MEDIA RELEASE

THE ST. LOUIS CHILDREN’S CHOIRS’ ARTISTIC DIRECTOR BARBARA BERNER TO PASS THE BATON AFTER 25 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

Only the third director in the choirs’ history, Berner will continue in a consultative role

ST. LOUIS (April 22, 2022) – The internationally acclaimed St. Louis Children’s Choirs (SLCC or the Choirs) has announced that Artistic Director and CEO Barbara Berner is planning to step away from her full-time duties at the conclusion of the 2022-23 performance season. A nine-member search committee has been formed to select the person who will be the fourth artistic director in the organization’s 45-year celebrated history.

Berner began her career as a children’s music educator in Boston, MA. She joined the Choirs in 1996 as an ensemble director and after an international search, assumed the Artistic Director role during the 1998-99 performance season. During her tenure, the organization has grown in enrollment and prestige, performing internationally and nationally. An estimated 6,000 singers have been positively impacted by the Choirs’ musical excellence and character development program under Berner’s leadership.

“It has truly been a blessing to work with thousands of young artists and their families.” Berner said. “The opportunity to teach and perform with young people, and to watch them grow as musicians and individuals of integrity, has been the highlight of my career.”

The St. Louis Children’s Choirs is composed of seven ensembles that include 350 to 450 students annually ranging in age from 6 to 18. The diverse student body comes from over 200 school districts in 85 different zip codes in Missouri and Illinois.

Highly regarded by her peers and beloved by her singers, Berner has directed Concert Choir, the top touring ensemble, at the Southwest and National American Choral Directors Association conventions, Carnegie Hall, and the White House. Internationally, SLCC young artists have performed in Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Germany, Sweden, Scotland, Wales, and most recently in Montreal, Canada.
The recipient of the 2017 Missouri Arts Awards for Excellence in Arts Education, Berner has conducted the National Children’s Festival Chorus at Lincoln Center and state honor choirs in Kentucky and New Mexico. Since the 1980’s SLCC has served as the official children’s choir of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra with Berner preparing the young artists for 95 SLSO performances. Other St. Louis collaborations include the Bach Society, the Ambassadors of Harmony, Opera Theatre, St. Louis African Chorus, and more.

Mrs. Berner received her BA from Principia College and her Master of Music degree from Ithaca College. Awarded an Artist-Teacher and Master Teacher Diploma from the CME Institute for Choral Teacher Education, she also holds an Advanced Certificate from the Kodály Pedagogical Institute in Kecskémet, Hungary.

“The St. Louis Children’s Choirs offers exceptional musical training experiences to hundreds of children each year and is a vital part of our city's artistic community,” offered Dr. A. Dennis Sparger, Music Director and Conductor of the Bach Society of St. Louis, a longtime collaborator with SLCC. “Because of Barbara’s leadership, singers gain a knowledge of how discipline, order, self-reliance and working together for a common goal combine to produce results of which they can be proud.”

Chris Koo, SLCC Board President and Director at Edward Jones, had high praise for Berner and the powerful impact she’s had during the past quarter century.

“While we are saddened by her departure, we are excited for her next chapter in life that is so much deserved,” Koo said. “She has shown us what it means to live out the words of our theme song sung at the end of every concert, ‘...that music made together may one day heal mankind.’”

Koo stressed that the Choirs’ core values and mission of character development through musical excellence will remain intact as SLCC transitions to a new artistic director.

The task of finding Berner’s replacement lies with a search committee that has already begun meeting. It includes Koo; Sparger; Dr. Jim Henry, Director of Choral Studies at UMSL and Co-Director of The Ambassadors of Harmony; Mandy Miller, Executive Director of the Choral Music Experience Institute in the UK and Europe and longtime visiting Master Teacher for SLCC; Pam Jones, SLCC Chief Operating Officer; Charles Gooden, SLCC Board Co-Vice-President; Libby McCandless, SLCC Board Co-Vice-President; Suzanne Galvin, SLCC Board Secretary and Partner at Thompson Coburn; and Amy Kramer, SLCC Board Member, alumna singer, and current Choir parent. After an international search, the goal is to name a new Artistic Director within the 2022-2023 season.

The Choirs’ offices are located at 2842 N. Ballas Road, St. Louis. More information is available at the Choirs’ website www.slccsing.org or by calling 314-993-9626.

Contact: John Boul info@johnboulcommunications.com 314-614-5890
Notable international and domestic performances under Barbara Berner’s leadership:

1998 – Denmark, Sweden
2000 – Scotland
2001 – Carnegie Hall
2002 – Vienna, Salzburg, Prague
2003 – Oregon Bach Festival, The White House
2004 – Southwest American Choral Directors Association, Little Rock, AR
2005 – National American Choral Directors Association, Los Angeles
2006 – Carnegie Hall with the St. Louis Symphony
2007 – Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles
2008 – Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne
2010 – Carnegie Hall
2011 – Nashville, Grand Ole Opry
2012 – Scotland
2013 – Lincoln Center
2014 – New Orleans
2015 – Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic
2016 – Oregon; Southwest American Choral Directors Association, Kansas City, MO
2017 – Carnegie Hall
2018 – Scotland
2019 – Montreal

###