



**Richmond Symphony Chorus Director Erin Freeman Steps Down After 15 Years;
Named Next Artistic Director of The City Choir of Washington**

Richmond, Va. (Dec. 6, 2021) - The Richmond Symphony announces that longtime Director of the Richmond Symphony Chorus Erin Freeman will step down at the end of the season in June 2022. She will become the new Artistic Director of The City Choir of Washington in Washington D.C, beginning in the 2022/2023 season. Freeman succeeds Robert Shafer, who will retire in July 2022 after a distinguished 54-year career as a conductor in the D.C. area.

Freeman is only the second Director of The Richmond Symphony Chorus since it was founded in 1971 by James Erb. Under Freeman's baton The Richmond Symphony Chorus became an award-winning, auditioned, all-volunteer ensemble of 150 members from the Richmond region. They perform regularly with the Richmond Symphony, the Richmond Ballet, and in stand-alone performances around the community.

Erin Freeman became director in 2007 and has led its singers in performances in Richmond, Wintergreen, Carnegie Hall, and Paris, France. Annual performances of Handel's Messiah and Let It Snow! Christmas Pops are highlights of the Symphony season. In 2018, the chorus was featured in the Grammy-nominated recording of the premier performance of "Children of Adam" by American composer Mason Bates and Vaughan Williams' "Dona Nobis Pacem".

Most recently, Freeman kept the Chorus together and singing through the pandemic when she moved the entire program online and into outdoor carparks! The Chorus is back onstage live for the holiday season and its 50th anniversary for the first time since 2019.

Freeman's appointment with The City Choir of Washington concludes a 20 month-long search that included about 50 superb candidates from all over the United States and Europe. Freeman will also leave her position as Director of Choral Activities at Virginia Commonwealth University, but will remain Artistic Director of Wintergreen Music Festival and Resident Conductor of the Richmond Ballet. The artistic programming for her inaugural season will be announced in the next several months.

"In 15 years as Director of the Richmond Symphony Chorus, Erin has nurtured and developed a truly inspiring choral tradition and the high numbers of singers and their absolute dedication is testimony to her kindness and talent. We are grateful for her leadership, passion and commitment in all these years, everyone at the Symphony and Chorus will deeply miss her. We are all thrilled and proud that she is moving to become Artistic Director of The City Choir of

Washington and wish her every success in her new position,” says Valentina Peleggi, Music Director of the Richmond Symphony.

“I’m thrilled to join The City Choir as Artistic Director. Bob Shafer has built an ensemble of exceptional artistry and a supportive community of dedicated singers. I look forward to continuing that legacy and contributing to the rich, vibrant artistic scene of the nation’s capital,” says Freeman.

“My time with the Richmond Symphony Chorus and VCU have been some of the best years of my life,” she added. “I have learned so much from my singers and students – lessons of leadership, grace, humor, and empathy. Their spirit will always be a part of how I approach my work with any group, and for that I am so grateful! And, I won’t be a stranger. I’ll be in the audience cheering away! I’m thankful that I will still be a part of the Richmond community through my work with the Richmond Ballet, and I know I’ll see many musical friends at Wintergreen over the summers!”

“We are delighted to welcome Erin into the City Choir family; she is an outstanding conductor who shares our commitment to artistic excellence, innovative programming, education, and expanding access to music. Erin’s experience and energy make her the ideal leader to build on the incredible work that Bob has done in the past 15 years with the choir to create a ‘sound like no other,’” says Benjamin Tsai, President and Chair of the Search Committee, The City Choir of Washington.

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About Erin Freeman

Erin Freeman serves in multiple capacities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and maintains a national, international, and online presence through guest conducting and speaking engagements. Freeman is Director of the Richmond Symphony Chorus, Artistic Director of Wintergreen Music, Resident Conductor of the Richmond Ballet, and Director of Choral Activities at Virginia Commonwealth University. Guest conducting includes the Buffalo Philharmonic, Orchestra Symphonique Bel’Arte, Portland Symphony Orchestra, South Carolina Philharmonic, Savannah Symphony, Charlottesville Symphony Orchestra, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, and additional ensembles throughout the United States. She has conducted at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, La Madeleine in Paris, and Boston Symphony Hall, was recently named nominee (2021) and finalist (2019) for Performance Today’s Classical Woman of the Year, and has received accolades in Opera News, ClevelandClassical.com, and Musicweb-International.com, among others. Freeman holds degrees from Northwestern University, Boston University, and Peabody Conservatory. More information can be found on her website at erinfreeman.com.

Follow Erin on social media:

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About the Richmond Symphony

The Richmond Symphony is dedicated to joy, connection, expression and collaboration through music. Founded in 1957, the Symphony includes an orchestra of 70 professional musicians and the 150-voice all-volunteer Richmond Symphony Chorus. The Richmond Symphony is overseen by a 35-member Board of Directors and managed by 28 staff members.

Each season the Richmond Symphony offers more than 200 public performances for approximately 200,000 patrons through concerts and educational programs. The Symphony also maintains an active touring schedule that brings live symphonic performances to rural communities. Through community festivals, the Symphony makes a significant impact on participating neighborhoods by combining the power of music with community investment. These community festivals allow for free outdoor musical experiences and serve thousands of people a year, creating unique opportunities for the public to engage with the Richmond Symphony and encourage community pride through music and collaboration. Additionally, the Symphony joins with Virginia Opera and Richmond Ballet for presentations each season and collaborates with other arts organizations for special projects. The Richmond Symphony is partially funded by the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. More at <https://www.richmondsymphony.com/>

About the City Choir of Washington

Founded in 2007, the City Choir of Washington is a symphonic chorus composed of 120 experienced volunteer singers from throughout the greater Washington metropolitan area. The City Choir seeks to inspire singers, audience members, and the community at large to discover the rich musical and cultural heritage of choral music.

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