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**San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus presents  
PARADISE FOUND  
March 30 – April 1, 2017 at Herbst Theatre**

SAN FRANCISCO (March 9, 2017) – Today, **San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus (SFGMC)** and **Dr. Timothy Seelig, Artistic Director**, announced the spring concert for Season 39: Community, featuring four performances of **Paradise Found**, running **March 30 – April 1** at the **Herbst Theatre** (401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco 94102). Performances are **Thursday, March 30 at 8 p.m., Friday, March 31 at 8 p.m.** and **Saturday, April 1 at 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.** Tickets range in price from \$25-65 and are available now on [www.SFGMC.org](http://www.SFGMC.org) or by calling City Box Office at (415) 392-4400.

*Paradise Found* features the 250 men of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, the spectacular choral sound for which they are known, and a cavalcade of surprises along the way. SFGMC's trademark sound will be on full display with several world-premiere pieces, cherished favorites and must-see production numbers. In addition, the Chorus welcomes the international sensation **Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu Dance Company**.

*Paradise Found* runs the entire gamut of musical styles in one beautiful evening, all wrapped up in the theme of "paradise" — both literal and figurative. In addition to four world-premiere pieces, more familiar selections include Rodgers & Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" (in the style of Israel Kamakawiwo'ole), "Hawaiian War Chant" (à la Bette Midler), Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along* and Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." The Chorus will also present stunning versions of "Amazing Grace" and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century hymn "Nearer My God To Thee," which highlight the Chorus' rich, choral tones. All of these come together to make a phenomenal program that showcases the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus at its best.

"Like all of us, my life has been about finding and creating my own heaven — or paradise — on earth," writes **Dr. Timothy Seelig**. "One of my vehicles for creating this has been music. *Paradise Found* is truly a culmination of that for me."

The Chorus will give the world-premiere performance of SFGMC Composer-in-Residence **Dr. James Granville Eakin III**'s 15-minute epic work "**Paradiso**," based on the work of Dante. "Paradiso" is breathtaking, radiating with bold conviction and vivid color, and is anchored by three trios guiding the listener from despair to ultimate joy, backed by the power of the entire Chorus. Eakin has recently premiered "Behold, the Gate" and the "#twitterlieder: 15 Tweets in 3 Acts" song cycle at SFGMC concerts over the past two years. Additionally, the Chorus will premiere "**Sanctuary**" by world-renowned composer **Ola Gjeilo**, who the Chorus commissioned to write "New Year's Carol" in 2014.

"Preparing this concert has been a decade-long journey for me," adds **Seelig**. "It was ten years ago that I was introduced to Dante's *Paradiso*, and I began dreaming about a concert centered around that gargantuan tome. I could not be more thrilled to be presenting the world-premiere of 'Paradiso.' It is truly a mirror of our own lives and our search for peace, tranquility and unity. We start with the darkest points of our lives, and through the journey of self-awareness and transformation, we find paradise."

For *Paradise Found*, **Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu Dance Company**, led by Director/Kumu Hula **Patrick Makuakane**, join the Chorus as special guest artists. Founded in 1985, the company of 40 dancers is known for its unique contemporary style called "hula mua," or "hula that evolves." The style blends traditional movements with non-Hawaiian music like opera, electronic, dance, alternative, and pop. Both *hula mua* and authentic, traditional pieces are showcased in the company's visually captivating stage productions. Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu will join SFGMC for some beautiful pieces together on the Herbst stage.

*Paradise Found* sees the Chorus at the recently renovated Herbst Theatre for the first time in over a decade. The Theatre is part of the War Memorial and Performing Arts Center in San Francisco's arts district, and houses eight large Beaux-Arts murals, wonderfully restored from the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and was the site of the signing of the United Nations Charter on June 26, 1945. The intimate space lends itself perfectly to the extraordinary sound of the Chorus.

"I've always believed that you create your paradise with your words, thoughts and actions — wherever you are," writes **Chris Verdugo, SFGMC Executive Director**. "I can't think of a more meaningful time in our history when we have needed this more than now. We [SFGMC] are doing just that with a show that calls forth hope, love, laughter and peace, and that for a few brief hours creates a paradise that you melt into and away."

### **About San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus**

For nearly 40 years, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus has courageously served as the international standard bearer for a powerful and accomplished mix of high-caliber performance, human rights, community activism, empowerment and inclusiveness,

establishing it as an icon among LGBT organizations. Founded in 1978, it was the first organization of its kind and is credited with starting the LGBT choral movement, galvanizing and changing the course of LGBT history. It continues to rally and inspire other arts-based community organizations around the world. Under the leadership of Artistic Director and Conductor Dr. Timothy Seelig, SFGMC has in recent seasons established a heightened level of performance standards receiving audience and choral acclaim, increased its touring and recording profile and broadened its impact and reputation in the community while maintaining its signature blend of humor, personality and high-voltage performances. For more information, visit [www.sfgmc.org](http://www.sfgmc.org) and @sfgmc (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram).

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