

CONDUCTOR STAN ENGBRETSON AND COMPOSER ALISTAIR COLEMAN ARE AVAILABLE FOR ADVANCE INTERVIEWS.

Media Contact: Deborah Birnbaum, deborah@nationalphilharmonic.org
301-493-9283, ext. 118



The National Philharmonic
Music Center at Strathmore
5301 Tuckerman Lane
North Bethesda, MD 20852
T 301.493.9283
F 301.493.9284

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PRESS CONTACT: Deborah Birnbaum
301.493.9283, ext. 118
deborah@nationalphilharmonic.org

**National Philharmonic Chorale Pays Tribute to
British Choral Music at the Music Center at Strathmore**
*Concert features world premiere *Of Radiance and Light* by 18-year-old
Maryland composer Alistair Coleman*

North Bethesda, MD, Sept. 29, 2016 –The National Philharmonic Chorale and Orchestra bring alive majestic cathedral music in Strathmore’s concert hall on Saturday, November 5 at 8 pm. Coronation music found in the great British choral tradition, including Handel’s famous *Zadok the Priest*, will be featured in this concert for choir, brass and organ and led by National Philharmonic Chorale Music Director Stan Engbretson. The evening will include the world premiere *Of Radiance and Light*, a commissioned work composed by the young, dynamic Maryland composer Alistair Coleman.

Coleman’s *Of Radiance and Light*, commissioned by the National Philharmonic, charts a journey from darkness to enlightenment, which is embodied structurally and symbolically through several devices in both the text and the music. The text, compiled by the composer himself, consists of verses from several psalms that are woven together to create a linear narrative representing this journey toward wisdom. Musically, the texture undergoes a transformation from dense and somber sonorities toward greater clarity and

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exhilaration of feeling, punctuated by introspective and meditative passages. An interesting textual device is the recurrence of the line “Arise, shine; for thy light is come” (*Isaiah*, 60), coupled with a variety of harmonic tones to represent the many sentiments that this sentence can evoke.

Coleman, born in October 1998 in Washington, DC, was first exposed to the National Philharmonic as an elementary student attending one of the orchestra’s annual free concerts at Strathmore for all Montgomery County Public School second graders. Coleman, now a senior at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, is a singer, pianist and composer. He has received commissions from the National Philharmonic Orchestra and the Takoma Ensemble. His music has been programmed broadly, including performances by the Atlantic Music Festival Orchestra, Houston Brass Band, Boston University Marsh Chapel Choir, and the Cathedral Choral Society, under the direction of the late J. Reilly Lewis. His Advent carol, *The King Shall Come*, and anthem, *A Hymn for Peace*, are published by E.C. Schirmer Music Company, and Alistair is the youngest composer ever published by ECS in its ninety-five-year history. At age thirteen, he won the National Student Composers Competition from the National Association for Music Educators. More recently he was the “Audience Choice Award” winner from the 2016 Call for Scores Competition organized by Baltimore’s Symphony Number One. Other accolades include “Honorable Mentions” from the American Composers Forum and the Friday Morning Music Club. Alistair studies privately with David Ludwig and Richard Danielpour, faculty members at the Curtis Institute of Music, and with local composer Gary Davison. Alistair plans to attend a music conservatory to continue his composition studies.

The concert pays tribute to music that originated in Britain’s medieval monasteries and churches and eventually was brought to the United States. The evening begins with *Zadok the Priest* by Handel, one of the most successful and influential Baroque composers. The work was premiered in October 1727 for the coronation of King George II and has been used for the coronation of every English monarch ever since. Thomas Tallis was one of the towering figures of the English Renaissance, excelling in the composition of religious choral music. His *Spem in Alium* for chorus in 40 parts is a tour-de-force of polyphonic writing, unrivaled in its consummate handling of musical texture

and space. Other older works include William Walton's celebratory *Coronation Te Deum*; and Charles Hastings Parry's *I was Glad*, a mainstay of the Anglican Church service has been regularly sung at the coronation of British monarchs.

Newer music includes John Rutter's popular *Gloria*, a work of great drama. Rutter's numerous activities as a composer, conductor, editor, arranger and record producer have earned him an important position in the contemporary music scene. *Gloria* has the breadth and complexity of a symphonic work, incorporating into its texture not only traditional Gregorian chant elements, but also distinctly secular devices.

A Grammy-winning composer and conductor, Eric Whitacre has achieved international recognition as one of the most popular composers of his generation as well. Whitacre's signature piece is *Alleluia*, one of the greatest works written by this young and dynamic American composer, now living in England. The *Alleluia*, dedicated to David Skinner and the Sidney Sussex Chapel Choir, premiered on 25 June 2011.

About Conductor Stan Engebretson

In demand throughout the United States and Europe, Dr. Stan Engebretson has led choirs in Venice's Cathedral of St. Mark and taught in Cologne, Trier, St. Moritz, and Barcelona. He has studied with the great masters of choral music, including Robert Shaw, Gregg Smith, Richard Westenburg, Roger Wagner and Eric Ericson. After attending the University of North Dakota and earning his Doctorate from Stanford University, Engebretson taught at the University of Texas and the University of Minnesota. He also was the Artistic Director of the Midland-Odessa Symphony Chorale and the Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Chorale. In Washington since 1990, Engebretson is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Studies at George Mason University and is the Director of Music at the historic New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. From 1993-2003, he was the Artistic Director of the predecessor to the National Philharmonic Chorale, the Masterworks Chorus and the semi-professional National Chamber Singers. Engebretson remains active in other areas, performing as a professional chorister and lecturer, and leading the Smithsonian Institution's Study Journeys at the Spoleto-USA Festival of the Arts.

About the National Philharmonic

Led by dynamic Music Director and Conductor Piotr Gajewski, the National

Philharmonic is known for performances that are “powerful,” “impeccable” and “thrilling” (*The Washington Post*). The National Philharmonic boasts a long-standing tradition of reasonably priced tickets and free admission to all young people age 7-17, assuring its place as an accessible and enriching component in Montgomery County and the greater Washington, DC area.

As the Music Center at Strathmore’s ensemble-in-residence, the National Philharmonic showcases world-renowned guest artists in time-honored symphonic masterpieces conducted by Maestro Gajewski and monumental choral masterworks under National Philharmonic Chorale Artistic Director Stan Engebretson.

The National Philharmonic also offers exceptional and unique education programs, such as the Summer Strings and Choral Institutes. Students accepted into the Summer String Institutes study privately with National Philharmonic musicians, participate in coached chamber music and play in an orchestra conducted by Maestro Gajewski and Philharmonic Associate Conductor Victoria Gau. For more information, visit www.nationalphilharmonic.org .

A free pre-concert lecture will be offered at **6:45 pm on Saturday, November 5** in the concert hall at the Music Center at Strathmore. To purchase tickets to National Philharmonic’s **Music From the Cathedral** concert, please visit

nationalphilharmonic.org or call the Strathmore Ticket Office at **(301) 581-5100**.

Tickets start from \$19. Kids 7-17 are FREE through the ALL KIDS, ALL FREE, ALL THE TIME program . ALL KIDS tickets must be purchased in person or by phone. **The photo credit for National Philharmonic Chorale is Don Lassell and for Alistair Coleman, John Troha Photography.**

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