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**Contact: Alan Baker
(570) 343-6707**

Choral Society will offer Regional Premiere of James Whitbourn's "Annelies"

New Cantata shares the story of Anne Frank through the words of her own Diary

SCRANTON/WILKES-BARRE, PA: The adult chorus of The Choral Society of Northeast Pennsylvania will join with The Bloomsburg University Concert Choir, Community Concerts at Lackawanna College, and soprano Jessica Hitchcock on **Sunday, March 31, 2019** to offer the regional premiere of James Whitbourn's "Annelies." The performance will be at the Peoples Security Bank & Trust Auditorium at Lackawanna College in downtown Scranton and begin at 4:00 pm. The Society's artistic director, Dr. Alan Baker, will conduct, with accompaniment by violinist John Vaida, Jr., cellist Christiane Vaida, clarinetist Nick Driscoll, and pianist Tsukasa Waltich. General admission tickets are priced at \$15.00 for adults with ages 18 and under admitted free and will be available at the door or by calling the Choral Society at (570) 343-6707. A \$2.00 discount will be given for adult students, senior-citizens, and WVIA members.

Composed in 2004, the work's libretto, by Melanie Challenger, uses words from 'Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl,' to share one of the most famous memoirs of the Holocaust. Anne Frank began her diary in 1942 at the age of thirteen, shortly before her family into hiding in a claustrophobic room above an Amsterdam warehouse, and continued it for the more than two years they remained there before being discovered and sent to the Nazi concentration camps. Beginning from one small volume, the Diary had spilled over into several notebooks and more than 300 loose sheets of paper. The arresting officers ransacked the room and took everything of apparent value, but left the Diary. A Dutch woman who had been the hideaways' lifeline to the outside world, rescued the pages and kept them, unread, until the war ended. She then gave the

Diary to Anne's father Otto, the family's sole survivor. Thus left behind as worthless by the looters, the diary has become a treasure to the world. As author Ernst Schnabel wrote: "Her voice was preserved, out of the millions that were silenced.... It has outlasted the shouts of the murderers and has soared above the voices of time."

The libretto of *Annelies* is not a chronological narrative of excerpts from the diary. It begins with a foreshadowing of the end and concludes with words in which Anne crystallized her hopes and ideals. In between are reflections on life in hiding, observations of the increasingly ominous world outside, and expressions of intense self-awareness. A few parts of the libretto are taken from sources other than the diary: including a traditional German folksong that Anne may have learned at her mother's knee, the Greek words *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy), an account of the capture taken from official reports, and verses from the Old Testament *Psalms* and *Lamentations*.

Formed in 1999 through the merger of the former Singers Guild of Scranton and the Wyoming Valley Oratorio Society, The Choral Society of NEPA serves as "the region's voice for choral music and education," sponsoring a series of graded choirs for children age 5-18, as well as large and small ensembles for adults. Choral Society ensembles regularly collaborate with the NEPA Philharmonic; are featured in broadcasts on the region's public radio affiliate, WVIA-FM; and perform regularly in the region's finest and most historic venues. Society ensembles and singers have toured internationally; performed by invitation at important state, regional, and national events and honor choirs; and participated in a number of recordings. Additional information on the Choral Society and its offerings is available by calling (570) 343-6707 or visiting the organization's website at www.choralsociety.net.

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