FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VOICES OF ASCENSION ANNOUNCES 2020–2021 SEASON OF VIRTUAL EVENTS TO CELEBRATE 30TH ANNIVERSARY

New York, NY - Voices of Ascension, New York City’s Grammy-nominated professional choral organization, will celebrate its 30th anniversary season in 2020–2021 with a series of monthly musical events online. Highlights include a Virtual 30th-Anniversary Fall Gala honoring Founder and Artistic Director Dennis Keene; the premiere of the commissioned work Astronautica: Voices of Women in Space; a new series called Music With the Maestro Live; and streamed concerts in the spring of 2021 as it becomes safe for singers and instrumentalists to come together to make music. The season both serves as a celebration of 30 years of excellence in choral performance, and also anticipates a new era of expanding programs and mission. Season Passes to all online events are available for $100, and a special Founder’s Circle Pass is priced at $1,000. Season Passes and program details can be found at www.VoicesofAscension.org.

“The Pandemic obviously has changed how we envisioned celebrating 30 years of Voices of Ascension,” said Executive Director Liz Norman. “In previous anniversary seasons – 10 years – 15 years – 20 years – we produced and performed choral masterworks at Lincoln Center, which was an opportunity to bring our excellent singers and instrumentalists to a wider audience. During the past six months we have focused on staying connected with music lovers until we can be together again in person. By doing so online and through our daily Voices of Connection emails of choral excerpts, our organization has gone beyond Lincoln Center and we are reaching an ever-widening circle of music lovers, and particularly choral music enthusiasts. We look forward to making many more friends during Voices of Ascension’s virtual season online.”
A Monthly Offering of Virtual Concerts and Events

Voices of Ascension’s virtual 30th-anniversary season begins on Thursday, September 24 at 6 PM with the launch of a new online series, Music with the Maestro Live. Over the course of the 2020–2021 season Artistic Director Dennis Keene will delve into selected musical works with recorded excerpts and behind-the-scenes insights and stories, including their significance to Voices of Ascension. September’s offering features Ernest Bloch’s Sacred Service. Keene says, “This glorious late-Romantic work is very dear to me. I look forward to sharing stories with you about my friendship and studies with the composer’s daughter who gave me so many insights to this lush, cosmic work. It is so fitting that we present this during the Jewish High Holidays.”

Music with the Maestro Live continues on Wednesday, October 21 at 6 PM with the recording that made Voices of Ascension world famous: Beyond Chant. “The story of this CD of favorite Renaissance pieces is the stuff of a movie script,” says Keene, “from threatened lawsuits by other record companies, to front page coverage in Billboard magazine, to its becoming one of the biggest-selling choral recordings in modern times. Many of Voices’ trademark pieces came from that CD.”

Voices of Ascension’s 30th Anniversary Fall Gala, the anchor event of the season, will be streamed live online on Tuesday, November 17 at 6 PM. This will be a major celebration of 30 years of music making, with special guests and members of the Voices ensemble. Dennis Keene calls it “a trip down memory lane featuring all the highpoints, and lots of music from the past, present and future. It’s going to be a great party! You will see more information in the coming weeks, but save the date now!”

One of the most beloved events each season is Voices of Ascension’s Candlelight Christmas Concert at Church of the Ascension in the heart of New York City’s Greenwich Village. There is no need to worry about getting a ticket to these traditionally sold-out concerts, as during this special virtual season video highlights will be presented from past performances: the carols, the candles, and the joy of the holidays streamed online.

The world premiere of Astronautica: Voices of Women in Space was postponed this past spring due to COVID-19. Trio Triumphatrix and video artists are making a special online version to premiere in January (date TBA), and this marks the launch of Voices of Ascension’s artistic initiative, Voices of the New. Astronautica is a commissioned work of music, voice, and video created from NASA footage, with a score by nine women composers, and a libretto drawn from the words of sixteen women astronauts who have traveled in outer space and seen the world from a dramatic new perspective. Astronautica is curated by Voices ensemble member Hai-Ting Chinn.
The **Music with the Maestro Live** series continues in February (date TBA) with Duruflé’s beloved *Requiem*. Dennis Keene will provide excerpts and insights into the music for which he is best known, and reminisce about his organ studies with the composer’s wife, Marie-Madeleine Duruflé, in the Duruflés’ Paris apartment. In 1989 Keene produced a city-wide Duruflé Festival. Its success led to the formation of Voices of Ascension.

March marks the month Voices of Ascension anticipates for its first live concert in the COVID era. **A Concert of Baroque Favorites** (date TBA) will be streamed online and feature Voices singers and instrumentalists safely performing pieces by the great Baroque composers.

In April (date TBA) the topic for the final offering in this season’s **Music with the Maestro Live** series is “Song of the Stars,” highlighting Voices of Ascension’s Grammy-nominated CD of Spanish choral music. Dennis Keene will tell about the discovery of the manuscript for “Song of the Stars” by Granados – lost for almost a century – and the modern premiere and subsequent recording by Voices. He will play excerpts, as well as rare and remarkable works by Casals, Oltra, Morera and others from Catalonia, the region surrounding Barcelona.

