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**American Choral Directors Association Premieres new Choral/Orchestral work *Cenotaph* by Dominick Argento at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary National Conference**

On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Choral Directors Association National Conference in Oklahoma City, Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award Winning American composer Dominick Argento has composed *Cenotaph*, a seven-movement major choral/orchestral work to be premiered in Oklahoma City March 5-7 at the Civic Center Music Hall.

Dictionaries define cenotaph as a monument to someone buried elsewhere, especially one commemorating people who died in a war. The original Greek

term means simply "empty tomb." Commenting on the title Argento states: "I remember, as a boy of seven or eight, seeing my first cenotaph in one of my hometown's public parks. Its proximity to the children's play area – the swings, merry-go-rounds, hopscotch diagrams chalked on sidewalks – did not occur to me as incongruous then. Only much later was I struck by the irony of how brief a span of time – often less than a decade – might lapse between romps on a playground and having one's name engraved in memorial stone."

The walls that define the Oklahoma City National Memorial form a kind of cenotaph. That first cenotaph, like the dozens later encountered in America and Europe and those humble, ubiquitous tablets on village greens all over England, to the monumental Menin Gate in Belgium bearing 55,000 names, was intended to honor soldiers killed in World War I. Recent past examples of a cenotaph include the striking Vietnam Veterans Memorial which catalogs even more names than Menin Gate, and the immense World War II Memorial in Washington, DC which displays no names at all but is intended to honor the 400,000 American soldiers who were killed, and the 16 million who served.

Argento's newly commissioned work uses a collage of textual sources, a trait that Argento is well-known for as well as his sensitive settings of complex, sophisticated poetry. Argento is best known as a leading composer of lyric opera and choral music. Among his most prominent pieces are the operas *Postcard from Morocco*, *Miss Havisham's Fire*, and *The Masque of Angels*, and the song cycles *Six Elizabethan Songs* and *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, the latter of which earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1975. In a predominantly tonal context, his music freely combines tonality, atonality and a lyrical use of twelve-tone writing, though

none of Argento's music approaches the experimental fashions of the post World War I era.

Performers for the world premiere of *Cenotaph* which will be complimented on the program with the performance of Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* include the Oklahoma Philharmonic Orchestra; a Festival Choir consisting of the Canterbury Choral Society, Oklahoma City University Singers, Oklahoma State University Concert Chorale and Singers, Oklahoma University Choir, and the University of Louisville Cardinal Singers and Collegiate Chorale. The performance is conducted by Ann Howard Jones. Soloists for the *Dona Nobis Pacem* are soprano Lynn Eustis and bass Joshua Copeland.

The Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> performance of these works is open to the public and tickets are available in advance through the Canterbury Choral Society Box Office, or at the door.

For more information about the March 4-7 American Choral Directors Association National Conference or for the March 6 performance of *Cenotaph*, call (405) 232 8161.