

For Release: April 26, 2024

Contact: Liza Beth

202.331.7577 ext. 243

liza@chorusamerica.org



Chorus America's 2024 Awards Recognize Outstanding Chorus and Individuals

Chorus America has announced the recipients of its 2024 awards program, recognizing Chorus America members for a broad range of achievements in choral music and service to the choral field. Awards celebrate meaningful contributions from remarkable individuals, choruses, and organizations.

"Chorus America is thrilled to honor these exceptional choruses and choral leaders who enrich our communities and inspire us through their outstanding work," said Chorus America president and CEO Catherine Dehoney. "Their artistry, dedication, and the joy they bring to their work moves the choral field forward."

Award winners will be recognized at the [2024 Chorus America Conference](#) in Atlanta, Georgia on June 6-8.

Michael Korn Distinguished Service Award: John Alexander

The Michael Korn Distinguished Service Award recognizes a member whose long-term service to the choral field has significantly furthered Chorus America's mission and vision.

John Alexander is the 2024 recipient of the Michael Korn Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his immense contributions to the choral field and his tireless advocacy for the artistry of singers and conductors. Alexander is artistic director emeritus of the Pacific Chorale, an organization that grew into one of the foremost professional-core symphonic choirs in the U.S. during his extraordinary 45-year tenure as artistic director. A passionate educator, Alexander taught as professor of music in the California State University system for 46 years, establishing respected choral programs at Cal State Northridge and Cal State Fullerton and training generations of artists who have gone on to achieve international careers of significance. Alexander served multiple terms on Chorus America's board, including as board president, and has long been a driving force behind Chorus America's conducting programs, most recently the Choral-Orchestral Conducting Academy. Alexander's achievements are a testament to a life dedicated to evolving the choral art form.

"I am deeply touched that Chorus America has chosen to honor me with this prestigious award," said Alexander. "One of the greatest joys of my life has been my long tenure of being a part of the Chorus America family. Thank you, Chorus America, for advocating so beautifully for all of us, helping each of us pursue our unique individual missions in furthering the art of choral singing."

Margaret Hillis Award for Organizational and Artistic Achievement: VOX Femina Los Angeles

The Margaret Hillis Award for Organizational and Artistic Achievement is presented to a member chorus that demonstrates both artistic achievement and a strong organizational structure with financial

stability, as well as a commitment to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion, community engagement, and education. This award honors the memory of Margaret Hillis, founder of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, for her more than 40 years of professional achievement and outstanding contributions to the choral field.

The 2024 Hillis Award recognizes an adult volunteer chorus and goes to **VOX Femina Los Angeles**. Now in its 27th season led by founding artistic director Iris S. Levine, VOX was built on a commitment to giving women voice and to centering its messaging and programming on issues of social and racial justice. The organization's dedication to commissioning new works for SSAA voices has resulted in over 50 commissions, many of them collaborations with composers from under-represented communities, as well as active participation in commissioning consortiums that expand the canon of women's choral music. VOX's music education programs serve over 2,000 students annually with a variety of offerings, including a Justice Choir community singing program offered to schools with little or no existing music education and a High School Choir Festival. These expanding programs are supported by a growing staff and board, as well as robust revenue-generating and fundraising efforts.

"I am extraordinarily proud that we have received Chorus America's 2024 Margaret Hillis Award," said Levine. "Many years ago, I had the distinct privilege of studying with Ms. Hillis, a trailblazer for women in the choral arts, and having VOX connected to her name and legacy is a tremendous honor. VOX Femina is truly grateful to Chorus America for this wonderful recognition."

Alice Parker Fund Award: Carlos Cordero

The Alice Parker Fund Award supports the composition and thoughtful presentation of choral music based in the traditions of Black and Latinx communities. This award recognizes the exemplary work of a Black or Latinx composer or an ensemble that respectfully and authentically presents works incorporating these traditions and experiences.

Carlos Cordero is the 2024 recipient of the Alice Parker Fund Award. A Venezuelan composer living in Austin, Texas, Cordero's compositions draw on his Latinx experience and musical influences to address socially relevant themes, pose questions, and create space for meaningful conversations. He collaborates with a wide range of ensembles across North and South America and Europe, including professional, community, and university choruses and his compositional gifts span a broad stylistic and expressive spectrum. With works like "¡Ayúdame! (Venezuelan Plea for Life)," which shines a light on the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, Cordero inspires listeners to seek greater understanding and to work towards change.

"I am honored to receive this award for my advocacy through new choral music," said Cordero. "Ms. Parker's fantastic work resonates beyond her many musical works and lives on with each of our missions. Thank you, Chorus America, for being an organization that supports and advocates for our BIPOC choral community. I look forward to deepening my advocacy journey in creating music that helps us explore how to be kinder to each other and ourselves."

Education and Community Engagement Award: Long Beach Camerata Singers

The Education and Community Engagement Award recognizes programs that expand a chorus's role in its community. Successful programs demonstrate mission-based program development, viable music

education, effective management and fiscal integrity, a commitment to artistic achievement, and collaborations that are sustainable, beneficial, and meaningful for all partners.

