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# Internationally renowned St. Olaf Choir shares its artistry and beauty of sound from Seattle to Phoenix during West Coast Tour, Jan. 31 – Feb. 11, 2018

# *Under the direction of conductor Anton Armstrong, St. Olaf Choir presents concert at Benaroya Hall in Seattle, 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31, 2018*

(Northfield, Minn.) – For more than a century the world-renowned St. Olaf Choir has set a gold standard for choral singing, and this winter’s national tour will take the ensemble’s 72 singers and conductor Anton Armstrong from Seattle to Phoenix with concerts in Oregon and California, Jan. 31 through Feb. 11, 2018. Their program offers an eclectic program of sacred and secular choral masterpieces that range from Baroque classics to American folk songs, world music, hymns, and spirituals. *(The tour itinerary and program follows at the end of this press release.)*

**The St. Olaf Choir’s 2018 National Winter Tour includes a concert at Benaroya Hall’s   
S. Mark Taper Foundation Auditorium, 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2018.**

Reserved tickets, priced at $30 to $40 for adults and $10 for students, are available at by calling 206-215-4747 or visiting [seattlesymphony.org](https://www.seattlesymphony.org/concerttickets/calendar/2017-2018/benaroyahall/st-olaf-choir).

**Singers from the Seattle area:** soprano **Kayleigh Shaffer**, Tacoma (a senior majoring in Vocal Music Education); and alto **Helena Webster**, Oak Harbor (a sophomore majoring in Vocal Performance).

“Hearing the St. Olaf Choir in concert is more than just a musical experience,” says Anton Armstrong. “Our singers, performing at the highest artistic level, convey a message of hope. Our music provides a bridge to what can unite us at a time when the world is so divided.”

Armstrong adds: “We often hear from concertgoers who tell us they are not only struck by the sound and uniformity of the St. Olaf Choir, but also by the earnestness of what comes through the voices of our young singers. The St. Olaf Choir performs at the highest artistic level, focusing on body, mind, spirit, and voice. Our singers touch the hearts and souls of listeners, and our audiences leave transformed.“

Founded 106 years ago by F. Melius Christiansen at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., the St. Olaf Choir is internationally recognized as a creative force behind America’s *a cappella* choral tradition.

Now in his 28th year as conductor of the St. Olaf Choir, Anton Armstrong is only the fourth conductor in the ensemble’s history, beginning his tenure in 1990. In addition to his role as a professor of music at St. Olaf College, he is in demand in the international choral scene as a guest conductor and lecturer.

Like his three predecessors, Armstrong carries forward the international reputation of the St. Olaf Choir, an ensemble that is rooted in St. Olaf College’s tradition of faith and commitment to a global perspective. “I program works that speak to the human spirit,” Armstrong says, “which are represented by today’s best choral composers, including Rosephanye Powell’s *With What Shall I Come*, Eric Whitacre’s *The Seal Lullaby*, and *Gloria* from André Thomas’ *Gospel Mass*.”

The tour program also features music by West Coast composers, including an arrangement of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Chorale (Pieta)* by Seattle based John Muelheisen, *This is the Day* by Stanford Scriven of Portland (who is a 2011 St. Olaf College graduate and past member of the St. Olaf Choir), *To Music* by David Conte of the San Francisco Bay area, and *Sure On This Shining Night* byMorten Lauridsen of Los Angeles.

Armstrong opens this year’s tour program with Baroque works: Jacob Gallus’ *Haec est dies (This is the Day)*, John Feguson’s setting of Johann Crüger’s *Ah, Holy Jesus*, and Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Chorale (Pieta)* and *Fürchte dich nicht (BWV 228)*.

In addition to the piece by Scriven, the second set of the program includes an arrangement by Padre Jesus Gabriel Segade of Ariel Ramiez’s *Gloria (Misa Criola)*, Jean Berger’s *Canticle of the Sun*, Ralph Manuel’s *Alleluia*, and F. Melius Christiansen’s *Praise to the Lord*.

