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Pacific Chorale to Receive National Endowment for the Arts Award Supporting a New Work by Jocelyn Hagen

COSTA MESA, CA (January 14, 2025) - Pacific Chorale, led by Artistic Director **Robert Istad** and celebrated for its artistic innovation and compelling performances, is pleased to announce it has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a Grants for Arts Projects award of \$15,000. This grant will support a commissioning and performance project featuring a major new work for symphonic chorus and orchestra by American composer Jocelyn Hagen.

The NEA will award 1,127 Grants for Arts Projects awards nationwide totaling more than \$31.8 million as part of the recent announcement of fiscal year 2025 grants.

“The NEA is proud to continue our nearly 60 years of supporting the efforts of organizations and artists that help to shape our country’s vibrant arts sector and communities of all types across our nation,” said NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. “It is inspiring to see the wide range of creative projects taking place, including Pacific Chorale’s Hagen commission.”

“We are thrilled to receive this NEA award, which allows us to champion an exciting voice in American composition. Jocelyn Hagen’s work will be a meaningful addition to the choral repertoire, and we’re proud to share it first with our Orange County audience,” said Istad.

The new work will receive its world premiere at Pacific Chorale’s Fall 2025 performance with Pacific Symphony at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, CA, under the direction of Robert Istad. The Washington Chorus will co-commission the work and present the East

Coast premiere in Washington, DC in 2026, conducted by Eugene Rogers. This work is also made possible thanks to the generous support from Platinum Season Sponsor Phillip N. and Mary A. Lyons, and Pacific Chorale's Artistic Innovation Fund.

Pacific Chorale plans to share more about this project, along with the complete 2025-2026 performance season, on March 17, 2025. Visit pacificchorale.org for more information.

Details on other projects included in the NEA's grant announcement are found at [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).

ROBERT ISTAD, a Grammy Award-winning conductor who “fashions fluent and sumptuous readings” (*Voice of OC*) with his “phenomenal” artistry (*Los Angeles Times*), was appointed Pacific Chorale's Artistic Director in 2017. Under his leadership, the chorus continues to expand its reputation for excellence for delivering fresh, thought-provoking interpretations of beloved masterworks, rarely performed gems and newly commissioned pieces. In July 2023, he led Pacific Chorale's first international tour in seven years, conducting performances at leading venues in Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom. His artistic impact can be heard on two recent recordings featuring Pacific Chorale, including the 2022 Grammy Award-winning “Mahler's Eighth Symphony” with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gustavo Dudamel on Deutsche Grammophon (2021), for which he prepared the chorus. It won Best Choral Performance and also garnered a Grammy nomination for Best Engineered Album, Classical. Additionally, Istad conducted the Pacific Chorale's recording “All Things Common: The Music of Tarik O'Regan” released on Yarlung Records (2020). He regularly conducts and collaborates with Pacific Symphony, Berkshire Choral International, and Yarlung Records. His extensive credits also include recording for Sony Classical and guest conducting Long Beach Symphony Orchestra, Bach Collegium San Diego, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, Bath Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Tesseræ Baroque, and Freies Landesorchester Bayern. Istad has prepared choruses for such renowned conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, John Williams, John Mauceri, Keith Lockhart, Nicholas McGegan, Vasily Sinaisky, Sir Andrew Davis, Bramwell Tovey, Carl St.Clair, Eugene Kohn, Giancarlo Guerrero, Marin Alsop, George Fenton, and Robert Moody. An esteemed educator, Istad is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Studies at California State University (CSUF), Fullerton, where he was recognized as CSUF's 2016 Outstanding Professor of the Year. He conducts the University Singers and manages a large graduate conducting program, in addition to teaching courses on conducting and choral literature. Istad, who is on the Executive Board of Directors of Chorus America and serves as Dean of Chorus America's Conducting Academy, is in demand as guest conductor, lecturer, and clinician.

