

PRESS RELEASE

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L O S A N G E L E S

MASTER CHORALE

**Los Angeles Master Chorale Celebrates the 30th
Anniversary of the Annual High School Choir Festival
Friday, May 3, 2019**



Students performing at the 2018 High School Choir Festival. Photo by Frances Chee.

**Festival concert conducted by Grant Gershon, Kiki & David Gindler
Artistic Director, and Eric Whitacre, Swan Family Artist-in-
Residence, at Walt Disney Concert Hall**

**Eric Whitacre to lead over 1,000 Southland students in a celebratory
pop-up performance of Pentatonix's *Sing* on the steps of Disney Hall**



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The 2019 Festival marks the 30th anniversary of one of the longest-running, continuous arts education programs in Southern California

(Los Angeles, CA) April 8, 2019 – The celebration of the 30th anniversary of the **Los Angeles Master Chorale’s Annual High School Choir Festival** will be so joyous, it cannot be contained within the walls of Walt Disney Concert Hall! As part of the celebratory Festival Day on **Friday, May 3**, over 1,000 student singers will give a pop-up performance outdoors on the main staircase of Disney Hall on Grand Avenue at 11:30 AM. Internationally renowned choral conductor and composer **Eric Whitacre**, who is the 2019 Festival’s guest artist, will lead the students in a performance of Pentatonix’s *Sing*, arranged for the Master Chorale by Ben Bram and Pentatonix.

The main event on Festival Day is the Festival concert performed by the students at 1 PM conducted by **Grant Gershon**, the Master Chorale’s Kiki & David Gindler Artistic Director, and Whitacre, the Master Chorale’s Swan Family Artist-in-Residence. The program for this year’s concert includes Handel’s *Hallelujah* Chorus, works by contemporary choral composers Abbie Betinis, Sydney Guillaume, and Rosephanye Powell, and the 17th century hymn *Hanacpachap cussicuinin* by Juan Pérez Bocanegra. In addition to the pop-up performance of *Sing*, Whitacre will conduct performances of his own compositions, *Cloudburst* and *Fly to Paradise*. The Festival concert grand finale will be a performance of *Lean On Me* by Bill Withers.

A hundred of the participating students have been selected by their choir directors for the prestigious Honor Choir. Members of the Honor Choir learn additional repertoire that they perform on the Walt Disney Concert Hall stage during the Festival concert. (Owing to the large size of the group, the other student singers are placed throughout the audience seats in the hall to perform.)





Students performing at the 2018 Festival in Walt Disney Concert Hall. Photo by Frances Chee.

In addition to the Festival concert at 1 PM, Festival Day includes a performance by the **Los Angeles Master Chorale Chamber Ensemble** in Walt Disney Concert Hall conducted by Associate Conductor **Jenny Wong** at 11 AM. This performance by 16 Master Chorale singers is a professional showcase for the students.

Both the Festival concert and the Chamber Ensemble concert are open to friends and family of the participants, supporters, and members of the community, and are free to attend. Ticket reservations are required, and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. A limited number of tickets can be reserved in advance of May 3 at lamasterchorale.org. Tickets will also be available on the day of the concert on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 10 AM in the main lobby of Walt Disney Concert Hall.





Eric Whitacre conducting over 2,200 Big Sing California participants in July 2018. Photo by Jamie Pham.

The Los Angeles Master Chorale is proud to engage guest artists to be part of the Festival, increasing the young singers' exposure to the choral industry's top musicians. Grammy®-winning composer and conductor Eric Whitacre's concert music has been performed throughout the world by millions of amateur and professional musicians alike, while his ground-breaking Virtual Choirs have united singers from over 120 different countries.

In his role as the Master Chorale's Swan Family Artist-in-Residence Eric has conducted the professional ensemble in performances of his own works including the world premiere of *The Sacred Veil* in February 2019. He was a guest conductor at Big Sing L.A. in June 2017 and he was the host and a galvanizing force of Big Sing California in July 2018, uniting thousands of choral singers around the world through live concerts and a livestream.



Over the three decades, guest artists have included a who's-who of the choral field, including Dr. Edith A. Copley, Rollo Dilworth, María Guinand, Francisco J Núñez, Moira Smiley, and Tesfa Wondemagegnehu.

In 2016 the Festival concert was seen by hundreds of thousands of people on television and online when guest artist Tesfa Wondemagegnehu and Grant Gershon added a tribute to music legend Prince to the program. Prince had died just the day before and so they arranged a version of his song *Purple Rain* to pay tribute. The subsequent performance garnered extensive media coverage, [including a Los Angeles Times video that has been viewed over 392,800 times](#).



Grant Gershon conducts the Honor Choir at the 2018 Festival. Photo by Frances Chee.