The third set in the program includes the works by Conte, Lauridsen, Powell, and Whitacre, as well as Carolyn Jenning’s *Feast of Lanterns* and *Sanctus* from Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass*.

The St. Olaf Choir and Armstrong close these tour concerts with Thomas’s rousing *Gloria*, Kenneth Jenning’s arrangement of the Korean folksong *Arirang*, and sacred arrangements including Robert Scholz’s *Children of the Heavenly Father*, Undine Smith Moore’s *We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace*, and Moses G. Hogan, Jr.’s *Ride on King Jesus*.

Joining the St. Olaf Choir and Armstrong on their tour is violinist and violist Charles Gray, professor of music at St. Olaf College. A former member of the Rochester Philharmonic in New York and the Grand Rapids Symphony in Michigan, Gray is currently a substitute member of the Minnesota Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

**ST. OLAF: A TRANSFORMATIONAL CHOIR**

*“When they opened their mouths to sing, an even wall of sound emerged: words clear, notes true. But more than that, the notes were felt … (The St. Olaf Choir is) good because of its remarkable balance and mellow   
tone … It’s good because of its dynamic shadings: its ability to sustain, then build from, nearly inaudible pianos, or to distinguish between a forte and a fortissimo … Dr. Anton Armstrong, the group’s leader since 1990,   
is clearly a gifted choral director – and a teacher to the core.” ~ The New York Times*

After F. Melius Christiansen founded the St. Olaf Choir in 1912, he was credited with contributing to the transformation of American choral music. He and the St. Olaf Choir transcended America’s limited early 20th century choral tradition with the introduction of *a cappella* singing of the highest level, creating a model for the widespread choral growth that followed.

“F. Melius opened a whole new paradigm that never existed before,” Anton Armstrong says. “Prior to the St. Olaf Choir, glee clubs and oratorio societies were the choirs of the day. *A cappella* singing in America was new for its time. The St. Olaf Choir helped establish what we know today as the parish choirs that are now a regular part of many worship services across the nation.”

The St. Olaf Choir has a long history of innovation. It became one of the first to tour the nation regularly starting in 1920. The St. Olaf Choir also began recording in the 1920s and performed on air when radio was in its infancy. The annual St. Olaf Christmas Festival has aired on national and international radio and television for more than 40 years, and continues to serve as a prototype for these types of holiday broadcasts.

In 2007 the St. Olaf choral ensembles achieved another major milestone when *Christmas at St. Olaf: Where Peace and Love and Hope Abide* was simulcast to more than 180 movie theaters across the United States on Dec. 2, 2007. The PBS premiere of the one-hour highlights program produced by Twin Cities Public Television aired on Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2007, and reached 2.5 million people.

Four years later the 100th St. Olaf Christmas Festival was simulcast to 372 movie theaters across America. On Dec. 23, 2013, PBS premiered *Christmas in Norway with the St. Olaf Choir*, which was filmed at the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway in June 2013, and won two regional Emmy® Awards in 2014.

The singers commit to balancing full course loads with rehearsals five days a week; choir members perform concerts entirely from memory. Anton Armstrong has conducted the St. Olaf Choir since 1990. There have been only three conductors of the St. Olaf Choir before Armstrong: Kenneth Jennings, Olaf Christiansen and the founder and first conductor F. Melius Christiansen.

The St. Olaf Choir has also performed in a number of symphonic collaborations including performances of Maurice Duruflé’s *Requiem for Voices, Orchestra and Organ, Opus 9*, with the Minnesota Orchestra under the baton of Osmo Vänskä in April 2010 at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. The St. Olaf Choir has also performed with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and under the direction of Sir Neville Marriner, Neemi Jarvi, Sir David Willcocks, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Andreas Delfs, Helmuth Rilling and Robert Shaw.

