



# BOK TOWER GARDENS

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

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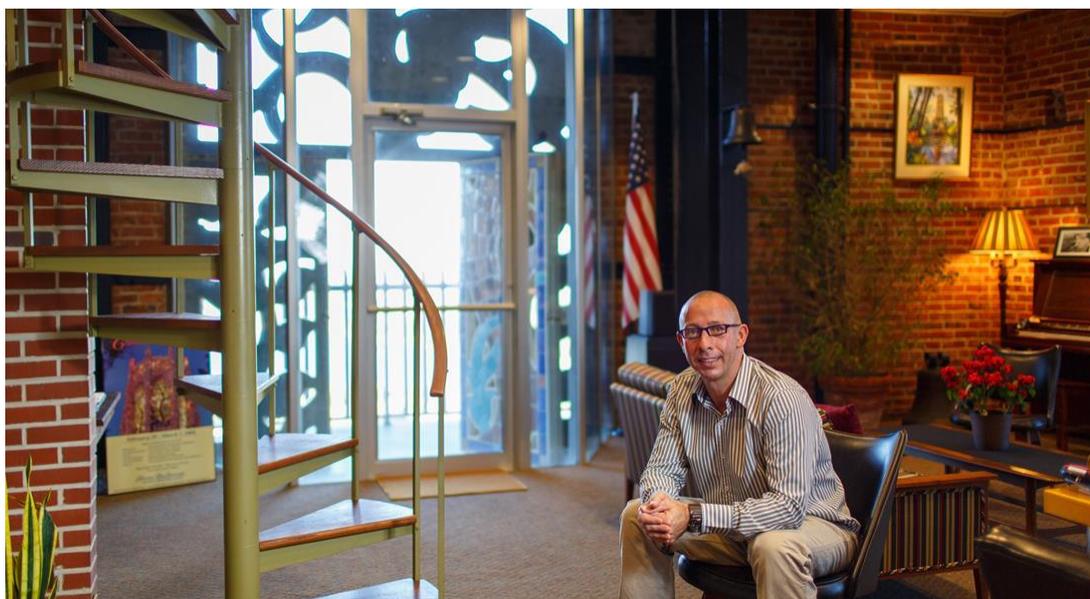
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**CONTACT:** Erica Smith

Director of Marketing

(863) 734-1210

[esmith@boktower.org](mailto:esmith@boktower.org)



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## **Bells Ring Round the World on Veteran's Day with the Music of Bok Tower Gardens' Carillonneur Geert D'hollander**

Described as the “war to end all wars,” World War I (WWI) was one of the largest conflicts in human history mobilizing over 70 million military personnel. Prior to WWI, European carillons and church bell towers were pillars of community pride and served as the chief form of mass communication.

With the signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918, the bell ringers of Europe signaled the end of war after four grueling years of silence. On that momentous day, ringers across Europe erupted in a joyous chorus of bells that spread from country to country.

### **The Broken Bells of Flanders**

At the beginning of WWI in 1914, German troops from the city of Neuss invaded the Belgian city of Leuven, killing hundreds of citizens and demolishing more than 1,200

buildings. Destroyed by the flames of battle, Leuven's nearly 200-year-old carillon and 13th century Park Abbey were lost. Saved many times throughout history, townsfolk hid the bells in times of war to prevent soldiers from using the metal for weapons. After the devastating loss of their town and cherished carillon, the citizens of Leuven were heartbroken for almost one hundred years.

After decades of rebuilding, a project began in 2012 to reconstruct the tower at Park Abbey and restore the carillon. In a display of unity, the citizens of both towns came together to provide a cultural institution for future generations. The project has culminated in the completion of the Peace Carillon that will be dedicated on November 11, 2018. The new 40-bell instrument is a replica of the 18th century carillon lost a hundred years ago.

