VOCALESSENCE WELCOMES SPRING WITH UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA WIND ENSEMBLE AND TWIN CITIES PIANIST THELMA HUNTER

Concert to Feature Music by Legendary Composer Percy Grainger

MINNEAPOLIS – March 1, 2013 — VocalEssence and the University of Minnesota School of Music are ready to welcome spring with its English Garden concert featuring the VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble Singers and the University of Minnesota Wind Ensemble performing works by legendary band and choral composer Percy Grainger. Led by VocalEssence artistic director and conductor Philip Brunelle, and University of Minnesota professor of conducting and director of university bands Craig Kirchhoff, the concert will be held on Saturday, March 9, 2013 at 8 p.m. at Ted Mann Concert Hall in Minneapolis. Tickets for English Garden are $13.50-$33.50 (Service charges apply. Student tickets are half-price and group discounts are available.) For tickets and information, call 612-371-5656 or visit www.vocalessence.org.

 Appearing for her second time with VocalEssence, Twin Cities-based pianist Thelma Hunter, who studied with Percy Grainger, will be performing a piano piece by Twin Cities composer Carol Barnett, “Thelma’s Country Garden.” Hunter was raised in a family actively engaged in the musical life of New York, her native city, and has had an active career as a recitalist, soloist and chamber musician. She has served on the faculty of the University of Minnesota School of Music and has appeared as a soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Minnesota Sinfonia and the Minneapolis Civic Orchestra. Prior to joining the music faculty of the University of Minnesota in 1947, she received her undergraduate degree from Cornell College where she was a student of the legendary pianist Egon Petrie, and completed her Master’s Degree and received the coveted Artist’s Diploma from the Eastman School of Music.

The University of Minnesota Wind Ensemble is a select ensemble comprised of 60 of the University’s finest graduate and undergraduate wind and percussion musicians. The ensemble performs five or six concerts on and off campus each academic year. Craig Kirchhoff coordinates the graduate program in Wind Ensemble/Band Conducting and guides all aspects of the University of Minnesota band program.

VocalEssence and the University of Minnesota Wind Ensemble will combine forces in an all-Grainger program for the English Garden concert. Grainger toured extensively throughout his life and visited Minnesota’s own Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter in 1940 to teach, lecture and perform with the Gustavus band. He enjoyed himself so much that he joined the ensemble on their 1941 tour of Minnesota from Willmar to Duluth.

Grainger, who was born in Australia but lived in England from 1901 to 1914 during the height of the Edwardian era, was a concert pianist, a composer and an avid collector of folk music. In the course of a long and innovative career he played a prominent role in the revival of interest in British folk music in the early years of the 20th century. He also made many adaptations of other composers’ works. Although some of his work was experimental and unusual, the piece with which
he is most generally associated is his piano arrangement of the folk dance tune “Country Gardens,” which reveals his fascination with the charming and whimsical melodies of England.

The concert will include the VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble Singers performing a selection of Grainger classics alone including “Irish Tune from Country Derry” and “Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon,” and the University Wind Ensemble performing Grainger’s great opus, “Lincolnshire Posy.” They will then combine to perform rarely heard pieces by Grainger including “I’m Seventeen Come Sunday” and “Marching Song of Democracy.”

About the U of M School of Music
Established in 1902, the University of Minnesota School of Music offers a dynamic, comprehensive program to more than 550 music students in undergraduate and graduate programs, led by a world-class faculty of more than 50 artists, scholars and teachers. The School of Music presents more than 400 free concerts per year. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.music.umn.edu or call (612) 626-1094 for a brochure.

About VocalEssence
Called “one of the irreplaceable music ensembles of our time” by Dana Gioia, past chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, VocalEssence was founded in 1969 by Artistic Director Philip Brunelle. Recognized internationally for its innovative exploration of music for voices and instruments, the organization presents an engaging collection of concerts featuring the 130-voice VocalEssence Chorus, the 32-voice Ensemble Singers (well known for their appearances on A Prairie Home Companion with Garrison Keillor), guest soloists and instrumentalists. In addition to championing lesser-known works of the past, VocalEssence has an unwavering commitment to today’s composers resulting in more than 145 commissions and world premieres to date. VocalEssence has released thirteen commercial recordings, including four WITNESS CDs of music by African American composers and artists available on the Clarion label. 2011 saw the release of a new CD, From the Land of Sky Blue Waters, featuring music from the North Star Tour, a six-stop tour of Minnesota’s Highway 23.

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