

Presenting exceptional, innovative and engaging choral performances for diverse audiences.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Voices of Light: The Passion of Joan of Arc
Free Performance Unites Live Music with Cinema

GREENSBORO, NC, February 8, 2012- New York based composer Richard Einhorn will be in Greensboro later this month to attend rehearsals and performances of his critically acclaimed work, *Voices of Light: The Passion of Joan of Arc*. The piece combines a screening of the classic silent film, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, with a live performance by Bel Canto Company, the Greensboro Youth Chorus and members of the UNCG chamber singers, orchestra and vocal faculty conducted by Bel Canto Company Artistic Director and UNCG Director of Choral Activities, Dr. Welborn Young. A free, public performance will be given at UNCG's Aycock Auditorium on February 28 at 7:30 PM and a second, closed performance will be the featured concert of the American Choral Directors Association Southern Regional Convention on March 1 in Winston Salem.

Voices of Light, described by Mr. Einhorn as a sort of modern "opera/oratorio", is a commanding, multi-media performance piece that unites the immediacy of live performance with the power of the cinema. The composition was inspired by Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1920s silent film masterpiece, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, and a screening of the film projected above the chorus and orchestra will provide the "staging" while the musicians perform the music below.

Einhorn's composition, conceived for chorus, soloists and a 34-piece orchestra, uses music to describe and comment on the events of the film. The libretto is comprised of portions of a number of ancient texts, most of which are the writings of medieval female mystics, including some of Joan of Arc's own dictated letters. The use of the original Old and Middle French, Latin and Italian texts is superbly effective in evoking both the spirit and the time of the work. Perhaps this quote from the liner notes of its Sony Classical release best summarizes the work:

Voices of Light is a meditation on the life and personality of Joan of Arc . . . The piece explores the patchwork of emotions and thoughts that are stitched together into the notion of a female hero. Such a hero invariably transgresses the conventions and restrictions her society imposes. And Joan of Arc -- the illiterate teenage peasant girl who led an army, the transvestite witch who became a saint -- Joan of Arc transgressed them all.

Thought to have been destroyed by fire just months after its premiere in the 1920s, *The Passion of Joan of Arc* was rediscovered in Norway in 1981. Since then it has been considered by critics and film historians as one of the 10 best films of all time. The story compresses the events of the final seven months of Joan of Arc's life into the span of one day, encompassing the action of her trial and execution. Most of the script for the movie was taken from the transcripts, still in existence, of Joan's trial at the hands of the Inquisition. The style of the film is remarkably modern, utilizing a number of camera angles and techniques that seem to predict the styles of future film-makers such as Alfred Hitchcock.

Voices of Light was first performed in 1994, and has since been performed over 100 times to sold-out crowds across the county and has received glowing reviews in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*,

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USA Today and numerous other papers and musical publications. Samples of the music and more about the composer and the piece can be found on the composer's website, www.richardeinhorn.com. At the time of this writing the movie and music was also available on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL23C0F1A9EE3F0B4B&feature=plcp>).

About Bel Canto Company:

Founded in 1982, Bel Canto Company is a choral ensemble of professional singers that presents exceptional, innovative, and engaging choral performances for diverse audiences. Bel Canto Company is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation organized to advance the cause and further the enjoyment of choral singing. The ensemble presents six to eight subscription performances as well as a number of regional concerts each season, and the ensemble earns rave reviews from audiences and critics alike.

In 29 seasons, BCC has contracted over 180 local singers, released nine CDs, commissioned several new works, and performed for prestigious music festivals and conferences throughout the Southeast, including Washington Cathedral's Summer Music Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, The American Choral Directors Association Southern and North Carolina Division Conferences, and the National Endowment for the Arts "American Masterpieces: Choral Music" programs. The ensemble has performed with the American Boychoir, the Virginia Chorale, the Greensboro Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony, the Carolina Chamber Symphony and has been featured on National Public Radio on Chorus America's "The First Art" and NPR's "Performance Today".

MEDIA CONTACT:

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