

The State College Choral Society



NEWSLETTER

January 2002

ACAPPELLA



It was morning on a June day when I got the call. I had just arrived at my office when my cell phone rang. I didn't need to answer it to know what the call was about. I read the familiar number on the caller ID, and I knew that it was my Aunt, calling from my grandmother's house. My Gram had passed away.

Until a year and a half ago, Gram came to every SCCS concert and Madrigal Dinner that I performed in. After each concert I would greet her and my parents, and Gram would say, "Now that was nice." However, if a concert was particularly good, she would say, "Now that was nice. I really enjoyed that." She would say those words, and suddenly, I would be younger. It was her hip that decided that it didn't want to attend any more concerts. After each concert, I'd stop to visit, and she would want to know how it went, and did I have a program for her. Then, in her home late last February, she had a stroke. It took the last of her mobility and robbed her of doing what she loved most: reading; solving crossword puzzles, cryptoquotes, and word jumbles in the daily newspaper; and doing needlework. She was still able to talk, and could give people the answers to these puzzles, but, as she said, "It just isn't the same."

That June day, I excused myself from the office and went to the lookout area at the top of the Wopsonnock mountain, above Altoona, to be alone with my thoughts. When I felt ready to return to work, I began the drive back down to the office. Out of habit I had left a CD in the radio in my truck, but I had forgotten what it was. I pushed the play button, and heard John Rutter's *Requiem*.

When we first started rehearsals this fall, I concentrated on learning my part, and was not really following the

content of the words. That is, until the night we rehearsed "Lux Aeterna." I knew my part musically, but this time my eyes were stung by the words. You see, my grandmother was born, raised, and lived life as a farmer. With my grandfather, she raised six children (my mother being the oldest), and worked both in the fields and in the house. She knew what labor was. I couldn't sing these words—my throat was suddenly tight, my mind's eye seeing Gram unloading hay, milking cows, and doing the things that a mother and grandmother does for her family. Then I heard the words of the "Lux Aeterna"—"light eternal shine upon them, Lord we pray." For the last couple of years it seemed that whenever I stopped to say hi to Gram, I'd find her sitting in her favorite spot in front of a sunlit window. I never realized that until this moment. Rehearsals of this portion of the Requiem were particularly difficult for me until the weekend of the concert. On Sunday, I sang the "Lux Aeterna," remembering Russ's words to us on Saturday, "Be musical, and then find your feeling," and, for me, that feeling was reassurance. As we received the ovation from our audience, I heard the words, "Now that was nice. I really enjoyed that."

Rua



The State College Choral Society warms up for the Schubert/Rutter concert.



Our Common Good in Our Staff

Each Monday night we meet together to share the beauty of the aural art we call music. What we see is 160+ people finding parking places, carrying in their scores and other accouterments, checking the easel for the latest information, stopping by the table to take care of a wide-range of business, carrying in and setting up chairs, greeting folks they haven't seen since the previous rehearsal, studying their scores one last time before we begin and then the familiar long and full "Hello." Warm-ups begin and the first collective pitches are heard. We know this routine week after week. What is not seen is the countless time, care, and dedication invested by those who serve our singing community through their work behind the scenes.

The level of persistent excellence our staff and volunteers bring to their respective responsibilities is a testament to their character. Much of what is involved in making our organization run smoothly results from the sincere commitment of our staff. For most, Choral Society is a commitment in addition to family, full-time jobs, church involvement, and community service. Choral Society exists because of the willingness of countless individuals who, over the past 54 years, gave of their time and talents to selflessly fulfill their responsibilities. Our current staff continues this legacy of sacrifice and dedication, and in so doing provides a common good from which we all benefit. A hearty "Huzzah" to our staff!!



Russ and his wife, Debbie, share a smile at the concert.

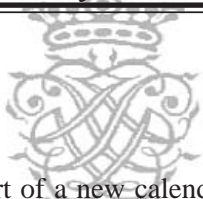
The Choral Society needs your help with

Program Ads

If you know of a business (or businesses) that might be interested in advertising in our spring concert program,

contact Bill Hessert

231-1213 or swh4@psu.edu
for advertising information sheets



State of the Society

January, the start of a new calendar year, is a good time to step back and evaluate the progress of the State College Choral Society. We've reached the midpoint of our season, and we've done three concerts, rather than the traditional one. In terms of music, they were very successful.

SCCS finances are of great concern to the Board this year. They are determined to balance income with expenses, since last year, expenses exceeded income by \$10,000. The Choral Society will not survive if we continue on that course. In an attempt to cover expenses, the Board decided on several courses: 1) to increase private donations; 2) to obtain corporate sponsorships totaling \$4,000; 3) to increase the number of program ads; 4) to obtain grants in the amount of \$4,000; and 5) to do "special fundraising." Bill Hessert was hired as development director to take on these tasks.

