



## Press Release

135 North Grand Avenue | Los Angeles, California 90012  
Press Contact Libby Huebner | 562.799.6055 | nyjazz@aol.com

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Press contact: Libby Huebner (562) 799-6055 nyjazz@aol.com

# **LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE PRESENTS WORLD PREMIERE OF MARK GREY'S *MUGUNGHWA: ROSE OF SHARON* FEATURING VIOLINIST JENNIFER KOH AS PART OF CHOIR'S ACCLAIMED "LA IS THE WORLD" INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTING CITY'S VIBRANT MULTI- CULTURAL INFLUENCES**

***All-Korean Program, "Stories from Korea," Conducted by  
Music Director Grant Gershon, also includes Hyowon Woo's Me-Na-Ri,  
and Beloved Korean Classic Arirang Fantasie***

**Sunday, March 6, 2011, 7 PM, at Walt Disney Concert Hall**

***Kogi Korean BBQ Truck Rolls up to Disney Hall Prior to Performance from 4-7 PM***

Renowned violinist Jennifer Koh joins Gershon and the Los Angeles Master Chorale to perform the world premiere of a piece by Mark Grey, named one of the *Los Angeles Times* "2008 Faces to Watch," Sunday, March 6, 2011, 7 p.m., at Disney Hall. The new work, *Mugunghwa: Rose of Sharon*, with text based on the extraordinary verses of Korean poet and engineer Namsoo Kim, who fled from a North Korean prison at the outbreak of the Korean War, was commissioned by the Chorale and is the fourth piece to be premiered by the choir as part of its notable "LA Is the World" initiative, which was launched in 2007. This installment begins phase two of the initiative, conceived by Gershon as a collaboration among composers, master musicians and the choir to expand the choral literature with works that mirror LA's vibrant multi-cultural fabric.

Also on the all-Korean program, entitled "Stories from Korea," is a stunning piece for three choirs entitled *Me-Na-Ri* by Hyowon Woo, who is the composer-in-residence of the world-renowned Incheon City Chorale and is recognized as one of the most brilliant young Korean composers on the scene today. The Chorale also performs a variety of Korean folksongs, including a wonderful choral arrangement by Hojun Lee of the classic Korean song *Arirang Fantasie*, Hyunchul Lee's *Dona Nobis Pacem*, an arrangement by Ben Jisoo Kim of *Hangangsu Taryeong* (Han River Song), Jungsun Park's *Dal-A Dal-a Ba-Geun Dal-A* (children's song).

Adding special flavor and a lighter touch to the evening, the famed Kogi Korean BBQ truck rolls up to Disney Hall prior to the concert from 4-7 PM, selling its delectable blend of Korean American street fare. *Los Angeles Times* food writer Jessica Galt gushes, "magic resides in a Kogi taco."

*Mugunghwa: Rose of Sharon*, written for Koh and the Chorale, is a story of courage and passion and based on writings by Korean engineer and writer Namsoo Kim. The work relates one man's spiritual path to reunification with his family, homeland and deceased father and blends hints of Korea's cherished musical and cultural traditions with Western art music to create a vibrant soundscape.

"Mark Grey is a composer for whom I have tremendous admiration," notes Gershon. "His piece, *Mugunghwa*, is a major new choral work – poetic, intense, and sonorous. It sparkles with fantastically colorful harmonies that respond beautifully to the poetry and the personal letters Mark has chosen to set to music. Audiences will love Mark's storytelling, his fascinating and accessible music, as well as the interplay of virtuosic chorus and violin solo. This is an extraordinary new work that I am exceedingly proud to premiere with the Master Chorale. This concert is a brilliant showcase for the Chorale and exemplifies what we mean when we say "LA is the World."

Grey, whose compositions have been performed in Carnegie Hall, the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall and the Barbican Centre in London, among other leading venues, eloquently describes the genesis of the piece: "When Grant approached me to conceptualize a work for solo violin, chorus and chamber ensemble I welcomed the challenge, partly due to there being very little repertoire written in this unique setting. Jennifer, a Korean-American, and I both decided that a story that celebrates the Korean people should be the subject of the work. In *Mugunghwa*, meaning Rose of Sharon, the symbolic role of the solo violin represents a Korean shaman – traditionally a woman who links the spirit world with human beings. Here, the violin is performing a non-traditional rite connecting one man's spiritual path with the reunification of his family, people, homeland, and deceased father. The chorus paints a wondrous landscape with Namsoo Kim's beautiful and turbulent poetry. Soaring and vibrant choral passages mix with deeply sonorous and dense textures to weave the touching story of loss and hope. When the solo violin and ensemble perform together they channel the voice of Kim's father. Kim, who fled a North Korean prison at the outbreak of the Korean War, never saw his father again. Though not directly quoting traditional Korean music, *Mugunghwa* does amalgamate hints of the country's cherished traditional music and song with western art music to help create a colorful and distinctive sonic world.

