

CONTACT:

Louise Adams

540-231-5200

louise@vt.edu

Virginia Tech Department of Music presents the New River Valley Symphony, Virginia Tech Choirs, and Blacksburg Master Chorale performing Johannes Brahms' choral masterpiece, *Ein deutsches Requiem*.

BLACKSBURG, Va., March 24, 2008 – Virginia Tech's Department of Music presents the New River Valley Symphony with the Blacksburg Master Chorale and the combined University Choirs in a performance of Johannes Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* on Saturday, April 12 at 8:00 p.m. in Burruss Hall Auditorium on the Virginia Tech campus.

Brian Gendron, Director of Choral Activities at Virginia Tech and Artistic Director of the Blacksburg Master Chorale, will conduct this choral masterpiece in a performance featuring English supertitles by Kathleen and Paul Zweifel. Solo parts will be sung by guest artists baritone Eugene Galvin and soprano Sandra DeAthos.

Massive in its orchestration and demanding in its libretto, Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* was written between 1865, following the death of his mother, and 1868. It also contains music that he wrote in 1854 after the attempted suicide of his dear friend and mentor Robert Schumann. Brahms' concept for his *Requiem* was unique abandoning the liturgical chants of the Catholic Church and replacing it with his own selection of passages from Luther's translation of the Bible. In his *Requiem*, he shifts the focus from the departed to the mournful living providing them comfort and hope. This great masterpiece of western art music transcends religious boundaries and provides comfort to us all. While it is sacred, it is also secular. The passages Brahms chose avoided Christian dogma and there is no mention of Christ or final judgment. "German" in the title of his piece refers to the German language. Writing to the music director of the Bremen Cathedral, Brahms wrote, "...I will admit that I would gladly give up the 'German' and simply put 'human' [in the title]..." Brahms dedicated *Ein deutsches Requiem* to Robert Schumann, his mother, and all of humanity.

The Virginia Tech Department of Music is very pleased to participate in the Community Recovery Program by providing complimentary tickets to this performance for distribution to the first responders of

the tragic events of April 16, 2007. Sponsored by The New River Community Service Board, the New River Valley Disaster Response Coalition and the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley with support from the United Way Fund, the Community Recovery Program encourages first responders to spend time with their families in activities that get them out and about in social settings.

This performance of Brahms' Requiem is also the kick-off event for ArtsFusion 2008, a weeklong celebration of the arts on the Virginia Tech campus, in the Town of Blacksburg and throughout the New River Valley occurring April 12 – 19. For more information about ArtsFusion, visit www.artsfusion.net

Following the concert, light refreshments will be served in the Burruss Auditorium lobby.

Eugene Galvin, praised in *Opera News* for his “rich voice and superb musicianship,” has sung with Wolf Trap Opera, Sarasota Opera in Cincinnati, Opera New England, and Opera Theater of Northern Virginia. He sang Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* under the baton of Victor Borge at Constitution Hall, and as the title character in *The Marriage of Figaro* with the New York Grand Opera. On the concert stage, Mr. Galvin has performed as soloist in the Kennedy Center's *Messiah Sing-Along*, in Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* with Ute Lemper and the National Symphony, and with the Arlington Symphony and Williamsburg Symphonia. He is also a regular featured performer in WMAL Radio's annual live Christmas concert from the Kennedy Center. Mr. Galvin holds a DMA in Opera Performance from the University of Maryland, an MM degree from the Catholic University of America and a BA from Frostburg State University. He teaches voice at the Catholic University of America and at the University of Maryland, where he also directs the Opera Workshop.

Soprano Sandra DeAthos is a frequent performer on the professional performance stage. As a Merola artist with the San Francisco Opera, DeAthos performed the roles of Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, and Despina in *Così fan tutte* and The Hen in *The Cunning Little Vixen* and with the Berkeley Opera she has performed the role of Galatea in *Acis and Galatea*. She has also appeared twice with Boston Lyric Opera as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* and as Bekhetaten in Phillip Glass' *Akhmaten*. Other professional credits include Papagena and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera North, Blonde in *The Abduction* from the *Seraglio* with DuPage Opera Theater and First Bridesmaid in *The Marriage of Figaro* with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Other operatic performance credits are Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Servilia in *La Clemenza di Tito*, Cake Box Lady in *Postcard from Morocco*, Adina in *The Elixir of Love*, Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and the title role in the world premier of Majorie Merryman's *Antigone*. On the

concert stage, DeAthos sang Handel's *Jephtha* and Bach's *Magnificat* with the San Francisco Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and Dvorak's *Te Deum* with the Springfield Symphony.

Brian Gendron is the Director of Choral Activities at Virginia Tech, where he conducts four ensembles and teaches applied choral literature and conducting. Since his appointment in 2003, Virginia Tech ensembles have performed at state conferences sponsored by the Virginia Music Educators Association and Virginia Music Teachers Association and they have collaborated with the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra, the Kansas City Baroque Consortium and the American Opera Theater. Gendron is also the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Blacksburg Master Chorale (BMC). Under his direction, the BMC has expanded with the addition of the Community Children's Chorus and the Blacksburg Master Singers. Gendron directs the Annual Blacksburg Bach Festival and serves as Chorus Master for select Opera Roanoke productions. Gendron has held positions at Goodrich High School in Michigan and Hollins University in Virginia. He served as Director of Music for churches in Michigan and Illinois and conducted the University of Illinois Chorus, University Singers, and Varsity Men's Glee Club. Gendron earned a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Central Michigan University and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting and Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he has also completed his residency for a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting.

Tickets for the New River Valley Symphony concerts are \$8 for general admission and \$5 for Seniors/Students and are available in advance by calling the UUSA Ticket Office at (540) 231-5615, online at www.tickets.vt.edu or at the door, if available, one hour prior to performance. For more information on the performance, please contact the School of the Arts at (540) 231-5200.

The Department of Music at Virginia Tech provides professional music training to select music students and enhances the cultural life of the university, region, and the Commonwealth through teaching, professional service, artistic performance, creativity, and research. The Department of Music, located in the School of the Arts within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, also provides high-quality training to a wide variety of ensembles and courses for large numbers of non-music majors.