From a financial standpoint, the first two concerts did not bring in income. We expected to receive a stipend from Beethoven's Ninth, but the Nittany Valley Symphony did not realize a profit from the concert. The Messiah, thanks to donated services from SCCS, the Center for Performing Arts, and the soloists, raised \$10,000 for the Music Academy. We can feel very good that we are giving back to the community that supports us, and propagating music in our community—we're fostering future Choral Society members!

Our January concert sold 460 tickets, but attendance was only 351. January concerts for the last two years had audiences of 366. I suspect many members buy their tickets, whether they are sold or not. SCCS survives thanks to the generosity of these "invisible" donors. The budget called for the concert to bring in \$5,000, and we were only a little short with \$4,234.

We are fortunate that, despite the tragic events of last fall, SCCS private donors have come through this year in record amounts. As of this date, individual donations top the budgeted amount of \$13,000, an increase of \$3,000 over last year. Unfortunately, despite Bill's best efforts, we have yet to obtain the hoped-for corporate sponsorship. Times are tough, and many of the companies approached are in dire

straits. Program ads are also a hard sell. On a brighter note, Bill did apply for and receive a grant from the Centre County Community Foundation, which, combined with our perennial grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, has brought us in line with that budget item. And we're close to the \$1,500 planned from special fundraising, thanks to the yard sale (which brought in \$1,000+) and our valiant 3WZ carolers (see the article on page 4), who received \$400 for their services.

Membership in the Choral Society continues to be high. For the last two years, our membership has hovered around 170, up from the 120 or lower of previous years. We will exceed the budgeted amount for memberships with new members joining for the spring concert.



SCCS on January 20, 2002. Love those dresses!

The Board has been very vigilant (read: tightwads!) with regard to expenses this year. The only time they released a tight grip on the purse strings was to agree to the instrumentalists for the January concert. While this was an unbudgeted expense, the cost was partially offset by savings in production expenses—programs for the January concert cost only \$429 compared to last year's \$800. We have spent a bit more on newsletters: our new general manager believes they are important to the morale of the organization and they provide a link with past and continuing members, as well as donors and friends in the community.

Madrigal dinners were a great success this year—Friday night sold out, and Thursday was close to sold out. Income was up, and expenses were kept to a minimum. The singers did a great job. *(Continued on page 4.)*

Pre-Registration Night

The Choral Society kicked off the spring season with a pre-registration night on Monday, January 21. In addition to distributing music to 112 members, the event was a social occasion, with cookies and punch brought in by various SCCS participants. Hats off to Social Chair Martha Hummel for doing a great job organizing the social side of the event, and to Chorus Manager Margie Wyand, for setting up the business end of the deal.

**STATE COLLEGE
CHORAL SOCIETY
Purple T-shirts**

\$12.00

Purple order forms available from Janet



Caroling, Caroling

On December 14, the melodious sound of carolers from the State College Choral Society could be heard on local radio station 95.3/3WZ. The station, for its annual \$10,000 shopping spree, asked SCCS to provide carolers to accompany the winner and sing festive carols as the lucky person made his/her choices at businesses throughout the area. Besides some great publicity, the carolers earned a \$400 donation for the Choral Society. However, they worked hard for the money: the shopping spree made 19 stops! A big thank you to Norene Ferris, Jan Miller, and Bernard Kelly for singing their hearts out, and to Gail Ritchey for joining in for a few stops.

STATE COLLEGE CHORAL SOCIETY

Telephone: 861-8749

On-line:

www.SCChoralSociety.org

State of the Society *(Continued from page 3.)*

SCCS is fortunate to have a wonderful endowment fund, the D. Douglas Miller Fund, which was begun with a \$50,000 anonymous donation three years ago. The Board wisely decided to protect the principle of the fund so that the Choral Society will have a modest income for years to come. A year ago, SCCS investments were moved to an actively-managed account with investment professionals Weinken & Associates. With constantly changing leadership and financial abilities on the Board, it was critical that the monies be placed with a knowledgeable organization to safeguard the funds. The investments went down with recent variations in the market, but at this point, it is encouraging that the market is recovering and the funds are approaching the original investment.

We finally got new ladies' outfits, so that they look as professional as the men. This was a dream of many female members since it was decreed that men wear tuxes or black suits four years ago. There were several positive comments about our appearance after the concert. Apparently, this has been a traditional problem for SCCS; in her history of the first 25 years, Bym Condee mentions that "what to

wear" was a controversy from year one, and continued to be debated every year!

