Noire*

Johannes Brahms: Psalm 13, Op. 27 (Herr, wie lange willst du mein...)

Edvard Grieg: *Ave Maris Stella*

Arvo Pärt: *Peace Upon You, Jerusalem*

Herbert Howells: *Psalm Prelude*, Op. 32, No 1

Single tickets range in price from \$26 to \$36 and can be purchased through City Box Office:

<http://www.cityboxoffice.com> and (415) 392-4400. Discounted \$18 single tickets are available to students.

For further information, please visit <http://www.sfgirlschorus.org>

ABOUT THE SAN FRANCISCO GIRLS CHORUS

Following a phenomenal 37th anniversary season, the San Francisco Girls Chorus has furthered its status as an internationally celebrated professional choral ensemble with its performance for the New York Philharmonic's Biennial Festival of new music in June, 2016. Past seasons included performances at the Inauguration of President Barack Obama and a New York debut at Lincoln Center. In 2010, the ensemble won its fourth and fifth Grammy Awards for Mahler's Eighth Symphony with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony. In 2013 it toured to Berlin, Germany, to participate in Artistic Director Lisa Bielawa's large-scale spatial symphony, Tempelhof Broadcast, and performed as part of the San Francisco iteration of the ambitious piece, Crissy Broadcast, in October 2013. Under the direction of Music Director and Principal Conductor Valérie Sainte-Agathe, SFGC performs regularly with the San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Opera, and has appeared with many other renowned cultural organizations including the KRONOS Quartet, Simon Bolivar Orchestra, New Century Chamber Orchestra, ODC/Dance, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the Oregon Bach Festival, and the Tokyo Philharmonic. In April 2017, the Chorus will perform with The Knights orchestra at the SHIFT Festival of American Orchestras at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. In 2018, the Chorus will perform with Philip Glass Ensemble at New York's Carnegie Hall.

ABOUT PAUL VASILE

Paul Vasile is a pianist, organist and conductor based in New York City. His wide-ranging talents and musical interests provide frequent opportunities to perform as a soloist and collaborative artist, both nationally and internationally.

As an artist-in-residence at Judson Memorial Church in New York City during the 2015-16 season, Paul

collaborated with award-winning mezzo soprano Sarah Craft in a series of innovative song recitals. He also continued a relationship with the Metropolitan Museum of Art as one of a handful of artists selected to perform on the historic Appleton pipe organ in the Musical Instruments Collection.

An abiding interest in contemporary music has led to premieres of new piano, organ and choral works by Lembit Beecher, Lisa Bielawa, David Crowell, Nathan Davis, Yotam Haber, Elliott Schwartz, Carl Schimmel, Aaron Spiegel, and Pēteris Vasks. Paul has also performed recitals of American Romantic organ music in Germany and New York, and was invited to perform at the Organ Festival 'Rīgas Domā' in Riga, Latvia in 2013.

For six years, Paul served as Minister of Music at Park Avenue Christian Church and Artistic Director of Arts at The Park, a church-sponsored concert series presenting some of New York City's finest performers and ensembles. In that role, he cultivated unique partnerships and co-produced notable projects throughout the city, including a celebrated production of Benjamin Britten's chamber opera *Noye's Fludde* with Lighthouse Guild International; an Interfaith Psalm Festival with the cantors and choirs of The Park Avenue Synagogue; and a Gospel Music Festival with Grammy Award-nominated artist Richard Smallwood and the Marble Collegiate Church Gospel Choir.

PHOTO CREDITS

Paul Vasile / Studio CD

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