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"The Crossing" Announces 2009 Concert Season

Donald Nally's all-pro chamber choir continues mission of premiering new choral music.

Philadelphia, PA, April 25, 2008: The Crossing is thrilled to announce their fourth season line-up of new music sung in the amazing acoustic of the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill. Singers from across America will gather to form what the critics have just called "the best chorus in Philadelphia" (Stearns, Philadelphia Inquirer, 2008). All concerts will be conducted by Donald Nally, "a musical treasure whose local ties should be maintained and sustained at all costs" (Caruso, Chestnut Hill Local, 2006).

Season highlights include:

- The Celan Project: Three commissioned premieres on poetry of this great German-Romanian poet. The new works will be written by Kirsten Broberg, David Shapiro, and Kile Smith. Additional Celan settings by the versatile and innovative colorist Erhard Karkoschka will set The Celan Project in motion at our January opening concert.
- Featured composer: Bo Holten, famed Swedish composer and conductor, best known for his recordings with the BBC Singers. We will sing his *First Snow, A time for everything, In nomine, and Rain and Rush and Rosebush*.
- Joby Talbot's *Path of Miracles*: an hour-long choral cantata depicting the journey of medieval pilgrims to Santiago, Spain, resting place of St. James. This is a tremendous new piece of epic scope and will be the sole work on the first of our Month of Moderns concerts.
- A work for women's choir by 2007 Pulitzer-prize-winner, David Lang.
- *A Month of Moderns*: the greater part of our season will be sung over a month beginning in mid-May – a celebratory concentration on new music for the final month of Philadelphia's Classical music season.



CROSSING @ WINTER: January 4 at 4pm

This concert will kick off The Celan Project with two 1997 settings of the poet's words by Erhard Karkoschka, the Czech composer whose interest in improvisation and loosening the autonomy of musical notation were heard to great effect in our performance of his music last Fall. Equally innovative, but more closely tied to traditional notation, is the music of Bo Holten, who seems to have been born with an affinity for choral textures. The featured composer of our entire season, two of Holten's works will be sung in January: *A time for everything*; and *First Snow*, the latter beginning with an extended wordless description of snow falling. Winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in music, David Lang's taut, emotion-packed musical language will be heard in a new work for women's voices: *I want to live* (2008). Famed British choral composer and conductor (The Finzi Singers), Paul Spicer's *How Love Bleeds (Four Carols for Dark Times)* (2003/5) will be sung, and the concert will conclude with John Kennedy's *Someday* (2000). Kennedy is head of Santa Fe New Music and an internationally recognized percussionist. He wrote this work for Kent Tritle's choir at St. Ignatius Loyola in New York, a creative and uplifting setting of the prose of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, French Jesuit and author of the modernist *The Phenomenon of Man*.

A MONTH OF MODERNS

Saturday, May 9 at 8pm

The first concert in our Month of Moderns will feature a single work: Joby Talbot's *Path of Miracles* (2005). Talbot – known in his native Britain for film and television scores – uses repetition and ostinato to bring an exoticism to his tonal language that captures the other-worldly quality of this epic journey; the four movements are named for the main staging points along the Camino Francés: Roncesvalles, Burgos, León, and Santiago. The work was written for Nigel Short's London-based Tenebrae. Talbot's command of range and texture keeps this extended work alive with ideas and his ability to weave together chant, medieval rhythms, the sounds of four languages, and extremes of range produces a gripping, moving evening of music.

Friday, May 22, 8pm

Bo Holten returns to our repertoire with *In nomine* (1999), a stunning work for 24 voices based on a mass of early-16th-century English composer, John Taverner. Also drawing on music of that era is American composer Stephen Stucky's *Whispers* (2002), written for Chanticleer and based on the famed *Ave verum corpus* of Elizabethan composer William Byrd, who seems to call out from an earlier time, pulling at Stucky's more modern setting of a poem of Walt Whitman. Still recalling 16th century, we hear British composer Peter McGarr's setting of Shakespeare's famed 'This scepter'd isle' speech (Richard II), in his *Dreaming England* (2005). We expand The Celan Project with a young Chicago composer, Kirsten Broberg, whose sense of color and space have brought her much recent attention. Czech composer Petr Eben, who passed away last October, will be remembered with his thoughtful *Bilder der Hoffnung* (1998), featuring our organist, Scott Dettra, organist at Washington National Cathedral. The fascinating Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, an institution in his native Denmark, seems to effortlessly combine humor with longing, minimalism with improvisatory writing, eclecticism with simplicity; it's a curiosity why he is not known in America! His *Four Madrigals from the Natural World* (2001) form a challenging, wonderful experience in music.



Friday, June 5, 8pm

The final work of featured composer Bo Holten is his *Rain and Rush and Rosebush*, a beautiful discourse on listening. American composer Jackson Hill's fascinating *Voices of Autumn* (1989), sets Japanese poetry in an exotic language of memory and subtext. Among our audience's favorite composers is Estonian Arvo Pärt, whose setting of *I am the true vine* (1999) is an extended meditation in simplicity and silence. Two shorter works will feature modern texts: British composer Philip Moore's *I saw him standing* (2004), setting Archbishop Rowan Williams' words, and American Paul Fowler's *Potter's Clay* (2007), a work for women's voices based on a poem of Naomi Rose. English composer John McCabe's *Scenes in America Deserta* (1986) requires the singers to demonstrate their virtuosic ensemble skills in creating a variety of moods depicting deserts around the world: a thoroughly modern work employing thoroughly traditional choral colors. Finally, The Celan Project reaches its conclusion with a new work of Kile Smith, whose *Epiphany Vespers* we sang to great acclaim this past January in collaboration with Piffaro, the Renaissance Band. Smith's music is rooted in tradition and yet expands that tradition to investigate just what *is* possible when twenty gifted singers get together. Having established a working love affair with The Crossing, we look forward to see what Smith will write for us this season.

About The Crossing

The Crossing was founded in 2005 by Donald Nally and friends specifically to perform new and modern choral music. Since then The Crossing has been garnering accolades acclaiming the beauty and accuracy of its performances. The Crossing is comprised of individual singers from many cities who come together with a shared vision of sound and phrasing based upon years of singing together. Its prior critically-acclaimed concerts have included works by David Lang, Thomas Adès, Kaija Saariaho, Thomas Jennefelt, Jonathan Harvey, James MacMillan, Gabriel Jackson, Judith Bingham, Robert Convery, Jonathan Dove, Judith Weir, Henryk Gorecki, Philip Moore, Arvo Pärt, John Tavener, Herbert Howells, Bruno Bettinelli, Edwin Fissinger, Gian Carlo Menotti, Erhard Karkoschka, Tarik O'Regan, Thea Musgrave, Kenneth Leighton, Luigi Nono and new works of David Shapiro and Benjamin C.S. Boyle.

For more information, visit www.CrossingChoir.com.

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