

The State College Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

November 2002

News & Notes 🎵

🎵 ALTO IS AN ACADEMIC SUPERSTAR

NINA FEDOROFF, soprano, was recently named Evan Pugh Professor, the highest distinction that Penn State can bestow on a faculty member. Named for Penn State's first President, this prestigious title is awarded to faculty whose research publications and creative work are of the highest quality over time, are acknowledged national and international leaders in their fields, have documented pioneering research or creative accomplishments, are recipients of major awards, and demonstrate excellent teaching skills with both undergraduate and graduate students.

Nina, professor of biology, the Verne M. Willaman Professor of Life Sciences, and Director of the Life Sciences Consortium and the Biotechnology Institute, came to Penn State in 1995. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, she received a bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from Syracuse University, and a Ph.D. in molecular biology from Rockefeller University. She was a staff member at the Carnegie Institution of Washington and a faculty member at Johns Hopkins University. After initial research in DNA sequencing, her focus changed to the isolation and molecular characterization of maize transposable elements. She currently explores the genes that contribute to a plant's ability to fight off disease and pollutants. If these genes can be identified, geneticists may be able to strengthen the ability of plants to withstand environmental assaults.

The recipient of many awards and honors, including an National Institute of Health Merit Award (a 10-year research grant that supported her work from 1989 to 1999), Nina is a member and serves on the boards of an impressive list of national and international organizations, and is author to an extensive list of publications. We are fortunate indeed that she also makes time to sing with us. Congratulations, Nina!



Nina at work in the lab.

🎵 Kudos to soprano **CHIEKO KOKA** for her beautiful contribution to the September 11th memorial service held at Tussey Mountain. Chieko sang Faure's "Pie Jesu" as well as "Amazing Grace" with the Pennsylvania Chamber Orchestra.



Congratulations to **TOM PENKALA**, bass, who was recently named assistant director in Penn State's Office of Donor Relations and Special Events. He returns to the University after almost seven years as a travel agent at Centre for Travel. Tom previously worked as a manager in food services at Penn State. In his new position, Tom is responsible for the planning, development, and management of special events for University donors. He holds a B.S. from Penn State in food service and hotel administration.

🎵 **KEITH THOMPSON**, tenor, and **SUSIE KLEINERT**, alto, performed with the Nittany Valley Symphony in their recent concert version of *Music Man*. Susie demonstrated a wonderful Irish brogue in her role as Mrs. Paroo, and Keith added his voice to the townspeople and appeared in the well-timed opening train scene.

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



New Kids on the Block

Introducing new members in SCCS
by Margie Wyand



Tanja Bekhuis

There are many places Tanja could call home, but as a child most of her years were spent in Miami Beach, Florida, although she graduated from high school in Westchester, New York. After graduating from college, Tanja did graduate work at the University of

North Carolina and post-doctoral work in Penn State's College of Health and Human Development. She worked as a research psychologist in State College and currently does freelance writing for the *Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders* and the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. Thanks to an interest in the history of medicine, she also writes for an American history magazine.

Tanja's husband, Joel Wade, is a professor at Bucknell. They have one daughter, Anja, 16, who shares her mother's interest in music (electric blues guitar). While Tanja played in the bell choirs at Grace Lutheran and State College Presbyterian Church, her first experience in choral singing did not come until two and a half years ago, when she joined the choir at the Presbyterian Church. She has worked hard to become a choral singer. After attending many SCCS concerts, Tanja focused on becoming a member of the Choral Society. In her spare time, Tanja is an avid gardener, and reads novels and biographies. We extend a warm welcome to Tanja.



Shawn Quinn

This is not the first time Shawn Quinn lived in the State College area. She attended Penn State "just yesterday," when she graduated with a teaching degree. She is now a substitute teacher for three area school districts. She had another career, as a nurse; she received her RN in the SUNY system.