"*Mugunghwa* is a celebration of the Korean people. Through the poetry and letters of one North Korean man's story, we experience a lifelong journey to reconnect with his family and the yearning for a unified country. Escaping prison in the North during the outbreak of the Korean War, and relocating a world away, Kim Namsoo finds himself lost without the family he left behind, as experienced by so many millions of Koreans still living today with a divided country. Here, we unite the beauty of words and music to color a Utopian world where boundaries vanish and war is forgotten."

Among his many credits as a composer and sound designer, Grey, the former composer-in-residence for The Phoenix Symphony, has composed for the Kronos Quartet, violin prodigy Leila Josefowicz, and soloists Joan Jeanrenaud, cello, Piotr Szewczyk, violin, and The Paul Dresher Ensemble, and was commissioned to write a work for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Minimalist Jukebox Festival, which was premiered by The California EarUnit in March 2006.

The virtuosic Koh, who mesmerizes audiences with the sheer intensity of her playing, last appeared with the Chorale for a critically acclaimed performance of Tan Dun's *Water Passion After Saint Matthew* in March 2005.

*Mugunghwa: Rose of Sharon* is supported by grants from The James Irvine Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc. Media sponsors are Korea Times/Hankook Ilbo and Radio Seoul 1650 KFOX, and the Korean Cultural Center of Los Angeles.

Concert tickets to range from \$19 to \$124. Student Rush seats are \$10 and are available at the box office two hours before the performance. For tickets and information, please call (213) 972-7282, or visit [www.lamc.org](http://www.lamc.org). (Tickets can no longer be purchased at the Walt Disney Concert Hall Box Office except on concert days starting 2 hours prior to the performance.) The Walt Disney Concert Hall is located at 111 South Grand Avenue at First Street in downtown Los Angeles.

**EDITORS: Please note Calendar Listing**

**EVENT:**

Los Angeles Master Chorale presents

"Korean Stories" – all-Korean program featuring world premiere of Mark Grey's *Mugunghwa: Rose of Sharon*

Grant Gershon, Conductor

Jennifer Koh, Violin

**WHEN:**

**Sunday, March 6, 2011, 7pm**

**PROGRAM:**

HYOWON WOO	Me-Na-Ri
HYUNCHUL LEE	Dona Nobis Pacem
arr. BEN JISOO KIM	Hangangsu Taryeong (Han River Song)
arr. HEEJO KIM	Gyoungbokung Taryeong (Palace Song)
JUNGSUN PARK	Dal-A Dal-a Ba-Geun Dal-A (children's song)
HOJUN LEE	Arirang Fantasie
MARK GREY	Mugunghwa: Rose of Sharon (world premiere)

**VENUE:**

Walt Disney Concert Hall  
111 S. Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**TICKETS PRICES:**

Concert Tickets: \$19 - \$124;

Student Rush seats available at box office two hours before the performance

**TICKETS/INFORMATION:**

213-972-7282

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**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Giving a voice to Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Grammy-nominated **LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE** (LAMC), considered one of the world's leading choirs, is led by Music Director Grant Gershon. The *Los Angeles Times* proclaims, "Under Gershon, the Master Chorale seems to be able to master anything," The *New York Times* calls the choir "inspired," and *The New York Observer* declares it "a superb vocal ensemble." The Chorale is currently in its 47th season as a resident company of the Music Center of Los Angeles County and its 8<sup>th</sup> as the resident chorus at Disney Hall. Presenting its own concert series each season, it has

