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Contact: Liza Beth
202.331.7577 ext. 243
liza@chorusamerica.org

Chorus America's 2023 Awards Recognize Outstanding Chorus and Individuals

Chorus America has announced the recipients of its 2023 awards program, recognizing a broad range of achievements in choral music and service to the choral field. The awards program celebrates and fosters meaningful contributions from remarkable individuals and choruses.

"Chorus America is delighted to recognize the accomplishments of these incredible award winners," said Chorus America president and CEO Catherine Dehoney. "Their artistry, their dedication, and the joy they bring to their work move the choral field forward and inspire us all."

Chorus America Distinguished Service Award: Roland M. Carter

The Chorus America Distinguished Service Award recognizes a member whose long-term service to the choral field significantly furthers Chorus America's mission "to strengthen singing communities with the advocacy, connections, and resources they need to be a vital part of society."

Roland M. Carter is the 2023 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his immense contributions to the choral field and his efforts to advocate for and uphold African American musical traditions. His work as a composer, conductor, educator, and music publisher has established him as a respected authority on the performance and preservation of African American music, and his extended concert arrangement of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" has been crucial to the prominence and significance of this anthem of the civil rights movement. Carter has also contributed much to choral music as a leader within numerous organizations, including serving as president of the National Association of Negro Musicians and on the board of Chorus America. After nearly 50 years at Hampton University and the University of Tennessee in his native Chattanooga, he has prepared generations of music students to continue his work of championing a more equitable and inclusive choral field and society.

"This award embodies the comprehensiveness of all we do: teaching, performance, research, and service," said Carter. "I am who I am because of the persons on whose shoulders I've stood—the tremendous support and encouragement of mentors, colleagues, students, and friends. Indeed, it is in their honor that I acknowledge this most esteemed award. Thank you."

Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence: Volti

The Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence is presented annually to a member chorus that demonstrates artistic achievement, a strong organizational structure, and a commitment to outreach, education, and/or culturally diverse activities. This award honors the memory of Margaret Hillis, founder of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, for her more than 40 years of professional achievement and outstanding contributions to the choral field.

The 2023 Hillis Award recognizes a professional or pro-core chorus and goes to San Francisco's [Volte](#). Established in 1979 as the San Francisco Chamber Singers, and led by founder Robert Geary, Volte's mission is to foster and showcase contemporary American music and composers, and to introduce contemporary vocal music from around the world to its Bay Area audience. In its 44-year history, the ensemble has commissioned more than 100 new compositions, many of them exploring timely issues of modern human experience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Volte pivoted quickly to commission four Bay Area composers and create an online season that showcased the possibilities of creating ensemble music remotely. The ensemble's education initiatives include meaningful experiences like the Choral Institute, an intensive weekend retreat for high school choirs.

"Volte is thrilled to be honored with the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence," said Volte executive director, Barbara Heroux. "Receiving this recognition from Chorus America is such a powerful affirmation at this time when we, like so many other arts groups, are struggling to recover from the effects of the pandemic. Thank you, Chorus America!"

[Dale Warland Singers Commission Award: Cantori New York and Adolphus Hailstork](#)

Chorus America and the American Composers Forum partner to present this award in honor of Dale Warland's lifelong commitment to new music as embodied through his work with the Dale Warland Singers. The award is made possible by the Dale Warland Singers Fund for New Choral Music, a permanently restricted endowment fund established in 2004. The winning chorus receives a cash award of \$10,000, \$7,500 of which supports the commissioning fee and \$2,500 of which supports engagement with the project composer, and production and promotion costs to present the project.

[Cantori New York](#) is the 2023 recipient of the Dale Warland Singers Commission Award, which will support a piece by American composer Adolphus Hailstork. Hailstork has chosen a text concerning the folly of war written by George Moses Horton, a 19th-century poet born into slavery. In its 37-year history, Cantori has premiered more than 100 compositions, and this project continues both the ensemble's commitment to new music and its longstanding relationship with Hailstork, who has been a frequent collaborator. Cantori also plans to record and publish the piece, inspiring additional performances of what promises to be a significant new work.

"Cantori New York and I are so honored to receive this amazing recognition from Chorus America. After all those vaccines, what a life-affirming 'shot in the arm' of a very different kind!" said Cantori artistic director and conductor Mark Shapiro. "Our admiration and affection for Adolphus Hailstork are longstanding and without limit; we're thrilled to be embarking on this beautiful new adventure together."

[Alice Parker Fund Award: Cantus](#)

The Alice Parker Fund Award supports the composition and thoughtful presentation of choral music based in the traditions of Black and Latinx communities. This award recognizes the exemplary work of a Black or Latinx composer or an ensemble that respectfully and authentically presents works incorporating these traditions and experiences. The winning individual or ensemble receives a cash award of \$2,000.

[Cantus](#) is the 2023 recipient of the Alice Parker Fund Award. The low voice ensemble's mission and vision are to "give voice to shared human experience," including embracing music by Black and Latinx composers. Every single Cantus program represents diverse composers and a variety of lived experiences. This is due in large part to its uniquely collaborative structure, in which the group's eight members make artistic decisions collectively. Cantus also engages deeply with community and artistic partners, including on a concert last summer with composer and jazz pianist Nachito Herrera that was devoted entirely to music from Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico. Nearly half of the music on its most recent album *Into the Light* was written by composers of color.