The Choral Society has had some wonderful publicity this year, starting with singing with the Nittany Valley Symphony for Beethoven's Ninth. The Messiah, with more than 1,200 in the audience, also reached folks we've never sung to before. The carolers on 3WZ—while you could only hear them in the background, the announcer mentioned over and over, "Carolers from the State College Choral Society." The SCCS volunteers who served on the PBS pledge break also earned us plugs on the air. Kristine Allen of WPSU (a recently-departed board member) gave our January concert lots of air time. Thanks to the Centre County Convention & Visitors Bureau, we are listed on many community calendars. Even the CDT listed the January concert as a "hot ticket," and published a nice article, complete with picture.

The state of our "union" is strong, dynamic, growing. We have attained a high standard as a choral organization, and strive to greater heights. We are truly one of the premier music organizations of Central Pennsylvania.



Counting My Blessings

I was pretty keyed up after the concert—I enjoyed the Schubert and was bowled over by the Rutter. What a great performance—the epitome of why I joined the Choral Society and why I am so happy to serve as general manager. But I was taken aback when friends congratulated me after the concert, because so many people did so much to make this concert happen. As I lay awake that night, re-living the moment and re-singing the music, I couldn't help but count my blessings.

First and foremost, aren't we so lucky to have a director with the talents and dedication of Russ Shelley? I've sung for dozens of directors, and Russ ranks with the best. His passion for the music translated into our stellar performance.

What a blessing to have Joan Denny as our liaison with Grace Lutheran Church. Since Grace is a wonderful concert site for us, we want to protect and preserve their beautiful sanctuary. Joan put in many hours setting up rooms and making arrangements. Thanks, Joan, for smoothing the way.

Margie Wyand, my dear friend and partner in choral crime, is the heart of the Choral Society. She is our collective "Mom," who works tirelessly for our organization; she even pitched in to help with the risers. Thanks, Margie.

Speaking of risers, Ryan Ditmer, you are my hero. Of all the tasks involved with this concert, I was most nervous about the risers. Beyond being physically unequal to the task, I didn't know the difference between a Wenger and a Mitchell. (Those of you who know what a "straightener" riser is get gold stars!) In addition to being a super Board chair, Ryan is there when the rubber meets the road, leading the way in the most onerous chore of all: risers. Ryan, thank you, thank you.

Special thanks to Rene Allard, who did double duty with his truck, and persevered even when the risers slid out; Don Warsing, who also brought his truck; Vic Sparrow, another link with Grace; Kenny Chen, who not only knows a Wenger from a Mitchell, but also where they're located in the Music Building; and to all of the proud, the few, the riser crew: Jim Havington, Doug Macneal, Ralph Locklin, Bill Haner, Ray Wakeland, Sara Kelley, Gail Ritchey, Jennifer Hessert, Bill Hessert, Megan Jones, Bernard Kelly, Steve Lutz, Andrew Revell, Melissa Deines, and Julian van Eyken. I suspect there are more that I've missed—my apologies and my thanks.

While I'm dwelling on risers, thanks to Lynn Drafall and the Penn State music department for the use of those risers. They were most gracious in allowing us access to their equipment, as was the Center for Performing Arts, who

came through in the end with the elusive straightener riser. Thanks to Lea Asbell-Swanger, and especially to Tom Heskath, who even agreed to meet us at Eisenhower late on Sunday afternoon to return the riser in question.

What a relief to have former general manager Paulette McLane manage the ticket table. I had this vision of myself selling tickets to late-comers, and then tearing down the aisle at the last possible minute to join the group. Instead, thanks to Paulette's capable and experienced management, I was able to concentrate on being a singer. Thanks also to my daughter, Sarah, who took time from her studies to join Paulette selling tickets, and to a great group of ushers: Asa's mom and dad, Letitia Ogden's husband, Leanne Zindler's husband, and, again, more that I didn't get names. Thanks.

Not only does Julie Peterson spend hours and hours each week on her many financial duties as SCCS treasurer, she also gives us the benefit of her professional editorial skills. Our practically perfect program (any errors are mine) is a testament to her ability. Thanks, Julie.

We are indebted to Asa Carns. Not only does his talent and dexterity take us through each and every rehearsal, he did a terrific job on the organ for the concert. And despite telling me he did not have a thing he could play as a solo, he produced the lovely Sonata in C Minor by Guilman. Asa, you are a wonder—thanks for being our man on the keyboard.

I love the concerts we do when we feature soloists from the Choral Society. The Schubert soloists, Peg Hayes, Dave Richards, and Jim White, were beautiful, beautiful. And Norene Ferris—your "Pie Jesu" sings in my head and reverberates in my soul.

