



St. Olaf Choir centennial celebration continues with 16-city, 10-state national winter tour across the Midwest to the East Coast with an eclectic program that honors its profound influence on America's choral tradition, Jan. 21 - Feb. 12

Northfield, Minn. – In the midst of an action-packed centennial celebration that has so far included a starring musical role on Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" broadcast live from St. Olaf College in November and a nationally simulcast and broadcast St. Olaf Christmas Festival in December, the St. Olaf Choir and conductor Anton Armstrong now embark on a 10-state, 16-city national winter tour across the Midwest to the East Coast Jan. 21 through Feb. 12.

Armstrong and the St. Olaf Choir will perform in some of the nation's finest concert halls including the Music Center at Strathmore in North Bethesda, MD; Wharton Center for Performing Arts in East Lansing, MI; Clay Center for the Performing Arts in Charleston, WV; the Meymandi Concert Hall in Raleigh, NC; Ferguson Center for the Arts in Newport News, VA; Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in Milwaukee; and Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis.

The program for the 2012 national tour features an eclectic program of sacred and secular masterpieces past and present, including works by Palestrina, Bach and Mendelssohn, as well music composed by the St. Olaf Choirs past three conductors: F. Melius Christiansen's *Psalm 50 (Movements II and II)*, Olaf C. Christiansen's *Light Everlasting* and Kenneth Jennings' *Antiphon (Spiritual Songs)*. Armstrong has also commissioned two new works for this tour: *On Horizon's Brim* by Ralph M. Johnson and *Ave Rosa* by René Clausen. The program also includes folk songs and spirituals including *Shenandoah* and *My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord*.

In its early days, the St. Olaf Choir was among the first American choirs to tour nationally and internationally. Founded in 1912 by F. Melius Christiansen, the St. Olaf Choir has been consistently recognized internationally as an ensemble that sets an uncompromising standard of excellence and innovation, and it is internationally recognized as a creative force behind America's *a cappella* choral tradition.

2012 National Tour

Visit stolafchoir.com for details about concerts in these cities:

[Fergus Falls, MN](#) – Jan. 21

[Moorhead, MN](#) – Jan. 22

[Madison, WI](#) – Jan. 28

[East Lansing, MI](#) – Jan. 29

[Indianapolis, IN](#) – Jan. 30

[Charleston, WV](#) – Jan. 31

[Charlotte, NC](#) – Feb. 1

[Raleigh, NC](#) – Feb. 2

[Newport News, VA](#) – Feb. 3

[North Bethesda, MD](#) – Feb. 6

[Cleveland, OH](#) – Feb. 7

[Grand Rapids, MI](#) – Feb. 8

[Urbana, IL](#) – Feb. 9

[Chicago, IL](#) – Feb. 10

[Milwaukee, WI](#) – Feb. 11

[Minneapolis, MN](#) – Feb. 12

(MORE)

ST. OLAF: A TRANSFORMATIONAL CHOIR

After F. Melius Christiansen founded the St. Olaf Choir in 1912, he was credited with contributing to the transformation of American choral music. He and the St. Olaf Choir transcended America's limited early 20th century choral tradition with the introduction of a cappella singing of the highest level, creating a model for the widespread choral growth that followed. Christiansen was the first of only four conductors for the St. Olaf Choir. He was succeeded by his son, Olaf Christiansen, in 1943; Kenneth Jennings in 1968; and current director Anton Armstrong in 1990.

Conductor Robert Shaw, one of America's greatest choral luminaries of the 20th Century, offered this praise of a St. Olaf Choir concert in 1983: *"From all the standpoints – intonation, enunciation, tonal beauty and balance, rhythmic vitality and musical style – it was absolutely first-rate ... I do not know of any college or university in the United States where choral singing of this quality goes on day-in and year-out."*

"F. Melius opened a whole new paradigm that never existed before," Anton Armstrong says. "Prior to the St. Olaf Choir, glee clubs and oratorio societies were the choirs of the day. A cappella singing in America was new for its time. The St. Olaf Choir helped establish what we know today as the parish choirs that are now a regular part of many worship services across the nation."

The St. Olaf Choir has a long history of innovation. It became one of the first to tour the nation regularly ... starting in 1920. The St. Olaf Choir also began recording in the 1920s and performed on air when radio was in its infancy.

The annual "St. Olaf Christmas Festival" has aired on national and international radio and television for more than 30 years ... and continues to serve as a prototype for these types of holiday broadcasts. This past December the 100th St. Olaf Christmas Festival "Rejoice, Give Thanks and Sing" was simulcast to nearly 300 movie theaters nationwide, and a new one-hour highlights telecast aired nationally on PBS.

In November, the St. Olaf Choir released its third volume in its *Great Hymns of Faith* series through [St. Olaf Records](#). This series has been the choir and St. Olaf Records' most popular commercial release ever, with the first two volumes received international critical acclaim and selling more than a quarter-million copies around the world. The St. Olaf Choir's ever-expanding discography now features 27 recordings.

The St. Olaf Choir has also been featured in a number of symphonic collaborations including, most recently, performances of Maurice Duruflé's Requiem for Voices, Orchestra and Organ, Opus 9, with the Minnesota Orchestra under the baton of Osmo Vänskä in April 2010 at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. The St. Olaf Choir has also performed with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and under the direction of Sir Neville Marriner, Neemi Jarvi, Sir David Willcocks, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Andreas Delfs, Helmuth Rilling and the late Robert Shaw.

For more information visit: stolafchoir.com.

To request interviews with Anton Armstrong, recordings or tickets for tour concerts, please contact publicist Karl Reichert at karl@karlreichert.com or 612-708-5275.