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Arts Community Welcomes Lesley Leighton, New Los Robles Master Chorale Artistic Director

On a recent warm Indian summer's night, members of the local performing arts community and its patrons came out to meet Los Robles Master Chorale's new Artistic Director Lesley Leighton. Leighton assumed the position in September, the start of LRMC's 31st season. At a reception hosted by the LRMC Board of Directors at Alessio Ristorante Italiano in Thousand Oaks, Leighton welcomed guests and spoke briefly about her vision for the group, citing an opportunity to grow by building new partnerships within the community, while continuing the longstanding mission of the group to give back to the community that has long supported it.

Among the guests toasting Leighton's appointment were Paul Salamunovich, Director Emeritus of the Los Angeles Master Chorale; Nelson Dodge, Executive Director of the New West Symphony; Los Robles Children's Choir director Donna Young; and Bill Benson, director of Conejo Valley Youth Orchestra.

"On behalf of the New West Symphony, I want to extend best wishes to Lesley as she assumes the leadership of the Los Robles Master Chorale," said Dodge. "The Symphony has a long history with the Master Chorale and we look forward to new collaborations in the future."

Also joining the celebration were music faculty from California Lutheran University, Moorpark College, Oaks Christian School, and the Church of the Epiphany, as well as members of the Westlake Women's Club and the New West Symphony League.

“What a wonderful and exciting future LRMC has with Lesley at its helm,” observed reception guest Patricia Johnson, President of the Arts Council of the Conejo Valley. “She will be a wonderful addition to the musical arts in the Conejo and will add a new direction and energy to the Chorale.”

Leighton is currently working toward her doctorate in choral conducting at the University of Southern California, from where she holds a Masters of Music in Vocal Performance. She has sung with Los Angeles Master Chorale and the Jacaranda Chamber Singers, and has appeared as a principal artist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, LA Opera, Los Angeles Master Chorale, New York City Opera, and the Norway Symphony. From 2002 to 2004, Leighton was Director of Development for the office of New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.

One of Ventura County’s preeminent performing arts groups, Los Robles Master Chorale has premiered works by both internationally-renowned and local composers, welcomed an impressive array of guest conductors, and embarked on six international concert tours. A fully independent organization since 2007, LRMC is a non-profit corporation under IRS section 501(c)(3).

Maestra Leighton will be on the podium when the Master Chorale presents its first concert of the season, *Holiday Presence*, on December 12 and 13 at the Church of the Epiphany in Oak Park. The program will include music by Willan, Buxtehude, Victoria, Rutter, Rossi, Carrillo, and Mgagna, in addition to some holiday favorites and a west coast premiere, as well as a pre-concert conversation with composer Nick Strimple and a post-concert reception. For tickets or additional information visit www.losroblesmasterchorale.org or call (805) 584-2357.