John Oliver, the Founder and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, will step down from his leadership position with the ensemble as of the end of the 2015 Tanglewood season. Mr. Oliver’s final concert as Conductor of the chorus will take place on Sunday, August 16, in connection with a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, featuring the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and soloists, under the direction of Asher Fisch (further details available at www.tanglewood.org).

Mr. Oliver, who has consistently garnered high praise from critics and audiences alike for his work with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, founded the ensemble as the official chorus of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1970. He has prepared the TFC in more than 200 works for well over 1000 performances, including appearances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Symphony Hall, Tanglewood, Carnegie Hall, and on tour in Europe and the Far East, as well as with visiting orchestras and as a solo ensemble. The TFC, under the direction of Mr. Oliver, has been featured with the BSO in more than forty commercial releases, as well as on the BSO Classics label, with James Levine, Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Haitink, Sir Colin Davis, Leonard Bernstein, Keith Lockhart, and John Williams. Click here to view John Oliver’s bio.
In honor of his 45 years of service to the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, the BSO will give Mr. Oliver the Tanglewood Medal at a ceremony to take place during the 2015 Tanglewood season. Mr. Oliver is only the second recipient of the Tanglewood Medal; Seiji Ozawa was the first recipient of the award in 2012, when the medal was created as a new tradition in honor of the festival’s 75th anniversary that summer. In addition to taking on the newly created lifetime title of Founder and Conductor Laureate of the TFC, John Oliver will also assume the title of Master Teacher Chair at the Tanglewood Music Center, the BSO’s preeminent summer music academy, beginning in summer of 2016. In this new role, Mr. Oliver will work with TMC Fellows in a variety of capacities, the details of which will be announced at a later date.

“John Oliver will always be deeply appreciated for the pivotal role he has played with the TFC in bringing the world’s greatest choral masterworks to BSO audiences here in Boston, at Tanglewood, in New York, and around the globe,” said BSO Managing Director Mark Volpe. “I wish John great fulfillment in his retirement from the chorus and in his reflections on a lauded decades-long career with the distinguished Tanglewood Festival Chorus. His enormous artistic contribution to the BSO is recognized today and will be remembered far into the future, as the orchestra’s impressive accomplishments and vibrant tradition continue to be documented for music lovers today and for generations to come.”

“I truly admire John Oliver’s tremendous achievements as Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus since 1970,” said BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons. “Our wonderful chorus and its conductor have been treasured by all of us at the BSO, and no one expresses that appreciation more than our fantastic audiences who give the chorus the most enthusiastic applause at the end of every one of their performances. The TFC is very much regarded for its dedication to excellence in performance, impressive commitment to a rigorous work schedule, and generosity in giving their time and skill to the BSO, and I know John Oliver has been such an essential source of inspiration for them. I sincerely thank John for his years of service and I wish him the very best following his remarkable career with the TFC and BSO.”

The BSO is currently in the process of forming a search committee that will be charged with appointing the next conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus.

**John Oliver Bio**

John Oliver founded the Tanglewood Festival Chorus in 1970 and has since prepared the TFC for more than 1000 performances, including appearances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Symphony Hall, Tanglewood, Carnegie Hall, and on tour in Europe and the Far East, as well as with visiting orchestras and as a solo ensemble. Occupant of the BSO’s Alan J. and Suzanne W. Dworsky Chair for Voice and Chorus, he has had a major impact on musical life in Boston and beyond through his work with countless TFC members, former students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (where he taught for thirty-two years), and Fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center who now perform with distinguished musical institutions throughout the world. Mr. Oliver’s affiliation with the Boston Symphony began in 1964 when, at twenty-four, he prepared the Sacred Heart Boychoir of Roslindale for the BSO’s performances and recording of excerpts from Berg’s *Wozzeck* led by Erich Leinsdorf. In 1966 he prepared the choir for the BSO’s performances and recording of Mahler’s Symphony No. 3, also with Leinsdorf, soon after which Leinsdorf asked him to assist with the choral and vocal music program at the Tanglewood Music Center.

In 1970, Mr. Oliver was named Director of Vocal and Choral Activities at the Tanglewood Music Center and founded the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. He has since prepared the chorus in more than 200 works
for chorus and orchestra, as well as dozens more *a cappella* pieces, and for more than forty commercial releases with James Levine, Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Haitink, Sir Colin Davis, Leonard Bernstein, Keith Lockhart, and John Williams. John Oliver made his Boston Symphony conducting debut in August 1985 at Tanglewood with Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* and his BSO subscription series debut in December 1985 with Bach’s *B minor Mass*, later returning to the Tanglewood podium with music of Mozart in 1995 (to mark the TFC’s 25th anniversary), Beethoven’s *Mass in C* in 1998, and Bach’s motet *Jesu, meine Freude* in 2010 (to mark the TFC’s 40th anniversary). In February 2012, replacing Kurt Masur, he led the BSO and Tanglewood Festival Chorus in subscription performances of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, subsequently repeating that work with the BSO and TFC for his Carnegie Hall debut that March.

