

June 11, 2020



We are all aware of the tremendous and sustained energy that is sweeping the nation and, really, the globe in response, specifically, to the murder of George Floyd and, more generally, to the many lives lost and injustices suffered by African Americans through the years. “BLACK LIVES MATTER” emerges, not only from the mouths of African Americans, but can be seen on the placards and heard in the chants of the multiracial multitudes in cities large and small, determined that their voices will be heard. “Black lives matter” is finally being understood. It does not say that *only* Black lives matter. It does not say that Black lives matter *more* than the lives of others. It is the anguished cry of people who

are calling for the lives of African Americans like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery and so many others to be *valued on par with other human life*.

Since 1993, I have been so incredibly fortunate to serve as Music Director of Milwaukee Choristers. This association has meant more than I can put into words. I was chosen through an open, competitive search process because Choristers *valued* what seemed to be my potential to effectively lead them after a succession of very fine conductors. I have remained on their podium, conducting them in Germany, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy and Cuba; conducting them for selected-by-audition appearances before professional choral conferences; conducting them in concert with the internationally known Kings Singers; conducting them as we joined forces with The Heritage Chorale of Milwaukee for significant projects; and conducting them in exchanges with the Iowa-based Decorah Chorale and the Brazeal Dennard Chorale of Detroit, because they have *valued* what I had to offer.

I am so incredibly proud that we join the many, many organizations and enterprises of every ilk nationwide to proclaim our alliance in this signal moment with what is *just* and *right* and *human*, and to do so by heightening our already solid, time-tested resolve to use our practice of the choral art as a community-based choral organization dedicated to excellence **to honor and value the voices of African American composers and African American music traditions in our programming, performing, commissioning of new music, and our community connections and initiatives.**

With deepest respect,

James Benjamin Kinchen, Jr.,
Music Director