

The State College Choral Society



NEWSLETTER

January 2003

ACAPPELLA



Recently our local newspaper ran a story about a Choral Society soprano, Patty Coldiron. As I read about Patty's achievements in her career and her involvement with the various musical groups in her own church and the surrounding Philipsburg area, one sentence in the article popped out at me and stayed in my thoughts the rest of the day.

In the course of the article, the paper was reviewing Patty's musical commitments on a weekly basis, noting what she did on Tuesday, Thursday, etc. Then a paragraph in the paper read:

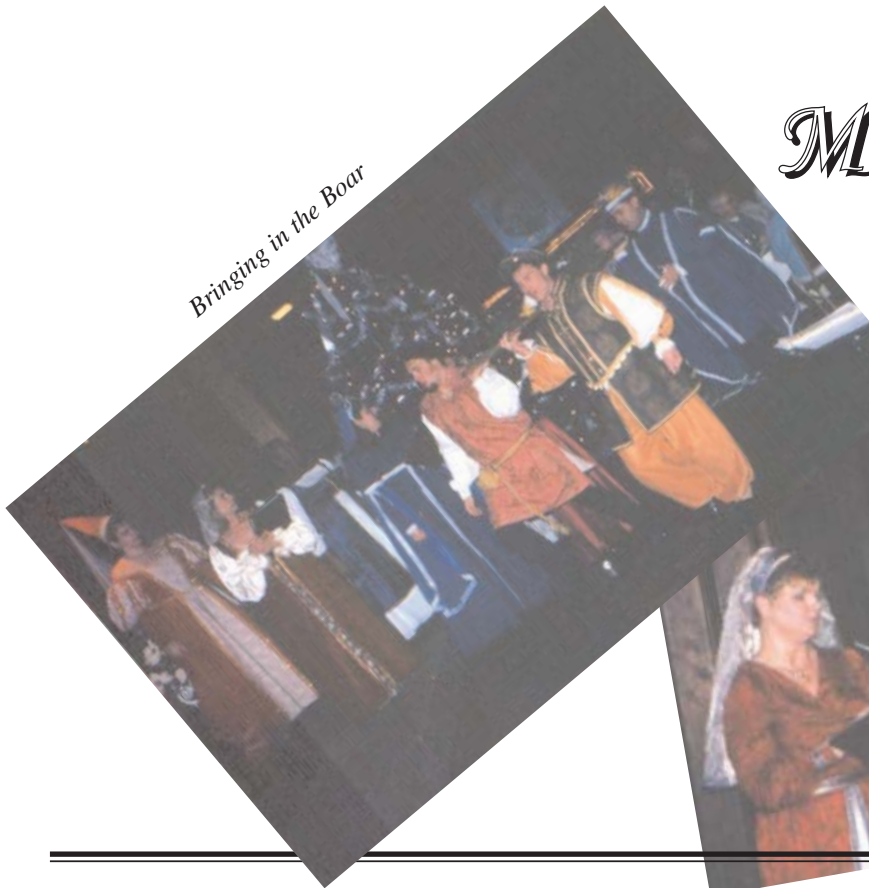
And Mondays? That's when Coldiron sings with the State College Choral Society. "That's one thing I do for myself," she says, smiling.

We are all like Patty Coldiron, consistently giving of ourselves unselfishly to share this wonderful miracle of making music. And the "one thing" we do for ourselves? We get "it" when we gather for rehearsals and when we have the opportunity to present our concerts. Many diverse people, coming together as one to share a miracle that can inspire, enthuse or touch someone like nothing else can.

Sharing together in a miracle for others ... not a bad thing to do for yourself!

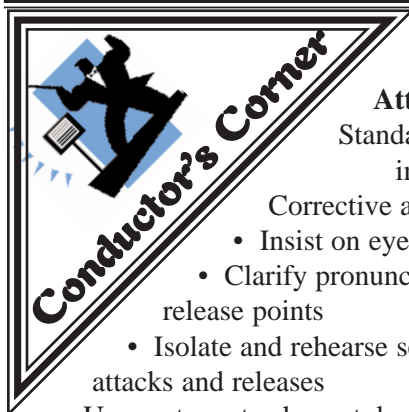
Madrigal Magic

Bringing in the Boar



Arietta





Mechanics Checklist

Attacks and Releases

Standard: Uniform precision in ensemble execution

Corrective actions:

- Insist on eye contact
- Clarify pronunciation at attack and release points
- Isolate and rehearse separately problematic attacks and releases
- Use gestures to show style of attack and release