In addition to his work with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and Tanglewood Music Center, Mr. Oliver has held posts as conductor of the Framingham Choral Society, as a member of the faculty and director of the chorus at Boston University, and for many years on the faculty of MIT, where he was lecturer and then senior lecturer in music. While at MIT, he conducted the MIT Glee Club, Choral Society, Chamber Chorus, and Concert Choir. In 1977 he founded the John Oliver Chorale, which performed a wide-ranging repertoire encompassing masterpieces by Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Stravinsky, as well as seldom heard works by Carissimi, Bruckner, Ives, Martin, and Dallapiccola. With the Chorale he recorded two albums for Koch International: the first of works by Martin Amlin, Elliott Carter, William Thomas McKinley, and Bright Sheng, the second of works by Amlin, Carter, and Vincent Persichetti. He and the Chorale also recorded Charles Ives’s *The Celestial Country* and Charles Loeffler’s *Psalm 137* for Northeastern Records, and Donald Martino’s *Seven Pious Pieces* for New World Records.

Mr. Oliver’s appearances as a guest conductor have included Mozart’s *Requiem* with the New Japan Philharmonic and Shinsei Chorus, and Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* and Vaughan Williams’s *A Sea Symphony* with the Berkshire Choral Institute. In May 1999 he prepared the chorus and children’s choir for André Previn’s performances of Benjamin Britten’s *Spring Symphony* with the NHK Symphony in Japan; in 2001-02 he conducted the Carnegie Hall Choral Workshop in preparation for Previn’s Carnegie performance of Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*. John Oliver made his Montreal Symphony Orchestra debut in December 2011 conducting performances of Handel’s *Messiah*. In October 2011 he received the Alfred Nash Patterson Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Choral Arts New England in recognition of his outstanding contributions to choral music.

**Tanglewood Festival Chorus**

Founded in January 1970 when conductor John Oliver was named Director of Choral and Vocal Activities at the Tanglewood Music Center, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus made its debut on April 11 that year, in a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with Leonard Bernstein conducting the BSO. Made up of members who donate their time and talent, and formed originally under the joint sponsorship of Boston University and the Boston Symphony Orchestra for performances during the Tanglewood season, the chorus originally numbered 60 well-trained Boston-area singers, soon expanded to a complement of 120 singers, and also began playing a major role in the BSO’s subscription season, as well as in BSO performances at New York’s Carnegie Hall. Now numbering over 300 members, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus performs year-round with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Pops. The chorus gave its first overseas performances in December 1994, touring with Seiji Ozawa and the BSO to Hong Kong and Japan. It performed with the BSO in Europe under James Levine in 2007 and Bernard Haitink in 2001, also giving *a cappella* concerts of its own on both occasions. In August 2011, with John Oliver conducting and soloist Stephanie Blythe, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus gave the world premiere of Alan Smith’s *An Unknown Sphere* for mezzo-soprano and chorus, commissioned by
the BSO to mark the TFC’s 40th anniversary.

The chorus’s first recording with the BSO, Berlioz’s *La Damnation de Faust* with Seiji Ozawa, received a Grammy nomination for Best Choral Performance of 1975. In 1979 the ensemble received a Grammy nomination for its album of *a cappella* 20th-century American choral music recorded at the express invitation of Deutsche Grammophon, and its recording of Schoenberg’s *Gurrelieder* with Ozawa and the BSO was named Best Choral Recording by *Gramophone* magazine. The Tanglewood Festival Chorus has since made dozens of recordings with the BSO and Boston Pops, on Deutsche Grammophon, New World, Philips, Nonesuch, Telarc, Sony Classical, CBS Masterworks, RCA Victor Red Seal, and BSO Classics, with James Levine, Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Haitink, Sir Colin Davis, Leonard Bernstein, Keith Lockhart, and John Williams. Its most recent recordings on BSO Classics, all drawn from live performances, include a disc of *a cappella* music released to mark the ensemble’s 40th anniversary in 2010, and, with James Levine and the BSO, Ravel’s complete *Daphnis and Chloé* (a Grammy-winner for Best Orchestral Performance of 2009), Brahms’s *Eindeutsches Requiem*, and William Bolcom’s Eighth Symphony for chorus and orchestra, a BSO 125th Anniversary Commission composed specifically for the BSO and Tanglewood Festival Chorus.

Besides their work with the Boston Symphony, members of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus have performed Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic at Tanglewood and at the Mann Music Center in Philadelphia; participated in a Saito Kinen Festival production of Britten’s *Peter Grimes* under Seiji Ozawa in Japan, and sang Verdi’s Requiem with Charles Dutoit to help close a month-long International Choral Festival given in and around Toronto. In February 1998, singing from the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations, the chorus represented the United States in the Opening Ceremonies of the Winter Olympics when Seiji Ozawa led six choruses on five continents, all linked by satellite, in Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*. The chorus performed its Jordan Hall debut program at the New England Conservatory of Music in May 2004; had the honor of singing at Sen. Edward Kennedy’s funeral; has performed with the Boston Pops for the Boston Red Sox and Boston Celtics, and can also be heard on the soundtracks to Clint Eastwood’s *Mystic River*, John Sayles’s *Silver City*, and Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan*. TFC members regularly commute from the greater Boston area, western Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine, and TFC alumni frequently return each summer from as far away as Florida and California to sing with the chorus at Tanglewood. Throughout its history, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus has established itself as a favorite of conductors, soloists, critics, and audiences.