The Grammy Award-winning **PACIFIC CHORALE**, an Orange County “treasure” with a “fresh viewpoint” that “can sing anything you put in front of it with polish, poise and tonal splendor” (*Orange County Register*), has “risen to national prominence” (*Los Angeles Times*) since its inception in 1968. Hailed for delivering “thrilling entertainment” (*Voice of OC*), the resident choir at Segerstrom Center for the Arts is noted for its artistic innovation and commitment to expanding the choral repertoire. It has given world, U.S., and West Coast premieres of more than 40 works, including numerous commissions, by such lauded composers as John Adams, Jake Heggie, James Hopkins, David Lang, Morten Lauridsen, Tarik O'Regan, Karen Thomas, Frank Ticheli, András Gábor Virág, and Eric Whitacre. In addition to presenting its own concert series each season, Pacific Chorale, led by Artistic Director Robert Istad, enjoys a long-standing partnership with Pacific Symphony, with which the choir made its highly anticipated Carnegie Hall debut in 2018. The chorus also regularly appears with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, with which it won the 2022 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance for its contribution to the live recording of “Mahler: Symphony No. 8, 'Symphony of A Thousand,'" conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, featuring Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Children's Chorus, Los Angeles Master

Chorale, National Children's Chorus and Pacific Chorale. The choir has performed with such leading orchestras as the Boston Symphony, National Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, and Musica Angelica, among others. In addition to receiving national accolades, Pacific Chorale has garnered tremendous international acclaim. In July 2023, the chorus completed its first international tour in seven years with appearances in Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom in collaboration with Bath Philharmonica, Free State Orchestra of Bavaria, and Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra. Previous tours have taken the choir to 19 countries in Europe, South America, and Asia, including engagements with the London Symphony, Munich Symphony, L'Orchestre Lamoureux and L'Orchestre de St-Louis-en-l'Île of Paris, National Orchestra of Belgium, China National Symphony, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Estonian National Symphony, and Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional of Argentina, among others. Deeply committed to making choral music accessible to everyone, the organization has a discography of 14 self-produced recordings and an extensive collection of free digital offerings. Among other artistic highlights, Pacific Chorale's "The Wayfaring Project," an original concert film conceived and conducted by Istad and produced during the pandemic, will be streamed through December 1, 2024 on pbssocal.org, kcet.org and the PBS app, reaching audiences around the globe. Pacific Chorale also places significant emphasis on choral music education, providing after-school vocal programs for elementary school students, a choral summer camp for high school students, and an annual community-wide singing event at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. www.pacificchorale.org

JOCELYN HAGEN composes music that has been described as "simply magical" (Fanfare Magazine) and "dramatic and deeply moving" (Star Tribune, Minneapolis/St. Paul). She is a pioneer in the field of composition, pushing the expectations of musicians and audiences with large-scale multimedia works, eletro-acoustic music, dance, opera, and publishing. Her first forays into composition were via songwriting, still very evident in her work. The majority of her compositions are for the voice: solo, chamber and choral. Her melodic music is rhythmically driven and texturally complex, rich in color and deeply heartfelt. In 2019 and 2020, choirs and orchestras across the country are premiering her multimedia symphony *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* that includes video projections created by a team of visual artists, highlighting da Vinci's spectacular drawings, inventions, and texts. Hagen describes her process of composing for choir, orchestra and film simultaneously in a TEDx Talk given at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, now available on YouTube. Her dance opera collaboration with choreographer Penelope Freeh, *Test Pilot*, received the 2017 American Prize in the musical theater/opera division as well as a Sage Award for "Outstanding Design." The panel declared the work "a tour de force of originality." As a fierce advocate for gender equality and inclusivity, Hagen's *Compose Like A Girl* initiative amplifies female-identifying composers, helps conductors diversify their concerts, and works toward more equality in music programming and commissioning. Through her podcasts, she engages in discussions with renowned composers like Reena Esmail, Chen Yi, and Rosephanye Powell. These conversations delve into the dynamics of opportunity, power, and privilege within the arts, advocating for female-identifying composers to embrace their unique artistic expression with confidence. The initiative also provides mentorship to emerging women composers, and highlights excellent work through her newly developed *Compose Like A Girl* Choral Series. In 2013 Hagen released an EP entitled *MASHUP*, in which she performs Debussy's "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum" while singing Ed Sheeran's "The A Team." She is also one half of the band *Nation*, an a cappella duo with composer/performer Timothy C. Takach, and together they perform and serve as clinicians for choirs from all over the world. Hagen's commissions include *Conspire*, the Minnesota Opera, the Minnesota Orchestra, the International Federation of Choral Music, the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota, Georgia, Connecticut and Texas, the North Dakota Music Teachers Association, *Cantus*, the Boston Brass, the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra and the St. Olaf Band, among many others. Her work is independently published through JH Music, as well as through Graphite Publishing, G. Schirmer, ECS Publishing, Fred Bock Music Publishing, Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and Boosey and Hawkes.

