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### **MONMOUTH CIVIC CHORUS RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD**

The Monmouth Civic Chorus has been named the 2008 recipient of the Chorus America/ASCAP Alice Parker Award. Given to only one chorus in North America each year, the award recognizes a chorus for programming significant recently composed music that expands the mission of the chorus and challenges the chorus's audience in a new way.

The award was presented at the Chorus America National Conference, held in conjunction with the National Performing Arts Convention, in Denver, Colorado. The Monmouth Civic Chorus's Artistic Director, Dr. Mark Shapiro, received the award and \$1000 at the conference on June 14.

The Monmouth Civic Chorus received the award for its March 2007 world premiere of Jorge Martin's *Stronger Than Darkness*, a Cuban-American opera in concert. "What a tremendous and unexpected honor for The Monmouth Civic Chorus. This ASCAP award acknowledges the passion and commitment of MCC's dedicated singers, hard-working Board, loyal supporters and fearless audience," Dr. Shapiro said.

Monmouth Civic Chorus President James Scavone, Red Bank, commented, "MCC's Board of Directors is tremendously proud of this achievement. Under Dr. Shapiro's fine leadership, the chorus has strived to present innovative repertoire that broadens the musical experience of its members and audience. Chorus America's and ASCAP's validation of this enormous effort is impressive."

The Chorus America/ASCAP Alice Parker Award honors the 60-year musical career of Alice Parker, whose arrangements with Robert Shaw of folksongs, hymns and spirituals form an enduring repertoire for choruses all around the world. The Monmouth Civic Chorus is the sixth recipient since this award was created in 2003, and the first New Jersey-based ensemble to win any Chorus America/ASCAP award since 1993. Mark Shapiro is unique among Artistic Directors in having won Chorus America/ASCAP Awards with more than one ensemble. He is also Artistic Director of Cantori New York, a semi-professional chamber choir, which previously won two Chorus America/ASCAP Adventurous Programming Awards.

Chorus America, founded in 1977, strengthens choral organizations and provides their leaders with information, research, leadership development, professional training, and advocacy to

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help them deliver the best possible contributions to their communities and to the choral art. Chorus America presents two annual awards in conjunction with ASCAP. The other Chorus America/ASCAP award winners this year are Chanticleer, The Esoterics and Peninsula Girls Chorus, recipients of the Adventurous Programming Award.

Established in 1914, ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) is the first and leading U.S. Performing Rights Organization representing the world's largest repertory totaling over 8.5 million copyrighted musical works of every style and genre from more than 320,000 songwriter, composer and music publisher members. Commenting on the awards, ASCAP Vice President and Director of Concert Music Frances Richard said: "With these awards, the members of ASCAP congratulate those choruses whose past season featured performances of music written by the composers of our time. These choruses not only preserve the great tradition of the 'first art,' choral music, but assure that it remains vibrant and relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

The Monmouth Civic Chorus will celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> season in 2008-2009, with performances of Handel's *Messiah* on December 21, a Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration on February 8, and Three Choral Diamonds on May 3. Information and tickets are available at [monmouthcivicchorus.org](http://monmouthcivicchorus.org) or 732-933-9333.

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