"We at Cantus are honored to receive Chorus America's Alice Parker Fund Award," said Cantus tenor Paul Scholtz. "It is a point of emphasis for us to proactively program and present a diversity of music in our work and certainly to feature Black and Latinx compositions. For us, the award serves as further reinforcement of the essential importance of diversity in effectively executing our mission to give voice to shared human experience by inspiring audiences through song and word, sparking new depths of understanding and empathy."

[Education and Community Engagement Award: SACRA/PROFANA](#)

The **Education and Community Engagement Award** recognizes programs that expand a chorus's role in its community. Successful programs demonstrate mission-based program development, viable music education, effective management and fiscal integrity, a commitment to artistic achievement, and collaborations that are sustainable, beneficial, and meaningful for all partners.

The 2023 Education and Community Engagement Award honors a by a chorus with a budget of under \$200,000 and goes to [SACRA/PROFANA](#). The ensemble's leadership has recognized needs present in its diverse San Diego, California community and thoughtfully developed several education programs that address those needs. Among these programs is the Summer Choral Intensive (SCI), which supports and enhances music education in San Diego County Schools. Participants have the opportunity to work with and learn from leading composers and musicians, making SCI one of San Diego's most sought-after vocal programs for middle school and high school singers. Recruitment for the program focuses on Title One schools, and full scholarships are available for any students with financial need.

"SACRA/PROFANA is humbled to receive the Chorus America Education and Community Engagement Award," said board president Karl Bunker. "We are proud of our education outreach programs, particularly our Summer Choral Intensive, and our engaging teaching artists. We appreciate being recognized for the work that goes into these programs and the students we have the opportunity to reach."

[Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award: Marques L. A. Garrett](#)

The Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award honors the life and achievements of educator, conductor, and arranger Brazeal Dennard by recognizing individuals or organizations whose work builds upon his commitment to diversity, inclusiveness, and furthering African American and other diverse choral traditions through performance, research, or the creation of new compositions of significance. The winner receives a cash award of \$2,500.

The 2023 Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award goes to [Marques L. A. Garrett](#), whose ability and commitment as a conductor, composer, singer, and researcher has already made a significant impact on the choral

field. In his five years of teaching at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, he has modeled the principles of an inclusive classroom to his students and focused on repertoire by Black composers. His largest choral work to date is *Dreamland: Tulsa, 1921*, honoring lives lost a century ago in the Tulsa race massacre. Garrett's many contributions as a researcher include *The Oxford Book of Choral Music by Black Composers*, an anthology of non-idiomatic choral music by Black composers, published earlier this year.

"Receiving this special award means that the contributions of my ancestors' lives and the work of my direct and indirect mentors is being realized," said Garrett. "I'm grateful to all who were a part of the award process. Thank you, Chorus America!"

Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art: Robert Geary

Named after one of the founders of Chorus America, the Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art was established in 1978 to honor an individual with a lifetime of significant contributions to the professional choral art.

Robert Geary is the 2023 recipient of the Korn Founders Award for his multi-dimensional commitment to cutting-edge professional choral music. Volti, which Geary founded in 1979 and continues to lead, is one of the oldest professional ensembles in the United States, known for commissioning and performing revolutionary new music. The ensemble's fully professional singers collaborate frequently with other arts groups and are often hired by presenters and touring orchestras. In addition to Volti, Geary founded the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir and the Golden Gate International Choral Festival and serves as artistic director of the San Francisco Choral Society. As an educator, Geary has trained many singers who grew up to be professional choral singers and conductors—and many more who grew up to be audience members and choral music lovers.

"From the early days when Chorus America was the Association of Professional Vocal Ensembles, I have admired both the artistry and dedication to the choral art of the people who have received this award," said Geary. "To have my name placed among theirs is a great honor. My gratitude goes to the singers, composers, board members, and administrators who have built and maintained Volti over the past 44 years."

Chorus America Philanthropy Award: John Alexander and Duain Wolfe

The Chorus America Philanthropy Award is given to individuals, corporations, or foundations whose financial support of Chorus America and the choral art has been especially significant and generous.

The 2023 Philanthropy Award recognizes John Alexander and Duain Wolfe for their more than two decades of support for Chorus America's conducting programs. Alexander and Wolfe, both former Chairs of Chorus America's Board, have been champions of Chorus America's conducting masterclasses and workshops programs. This work culminated in 2017 with the establishment of the Choral-Orchestral Conducting Academy, regarded as the one of the premier programs available for emerging conductors. Together, Wolfe and Alexander have helped raise significant funds to support this program. Their friends and admirers have joined them and honored their legacy to create two permanently endowed funds for Chorus America, the John Alexander Fund and the Duain Wolfe Fund. These efforts will help support our choral conducting programs far into the future.

Visit chorusamerica.org/awards to learn more about Chorus America's Awards program.

Chorus America is the advocacy, research, and leadership development organization that advances the choral field. We support and serve choral conductors, administrators, board members, and singers with tools, training, peer networking, and access so that choruses are better able to contribute to their communities. Our membership includes more than 6,000 choruses, individuals, businesses, and organizations that are part of the choral field.

Chorus America is governed by a diverse board of accomplished arts leaders from the U.S. and Canada, and the executive staff is headquartered in Washington DC. Learn more at www.chorusamerica.org.

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