Touring, recording and broadcasts are all major components in the artistic life of the St. Olaf Choir. The St. Olaf Choir has performed for capacity audiences in major concert halls across the nation and overseas since 1920. The St. Olaf Choir traveled to Asia in June 2017, presenting concerts at Minatomirai Hall in Tokyo and the Kyoto Concert Hall in Japan, followed by performances in South Korea at the Busan Cultural Center Grand Hall in Busan, Gyeongju Arts Center in Gyeongiu, and the Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul.

Other recent tours have included a 2013 tour to Norway, a 2009 tour to England, Wales and Ireland, a 2005 tour of Norway, a 2001 European tour including Paris, Prague, Vienna and Berlin, and a 1997 tour to Australia and New Zealand. Annual tours attract audiences totaling 25,000.

For more info visit: [stolafchoir.com](http://stolafchoir.com).

St. Olaf Choir 2018 National Tour Program

**I.**

*Haec est dies (This is the Day)* Jacob Gallus (1590-1591)

*Ah, Holy Jesus* Johann Crüger (1598-1662)

setting by John Ferguson (b. 1941)

*Chorale (Pieta)* Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

setting by John Muelheisen (b. 1955)

*Fürchte dich nicht (BWV 228)* Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

**II.**

*Gloria (Misa Criola)* Ariel Ramirez (1921-2010)

arr. Padre Jesus Gabriel Segade (1923-2007)

*Canticle of the Sun* Jean Berger (1909-2002)

*Alleluia* Ralph Manuel (b. 1951)

*This is the Day* Stanford E. Scriven (b. 1988)

*Praise to the Lord* arr. F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955)

###### INTERMISSION

**III.**

*To Music* David Conte (b. 1955)

*Sure On This Shining Night* Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

*The Seal Lullaby* Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

*Feast of Lanterns*  Carolyn Jennings (b. 1936)

*With What Shall I Come* Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

*Sanctus (Mass)* Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

***V.***

*Arirang* arr. Kenneth Jennings (1925-2015)

*Children of the Heavenly Father* arr. Robert Scholz (b. 1940)

*Gloria* André J. Thomas (b. 1952)

*We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace*  arr. Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)

*Ride On King Jesus*  arr. Moses G. Hogan Jr. (1957-2003)

**Optional Selection:**

*Beautiful Savior* arr. F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955)

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**St. Olaf Choir 2018 National Winter Tour Itinerary**

**Weekend Tour:**

**Buffalo, Minnesota**

Saturday, January 20, 7 p.m.

Buffalo High School Performing Arts Center

**Stillwater, Minnesota**

Sunday, January 21, 3 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church

**Main Tour:**

**Seattle, Washington**

Wednesday, January 31, 8 p.m.

S. Mark Taper Foundation Auditorium

Benaroya Hall

**Portland, Oregon**

Thursday, February 1, 7:30 p.m.

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral

**Eugene, Oregon**

Friday, February 2, 7 p.m.

First United Methodist Church

**Medford, Oregon**

Saturday, February 3, 3 p.m.

North Medford High School

**Arcata, California**

Sunday, February 4, 3 p.m.

John Van Duzer Theatre

Humboldt State University**Davis, California**

Tuesday, February 6, 7:30 p.m.

Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center  
 for the Performing Arts

University of California, Davis

**Stanford, California**

Wednesday, February 7, 7:30 p.m.

Stanford Memorial Church

**Santa Barbara, California**

Thursday, February 8, 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

**Pasadena, California**

Friday, February 9, 7:30 p.m.

First United Methodist Church

**Rancho Santa Fe, California**

Saturday, February 10, 3 p.m.

Village Community Presbyterian Church

**Paradise Valley, Arizona**

Sunday, February 11, 3 p.m.

Camelback Bible Church

**Home Concert:**

**Northfield, Minnesota – Home Concert**

Friday, February 16, 7:30 p.m.

Boe Memorial Chapel

St. Olaf College

Free and open to the public

Tickets are now available for all tour concerts online at stolaf.edu/tickets.