The Tudor Choir

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FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

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Expanded 24-voice Tudor Choir performs early and contemporary choral "Fireworks"

WHAT:	The Tudor Choir *presents* FIREWORKS Music by Brumel, Cornysh, Gombert, Guerrero, Josquin, Pärt, Swayne & Tavener
WHEN & WHERE:	Saturday, February 24, 2007 at 8:00 pm Town Hall, 8th & Seneca, Seattle 98101 *Free pre-performance discussion with Doug Fullington at 7:00pm
WHEN & WHERE:	Sunday, February 25, 2007 at 3:00 pm St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 8398 NE 12th St., Medina 98039
TICKETS:	$25 general admission; $20 seniors; $15 students; group rates available ORDER ONLINE at www.tudorchoir.org or call the Tudor Choir at (206) 323-9415

The Tudor Choir presents two performances of FIREWORKS, a sequence of *a cappella* choral works that puts the prowess of the human voice on brilliant display. Expanded to 24 voices, the Tudor Choir, directed by Doug Fullington, will perform FIREWORKS on Saturday, February 24 at 8:00pm at Town Hall, Seattle, and on Sunday, February 25 at 3:00pm at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Medina.

FIREWORKS is sponsored in part by Washington State Arts Commission. The Tudor Choir's 2006-2007 season is sponsored in part by Seattle Foundation. Additional season support provided by ArtsFund. Advertising support provided by Classical KING-FM.

Tickets for FIREWORKS cost $25 for general admission, $20 for seniors and $15 for students. Group rates are available. Tickets are available from the Tudor Choir at (206) 323-9415. Further information is available on the Tudor Choir website, www.tudorchoir.org.

The program opens with Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's serene but anticipatory *Solfeggio*, a series of slow-moving ascending lines made up of the seven notes of the basic *solfege* scale. These few notes will be transformed into the vocal masterpieces that follow.

The chant melody *Regina caeli* leads into a 12-voice setting of the same text by Flemish Renaissance composer Nicolas Gombert. Rather than basing his choral setting on the *Regina caeli* chant melody, Gombert employs a chant set to the text "Et ecce terrae motus" (And, behold, the earth shook").

Antoine Brumel's "Gloria" is from the Flemish Renaissance composer's 12-part mass, *Missa Et ecce terrae motus*. The mass setting is popularly called the "Earthquake Mass," referring to the chant melody on which the mass is based and also the exciting, almost violent, rhythms and textures employed by Brumel in composing for 12 voices, unprecedented at the time. Brumel succeeded in creating a powerful work that is rivaled by few others from the Renaissance period (Thomas Tallis' 40-part *Spem in alium*, for one).

Ever since his dramatic cantata *The Whale* took its audience by storm in 1968, contemporary English composer John Tavener has continued to develop an intensely personal style and compose music that is strikingly original in concept. The enormous popularity of Tavener's music is reflected in the number of commissions he is given and the frequency of performances of his work at festivals and concerts around the world. Tavener's *The Lamb* and *The Tiger* are settings of poems by William Blake, the former an intimate setting for four voices and the latter a magnificent setting that ultimately divides the choir into 15 parts. Within the massive textures of *The Tiger*, Tavener includes a brief, magical quotation from *The Lamb* at the text, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"

The second half of the program opens with what is likely the most ornate setting of the Magnificat in all Renaissance musical literature. English composer William Cornysh senior worked in London as Instructor of the Choristers of the Lady Chapel choir at Westminster Abbey in the 1480s and also likely joined the Fraternity of St. Nicholas (the London Guild of Parish Clerks). During this period, he composed his setting of the Magnificat. Preserved in the lavish Caius Choirbook, the 5-voice Magnificat best demonstrates Cornysh's impressive skill at handling vocal textures and intricate florid writing. Notable passages include the quartet of tenors and baritones at "Esurientes implevit bonis" and a sequence of duets, beginning at "Sicut erat," that lead to a virtuosic duo between the soprano and alto.

The triple-choir motet *Duo Seraphim*, by Spanish Renaissance composer Francisco Guerrero, magnificently exploits the possibilities afforded by a 12-voice structure, using antiphonal exchanges and different groupings of voices. Guerrero also uses the texture to underline the sense of the text. The piece begins with two sopranos singing the words "two Seraphim"; the words "there are three who give testimony in heaven" are given to three voices; and the only point when Guerrero has the full three choirs singing together emphasizes "the earth is *full* of his glory."

Josquin Desprez, the renowned Flemish Renaissance composer who worked for the Papal choir from 1486 to 1499 and inspired a century of composers, outdid himself with his 24-voice canon, *Qui habitat* (the first 8 verses of Psalm 91). The piece is actually a quadruple canon, with each canon divided into 6 equal voices (6 sopranos, 6 altos, 6 tenors and 6 basses). Pieces written in so many parts were extremely rare at the time, and Josquin's work is particularly extraordinary because the extent to which he is able to include so many passages with all 24 parts going at once. Managing so many parts necessitated

the use of very simple harmony, with entire passages circling around a single chord, but the individual phrases are often angular and unpredictable and lead to some wonderful dissonances that at times create very modern-sounding harmonies.

Contemporary English composer Giles Swayne's Magnificat was written in 1982 in response to a commission from Christ Church College, Oxford, and has since become a modern classic. At that time, Swayne was influenced by his recent discovery of African music. During a period of research in Senegal and The Gambia, he recorded a working song in a small village called Badem Karantaba, about thirty miles southeast of Ziguinchor in the Casamance region of southern Senegal. Swayne used the opening call of this song to begin the Magnificat and it returns as a refrain towards the end. These sections alternate with passages employing the medieval technique of "hocket," a practice in which a melody is passed quickly back and forth between two voices. Swayne expands on the hocket technique to include a total of 12 voices to riveting effect.

About the Tudor Choir

Hailed as "a superb choir" (*Gramophone*), as well as "a choir to watch" (*Fanfare*), the Tudor Choir and its director Doug Fullington are receiving increasing national and international attention as interpreters of Renaissance polyphony and early American music. Founded in 1993, the Seattle-based professional vocal chamber ensemble comprises 12 core singers, but can expand to up to 40 members for works such as Thomas Tallis' monumental *Spem in alium*. As Artists-in-Residence at St. Mark's Cathedral, Seattle, and a Resident Ensemble at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Medina, the choir presents an annual subscription series and has performed under guest conductors including Peter Phillips, Paul Hillier, Andrew Parrott, Stephen Cleobury and Martin Haselböck. The choir also has made guest appearances with the Mark Morris Dance Group, Pacific Northwest Ballet and Early Music Guild of Seattle. Recent appearances include performances at Festival Vancouver, Annas Bay Music Festival and Early Music Society of the Islands. The choir's recordings of Renaissance polyphony, English carols and early American music have been released on the Loft Recordings label.

FIREWORKS program

Solfeggio	Arvo Pärt (born 1935)
Regina caeli	Chant
Regina caeli	Nicolas Gombert (c.1490-1556)
"Gloria" from Earthquake Mass	Antoine Brumel (c.1460-c.1515)
The Lamb	John Tavener (born 1944)
The Tiger	John Tavener

Intermission

Magnificat	William Cornysh, Sr. (c.1430?-1502)
Duo Seraphim	Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599)
Qui habitat	Josquin Desprez (c.1440-1520)
Magnificat	Giles Swayne (born 1946)