

PRESS RELEASE

Distinguished Irish choir to perform in Philadelphia area

Cappella Caeciliana, a distinguished chamber choir from Belfast, Northern Ireland, is undertaking a tour of the USA in late April and is including the Philadelphia area in its itinerary. Under its Musical Director, Donal McCrisken, the choir will present concerts of sacred and Irish music on April 27th (7.30pm) in St. Thomas' Church, Villanova University, Radnor Township, and on April 28th (7pm) in St. Malachy's Church, 1429 North Eleventh Street, Philadelphia. After leaving Philadelphia, the choir will then provide the music for Choral Evensong in Washington National Cathedral on April 29th. This tour is part of **Imagine Ireland**, a year-long celebration of Irish arts in the USA supported by the Irish Government agency, Culture Ireland. Imagine Ireland has already brought leading Irish groups such as The Chieftains and Altan to Pennsylvania this year.

The Villanova concert is part of the University's "Catholic Imagination in the Arts" series, which is designed to demonstrate how religious faith informs and inspires the work of artists, writers, poets, playwrights, musicians, film makers and culture in the broadest sense. The concert includes a broad range of music by Catholic composers from the 16th to the 21st centuries.

The concert in St Malachy's Church on the following evening is designed to provide financial support for the work which the parish undertakes to support children in North Philadelphia. Long known as a "beacon of hope", the parish has strong connections with Cappella Caeciliana's homeland, having been founded by Irish immigrants in 1850. As well as the choir's core repertoire of sacred music, this concert also features various Irish items of a secular nature.

Founded on the feast of St Cecilia in 1995, **Cappella Caeciliana** specialised from the start in singing great choral repertoire in both concert and liturgical contexts.

Performances have included Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Pergolesi's *Magnificat* as well as an

increasingly broad a cappella repertoire ranging from plainchant to contemporary composers such as John Tavener and Eric Whitacre. The choir has performed in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and at a Papal Audience in Rome. Appearances closer to home have included collaborations with the Ulster Orchestra and The Priests (who were founder members of the choir and are currently on sabbatical from it in order to fulfil their recording commitments with Sony). The choir has also undertaken full performances of Bach Cantatas in Dublin directed by Toronto-based Kevin Mallon. Frequently to be heard and seen on radio and television, Cappella Caeciliana has to date released three highly acclaimed CDs.

Exsultet, a new work from composer Neil Martin will be included in all of the choir's US performances. The work is a new setting of the Easter vigil prayer - traditionally sung in Latin, Martin's composition uniquely also uses the Irish language. Funded by the UK National Lottery through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, ***Exsultet*** was specially commissioned by **Cappella Caeciliana** for its USA tour.

Neil Martin, who is one of Ireland's leading contemporary composers and lives in Belfast, is known for his work with The West Ocean String Quartet, for his collaborations with leading Irish musicians (including Christy Moore, The Dubliners, The Chieftains, Altan and Mary Black), and for his compositions across many genres. Noteworthy amongst recent scores are the feature film *Hell's Pavement* (2009), his choral symphony, *OSSA* (2007), and his a cappella setting of the *Agnus Dei* (2010), premiered by Methodist College Chapel Choir in St Paul's Church at Ground Zero. Currently working on orchestral, operatic and theatrical projects, Neil has contributed to more than 100 albums and his music has taken him throughout Europe and North America, including performances in Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Centre DC and London's Royal Albert Hall.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Admission to the Villanova University and St Malachy's Church concerts is free and no tickets are required. The St Malachy's concert will have a free will offering and will be followed by a reception in the school hall.
2. For general tour enquiries, please contact Robert P. Connolly, (617) 548-0238
3. For local information regarding the Villanova University concert, please contact Marcella Bray - marcella.bray@villanova.edu
4. For local information regarding the St Malachy's Church concert, please contact Mary Courtney - (215) 763-1305 - DevelopmentDirector@stmalachy.us
5. Neil Martin is available for interview – contact on 011 44 7775 846663 or via info@caeciliana.org.
6. Donal McCrisken is available for interview – contact on 011 44 7812 110105 or via info@caeciliana.org.
7. A broadcast quality recording of 'Exsultet' is available on request.
8. Further information about Cappella Caeciliana can be found at www.caeciliana.org
9. Further information about Imagine Ireland can be found at www.imagineireland.ie