Phrasing

Standard: Total compliance with established phrasing

Corrective actions:

- Identify to and from patterns
- Insist on breathing only at designated places
- Stress need for adequate inhalation and controlled emission of breath
- Deliberately slow down demanding phrases to develop stamina and pacing
- Make sure that singers do not breathe in obtrusive places when they are employing staggered breathing

Intonation

Standards: Accurate and timely movement to pitches especially within chords

Consistent preservation of pitch and key within each section

Corrective Actions:

- Insist on proper posture and adequate support
- Keep ensemble vocal production lyrical and forward in placement. Avoid chesty, throaty singing
- Make sure vowels are correctly and uniformly pronounced
- Guard against "dipping" into successive notes on the same pitch
- Beware of ensemble tendency to overstep descending intervals and understep ascending intervals
- Avoid "key fatigue" from singing in one key too long
- Experiment with raised and lowered keys, especially when a particular vocal section appears to have tessitura or register problems
- Vary accompaniment by having the keyboard played an octave higher or lower or by using staccato
- For accompanied choral works, switch to a cappella performance to develop ensemble pitch awareness
- Make sure outer vocal parts are tuned and then tune inner parts

Tonal Intensity

Standard: Continued vibrancy of tone

Corrective actions:

- Insist on energized consonants and rounded vowels to prevent "dead" tones
- Stress the necessity for increased support when singers are singing softly
- Ask for hushed rather than a soft response
- Strive for controlled, resonant singing of loud passages. Do not permit shouting or blatancy

Rhythm and tempo

Standards: Precise execution of note values

Accurate initiation and maintenance of conductor's tempo

Corrective actions:

- Conductor must do score study with a metronome
- Do not accept rhythmic discrepancies between individual singers
- To define exact moment of entry for each note, request choir to perform music staccato
- Practice the opening measure of the composition at various speeds to establish ensemble compliance
- When you encounter difficulty in maintaining a steady tempo, ask singers to sub-divide while count singing

Dynamics

Standards: Observance of all dynamic markings

Clarity of contrast between dynamic levels

Smooth control of crescendos and decrescendos

Corrective actions:

- Clarify which dynamic levels are required and then move to each marking and rehearse for accuracy in volume
- Verbally warn singers of upcoming dynamic markings as they perform the music
- Specify exactly where crescendos and decrescendos begin and end. For extended ones, ask singers to write in dynamic levels as signposts above designated notes
- Assign numeric values to dynamic degrees

Articulation

Standards: Observance of all articulation markings

Clarity of contrast between required articulations

Corrective actions:

- Demonstrate required articulations. Show the difference between accents and stresses, staccato and marcato, etc.
- Verbally warn singers of upcoming articulations as they perform the music

Blend

Standard: Uniformity of ensemble sound; no voices stick out

Corrective actions:

- Insist on smooth, composite sound, especially when vocal sections have "solos"
- Avoid edgy or "pinched" tone quality. Request singers

(continued on page 5)



New Kids on the Block

Introducing new members in SCCS

by Margie Wyand

Ed Novitsky

I'll never forget the email and subsequent phone conversation I had with Ed Novitsky. He was on a mission- a singing mission. While he hadn't sung before, Ed was determined to become a singer because he heard the Choral Society was doing *Carmina Burana*, and he was willing to do anything to be a part of that. So he came to the SCCS summer Sing-Alongs and then took voice lessons from Jan Miller. By fall, Ed was ready to jump in with both feet, madrigals and all.

Ed grew up in Dallas, PA near Wilkes Barre, and played the saxophone in high school. He came to State College in 1996 to work on a PhD in electrical engineering and since graduating, has worked for the Applied Research Lab. He feels settled here and hopes to buy a house soon. His most memorable musical experience was singing in madrigals in December. It looks as if Ed is hooked on singing so he'll be around long after *Carmina Burana*. A big welcome to our newest tenor, Ed Novitsky.



Andrew Revell

While Andrew isn't one of the newest "kids on the block" he was recently appointed to the State College Choral Society Board as grad student representative. He joined SCCS in February of 2001. While enthusiastic about becoming part of the bass section, he had another "iron in the fire" that delayed his coming to rehearsals. He was taking a gourmet cooking class from the chef at the Hummingbird Room. Andrew comes from a family that values good music. His musical parents (his father graduated from a private conservatory) gave Andrew and his sister the tools to pursue a life that included music. Andrew chose the timpani at age 9 and continued as a percussionist through most of his undergraduate years in the midwest. Later he completed his master's degree at Southern Illinois University in clinical adult psychology with an emphasis in gerontology.