performed more than 480 concerts, featuring choral music from the earliest writings to the most recent contemporary compositions. The choir has commissioned 25 and premiered 63 new works, of which 41 were world premieres, and has been awarded the ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming three times – in 1995, 2003 and 2010. Additionally, the Chorale has performed in more than 280 concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at both Disney Hall and the Hollywood Bowl and has also appeared at the Ojai Festival, the Great Performers series at Lincoln Center, and at Overture Center in Madison, Wisconsin, as well as in leading venues throughout the Southland. Its discography includes three CDs under Gershon's baton, including *Daniel Variations* by Steve Reich, released in spring 2008 on Nonesuch Records, *You Are (Variations)* by Steve Reich, released in September 2005 on Nonesuch Records, and an RCM recording featuring Esa-Pekka Salonen's first choral work, *Two Songs to Poems of Ann Jäderlund*, and Philip Glass' *Itaipu*. In June 2010, Gershon conducted recording sessions at Disney Hall for his fourth CD with the choir, which will be an all-Nico Muhly album to be released by Decca later this season. LAMC previously released three CDs under Music Director Emeritus Paul Salamunovich on RCM, including the Grammy-nominated *Lauridsen-Lux Aeterna*. The Chorale is also featured with Gershon on the soundtracks of such major motion pictures as *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Lady in the Water*, *License to Wed*, and *Waterworld*. Serving more than 40,000 audience members of all ages annually, the Los Angeles Master Chorale also provides education outreach to approximately 6,000 children each year. In 2008, the Chorale's highly successful outreach program "Voices Within" earned the coveted Chorus America Education Outreach Award.

**GRANT GERSHON**, who was named Music Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale in 2001 and also serves as LA Opera Associate Conductor/Chorus Master, has garnered tremendous critical acclaim. The *Los Angeles Times* proclaims that the Chorale "has become the most exciting chorus in the country under Grant Gershon." During his tenure with the Chorale he has led over 75 performances at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, including virtually all of the major choral works. Also well known as a champion of new music, Gershon has led world premiere performances of works by John Adams, Louis Andriessen, Christopher Rouse, Steve Reich, and Chinari Ung among many others. His discography includes two Grammy Award-nominated recordings: *Sweeney Todd* (New York Philharmonic Special Editions) and Ligeti's *Grand Macabre* (Sony Classical); as well as four CDs with the Chorale: *Glass-Salonen* (RCM), *You Are (Variations)* (Nonesuch), *Daniel Variations* (Nonesuch), and *A Good Understanding* (Decca), which the Chorale recorded in Disney Hall and was released in September. In New York he has appeared on the *Great Performers* series at Lincoln Center and on the *Making Music* series at Zankel Hall. Other major appearances include performances at the Ravinia, Aspen, Edinburgh, Helsinki and Vienna Festivals. He has worked closely with many leading conductors, including Claudio Abbado, Pierre Boulez, Gustavo Dudamel, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Simon Rattle and Esa-Pekka Salonen. In 2007, Gershon conducted the Minnesota Opera's world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon's opera *The Grapes of Wrath*, which was recorded live for PS Classics. In 2008, he made his highly acclaimed Los Angeles Opera debut leading eight performances of Verdi's *La Traviata*. In September 2010, Gershon conducted the world premiere performances at L.A. Opera of Daniel Catán's *Il Postino* featuring Plácido Domingo, and he will make his Santa Fe Opera debut in 2011, conducting Peter Sellars' new production of Vivaldi's *Griselda*. Gershon was named Outstanding Alumnus of the USC Thornton School of Music and is a member of the Board of Advisors for the Thornton School and the Board of Directors of Chorus America.

As a virtuoso whose natural flair is matched by a probing intellect, violinist **JENNIFER KOH** is committed to exploring connections between the pieces she plays, searching for similarities of voice between different composers, as well as within the works of a single composer. Since she came to international attention in 1994 as winner of the top prize at the Tchaikovsky Competition, Koh has gone on to perform as guest soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, National Symphony of Washington, D.C., the Kirov Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre, the Moscow Radio Symphony, and the Helsinki and Czech Philharmonics. A prolific recitalist, Koh appears frequently at major music centers and festivals including Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, The Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, Marlboro, Wolf Trap, Spoleto, and The Festival International de Lanaudiere in Canada. She regularly records for the American Cedille label and her most recently released recording "String Poetic" was nominated for a Grammy in 2009. Born in Chicago of Korean parents, Koh currently resides in New York City. She is a graduate of Oberlin College and an alumna of the Curtis Institute, where she worked extensively with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimir.

Artists, program and ticket prices subject to change.

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