

Renowned organist to perform with Potsdam chorus

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By SUSAN MENDE

POTSDAM -An internationally-renowned concert organist will join the Potsdam Community Chorus for its annual spring concert at SUNY Potsdam's Helen M. Hosmer Concert Hall.

Gail R. Archer, a music professor at Barnard College in New York City, will accompany the 100-member chorus and soloists.

The free concert starts at 3 p.m. April 22. Donations are welcome.

It will feature a performance of Requiem by Maurice Durufle, a French composer who wrote the piece in memory of his father.

Following the concert, Ms. Archer will play the church organ at the First Presbyterian Church of Potsdam, 42 Elm St. She will also present a short slide show featuring some of the world's great pipe organs.

Ms. Archer traveled to the north country earlier this month to rehearse with the chorus and is looking forward to her return to trip to Potsdam.

"The chorus sounded beautiful. They're working very hard," Ms. Archer said during a telephone interview. "It's really fun to do these choir and organ combinations."

As part of her spring tour, Ms. Archer is celebrating the work of American organ composers, focusing primarily on early 20th-century works.

Spectators will recognize many of the pieces, she said.

"I think the tunes will be familiar to many people, students and adults," she said. "I'm hoping to send people away from the concert feeling happy."

In its 12th year, the Potsdam Community Chorus is made up of students from area high schools, college students and community members from teens to senior citizens. Each year, the chorus performs a spring and fall concert and a community outreach concert. The chorus is led by conductor Jeffrey D. Francom of the Crane School of Music faculty.

Besides traveling around the world to perform concerts, Ms. Archer is college organist at Vassar College and director of the music program at Barnard College, Columbia University where she conducts the Barnard-Columbia Chorus and chamber choir. She also teaches Introduction to Music, a year-long survey of Western Classical Music from Gregorian Chant to living composers. She serves as director of the artist and young organ artist recitals at the historic Central Synagogue, New York City.

Her visit to Potsdam is co-sponsored by Potsdam Community Chorus, the American Guild of Organists, St. Lawrence River Chapter and the First Presbyterian Church of Potsdam. More information about her can be found on her website, gailarcher.com.