One of Andrew's most memorable musical experiences was playing timpani with the St. Louis Symphony. Following completion of his master's degree, he spent time doing research at Wayne State University, and it was in Michigan that he experienced a second memorable musical event. He joined a professional choir where he got paid for doing his favorite thing-singing. Andrew moved to State College in August 1999 to begin work on a PhD in the College of Human Development and Family Studies on Alzheimers disease. He hopes to finish his work this summer or fall, and plans to do post doc work in the early detection and prevention of Alzheimers. In addition to cooking, his hobbies include swimming and cycling. He is especially proud of his Scottish heritage and would love to show you his kilt.

Mechanics Checklist *Continued from page 2*

incorporate a "yawn" feeling into their singing.

- Work with sections down to quartets or even duets to achieve uniformity of sound
- Place opposing voice qualities next to each other to avoid polarity of differences

Balance

Standards: General equalization of tonal weight between vocal sections

Sectional sensitivity to dynamic give-and-take

Corrective actions:

- To achieve weight, require all sections to match volume with that produced by the weakest vocal part
- Specify places where musical material should be brought out or subordinated by individual sections
- To promote awareness of give-and-take in rehearsal, instruct performers to sing words only when they are presenting thematic material. Otherwise, when presenting subsidiary material, they should hum or sing on specified vowel

Gordon, Lewis (1989) *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide*. West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Company.

Look for
Carmina Burana
Translation and Pronunciation Guides
 on the Choral Society Website
www.SCChoralSociety.org
 later this week



State of the Society

The New Year brings renewed hope for the future—we all make resolutions to improve in one way or another, or at least plan for what we want to happen in the year to come. Planning for a “preferred future”—one in which desired goals are realized—begins with an assessment of what has come before. Let’s look back at 2002 in terms of Choral Society accomplishments attained and challenges still to be met.

The year started off with our January concert in Grace Lutheran Church—a delightful combination of Schubert’s *Mass in G* and the Rutter *Requiem*. The Church was nearly full, with 467 tickets sold. Limiting the accompaniment to three instruments and organ (a cost saving measure) focused attention on the haunting cello and oboe solos and the lovely harp obbligatos.

Following this concert, work began on the glorious Brahms *Requiem*. The production in April was a success from a musical point of view. However, financial returns showed that it is becoming increasingly cost-prohibitive for us to perform in Penn State’s Eisenhower Auditorium. While Eisenhower is one of the few venues large enough to hold SCCS and a full orchestra, the decision two years ago by the Centre for Performing Arts to charge \$1,000 a day facility use fee has resulted in a drain on the Choral Society budget. Choral Society members sold less than 400 tickets for this concert. While another 200 were sold at the door, attendance at this concert was 600 or less.

Late in the spring, the SCCS Board made some determined budget decisions for the coming fiscal year in an effort to bolster finances. With two benefit concerts planned for the fall portion of the season (*Sing for the Cure* and the *Messiah*) and SCCS participating in the CPA production of *Carmina Burana* in March, it was decided to hold the spring concert (scheduled for May) in the much-more-cost-effective Grace Lutheran Church. The Board also readily agreed to Russ’ idea of producing a CD of holiday music as a fund-raiser.

The lazy hazy days of summer, 2002, were brightened by three Sing-Alongs sponsored by the Choral Society. Three local church choir directors served as guest conductors as we gathered on a summer’s evening to enjoy great works from Mozart and Vivaldi. While attendance was light, those who came enjoyed the opportunity—and SCCS gained a new tenor who started his choral career with the Sing Alongs (see “New Kids” on page 5). Free will offerings offset the minimal expenses of these events.

In August, Margie again held a “preregistration night” so that we could pay dues and get music before rehearsals started in September. Preregistration gives

continuing members a chance to avoid long lines at the first rehearsal of the season.

The Choral Society held its second annual yard sale in mid-August, and again realized a profit of \$1,000. The Board continues to explore creative ways raise money in support of our cause.

Unfortunately, the carefully planned October concert of *Sing for the Cure* had to be put on hold when new funding procedures of one of the sponsors meant the request would not be considered until January. The Board moved quickly to make other arrangements, and decided a concert of the holiday music intended for the CD was the best idea.

The Madrigal Dinners in early December were a success, thanks to a new script spearheaded by Angela Taylor and the myriad of arrangements by new Madrigal Dinner Manager Shawn Quinn. Both nights were close to sold out, and a festive time was had by all—even a Thursday snow-storm could not dampen spirits.