Shawn was born in Chambersburg, but grew up in Long Island where, at a young age, she developed a love of music and performing. She plays piano and guitar, and sang in a jazz band that played songs from the 40s. Her most memorable music experience was singing "Amazing Grace" in church and hearing the silence that immediately followed. In between raising four very musical children and substitute teaching, Shawn is also a Creative Memories consultant and enjoys doing scrapbooking in her spare time. She is a master gardener, and in the time left over, she can be found knitting.

Shawn's husband, Robert, is director of computer services in Penn State's financial aid office. When they met five years out of Penn State, they found that they had the same circle of friends during their college years, but never actually met. We are pleased to have Shawn as our new madrigal dinner manager and an enthusiastic new member in the soprano section.

WELCOME to our newest Board Member:



ANDREW REVELL

2002-05, 1st Term
Email: revell@psu.edu
Phone: 863-0092 (o)
357-1179 (h)

Thanks to Andrew for agreeing to serve as the graduate student representative on the Board.

Here's Dan, since we missed his photo last time:



DAN MOERDYK

2001-04, 1st Term
Email:
dmoermeade@pennswoods.net
Phone: 364-1527 (h)

Oops, there was a mistake in the last newsletter: Adrian Ocneanu is no longer on the Board. We are in the process of recruiting the final Board member.

In the Margins

Eric Nelson, chair of the Choral Department at Emory University, once conducted a PMEA District Chorus where he worked the choir Thursday and Friday “just to get them to do what was on the page.” On Saturday morning, he reminded them that doing what was on the page was only the beginning of fulfilling the intentions of the composer. “There is so much more in the margins,” he implored. The margins often contain the space where nuance and beauty can be found.

In a practical sense, we’ve “moved into the margins” by being proactive regarding our seating arrangement. Although this may seem marginally important, it has helped us in at least three ways: 1) our sound is more blended, 2) the amount of talking during rehearsal has decreased, and 3) folks seem to be more attentive with their basic posture, writing instructions in scores, etc. Thank you for being willing to move from your comfort zone.

In a fiscal sense, margins are fundamental to the fiduciary health of any organization. Given the 80 percent margins of recording projects, the Christmas CD project has the potential of generating \$8,000. This is based on each family unit in SCCS selling five recordings. We hope you will ask five friends or family members to support your singing by purchasing a CD. Or you may want to purchase them yourself and give them away as personal (and economical) gifts. The CDs will sell for \$15.00.

Each week there are hard-working individuals taking care of the margins of our collective seating arrangement, organizing score distribution, taking money, posting announcements, handling upcoming concert details, securing funding, paying bills, generating financial reports, attending board meetings, etc. Just as singing only what is on the page falls short of fulfilling a composer’s intent, so too, the State College Choral Society would not live very long without all the non-rehearsal work that goes on “in the margins.” Please take the time to express a word of thanks and encouragement to our spectacular staff and Board of Directors. They attend to an amazing number of details each week.

If our Monday evening time together is the “main” event of the week, the time you spend studying your music outside our rehearsals is very important time “in the margins.” The analogy serves us here, too, since 45 minutes of individual work frequently yields more nuance and proficiency. Our corporate experience is enhanced as you spend time on your own practicing the details we’ve gone over in rehearsal.

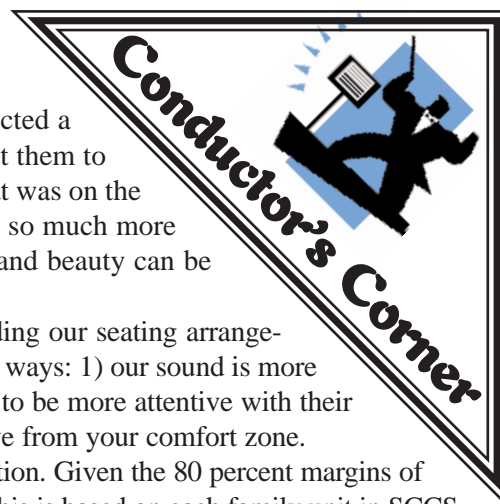
With the amount of time and money invested in SCCS, may we continue to search the margins in an effort to take advantage of every opportunity to reach every potential. The State College Choral Society: A Chorus Worthy of the Best Singers and Singers Worthy of the Best Chorus. Thank you for your continued commitment, sacrifice, and enthusiasm!