THE WASHINGTON CHORUS (TWC), now in its 63rd season, is one of the foremost symphonic choruses in the nation. Noted for the superb artistry of its performances and recordings of the entire range of the choral repertoire, TWC is widely recognized as a cultural leader in the nation's capital. A three-time nominated and two-time Grammy Award winner, the 220-voice Washington Chorus presents an annual series at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, regularly performs at the

invitation of the National Symphony Orchestra and appears annually at the Music Center at Strathmore in Maryland and Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts in Virginia. TWC was the first major Washington area chorus to be founded independent of a church or college. In 1961 Hugh Hayward, a medical doctor and classically trained musician, founded the Oratorio Society of Montgomery County, which became known as the Oratorio Society of Washington, and is now celebrated under the name of The Washington Chorus. In 1971, Robert Shafer succeeded Hayward as music director, leading the chorus for more than three decades with great distinction, including two Grammy Awards. From 2008–2017 Julian Wachner led the organization with education and innovation at the forefront of his programs. Christopher Bell brought unparalleled attention to precision and clarity to the ensemble with his trademark flair during his tenure as Artistic Director from 2017 to 2020. The Chorus' fifth Artistic Director Eugene Rogers is widely regarded as one of the most acclaimed next-generation conductors and musical thought leaders today working at the intersection of classical music and social change. TWC's commitment to the greater Washington community is evidenced by its Connections Programs, including the Side-by-Side high school program and the DC Honor Chorus in partnership with DC Public Schools. Chorus America, the national association for choruses, has honored The Washington Chorus with the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence and the ASCAP Alice Parker Award, which recognizes a chorus programming significant, recently-composed music that expands the mission of the chorus and challenges audiences in new ways. Other awards include the 2000 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance for the live-performance recording of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* and a 1996 Grammy Award for John Corigliano's *Of Rage and Remembrance* with the National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leonard Slatkin. TWC has appeared at the invitation of leading orchestras including the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. TWC is proud to have sung with the NSO in more than 300 performances, under the direction of many of the world's greatest conductors, including Gianandrea Noseda, Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Seiji Ozawa, Sir Neville Marriner, Kent Nagano, Marin Alsop, Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Andrew Davis, and many others. TWC has sung for numerous prestigious events throughout its history—inaugurations, papal visits, with the Rolling Stones during their 50th anniversary tour, and at the White House in 2013 and 2014 for the President and First Lady.

A two-time Michigan Emmy Award winner, a 2017 Sphinx Medal of Excellence recipient, and a 2015 GRAMMY® Award nominee, **EUGENE ROGERS** is recognized as a leading conductor and pedagogue throughout the United States and abroad. In addition to being the founding director of EXIGENCE, Dr. Rogers is the director of choirs and an associate professor of conducting at the University of Michigan. Recently, he was named as the fifth Artistic Director of the two-time GRAMMY® Award-Winning Ensemble, The Washington Chorus (Washington, D.C.). At the University, Rogers leads the graduate choral conducting program, conducts the chamber choir, and administers the program of over eight choral ensembles. His choirs have toured throughout China, South Africa, the United States, and have appeared at national and regional conferences. In December 2017, Musical America named Rogers one of the top 30 “Movers and Shapers” professionals in North America. His past appointments include being the director of the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club, Macalester College (St. Paul, Minnesota), the Boys Choir of Harlem, Waubonsie Valley High School (Aurora, Illinois), and Anima Young Singers of Greater Chicago (formerly the Glen Ellyn Children's Choir). In 2016, Rogers' passion for issues of social justice and music was featured in the award-winning documentary *Love, Life and Loss* which highlights Joel Thompson's powerful *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, and in 2013, he co-managed the production of the joint CD *Ye Shall Have a Song* with the Michigan, Yale, and Harvard Glee Clubs, a collaboration celebrating America's three oldest collegiate choirs. In 2015, Mark Foster Publishing began the Eugene Rogers Choral Series, a series featuring emerging composers who specialize in contemporary classical and folk music traditions, and the EXIGENCE Choral Series in 2018 which features folk and contemporary works by Black and Latinx composers. In 2011, Rogers traveled to and studied the choral traditions of East Africa (Tanzania). Rogers holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in choral music education from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign and the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in choral conducting from U-M. He currently serves on the board of Chorus America and is a former national chair of the Diversity Initiatives Committee for the American Choral Directors Association.

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