The holiday concert, *Songs of the Season*, was held in Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church. The space worked well with the accompanying brass and handbells, and the Choral Society is indebted to the Church for selling tickets and for accommodating, on relatively short notice, the many requirements of presenting a concert of this size. Despite winter storm predictions, the audience turned out in force, with an estimated 650-700 people. An audience survey was distributed for this concert and the holiday format elicited many positive comments.

Our music marathon weekend included a spectacular production of the *Messiah*. The wondrous acoustics, the warm welcome of our hosts, the enormity of the audience, and the beauty of the music combined to provide another rewarding musical production, one that financially benefitted the good works of the magnificent cathedral in Altoona.

The Choral Society still has many challenges to overcome: our budget calls for \$14,000 in donations, and we have yet to top \$10,000. Corporate sponsorships are still hard to come by, and grants and investments are down. Program ads to date have brought in close to \$1,600, only slightly more than half of the budgeted \$3,000.

On the plus side, we continue to enjoy a healthy level of membership, with wonderful new voices joining each semester. We have a dynamic and talented director, a dedicated staff, and a committed Board. There will be more challenges in the year to come, but in the meantime, are we not blessed to have an organization with the ability to sing and produce such music? Thanks to all of you for the contributions, tangible and otherwise, that make the State College Choral Society what it is.

Magnificent Messiah

Long-time enthusiastic Choral Society member Joe Senft often shared with SCCS words of wisdom regarding the spirit of music. Russ submitted this for the newsletter, a quote Joe found in Schopenhauer: “Music is by no means like the other arts—it is the copy of the will itself—it shows us the eternally moving, striving, wandering will, always at last returning to itself to begin its striving anew. This is why the effect of music is more powerful and penetrating than the other arts, for they speak only in shadows, while it speaks of the things itself. It differs too from the other arts because it affects our feelings directly, and not through the medium of idea; it speaks to something subtler than the intellect—”

What better example of striving anew than our production of the *Messiah*, a piece many of us have sung dozens of times, but never tire of, and in which we always find new nuances, new life, new music? Another memorable musical moment.

Guest “conductors” assist Russ with his directing duties.



Rehearsing the Messiah in the Altoona Cathedral

HELP!!! HELP!!!! HELP!!! WANTED: PIANIST (i.e. Piano Player)

POSITION: Playing with State College Senior citizens Band - a group of 11 experienced (but not too experienced) and affable (relaxed) musicians who play jazz and swing tunes mainly of the 30s and 40s.

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Able to **READ** music - mainly pound out solid chords to complement drums and bass with an occasional solo (if so desired).
2. Enjoy jazz/swing tunes of the 30 & 40s.

IF INTERESTED CONTACT: Ted Fuller (bass in SCCS): email tef4@psu.edu or phone 238-9638 (home) or 863-8247 (office).

Upcoming Dates

Saturday, March 1
Carmina Burana
 Eisenhower Auditorium

Saturday, March 22
Trip to Bethlehem Bach Choir Concert
 Bucknell University

Saturday, April 12
Trip to Chanticleer Concert
 Hershey Theater

Sunday, May 4
To Hope! A Celebration
 Grace Lutheran Church

Picture Request

Do you have pictures of Choral Society?

We are putting together a Power Point presentation on the history and times of the State College Choral Society, and would appreciate borrowing any and all pictures from SCCS concerts, rehearsals, and other special occasions. Please give photos, slides, and other memorabilia to Janet Haner. She will scan the items and return them to you within two weeks.

News & Notes 🎵

🎵 Alto Allison Hutchison is currently unable to sing with us due to debilitating back trouble. She is on medical leave from her job, and has seen several doctors in an effort to correct the problem. Send cards and notes to Allison at 423 Hubler Road, State College, PA 16801.

🎵 **WELCOME** to our newest Board Member.

Nona Uhler, soprano, was appointed to the SCCS Board to complete the term of a member who was unable to serve. The picture below shows Nona and her husband on a cruise they took to celebrate their 45th anniversary and Nona's birthday, which happened to fall on the first night of their trip. More good news: Nona recently lost 46 pounds—she's not getting older, she's just getting better!



NONA UHLER

2002-05, 1st Term
 Email: muset@aol.com
 Phone: 355-3264 (h)

Thanks, Nona, for agreeing to serve on the Board!

If you have an item to include in "News & Notes," please submit via email to jhaner@adelphia.net.



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