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CONTACT: Michelle McGrath, Media Relations,
339-832-0820, michelle@mcgrathpr.com, mcgrathpr.com

Pilgrim Festival Chorus Launches 20th Anniversary Celebration with Mozart Masterwork Concerts

*Scituate performance expansion launches high school student collaboration,
cultivating a multi-generational mission for the ensemble*

PLYMOUTH and SCITUATE, MA Issued March 7, 2019... Pilgrim Festival Chorus (PFC), the South Shore's principal non-profit community chorus, launches its two-decade anniversary celebration this spring with two concerts featuring the choral masterwork *Mozart Requiem* on Saturday, April 27, 7:30 pm at St. Bonaventure Parish, Plymouth, and on Sunday, April 28, 4 pm at Scituate Center for the Performing Arts, 606 Chief Cushing Highway, Rte. 3A, Scituate. A brief pre-concert talk will be held 30 minutes prior to each performance. The chorus is directed by founding Co-Artistic Directors William B. Richter, conductor and Elizabeth Chapman Reilly, accompanist. The concerts feature a 20-piece professional orchestra.

Pilgrim Festival Chorus celebrates its 20-year milestone of celebrating the world's great choral music with two concerts featuring Mozart's *Requiem*, one of the best-known choral pieces ever composed, and a setting of England's first Poet Laureate John Dryden's poem, *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, by Massachusetts composer Clifton J. Noble. The work, which celebrates the important role music plays in our lives, was commissioned by the Assabet Valley Mastersingers in 1998 as a companion piece to their performance of the *Requiem*. To deepen the audience's understanding of the *Requiem*, the concerts are preceded by a talk discussing the work's history and unique place in the classical repertoire.

"None of us knew that founding the chorus would lead to two decades of marvelous choral music making," shares Richter. "It was made possible through the collaboration that Elizabeth and I have enjoyed. We're only 20 years into this! I can't wait for all that is to come."

PFC's inaugural performance at Scituate Center for Performing Arts features a debut collaboration with Scituate High School's (SHS) Select Choir, under the direction of four-decade educator William B. Richter, who serves both ensembles. The Select Choir, an auditioned ensemble of nearly 60 high school singers, is currently immersed in rehearsing the masterwork, aspiring to foster the students' lifelong appreciation of classical and choral music. This in-depth study, part of this semester's school curriculum, will enhance the students' understanding of the work and give them an opportunity to sing with a large, multi-generational choral group, performing alongside adult chorus members, voice teachers, professional instrumental musicians and music educators. The collaboration is supported in

part by a grant from Scituate Cultural Council, in addition to funds contributed by several regional Massachusetts Cultural Council chapters.

“I knew my students were becoming attached to the *Requiem* when one student, during rehearsal, leaned over to another and whispered, ‘What’s your favorite movement?’” said Richter. “They have embraced this challenge and are greatly looking forward to performing with an adult chorus and orchestra.”

Tackling this Mozart masterwork is a landmark achievement for Pilgrim Festival Chorus, as well as an extraordinary learning opportunity for all the collective singers, orchestra members and audiences, anticipating reaching new fans with the Scituate expansion. The resulting Scituate performance features an assembled ensemble of more than 140 singers, further inspiring PFC’s creative and administrative leadership to further outreach in the greater South Shore community.

Programming the Mozart to mark this important anniversary shows the Pilgrim Festival Chorus’s level of musical maturity. “It can take a long time for a group to be ready to perform a complex work like the Mozart,” says Reilly. “For the last twenty years, we’ve intentionally programmed increasingly complex repertoire that has helped our singers grow to the point where they can perform great works, both old and new.”

Four professional soloists were selected from a talented pool of recent vocal performance college graduates, giving them the opportunity to expand their professional experience and grow their classical resume. Three accomplished Scituate High School instrumental students join the ranks of the orchestra, offering them the opportunity to play with seasoned professionals.

The orchestra includes two basset horn players that will help give a flavor of authenticity to the concert. The basset horn, popular in the 18th century, was a favorite of Mozart’s. Clarinetist Jennifer Gilman, a retired Scituate music educator, is embracing the opportunity to play the instrument in order to perform alongside Diane Heffner, a basset horn expert with several professional regional orchestras.

Pilgrim Festival Chorus is an auditioned choral group with about 80 active members representing all skill levels, dedicated to the performance of choral music in many genres. Cultivating a passion for classical and choral music in audiences is central to its mission. The ensemble typically performs major concerts in the winter and spring each season. Pilgrim Festival Singers, a PFC offshoot ensemble, performs an annual summer concert series of lighter music, and occasionally sings at local community events.

Tickets to the *Mozart Requiem* are \$20 for adults, \$18 for senior citizens and \$15 for students over 14. Children age 14 and under are admitted for free. Scituate Public School students up to age 14 are admitted for free, and discounted Scituate family tickets are available, all by online advance reservation, supporting PFC’s mission to increase access to the professional performances of classical and contemporary masterworks. Tickets sold at the door do not qualify for discounts. All tickets are available at pilgrimfestivalchorus.org and from PFC members. To reserve tickets by phone, please call Gail at (781) 826-8416. Tickets will be available at the door, limited to venue capacity.

For more information, please visit pilgrimfestivalchorus.org, or follow Pilgrim Festival Chorus on Facebook.

About Pilgrim Festival Chorus

The Pilgrim Festival Chorus (PFC) is a volunteer, not-for-profit singing group dedicated to performing choral music in public and private concerts; to providing music education to its members and the public; and to encouraging and promoting the performance of quality choral music. The PFC is funded in part by grants from many of the region's Cultural Councils, local agencies supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. For more information about PFC, please visit pilgrimfestivalchorus.org, or follow Pilgrim Festival Chorus on Facebook.