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**ARIAN KHAEFI ANNOUNCED AS HANDEL CHOIR OF BALTIMORE'S
NEXT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR**

(Baltimore, MD) Handel Choir of Baltimore has appointed Dr. Arian Khaefi to become its next Artistic Director and Conductor, effective July 1, 2013.

“We were deeply honored by the number of highly qualified candidates who were interested in becoming Handel Choir’s next Artistic Director,” said Leslie Greenwald, President of the Choir’s Board of Trustees, who served as head of the search committee. “It was a difficult decision, in part because of the incredibly high bar set by Melinda O’Neal. We are very excited to work with Arian in our 79th season.” Last September, Melinda O’Neal, Artistic Director and Conductor of Handel Choir for the past nine years, announced her plans to retire in June, 2013.

“I’m not sure how the stars aligned to create this amazing opportunity, but I am absolutely humbled, honored and elated to be afforded the chance to work with an ensemble of this caliber,” said Khaefi. “I’m incredibly excited to begin exploring music with Handel Choir!”

Khaefi will continue as Director of Choral Activities for Towson University, where he has been assistant professor of music since September 2012. Khaefi earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in vocal performance and Master of Music degree in conducting at University of California, Los Angeles, and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting at University of Michigan. His primary conducting teachers have been internationally renowned conductors Jerry Blackstone and Donald Neuen.

An active teacher, researcher, and conductor, Khaefi has worked with ensembles from middle school through collegiate chamber ensembles and semi-professional symphonic choirs. While in Michigan he served as assistant conductor of the University Musical Society Choral Union, where he assisted in the preparation of the chorus for performances both in Ann Arbor and Detroit with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under such noted conductors as Leonard Slatkin and Christopher Warren Green.

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Khaefi has appeared as a clinician at high schools and middle schools across Southern California. Before coming to Baltimore, he served as director of choral activities for a number of successful choral music programs.

Greenwald said Handel Choir will soon complete plans for its 2013-2014 concert season, including two performances of Handel's *Messiah* with period instrument orchestra in December.

Melinda O'Neal's final concert with the Choir is **Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem)*** at 4 p.m. April 14, 2013 at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, St. Paul and 20th Streets, Baltimore 21218. Handel Choir presents Brahms' Requiem in collaboration with Camerata of University of Maryland Baltimore County and Orchestra of St. John's, joined by acclaimed soloists Laura Choi Stuart, soprano, and Steven Combs, baritone.

Handel Choir is throwing a Spring Gala in honor of Melinda O'Neal on Saturday, May 4 at Cylburn Arboretum. Friends and supporters are invited to attend and wish her well as she passes the baton—literally—to Handel Choir's next Artistic Director and Conductor, Arian Khaefi. All proceeds benefit the Choir and its activities in the community. For more information, call **410.366.6544** or go to **handelchoir.org**.

Handel Choir of Baltimore is an oratorio ensemble presenting baroque, classical, and early romantic works with period instrument orchestras, as well as modern repertoire and commissioned works. Handel Choir and **Chandos Singers**, the Choir's chamber vocal ensemble, are proud to collaborate with orchestras and opera companies in the Baltimore-Washington area including Baltimore Baroque Band, Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Pro Musica Rara, Peabody Early Music and American Opera Theater. Tim Smith of *The Baltimore Sun* has praised the Choir's "ripe, smoothly balanced sound, ... admirable discipline [and] expressive fire" (April 2012). Handel Choir performs Handel's *Messiah* annually, an uninterrupted 78-year tradition.

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