

Media Release

For Immediate Release

Calgary Philharmonic welcomes new Chorus Master

Calgary Alta. (June 9, 2021) – On Wednesday, June 9, the Calgary Philharmonic announced a new Chorus Master to lead its choristers through the 2021/2022 Season as they prepare to resume in-person performances. Dr. Mark Bartel, an experienced choral conductor and music educator, replaces Timothy Shantz, who led the chorus for more than a decade before leaving in 2020 after accepting a new position at the University of Alberta.

“The Chorus Master guides our dedicated choir members and plays a crucial role in bringing impressive choral works to our audiences,” says Music Director Rune Bergmann. “Mark’s commitment to upholding our chorus’s reputation for excellence and his ideas for the future are exciting — we’re looking forward to having him on board.”

Bartel says he is delighted to join the Calgary Phil and work with Bergmann to perform classical standards as well as share new music experiences. “I feel very honoured to be entrusted with this position,” he adds. Bartel, who also replaced Shantz as Artistic Director of Spiritus Chamber Choir, says he has great respect for his predecessor and the tremendous impact he’s had on the Chorus and in the community — he looks forward to building on that foundation while continuing to explore new directions.

Bartel moved to Calgary in 2019 to join the faculty at Ambrose University as Associate Professor of Music following 16 years of teaching and conducting in the United States, but he already knew the city well. He was born in Ontario and previously worked and studied in Canada, and has visited his wife’s family in Calgary many times. He adds that he feels fortunate to be in this city and have opportunities that allow him to be “steeped in choral repertoire and performance.”

Although the hiring process for the Chorus Master position was delayed due to COVID-19, Bartel joined the bass section when extra singers were brought in for a performance of Gustav Mahler’s *Symphony No. 2* in 2019 and he conducted the Chorus for an audition prior to the cancellation of concerts. He has been hired for a one-year term starting July 1, 2021 with an option to renew once he’s worked with the Chorus in person. He recently met with members online to get to know them better and talk about his vision.

Bartel says a large Chorus requires a large number of voices, but doesn’t have to be homogenous — he wants to ensure it represents the diversity of the city and the community it’s located in. He also wants to find new ways for the Chorus to act as an ambassador for the Orchestra by being active in the community. “We can think of ourselves as not only people who make music, but also people who make connections,” he says. “Music is always about more than music. It’s part of the social fabric — that’s what it comes out of and that’s what it speaks to.”

Throughout the pandemic, the Calgary Philharmonic Chorus has continued to practise and attend workshops online under the leadership of Evan Mounce. Members released a virtual performance of *Brother Heinrich’s*

Christmas (youtube.com/watch?v=PtCH2vySBbY) in December and will record a 'car choir' version of a new commission by Edmonton composer Laura Hawley this month as part of a collaboration with Pink Flamingo. For more information, visit www.calgaryphil.com.

Mark Bartel

Dr. Mark Bartel is in demand as a versatile conductor and music educator. After a 16-year tenure in the United States, he returned to Canada in 2019 to join the faculty at Ambrose University as Associate Professor of Music. Since arriving in Calgary, he has been appointed Artistic Director of the Spiritus Chamber Choir. Bartel is known for his musical, educational, and community collaborations and has established a reputation as a successful builder of choirs and choral programs. He has conducted college and university choirs for over 20 years and has extensive experience leading a wide range of community choirs in both the United States and Canada. In addition to his interest in choral-orchestral works and choral music of the Baroque, he brings his expertise as a solo singer and teacher of applied voice to his work with choirs. Bartel is a passionate advocate of the impact of the choral experience in the lives of choristers, in communities, and society at large. (For Mark Bartel's full bio go to calgaryphil.com/chorus-master.)

Calgary Philharmonic Chorus

The Calgary Philharmonic Chorus is a group of more than 100 voluntary singers and four section principals who deliver excellence in the performance of choral music and promote the enjoyment and development of choral singing in the Calgary community. Established in 1963, the Chorus performs a wide variety of repertoire, including oratorio, opera, light classics, contemporary music, pops, and commissioned new works. In a typical Season, the acclaimed ensemble is featured in four to eight concerts with the Orchestra. (For more details about the Chorus go to calgaryphil.com/chorus.)

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Media Opportunities

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About the Calgary Philharmonic

The Calgary Philharmonic celebrated 65 years as a pillar of Calgary's vibrant arts community in 2020 and has grown to be one of Canada's most celebrated live music ensembles. Led by Music Director Rune Bergmann, the Calgary Phil presents classical works, pop favourites, bold collaborations, and cutting-edge new compositions, and attracts world-renowned guest artists and dynamic conductors. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Calgary Phil hasn't missed a beat — engaging with the community through free and accessible virtual concerts, launching an All Access online hub giving visitors an in-depth musical experience, and continuing to produce high-quality videos. In a typical Season, the Orchestra welcomes over 100,000 visitors and, in 2017, launched its live-stream initiative — an immersive, digital concert experience for audiences around the world.