The 2024 Education and Community Engagement Award honors a chorus with a budget of over \$200,000 and goes to **Long Beach Camerata Singers**. The Camerata Children’s Music Academy Program provides fundamental music education to preschool students ages 2-5 at three Early Childhood Education Centers run by the Greater Long Beach YMCA, which offers state-subsidized childcare to low-income families. The in-depth program teaches concepts like melody, harmony, beat, and tempo during 30-minute classes that meet three times per week, overcoming traditional barriers to access like cost and transportation. A rigorous evaluation process shows that participating students demonstrate increased language development and improved social skills, motor skills, and emotional regulation, entering kindergarten and the public school system on more equal footing with peers from affluent families.

“All of us at Camerata are thrilled and honored to receive the Chorus America 2024 Education and Community Engagement Award for our Camerata Children’s Music Academy,” said board president Jan B. Hower. “The project has been a success because of the dedication of many creative people who contributed to the vision, resulting in the program we have today. We hope this recognition will spark the interest of funders and donors, allowing us to make this vital resource available to even more children.”

Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award: Heritage Signature Chorale

The Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award honors the life and achievements of educator, conductor, and arranger Brazeal Dennard by recognizing individuals or organizations whose work demonstrates a long-term commitment to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion and furthers diverse African American choral traditions through performance, research, or the creation of new compositions of significance.

The 2024 Brazeal Wayne Dennard Award goes to the **Heritage Signature Chorale**. Since its founding in 2000, the organization has stayed true to its mission of preserving, at the highest artistic level, the performance art traditions of African American choral music and its vision to enhance opportunities for a new generation of listeners to understand and appreciate this historical legacy. In addition to shining a light on diverse repertoire by Black composers, Heritage Signature Chorale has catalyzed essential conversations around race, history, and culture through educational offerings like pre-concert discussions and virtual conversations on topics like cultural appropriation and performance practices of the Negro Spiritual by multicultural choirs. The Chorale has performed in notable venues and houses of worship, and further spreads its mission and vision through partnerships with other choral organizations in the Washington DC area and beyond.

“We at The Heritage Signature Chorale are deeply grateful to receive this award, presented in the name of a true trailblazer in music arts and education, Brazeal Dennard,” said president and artistic director Stanley J. Thurston. “I was honored to conduct his retirement concert in Detroit, invited by Maestro Dennard himself. I will never forget that experience, which has been a foundation for my vision with Heritage Signature Chorale.”

Louis Botto Award for Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Erin Guinup

The Louis Botto Award for Innovation and Entrepreneurship was established in memory of Louis Botto for his artistry and entrepreneurial spirit in founding the vocal ensemble Chanticleer. The award recognizes a mid-career conductor for their contributions to furthering the mission of their ensemble or organization.

Erin Guinup is the recipient of the 2024 Louis Botto Award, which honors the leader of a volunteer adult ensemble. As the founding executive and artistic director of the Tacoma Refugee Choir, an ensemble of refugees, immigrants, and friends, Guinup has developed an innovative new model that creates a more equitable and welcoming community. The majority of repertoire is internally generated to reflect the lived experiences of members, and the choir actively involves members in the creative process and leadership roles, resulting in a strong sense of member ownership. Since its inception in 2016 in Tacoma, Washington, the choir has welcomed over 800 members from over 70 countries and raised awareness about local and global refugee issues through high profile performances, creative video projects involving Grammy-winning artists and government officials, and speaking engagements including TEDxSeattle and the Global Migrant Festival.

“It means a lot to me for Chorus America to recognize our unique community and the joy and beauty of bringing people together from diverse backgrounds,” said Guinup. “Singing can change lives and I'm grateful for the privilege of seeing people heal and grow from finding their voice with the Tacoma Refugee Choir.”

Chorus America Philanthropy Award: Anne B. Keiser

The Chorus America Philanthropy Award is given to individuals, corporations, or foundations whose financial support of Chorus America and the choral art has been especially significant and generous.

Chorus America is honored to present the 2024 Philanthropy Award to **Anne B. Keiser** for her immense generosity and support of the choral field. As a dedicated choral advocate and singer, Keiser's passion and impact can be felt across the stage, in audiences, at the board table, and across the community. Now in her second term as a Chorus America board member, her generous support has ensured the strength of the organization's membership services for the field and has helped nurture special programs such as the Choral Executive Leadership Academy and conducting programs. Keiser has served as a member of the board of The Choral Arts Society of Washington since 1988, twice serving as board chair, where she has generously supported a wide variety of outstanding concerts, featuring both new and beloved works, powerful artistic partnerships, and meaningful collaborations including the Annual Choral Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with the choirs of Washington Performing Arts.

“I'm deeply honored to receive this award,” said Keiser. “Choral singing and choruses are a huge, joyous part of my life, and it is very meaningful to me to give back to the art form that I love.”

Visit chorusamerica.org/awards to learn more about Chorus America's Awards program.

Chorus America is the advocacy, research, and leadership development organization that advances the choral field. We support and serve choral conductors, administrators, board members, and singers with tools, training, peer networking, and access so that choruses are better able to contribute to their communities. Our membership includes more than 6,000 choruses, individuals, businesses, and organizations that are part of the choral field.

Chorus America is governed by a diverse board of accomplished arts leaders from the U.S. and Canada, and the executive staff is headquartered in Washington DC. Learn more at www.chorusamerica.org.

###