FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Minnesota School of Music to Confer an Honorary Degree on Philip Brunelle, VocalEssence Artistic Director, at U of M School of Music Fall Convocation on Thursday, October 6, 2011

Minneapolis, MN (9/13/2011)— The University of Minnesota School of Music will confer an honorary degree on internationally renowned conductor and VocalEssence Artistic Director Philip Brunelle on Thursday, October 6 at 10 am at the U of M School of Music’s Fall Convocation at Ted Mann Concert Hall. The Doctor of Humane Letters is the highest award conferred by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, recognizing individuals who have achieved acknowledged eminence in their field.

The School of Music Fall Convocation will also feature keynote speaker Helena Gaunt (London’s Guildhall School of Music and Drama) on “Becoming a Musician in the 21st Century.” The School of Music Fall Convocation is free and open to the public. Admission to the School of Music Fall Convocation is on a first-come, first-seated basis. Parking is available in the 21st Avenue ramp, one block southwest of the concert hall.

On Brunelle’s honorary degree, School of Music Director David Myers says, “Ever since leaving the University of Minnesota School of Music just a few credits shy of his bachelor’s degree and serving as the youngest member of the Minnesota Orchestra at age 19, Philip has been advancing the art of music performance and assuring access to rich and varied musical opportunities for thousands of people locally, nationally, and internationally. The time has come for the university and music school Philip chose to attend as a young man – the University of Minnesota – to recognize and affirm officially his outstanding lifetime artistic and leadership achievements.”

Myers continues, “It was at the School of Music that his career took root when he studied opera history with Professor Dominick Argento, with whom he maintains his professional relationship, and organ with Professor Arthur Jennings. He has been an advocate for the work of Minnesota graduates, such as Libby Larsen and Stephen Paulus, as well as other living composers around the world. He is repeatedly invited to university functions having served as an adjunct faculty member in the areas of choral, accompanying and brass choir, is a stalwart advocate for the University of Minnesota and its School of Music, and has been asked for his consultation and advice on an arts profile for the university at-large. This award will not simply add to his already lengthy list of distinctions; it shows convincingly that his alma mater honors and celebrates his life of service to a greater good through excellence in the art of music.”

Philip Brunelle shares, “I am thrilled to be recognized by the University of Minnesota School of Music with an honorary degree. My years at the University which coincided with my years in the Minnesota Orchestra were formative ones for me, allowing me the opportunity to study with some “University greats” - Dominick Argento, Paul Fetler, Mary Malcolm, Robert Laudon, Paul Knowles and Paul Freed. I was granted many wonderful opportunities to excel and am grateful for all that the University of Minnesota offered me. It has been my good fortune since that time to serve the School of Music when asked as an adjunct faculty member, conductor, and tenure committee member. Thank you to David Myers and all who made awarding of this Doctor of Humane Letters a reality.”
Philip Brunelle Biography

Born in Faribault, Minnesota in 1943, VocalEssence Artistic Director and Founder Philip Brunelle showed signs at an early age of the adventurous spirit that has driven his lifelong enthusiasm for all forms of choral, vocal, opera and symphonic music. At the age of six, he requested and received a vocal score of Handel’s Messiah for Christmas. As a teenager he was already working as a professional church organist; at 19 he became a full-time member with the Minnesota Orchestra.

At the age of 25, Philip was appointed choirmaster-organist of Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis. He immediately established the Plymouth Music Series, which has become today’s choral music organization VocalEssence. Philip played piano on the very first episode of A Prairie Home Companion in 1974, forging a connection with Garrison Keillor that has resulted in many creative ventures over the years.

Philip has been invited to guest conduct choirs and orchestras across the United States, South America and Europe, including the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Berkshire Choral Festival, the BBC Singers and the Seattle Symphony. He is called upon to adjudicate choral competitions all over the world, with recent visits to South Korea, China, Norway and Hungary.

Philip is currently a board member of Chorus America and the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM), where he serves as Vice President and served on the artistic planning committee for the 2011 World Choral Symposium in Argentina and the 2008 Symposium in Copenhagen, Denmark. He served as President of the Sixth Symposium, held in Minneapolis in 2002, and is involved in the 2014 Symposium to be held in Seoul, South Korea.

Philip has been recognized for his commitment to choral music by Norway (Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit), the United Kingdom (Honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire), Hungary (Kodály Medal) and Sweden (Royal Order of the Polar Star). In 2003, Chorus America honored Philip with its highest award, the Michael Korn Founder’s Award for Development of the Choral Art.

He has been honored with a “Local Legend” award from General Mills and the United Negro College Fund; American Composers Forum “Champion of New Music”; U.S. Bank Sally Ordway Irvine Award for Commitment, recognizing lifetime achievement, contribution and leadership in culture and the arts; and the F. Melius Christiansen Lifetime Achievement Award, American Choral Directors Association-Minnesota Chapter’s highest honor. Philip holds honorary doctorates from St. Olaf College, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. John’s University and United Theological Seminary.

The School of Music presents more than 400 free concerts and recitals per year. For a complete schedule of events, visit music.umn.edu or call the School of Music events hotline at 612/626-8742.

Photographs available upon request. Email requests for photographs to marsh396@umn.edu.

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.

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