The 2020–2021 season concludes for now in May (date TBA) with **A Concert Celebrating 30 Years of Voices of Ascension**. Streamed from Church of the Ascension, this concert features what Dennis Keene describes as “one gorgeous piece after another,” signature pieces from over the years, newly performed, and safely so, by the Voices ensemble. The concert will include previously and newly-commissioned world premieres by composer and ensemble member James Bassi and others to be announced. Dennis Keene notes, “Professional choruses don’t reach 30 years very often, so this will be a very special occasion!”

As always when announcing performing arts seasons, programs and artists are subject to change. During this unprecedented time, things are even more uncertain. As the course of the pandemic progresses, Voices of Ascension will keep patrons informed about any updates and will nimbly respond to performance opportunities as circumstances permit. Executive Director Liz Norman states, “We all look forward to the day when a vaccine is widely available and we feel safe to return to ‘normal’ concerts. But, in the meantime, we have planned a rich and safe season which we hope will fill your soul in the way that only music can.”

Season Pass holders will be given links to every event to access live online, as well as “on demand” later, pending the availability of that option. Dates for the December through May events will be provided to Season Pass holders and the media as plans are finalized. Season Passes are $100, with a limited number of special 30th Anniversary Season Founder’s Circle Passes priced at $1,000. Purchase Voices of Ascension 30th Anniversary Season Passes at [www.VoicesofAscension.org](http://www.VoicesofAscension.org).
Sign up for daily *Voices of Connection* emails of choral excerpts at [www.voicesofascension.org](http://www.voicesofascension.org).

**ABOUT DENNIS KEENE**
Dennis Keene, Artistic Director and Conductor of Voices of Ascension, is an internationally renowned conductor. Through his concerts and Grammy-nominated recordings with Voices of Ascension, as well as regular guest appearances as conductor and teacher, he has become one of the preeminent figures in choral music today. Recipient of awards for exceptional artistry from The Juilliard School and Chorus America, Dr. Keene has also served on grants panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts, as well as the board of Chorus America.

**ABOUT VOICES OF ASCENSION CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA**
Voices of Ascension, founded in 1990 and directed by conductor Dennis Keene, presents exceptional performances of great works of music for chorus and orchestra. It sustains a vibrant artistic community of professional vocal and instrumental musicians in New York City through a broad repertory, dynamic programming, and strategic collaborations across the tri-state area. Performances by the Grammy-nominated ensemble have been described as “richly colored, impressive, and beautifully balanced” (*Wall Street Journal*) and “inspired” (*New York Times*).

The singers of Voices of Ascension are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO.

**For calendar listings:**

**Voices of Ascension’s 30th Anniversary Season 2020–2021**

*Virtual Events – Real Inspiration*

**SEPTEMBER**
Thursday, September 24 at 6 PM
**Music with the Maestro Live**
Ernest Bloch’s *Sacred Service*
During the Jewish High Holidays, an exploration of Bloch’s late-Romantic work, led by Maestro Dennis Keene, streamed online

**OCTOBER**
Wednesday, October 21 at 6 PM
**Music with the Maestro Live**
*Beyond Chant*
Featuring Renaissance choral music and the story behind Voices of Ascension’s *Billboard* chart-topping hit, led by Maestro Dennis Keene, streamed online
NOVEMBER
Tuesday, November 17 at 6 PM
Voices of Ascension's 30th Anniversary Fall Gala
A celebration of 30 years of music making, streamed online
Honoring Founder and Artistic Director Dennis Keene
Featuring special guests and members of the Voices of Ascension ensemble

DECEMBER
Date TBA
Candlelight Christmas Concert
Voices of Ascension
Artistic Director, Dennis Keene
Video highlights from past candlelit holiday performances at Church of the Ascension, streamed online

JANUARY
Date TBA
Astronautica: Voices of Women in Space
Online premiere
Words by 16 women astronauts
Music by 9 women composers:
Hai-Ting Chinn, Renée Favand-See, Jennifer Jolley, Elaine Lachica, Gilda Lyons, Rashonda Reeves, Kamala Sankaram, Jane Sheldon, and Bora Yoon
Performed by Trio Triumphantrix:
soprano Lindsay Kesselman, mezzo-soprano Hai-Ting Chinn, and contralto Kirsten Sollek
Video projections: Elena Mannes

FEBRUARY
Date TBA
Music with the Maestro Live
Duruflé’s Requiem
Featuring insights into Duruflé’s masterpiece and how it led to the founding of Voices of Ascension, led by Maestro Dennis Keene, streamed online

MARCH
Date TBA
A Concert of Baroque Favorites
Voices of Ascension
Artistic Director, Dennis Keene
Featuring Baroque vocal and instrumental pieces, newly performed and streamed online
APRIL
Date TBA
Music with the Maestro Live
Song of the Stars
Featuring Spanish choral music from Voices of Ascension’s Grammy-nominated CD, and the story of the discovery of the manuscript by Granados, led by Maestro Dennis Keene, streamed online.

MAY
Date TBA
A Concert Celebrating 30 Years of Voices of Ascension
Voices of Ascension
Artistic Director, Dennis Keene
Featuring choral highlights and favorites, newly performed and streamed online.

Programs and artists subject to change.

Season Pass: $100
Founder's Circle Pass: $1,000
For information, visit voicesofascension.org, email info@voicesofascension.org or call the box office at 212-358-7060.

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