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For Immediate Release: April 14, 2015

## **MidAmerica Productions to Present U.S. Premiere and first-ever Mass sung in Arabic in Carnegie Hall, May 23, 2015**

New York, NY, April 14, 2015 – MidAmerica Productions, Inc., announces an historic concert which will take place on the main stage of Carnegie Hall on Saturday, May 23, 2015, at 1 p.m. During the concert, three choral music conductors from Lebanon will lead choruses from Lebanon and the U.S. and the New England Symphonic Ensemble in three separate and distinctive masses.

First on the program will be a performance by Khalil Rahmeh, who will conduct the U.S. Premiere of his own work Paulus about the life of St. Paul. Paulus will be the first performance of a Mass in Arabic.

Toufic Maatouk will conduct Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, and Joanna Nachef, the first female conductor from Lebanon, will lead John Rutter's popular *Mass of the Children*. Participating choruses for all three works are: Antonine University Choir, Hadat-Baabda, Lebanon; Antonine Young Singers, Kesrewah, Lebanon; Notre Dame University Choir, Zouk Mosbeh, Lebanon; California Academy of Mathematics & Science, Carson, CA; Capistrano High School Camerata, Mission Viejo, CA; El Camino College Chorale, Torrance, CA; Los Cancioneros Master Chorale, Torrance, CA; Voce Angelicus, Torrance, CA; and Guajome Middle School Choir, Vista, CA.

Of this performance, Joanna Nachef, one of the conductors, said: "This is the best type of cultural exchange of all with students from Lebanon and the United States standing side by side and making music together in a great concert hall."

### **Joanna Medawar Nachef**

Joanna Medawar Nachef, who has conducted on MidAmerica Productions' series in Carnegie Hall since 2007, is recognized as the first woman conductor from the Middle East. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, she moved to Los Angeles in 1976. The Director of Choral Activities at El Camino College, she earned her Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance from California State University, Dominguez Hills; and her Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees in Choral Music from the University of Southern California. Dr. Nachef is on the faculty of California State University Dominguez Hills, California Academy

of Mathematics and Science, and is artistic director for Los Cancioneros Master Chorale, and choir director at Peninsula Community Church. She was featured in the *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* (1996), *American Women* (2009), *Who's Who in the World* (2010), and *Who Is She* (2012), and Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at Lebanese American University (2012). She received the 2005 "Excellence in Arts Award" in music, and the 2008 Daily Breeze Director's Award for Making a Difference. Most recently the U.S. Institute of Peace cited her for her Peace-building strategy through music." Dr. Nachef made her debut in Lebanon at Al Bustan Festival in 2009, was named a living legend for the African Diaspora of Sacred Music and Musicians in 2010, received the 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award by the Lebanese Ladies Cultural Society, and the 2013 National Americanism Award by the Daughters of the American Revolution, El Redondo Regent.

## Toufic Maatouk

Conductor Toufic Maatouk, O.A.M., is currently Guest Conductor of the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra, Artistic Director of Beirut Chants International Festival, Director of the Antonine University Chorus (Lebanon), Head of the Voice Department in the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory, and a director and lecturer at the Antonine University/Faculty of Music in Beirut. Fr. Maatouk received his initial musical training at the Antonine University and Lebanese National Higher Conservatory in Beirut where he majored in Piano and Opera Singing. He studied Musicology at the Istituto Pontificio di Musica sacra (Pims) in Rome. He also studied maronite chants and orchestra and opera conducting. Numerous concerts have been recorded live by LBCI (Lebanese broadcasting Corporation International), MTV (MTV Lebanon), FutureTV (Lebanon). To date, he has released eight CDs, Antonine University editions, (Lebanon) on the syriacmaronite tradition. As a principal conductor, he has led the Antonine University Choir and the Choir of the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra. Since 2005, he has been the director of the Faculty of Music at the Antonine University, and since 2012, the artistic director of Beirut Chants festival, a festival for early and classical choral and instrumental music. He has also collaborated with Al Bustan International Festival, Baalbeck International Festival, Byblos International Festival (Lebanon), Festival d'ile de France (Paris), MidAmerica Productions at Carnegie Hall (New York), Al-Ain International Music Festival (UEA), and Bahrain International Music Festival (Bahrain).

## Khalil Rahmeh

Born in Becharre, Lebanon in 1962, Khalil Rameh was ordained priest of the Maronite Mariamite Order in 1987. He attended The Pontifical University of "Laterano" in Rome, studying philosophy and theology. He also studied musical theory and notation, piano, classical and Gregorian singing, and earned degrees from the School of Music "T.L. La Victoria," and from the conservatory "Santa Cecilia" in Rome. Khalil Rameh also pursued studies in music composition for the organ. He has been Director of the School of Music at Notre Dame University – Louaizé which he established in 1992. He founded and has directed the "Notre-Dame University Choir of Louaizé" since 1993 and founded the children's choir at Notre-Dame of Louaizé School. Additionally, he is an instructor of musical theory, notation, and choir singing at the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music. Khalil Rameh has written religious chants and hymns for various occasions as well as a mass for children. He has written the music for the documentary "Close to Heaven" and the melodrama "L'Espoir," as well as an oratorio, two theatre pieces and religious operas. He has recorded numerous CD's with the NDU choir.

## MidAmerica Productions, Inc.

The foremost independent producer of classical concerts in Carnegie Hall, MidAmerica Productions was conceived in 1983, and founded in January 1984 after Peter Tiboris conducted his first concert at Alice

Tully Hall, Lincoln Center. Since then, the company has presented more than 1250 concerts worldwide, including 541 in Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage at Carnegie Hall, and 384 in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

Tickets to this concert and other concerts in Carnegie Hall are \$96, \$58, and \$35. To order tickets, call CarnegieCharge at 212-247-7800; go online to [www.carnegiehall.org](http://www.carnegiehall.org); or visit the Carnegie Hall Box Office at 57<sup>th</sup> Street and Seventh Avenue in New York City. For additional concert information call Molly Waymire at PipTix, 917-513-3080 or email [Molly.Waymre@PipTix.com](mailto:Molly.Waymre@PipTix.com).

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