Gershon says the sheer scale of the event, that gives the students such a thrilling opportunity to sing en masse, never fails to inspire him: “The Annual High School Choir Festival is one of the most exhilarating days of the year for the Master Chorale and such an impactful program and event for these young singers. Many studies have shown that children



who sing in choirs have greater academic success and learn valuable life skills, and people who sang in the Festival frequently tell us how being part of such a massive group and getting to perform in Walt Disney Concert Hall is an experience they truly treasure. It is an enormous honor to conduct this milestone 30th concert, and I know that having Eric Whitacre — a bona fide choral rock star — join us this year is going to make this one huge party!”

The Los Angeles Master Chorale’s Annual High School Choir Festival is made possible by the generous support of Jerry and Terri Kohl, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Cheryl Petersen and Roger Lustberg, Rosemary Schroeder, Ann Peppers Foundation, Bryant and Judi Danner, Carolyn L. Miller, The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation, John and Beverly Stauffer Foundation, Sidney Stern Memorial Trust, Friars Charitable Foundation, and Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts.

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30TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR FESTIVAL CONCERT PROGRAM:

FESTIVAL CHORUS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Hallelujah Chorus</i> | George Frideric Handel (1685 – 1759) |
| <i>The Word Was God</i> | Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962) |
| <i>Journey Home</i> | Abbie Betinis (b. 1980) |
| <i>Hanacpachap cussicuinin</i> | Juan Pérez Bocanegra (1598 – 1645) |

FESTIVAL HONOR CHOIR

| | |
|------------|----------------------------|
| Kanaval | Sydney Guillaume (b. 1982) |
| Cloudburst | Eric Whitacre (b. 1970) |

FESTIVAL CHORUS

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Fly to Paradise</i> | Eric Whitacre |
| <i>Lean on Me (Grand Finale)</i> | Bill Withers (b. 1938) |



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS:

Agoura High School (Agoura Hills) | Chad Bloom, director

Arroyo High School (El Monte) | Jennifer Stanley, director

Azusa High School (Azusa) | Mary Turner, director

Baldwin Park High School (Baldwin Park) | Nathan Bailey, director

Bellflower High School (Bellflower) | Carolyn Kennedy, director

Birmingham Community Charter High School (Van Nuys) | Michael Suffolk, director

California High School (Whittier) | Dan Hawkins, director

Charter Oak High School (Covina) | Rebecca Portnoy, director

Culver City High School (Culver City) | Tony Spano, director

East Los Angeles Performing Arts (Los Angeles) | Melissa Rios, director

El Camino Real Charter High School (Woodland Hills) | Corinne Brennan, director

El Monte High School (El Monte) | Joel Whisler, director

Fullerton Union High School Academy of the Arts (Fullerton) | Scott Hedgecock, director

Gabrielino High School (San Gabriel) | David Pitts, director

Glendale High School (Glendale) | Grace Sheldon-Williams, director

Glendora High School (Glendora) | Brian Trevor, director

Hamilton High School (Castle Heights) | Wendy Walsh, director

John F. Kennedy High School (Granada Hills) | Suzanne Jones, director

Lakewood High School (Lakewood) | Ralph Siemsen, director

Marshall Fundamental Secondary School (Pasadena) | Jonathan Gould, director

Montebello High School (Montebello) | Jessica Dalley, director

Palisades Charter High School (Pacific Palisades) | Jaco Wong, director

Palos Verdes Peninsula High School (Rolling Hills Estate) | Dan Doctor, director

Ramon C. Cortines High School of VAPA (Los Angeles) | Drew Lewis, director

Rosemead High School (Rosemead) | Ruth Gray, director

Rubidoux High School (Riverside) | Jeff Lin, director

Torrance High School (Torrance) | C. David Wright, director



Valley Academy of Arts and Sciences (Granada Hills) | Paul Sims, director

Valley High School (North Hills) | Melanie Garcia, director

Van Nuys High School (Van Nuys) | Brianne Arevalo, director

Venice High School (Venice) | Wendy Sarnoff, director

William Howard Taft Charter High School (Woodland Hills) | Natalia Ramos, director

CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

30th Annual High School Choir Festival concert presented by the Los Angeles Master Chorale

WHEN:

Friday, May 3, 2019; 11 AM – 3 PM

- Los Angeles Master Chorale Chamber Ensemble performance at 11 AM
- Pop-up outdoor performance by students at 11:30 AM
- High School Choir Festival performance by students at 1 PM

WHERE:

Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave.

TICKETS:

Open to the public; free entry. Limited advance ticket reservations available at lamasterchorale.org starting April 8.

If no tickets are available online, people should come to the Walt Disney Concert Hall main lobby on the concert day where tickets will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis by Master Chorale staff in the main lobby from 10 AM.

LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE MEDIA CONTACT:

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Members of the press are welcome to attend, photograph, and film the 30th Annual High School Choir Festival concert. Please RSVP to Jennifer Scott, jscott@lamasterchorale.org

