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**The Crossing and John Story Jenks School in Chestnut Hill begin Collaborative Project.**

*Students, poet, composer, and choir work together to create a new work.*

**Philadelphia, PA – April 11, 2014:** The Crossing is thrilled to announce that it has begun a two-year residency with the John Story Jenks School in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia. The project will include poetry workshops, composition programs, and vocal technique instruction, from which a choral work will be created for presentation during a combined concert.

In the middle of National Poetry Month, Philadelphia poet Ryan Eckes has begun his work with students at J.S. Jenks to coach them in creating their own works to be presented in an assembly on May 9th at 1:30 PM at J.S. Jenks School. Their work together will also inform Ryan's poem on which the final musical work will be based.

“We are excited for the opportunity to work with The Crossing and to facilitate this collaboration,” said Haviva Goldman from The Friends of J.S. Jenks, an independent organization of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members dedicated to supporting development at the school. “Part of the Friends of J.S. Jenks' mission is to help the school develop community partnerships and to enhance enrichment programming at the school. The collaboration with The Crossing fits both aspects of this mission, providing students in J.S. Jenks' JAM (Jenks Art and Music) program with a unique opportunity to work with commissioned poets and composers on a new choral piece, while being exposed to musical genres that the students, and their families, might otherwise not have the opportunity to appreciate. “

In the next academic year Philadelphia composer Kile Smith will share the creative process, working with students as they discover composition; watching their artistry emerge in musical works, he will also create his own piece on Ryan's poem, to be sung by the students and The Crossing. Further into the process, singers from The Crossing will visit the school, demonstrating and preparing the new work until all forces are ready to be assembled for a grand finale - a performance of the Smith-Eckes composition.

This project has been made possible in part by two generous grants from area organizations. The Presser Foundation has awarded \$13,000 and The Chestnut Hill Community Fund has granted \$8,000 to support this collaboration.

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"We are truly looking forward to our first outreach to young people and are thrilled that it is in our home community of Chestnut Hill," said Donald Nally, conductor of The Crossing. "The Jenks School has honored us with this collaboration and our artists are ready and eager to share their ideas with the young artists of the school. With funding from the Presser Foundation and Chestnut Hill Community Fund, and a culminating performance that will benefit the entire community, this project represents a true community partnership."

**About Kile Smith:** Kile Smith's music is praised by critics and audiences for its emotional power, direct appeal, and strong voice. Gramophone hailed the "sparkling beauty" of his music, calling *Vespers* "spectacular." Recent commissions include *Red-tail and Hummingbird* for Orchestra 2001 and Piffaro, *The Red Book of Montserrat* for the Philadelphia Sinfonia, *The Waking Sun* and *Where Flames a Word* for The Crossing, the song cycle *Plain Truths* (baritone, chorus, and string quartet) for the Newburyport Chamber Music Festival, *The Nobility of Women* for Mélomanie, and the *Mass for Philadelphia* by the Association of Anglican Musicians.

Kile also hosts *Now Is the Time, Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection*, and is a classical host at WRTI-FM, writes for the Broad Street Review and WRTI, and teaches. Kile was Curator of the Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music, the world's largest lending library of orchestral performance materials, at the Free Library of Philadelphia.

**About Ryan Eckes:** Ryan Eckes lives in South Philadelphia. He's the author of *Old News* (Furniture Press, 2011), *Valu-Plus* (forthcoming, Furniture Press, 2014) and other books. New poems will be published soon in *Sugar Mule*, *Bedfellows*, *Trinity Review* and *Eleven and a Half*.

**About The Crossing:** The Crossing is a twenty-four-member professional chamber choir conducted by Donald Nally dedicated to new music. Originally formed by a group of friends in 2005, the ensemble has since grown exponentially and "has made a name for itself in recent years as a champion of new music." - *New York Times* 2/14. Highly sought after for collaborative projects, The Crossing was the resident choir of the Spoleto Festival, Italy in 2007; appeared at Miller Theatre of Columbia University (in the American premiere of James Dillon's *Nine Rivers*) with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE); performed during Bang on a Can's first Philadelphia Marathon; and has appeared with Network for New Music, Lyric Fest, Piffaro, red fish blue fish, Tempesta di Mare Baroque Chamber Orchestra, PRISM Saxophone Quartet, Toshimaru Nakamura, Dolce Suono; and this past summer, The Rolling Stones.

The Crossing frequently commissions works and has presented over 40 world premieres. Current projects include commissions with John Luther Adams, Ted Hearne, Joel Puckett, Toivo Tulev, and Gavin Bryars. The ensemble recently released two recordings on the Innova label: *Christmas Daybreak* - with world premiere recordings of James MacMillan and Gabriel Jackson - and *I want to live* with the complete choral works for women by David Lang. This past February The Crossing made its Carnegie Hall debut with The American Composers Orchestra, and will be making its Disney Hall debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in two weeks.

For more information, visit [www.CrossingChoir.com](http://www.CrossingChoir.com).

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