

Letter from Italy, 1944

A soldier's story told in music

PRESS RELEASE from GMChorale www.gmchorale.org
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Former Senator Bob Dole Named to Honorary Board for *Letter from Italy, 1944* Project

Middletown, Conn. (February 23, 2017) - Former Senator and Army Lieutenant Bob Dole, a WWII combat veteran of the 10th Mountain Division, is one of several prominent individuals named to the Honorary Board for the Hartford Premiere of *Letter from Italy, 1944*. The performance of this oratorio will feature the combined voices of GMChorale and Hartford Chorale, with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, at The Bushnell on Thursday, May 4, at 7:30 p.m. Please visit www.bushnell.org for tickets.

The story of Dr. John K. Meneely, a WWII combat medic in the Army's famed 10th Mountain Division, who returned home suffering from what is now termed PTSD, inspired *Letter from Italy, 1944*. Commissioned by GMChorale and created by his daughters, composer Sarah Meneely-Kyder and librettist Nancy Fitz-Hugh Meneely, the moving and powerful oratorio was first performed in Middletown in 2013.

In the words of Senator Dole, "The experiences and struggles in the mountains of Italy of this courageous and admirable man parallel my own experiences during WWII as a member, as was Dr. Meneely, of the 10th Mountain Division. Thank you for giving me the honor of participating in this most impressive and important endeavor."

Other members of the Honorary Board include: U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, U.S. Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty, CT State Senator Len Suzio, Mayors of Hartford (Hon. Luke Bronin) and Middletown (Hon. Daniel Drew), representatives of the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (Dr. Linda Schwartz) and CT Dept. of Veterans Affairs (Col. Philip Cacciola), UConn Board of Trustees Chairman Lawrence McHugh, and Wesleyan University Professor of History Ronald Schatz.

In preparation for the Hartford Premiere of *Letter from Italy, 1944*, a series of eight Community Conversations will be featured:

- A lecture by Dr. John H. Warner, Yale University, entitled “Mental Health, the Media, and the U.S. Veteran: Historical Perspectives on PTSD/Military.”
- A screening of the 2016 Emmy Award-winning documentary narrated by Meryl Streep, “*Letter from Italy, 1944: A New American Oratorio.*”
- A screening of the documentary followed by Conversation with Dr. James Marinchak, VA Connecticut Healthcare System.
- Exhibition: “*Letter from Italy, 1944: Original Sources,*” with Meneely Collection photos, letters, 10th Mountain Division artifacts, poetry and scores used in the oratorio’s creation.
- Presentation, “*Letter from Italy, 1944: A Musical Moment,*” by Jack Anthony Pott, tenor lead soloist, and Joseph D’Eugenio, Production Director.
- A Three Lecture Series, “Transforming the Silence,” will be presented at University of Hartford’s Presidents’ College. Fee for the series is \$80 (\$65 for Fellows). Register at <http://library.hartford.edu/presidentscollege/>.
 - a. A screening of the 2016 Emmy Award-winning documentary, “*Letter from Italy, 1944: A New American Oratorio,*” followed by Conversation with Filmmaker Karyl Evans.
 - b. Poet and Librettist Nancy Meneely will read her poetry used for the oratorio with slide projections and music. Composer Sarah Meneely-Kyder joins her sister for Conversation with the audience.
 - c. A lecture, “*Looking at PTSD,*” presented by Dr. Jason DeViva, VA Connecticut Healthcare’s PTSD and Anxiety Disorders Program.

These Community Conversations will be presented between March 2 and April 6, except for the exhibit, which will be ongoing from April 1 to May 30. Visit www.gmchorale.org for information on the dates, times and places.

Letter from Italy, 1944 — a soldier’s story told in music — is indeed most timely as our nation strives to understand and address our veterans’ struggles with the emotional consequences of war, known as PTSD. In the words of Elaine Lowry Brye ([Be Safe, Love Mom](#), PublicAffairs, 2015), “... it is clear, as we look at the alarming numbers of soldier’s suicides and lives torn apart by substance abuse, violence, and emotional instability, that we need a war on brain injury and emotional trauma.” Please join us to learn more about this national crisis and the *Letter from Italy, 1944* project.

The Hartford Premiere of *Letter from Italy, 1944* is being made possible, in part, by The Richard P. Garmany Fund and The Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation, with additional support from The William and Alice Mortensen Foundation and The Greater Hartford Arts Council.