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**New York City Master Chorale to celebrate the season with Camille Saint-Saëns
Oratorio de Noël and the New York premiere of Paul Leavitt *Magnificat***

NEW YORK, November 18, 2013 – The New York City Master Chorale (www.nycmasterchorale.org), led by Artistic Director Thea Kano, will mark the holiday season with a concert at the Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch, featuring Camille Saint-Saëns’ *Oratorio de Noël* and the New York premiere of Paul Leavitt’s *Magnificat*. Both works feature a quintet of phenomenal soloists from the Chorale, including soprano Paige Cutrona, whom *The New York Times* describes as “vocally striking.” The concert will be accompanied by organist James Kennerley on the Church’s magnificent Aeolian-Skinner organ.

Late in 1858, the Church of the Madeleine commissioned 23-year-old Camille Saint-Saëns to write an oratorio for the Christmas celebration. He began the work on December 4, and by December 15 had finished a ten-movement work telling the Christmas story, with additional commentaries. Saint-Saëns’ *Oratorio de Noël* is an intimate work that blends a number of musical styles—narrative recitatives, folk-like melodies, passionate operatic solo passages, and simple choral writing.

Paul Leavitt also wrote his *Magnificat* to depict the awe of Christ’s impending birth from the perspective of the Virgin Mary. However, his commission came from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC to commemorate the 70th anniversary of its concert series. Originally set for chorus and orchestra, the New York City Master Chorale will premiere an arrangement of Leavitt’s work for chorus and organ.

“We are delighted to quick off the holidays with such beautiful repertoire depicting the Christmas story,” says Kano. “It is a particular honor to include the New York premiere of Paul Leavitt’s *Magnificat*, a perfect compliment to the Saint-Saëns and a celebration of the season.”

**St-Saëns Oratorio de Noël and Leavitt Magnificat
New York City Master Chorale**

WHEN: Friday, December 13, 2013 at 8:00 pm

WHERE: The Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch (552 West End Avenue), at the corner of West 87th Street, accessible by via the 1 trains to 86th Street.

TICKETS: \$25 for students/seniors and \$35 for general seating. Tickets may be purchased online at nycmasterchorale.org or by calling the New York City Master Chorale Box Office at 917.326.1422. Tickets are also available at the door prior to the concert, as space permits.

About Conductor Thea Kano

Thea Kano is the founding artistic director and conductor of the New York City Master Chorale. Dr. Kano is known for her expressiveness and dynamic conducting and her Chorale has been praised for its balance and richness in tone. She has prepared choruses for Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and has prepared the New York City Master Chorale for performances with the Astoria Symphony and the Park Avenue Chamber Symphony. Dr. Kano's ensembles have performed at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Disney Hall, Église Saint-Sulpice (Paris), and on the National Mall for the 2009 and 2013 inaugural ceremonies. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the University of California, Los Angeles, where she studied with Donald Neuen and Paul Salamunovich.

About Composer Paul Leavitt

Paul Leavitt made his début as a concert pianist at 15 years old with the Albany Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Julius Hegyi. As a scholarship student he received a Master's Degree from the Juilliard School in New York and a Bachelor's Degree from SUNY Purchase. He was a laureate of the International Steinway Competition for Young Talents (1989) in Paris, France. A versatile musician and composer, Leavitt performs regularly in Europe and in the United States as a classical pianist, concert organist and choral conductor. He currently serves as the Director of Music and Arts at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Washington, DC.

About Organist James Kennerley

James Kennerley has been Organist and Music Director at the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Times Square, since 2008. Mr. Kennerley has performed at many major venues in Europe and the United States, both as a soloist and accompanist, and has been a prizewinner at several competitions. At Saint Mary's, he performs weekly on the church's famous 1932 organ during services and concerts. Mr. Kennerley has studied with David Sanger, Thomas Trotter and McNeil Robinson, and holds the Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists diploma.

About New York City Master Chorale

Founded in 2005, the New York City Master Chorale consists of 75 trained musicians from the greater New York City area who seek to broaden public interest in fine choral music by performing a full range of musical styles at the highest level of quality. The Chorale presents an annual concert series at venues throughout New York City, including the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle, The Riverside Church and Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center. In addition, the Chorale

has been invited to sing in many of New York City's most prestigious venues, including Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Avery Fisher Hall and Carnegie Hall. The Chorale made its European debut at Église Saint-Sulpice in Paris, France in 2011. The Chorale is noted for its excellent performances of the entire range of the choral repertoire, with a specialty in repertoire by French composers. As an integral component of its mission, the Chorale also provides education and outreach initiatives to New York City schools and community organizations.

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