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Robert Istad, Artistic Director & Conductor
Craig Springer, Board Chair
Julie Virjee, Board Chair-Elect
Rhett M. Del Campo, President & CEO

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PACIFIC CHORALE ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD LEADERSHIP, EXPANDS COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

Orange County arts philanthropist Charlie Zhang also returns to the Board; four new members bring deep expertise in development, education, media, and technology

COSTA MESA, CA (July 29, 2025) – Pacific Chorale, Orange County’s GRAMMY®-winning choral organization, has announced the addition of five new members to its Board of Directors, further deepening its roots in the local community. The organization also confirmed the election of respected nonprofit leader **Julie Virjee** as Chair-Elect, with her term beginning at the September 20, 2025 annual meeting. A dedicated advocate for education and the arts, Julie is widely respected for her collaborative leadership and community service. Her guidance will help shape the Chorale’s strategic growth and deepen its regional impact. In addition to her work with the Chorale, Virjee is the founder and Chair of Yambi Rwanda, a nonprofit dedicated to the uplifting of Rwandans through the provision of basic resources, education, and the arts. A former expert and consultant in educational publishing, Virjee also has deep roots in California State University Fullerton, as a committed volunteer for the President’s Scholar program and a mentor in the Executive in Residence Program in the CSUF College of Business.

Board leadership is further strengthened by the addition of **Charlie Zhang, Samuel Nordrum, Jennifer Baker, Mike Andrews, and Ann Pulice Owens**, each bringing a distinctive blend of professional expertise, artistic engagement, and regional connection:

- **Charlie Zhang**, of Laguna Niguel, a visionary philanthropist and long-time supporter, returns to the board in support of Julie Virjee. and reflects his enduring commitment to the arts and to Pacific Chorale’s strategic direction.

- **Samuel Nordrum**, of Mission Viejo, serves as the Annual Giving Manager at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. He brings extensive fundraising experience from roles at Concordia University Irvine, Pacific Symphony, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and is active in national arts advancement networks
- **Jennifer Baker**, of Laguna Beach, is a veteran music educator with more than 30 years in Orange County schools. A former Pacific Chorale singer with deep family ties to the organization, she champions arts education and youth engagement.
- **Mike Andrews**, of Orange, is Director of Marketing Communications at Extron, a global audiovisual firm. A long-time Chorale singer and contributor to the organization's endowment, he also brings a strong background in live event marketing and choral leadership.
- **Ann Pulice Owens**, of Santa Ana, is an Emmy and Golden Mike Award-winning broadcast journalist and educator. A former Pacific Chorale board member, she returns with deep expertise in digital storytelling and community outreach.

Pacific Chorale also extends its deep gratitude to **Craig Springer**, president of Irvine Barclay Theatre, who concludes his service as Board Chair at the Annual Meeting in September. Craig's steady leadership helped the organization stabilize financially, welcome new executive leadership, and chart a strong course for future success. His thoughtful and committed stewardship helped position the Chorale for continued success at a key moment in its evolution.

"Our Board is growing at a pivotal time, with new voices and renewed vision helping guide Pacific Chorale into its next chapter," said **Rhett Del Campo**, President & CEO. "These remarkable individuals bring a wealth of knowledge and a shared belief in the transformative power of choral music. As we enter into a robust three-strategic planning process, their leadership and support will be significant in advancing both our artistic goals and our community reach."

Craig Springer, current Board Chair, added, "It's a tremendous moment for the organization. This new group reflects the best of Orange County—leaders in education, the arts, philanthropy, and communication. I'm especially proud to welcome Julie as Chair-Elect. Her heart for service and her leadership experience make her an ideal steward for the Chorale's future."

Looking ahead, the Board will convene a strategic planning retreat this August with focus on the Sustainability Plan: PC@60—a long-range initiative to bring Pacific Chorale into financial alignment with the 60th anniversary in 2028 as the focal point. This planning

process will set a bold course for the organization's continued and expanded artistic excellence and community impact.

For more information on Pacific Chorale's Board of Directors and programs, visit

www.pacificchorale.org.

The Grammy Award-winning **PACIFIC CHORALE**, an Orange County "treasure" with a "fresh viewpoint" that "can sing anything you put in front of it with polish, poise and tonal splendor" (*Orange County Register*), has "risen to national prominence" (*Los Angeles Times*) since its inception in 1968. Hailed for delivering "thrilling entertainment" (*Voice of OC*), the resident choir at Segerstrom Center for the Arts is noted for its artistic innovation and commitment to expanding the choral repertoire. It has given world, U.S., and West Coast premieres of more than 40 works, including numerous commissions, by such lauded composers as John Adams, Jake Heggie, James Hopkins, David Lang, Morten Lauridsen, Tarik O'Regan, Karen Thomas, Frank Ticheli, András Gábor Virág, and Eric Whitacre. In addition to presenting its own concert series each season, Pacific Chorale, led by Artistic Director Robert Istad, enjoys a long-standing partnership with Pacific Symphony, with which the choir made its highly anticipated Carnegie Hall debut in 2018. The chorus also regularly appears with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, with which it won the 2022 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance for its contribution to the live recording of "Mahler: Symphony No. 8, 'Symphony of A Thousand,'" conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, featuring Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Children's Chorus, Los Angeles Master Chorale, National Children's Chorus and Pacific Chorale. The choir has performed with such leading orchestras as the Boston Symphony, National Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, and Musica Angelica, among others. In addition to receiving national accolades, Pacific Chorale has garnered tremendous international acclaim. In July 2023, the chorus completed its first international tour in seven years with appearances in Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom in collaboration with Bath Philharmonica, Free State Orchestra of Bavaria, and Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra. Previous tours have taken the choir to 19 countries in Europe, South America, and Asia, including engagements with the London Symphony, Munich Symphony, L'Orchestre Lamoureux and L'Orchestre de St-Louis-en-l'Île of Paris, National Orchestra of Belgium, China National Symphony, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Estonian National Symphony, and Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional of Argentina, among others. Deeply committed to making choral music accessible to everyone, the organization has a discography of 14 self-produced recordings and an extensive collection of free digital offerings. Among other artistic highlights, Pacific Chorale's "The Wayfaring Project," an original concert film conceived and conducted by Istad and produced during the pandemic, will be streamed through December 1, 2024 on pbssocal.org, kcet.org and the PBS app, reaching audiences around the globe. Pacific Chorale also places significant emphasis on choral music education, providing after-school vocal programs for elementary school students, a choral summer camp for high school students, and an annual community-wide singing event at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. www.pacificchorale.org

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