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MEDIA RELEASE

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RHS Meistersingers Debut Commissioned Work

Radnor High School music teacher Dr. Bruce Glenny has received a grant from the Radnor Educational Foundation for a commissioned vocal work, *Songs of Ascents*, for the RHS Meistersingers.

The composer of this work, Daniel Shapiro, has worked in rehearsal with the Meistersingers in preparation for the work's debut May 20. Glenny and students will be performing additional music related to this project in a December concert.

Songs of Ascents takes its title from the 15 Biblical psalms (nos. 120-134) concerning the Israelites' journey to Jerusalem. According to Shapiro, "Most Hebrew poetry uses either parallel or antithetical couplets as a rhyming device; it is an intrinsically musical idea, the notion of antecedent and consequent phrase. The two movements of *Songs of Ascents* reflect this dichotomy. The first is dark and satanic... the second is a jubilant free-for-all, wildly contrapuntal and chromatically rich, with a restless rhythmic impetus that hurtles toward a final burst of joy."

The work is in Hebrew. This helps celebrate the diversity of Radnor High School; singing in Hebrew has also allowed the students to learn different phonetic sounds and a new language.

It is rare for high schools to have the advantage of debuting a commissioned work. Further, Dr. Glenny noted that in his 30-plus years of music, he himself has been able to work with a composer on an original work only once. This is an incredible opportunity for the students, both those who sing and those interested in composition.

Shapiro is a graduate composition student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, one of only two students accepted this year. His works have been performed at the Kimmel Center and around the greater Philadelphia area and will be performed at a music festival in France this summer, while attending the Fontainebleau Conservatory close to Paris, in the same composition program that fostered seminal American composers such as Aaron Copland and Elliott Carter.

He was pleased and impressed with the Radnor students, saying their ability to take direction from a director was admirable.

"My collaboration with the students of Radnor High School has been wonderful. It is evident that Dr. Glenny's high standard of teaching and conducting has nurtured the innate talent of these young singers to produce a choir of exceptional quality, both in raw vocal ability and (much rarer) musical sensitivity. I am sincerely hopeful that we will continue our work together, and that this is the first of many projects."

Songs of Ascents will receive its world premiere at the Radnor High School Spring Concert May 20 at 7:30 p.m. in the Radnor High School auditorium with the composer in attendance.