We are also lucky to have a wealth of instrumentalists to draw on. Carol Lyon, Ruth Hunter, and Barry Kroeker were wonderful. Susan Kroeker did a phenomenal job in engaging them for us. What a joy to hear the rich tones of the cello, the haunting sweetness of the oboe, the magic ethereality of the harp!

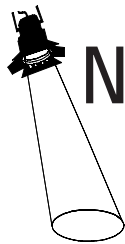
More: thanks to Pro-Copy for producing our programs on time and in perfect order. Thanks even to Southeastern Apparel, who got our dresses here in the end. Thanks to Gail Ritchey and Patty Zarkower for joining me in our Saturday afternoon hemming party, and to all the ladies, who had to make time on short notice to get those dresses ready. The effect was well worth it. I should send a photo to Southeastern; I'm sure they'll want to use it in their advertising!

Speaking of advertising, please support our program sponsors: Ritchey, Cox, Hollis, Mock & Klein, PC; The Granary; Leitzinger Imports; the Fillmore General Store; and Robert M. Sides Family Music Center. When you do, tell them, "I saw your ad in the Choral Society program. Thanks for your support."

Again, I apologize to those I missed. As you can see, it takes a village—a community of dedicated volunteers—to produce such a wonderful event. Thanks from the bottom of my heart.

Janet





New Kids on the Block

Introducing new members in SCCS

by Margie Wyand



Tim O'Connell

Tim, who has lived in State College since 1994, is a research associate in ornithology. Yes, he knows Ted Fuller, our other Choral Society bird enthusiast. He is originally from Utica, New York.

After earning a degree at Cornell, Tim moved on to William and Mary and Penn State to get his graduate degrees. His exposure to singing was very limited until he moved to State College and got involved with the Penn State Catholic Community. He found out about the Choral Society from someone he met there. Tim is married and has two children, ages 3 years and 6 months. In addition to his interest in birds, Tim was involved with the Nittany Scottish and Country dancers. He has two cats, who obviously are INDOOR cats—one of them had to be rescued from a storm drain. Welcome, tenor Tim!!!



Chieko Koba

Chieko, a resident of State College for two years, is currently employed in the Penn State Alumni Association office, where she works on the alumni magazine. She came here from New York City with her fiancé, a State College native who wanted to live closer to his parents. While it has been a bit of an adjustment for her, Chieko likes the area very much. She was born in Osaka, Japan and studied music there before getting a master's in music performance at the State University of New York. She also studied music at Juillard, and in Aspen, Colorado. While living in New York City, Chieko sang professionally with a group called "Co-Terative," 30-40 men and women who sang songs from operas. She loves scuba diving and working out at the gym, and also enjoys being a spectator at Penn State sporting events. She sings soprano and jumped right in last fall by participating in the Madrigal Dinners. Welcome, Chieko!!!

APOLOGIES

Our deepest apologies to those who were inadvertently omitted from the Messiah program:

Sharon Arnold
Bill Bemis
Dorothy Blair
Gayl Lent
Linda Michels
Winnie O'Halloran
Katriona Shea
Elizabeth Specht

And to **Elizabeth Specht** and **Martha Butler** who were not listed in the Schubert/Rutter program

Magnificent Madrigals

This year's Madrigal Dinners were held Thursday and Friday, December 6 & 7, at the State College Elks Club. They were well attended, with Friday night a sell-out. The evening featured the Madrigal Singers' delightful repertoire of traditional Elizabethan madrigals, interspersed with instrumental offerings, and interludes sung by the newly-formed ladies' group, Airietta.

Airietta began last summer when the "Margarita Mamas" (a dedicated group of Choral Society party girls) decided to form a ladies group. Jan Miller directs the group, and Gail Ritchey helps to organize and serves as accompanist. After warming up by singing at a few area churches over the summer, the group was ready to provide lovely three- and four-part pieces for the Madrigal Dinners.

Instrumental music for the occasion was carried on by the Aller twins, Bonnie and Amy, who played lively recorder duets at various locations throughout the hall. The evenings opened with wonderful brass music provided by a brass quintet led by Herb McKinstry (son of the famous SCCS tenor, Herb McKinstry).

Both evenings were very festive, with 35 international scholars in attendance Thursday night, and several groups in the audience on Friday. Particularly popular was the song when everyone got to sing along as animal—the noisiest table won free tickets to the January concert.

The Choral Society is indebted to Madrigal Dinner Manager Beverly Sutley who brought together all the pieces of this gala evening. Special thanks to the set-up crew, the ticket-takers, and all who helped make the event possible.