In celebration, the City of Leuven commissioned Bok Tower Gardens' Carillonneur Geert D'Hollander to compose a memorial piece of music he entitled, *A Sacred Suite* for the dedication ceremony. To spread their message of peace and reconciliation, representatives from Leuven have shared D'hollander's musical score around the world for carillonneurs to perform in conjunction with their inauguration.

### **A Song Heard Round the World for Veterans Day**

An honor of a lifetime, D'hollander's composition will be the first piece of music played on the Peace Carillon. A triptych on Gregorian themes, *A Sacred Suite* was inspired by the 16th century music played on the carillons of that era and was composed at Bok Tower Gardens in the spring of 2018.

Composed exclusively for the Peace Carillon, D'hollander has also composed a second piece for mixed choir inspired by an ancient Latin hymn *Regina Coeli* "Queen of Heaven."

The dedication of the Peace Carillon coincides with the 100-year anniversary of the signing of the armistice. In remembrance of that moment in history, bells will ring across the globe on Veterans Day and musicians will perform concerts including *A Sacred Suite* composed for the international endeavor by D'hollander. European carillons will begin ringing their bells at 11am followed by their American partners at 12:30pm

Joining the world in musical unity, Bok Tower Gardens will participate with a bell ringing ceremony at 12:30pm followed by live concerts at 1pm and 3pm. D'hollander will play his composition *A Sacred Suite* at both concerts. The concerts feature a musical salute of gratitude to all branches of the military. Active, retired and disabled veterans receive free admission with valid ID.

### **Culture Connects Communities**

European governments have issued a unique joint appeal to communities across the world to participate in this Veteran's Day musical endeavor. Thousands of bell ringers and carillonneurs at more than 3,000 towers are preparing to join the international initiative to celebrate the peace and friendship that now exists between former enemies.

In the United Kingdom, the campaign *Ringin' Remembers* is working to recruit 1,400 musicians for the event, the same number of bell ringers that lost their lives during WWI.

D'hollander shared, "This piece of music is especially poignant as in a few weeks, I will become a citizen of the United States. Music can heal hearts, connect communities and unite nations. I am honored to provide beautiful music to commemorate this important landmark and historic day."

"As a boy growing up in Belgium, bell towers were the center of our communities. Now as an American artist, I am humbled to have this opportunity to unite a global community of musicians," D'hollander said.

Bok Tower Gardens' President David Price provided, "We are thrilled to be a part of this global effort to recognize the 100-year commemoration of the armistice. As an ardent proponent of world peace, our founder Edward Bok created these historic gardens to foster his vision for a more beautiful world. Geert has captured that heritage with his music," Price continued.

For nearly 90 years, Bok Tower Gardens has conducted special concerts dedicated to the memory of veterans providing musical solace beginning with first Carillonneur, Anton Brees. This tradition continues with the Gardens' fourth Carillonneur Geert D'hollander whose musical compositions serve as a global reminder of the ultimate sacrifice made by veterans around the world.

### **About Geert D'hollander**

D'hollander is the fourth carillonneur in the history of Bok Tower Gardens. Recognized around the world as a top composer and musical artist, D'hollander has studied, among others, piano, chamber music, choral and orchestral direction, fugue, and composition at the Royal Conservatory in Antwerp, Belgium and carillon at the Royal Carillon School in Mechelen, Belgium.



### **About Bok Tower Gardens:**

Voted Florida's best garden, Bok Tower Gardens is a National Historic Landmark located 10 miles from LEGOLAND Florida, 55 miles southwest of Orlando and 60 miles east of Tampa near Lake Wales in Central Florida's rolling hills of citrus. Open every day of the year from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Visitor Center, Café and Gift Shop are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults (effective Oct. 1, 2018) and \$5 for ages 5-12. Members and children under 5 are admitted free. For more information contact Bok Tower Gardens, 1151 Tower Boulevard, Lake Wales FL 33853; 863-676-1408 or visit [www.boktowergardens.org](http://www.boktowergardens.org).