

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Westchester Oratorio Society concludes its 16th season with the Robert C. McDonald Memorial Concert, a special event featuring Beethoven's "Choral Fantasy" performed by the highly acclaimed pianist, H el ene Grimaud, on Sunday, June 2, in the Theater at John Jay Middle School in Cross River, NY, at 4 PM.

The program also includes Brahms's "Schicksalslied" Op. 54 and selections from Beethoven's "Christus am Oelberge" Op. 85. Soloists for the performance are Roseanne Ackerley, Soprano, Jane Buchi, Soprano, Leanne Gonzalez-Singer, Alto, Marc Molomot, Tenor, Peter Buchi, Tenor and Matthew Singer, Baritone.

Bob McDonald, a much respected, active community volunteer, was among the oratorio society's original founders, serving as treasurer. Each year the society gives a scholarship in his name to a college-bound, John Jay High School senior who exhibits a commitment to community service. After his retirement from IBM, Mr. McDonald also devoted time to the Wolf Conservation Center, which was co-founded by Ms. Grimaud. The Center is a popular environmental education organization located in South Salem, NY, and the preeminent facility in the northeast for the captive breeding of wolves for reintroduction into the wild. The French-born pianist who tours internationally calls northern Westchester home.

Westchester Oratorio Society was founded in 1997 by a group of South Salem residents, including Mr. McDonald and his wife Elisabeth, and the noted choral conductor Harold Rosenbaum. Since then, the group has been true to its mission of bringing high quality performances of choral masterworks to northern Westchester audiences with professional soloists and orchestras while providing a unique educational experience for the avocational singers that comprise the chorus.

"I was honored that Ms. Grimaud agreed to perform with us in memory of Bob," said Benjamin Niemczyk, who succeeded Mr. Rosenbaum and is now in his sixth season as choral director. A Brooklyn resident and a founding member of C4, the nation's largest new music choral ensemble, he is also conductor of the New Westchester Symphony Orchestra, a community ensemble which rehearses at the Music Conservatory of Westchester.

"The 'Choral Fantasy' is a great tribute," Mr. Niemczyk said. "The piece is a celebration of nature and art, and just as Bob was involved with many aspects of the local community, it brings together many diverse elements, highlighting solo piano, chorus and orchestra, while the text celebrates the gift of music, comparing its power to that of the springtime sun," he continued. With enthusiasm, the conductor made note that earlier this year, Ms. Grimaud's recording of Beethoven's "Emperor Concerto" was chosen as a "classical essential" by iTunes in a global campaign as one of 30 "must own" classical recordings. "Her performance will surely be a unique treat for me, our performers and the audience," he concluded.

The oratorio society began its season in November at Temple Shaaray Tefila in Bedford with a concert that featured Schoenberg's "A Survivor from Warsaw." In addition to its local performances and outreach programs, the group has performed in venues including Carnegie Hall, the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and collaborated with groups including the Westchester Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic and REBEL Baroque Orchestra.

Tickets for the Robert C. McDonald Memorial Concert are \$25 and \$50. For further information call 914 763 9389, email westchesteroratorio@gmail.com or visit the group's website at www.westchesteroratorio.org. Find WOS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/westchesteroratorio and follow on Twitter at @westchesterora.