Follow-up on “Fun with Russ”

Operation “Fun with Russ” is complete, and the seating chart is in place. As and Bs or bright and dark—hopefully we all now know and understand a bit more about the logic behind this process; the well-placed combination and blend of both types of voices gives us a fuller and richer sound. A or B does not mean good voice or bad voice. For those of you who spent a few minutes singing for Russ, the change of sound was dramatic with just a few placement changes. It is that effect that we hope to achieve. It is important that each singer rehearse and perform in the same place. Since there are more Bs than As, my instructions from Russ were to have no As sitting next to or behind each other. Height was the only other factor in determining placement. The men were divided into firsts and seconds, but not the women. I tried to accommodate individual requests and made changes accordingly.

Please sit in your assigned spot, and be aware of who is in front of you. I know this is somewhat difficult in our rehearsal setting with aisles and such, but do the best you can. Thanks to all for your cooperation and flexibility in this project.

-Margie



CHANTICLEER

Saturday, April 12, 2003

Hershey Theater

\$40 includes the bus and concert ticket

Feel free to bring a friend

“For a vocal group, twenty-five years is a glorious achievement and one to be relished, praised and admired by all who love the sound of voices singing together, unamplified and unadorned,” says a recent advertisement for Chanticleer CDs. Come join other Choral Society members for a bus trip to Hershey to hear America’s version of the King Singers. Chanticleer is a twelve-member a cappella group with a “uniquely pure sound and seamless blend that has earned them the reputation as ‘an orchestra of voices.’”

ACAPPELLA



How do you describe a concert season where things you thought were planned suddenly change with little or no warning?

Frustrating? Interesting? Trying? Exasperating? Testing? Unnerving? Scary? Hopeful?

All of the above, but most importantly . . . exciting!

When we started our concert season, we as an organization were presented with a set of challenges and an unprecedented schedule re-organization. However, SCCS is blessed with the people who make up our Board of Directors and staff. When it appeared that our concert season was taking a different course, the staff and Board met, and, in two weeks time, decided on the season that we are now rehearsing. A little unnerving to be re-planning a season on short notice, a little trying in checking to see if new and old performance spaces would be available (frustrating when they weren't), and interesting when new performance spaces were available.

As an organization we are rare in that our Board of Directors is composed primarily of . . . us: singing members of SCCS oversee the business operations of the organization. As individuals, our Board members are as diverse as SCCS itself. But as a group working with the SCCS staff, they take care of the details that allow us to have the times and places to practice our craft and let us share this gift with others.

In the upcoming weeks we will again initiate the process of finding new members to take the place of those on the Board whose terms have expired. (Board members serve three-year terms.) If you are asked, please give serious consideration to serving on the Board. Or better yet, give your name to any current Board member and let them know that you would be willing to be nominated. Help keep our organization fresh, hopeful, and exciting!

P.S. Scary, exasperating, and testing? One word—rehearsals!

Volunteers Needed

The Proud, The Few, The Riser Crew

Calling all able-bodied SCCS members: please give your name to Janet Haner if you can help move and set up risers for *Songs of the Season*.



Money, money, money, money. It seems everywhere you look, someone is hitting you up for something. Even in Choral Society rehearsals, you pay your membership dues, buy your music, and purchase a dress or tux. Next, you're expected to help with program ads and sell tickets. To top it off, you're asked for a donation!

The plain truth is that choral societies do not garner the level of support that other community musical groups, such as symphonies, do. We are a large group that requires a sizable venue to perform. We love singing with an orchestra—a glorious accompaniment to a major work—but orchestras are expensive. Publicity, staff, operating expenses, all funded by ____? Symphonies often have corporate sponsorships, but that kind of support is hard to come by, especially in the past couple years. And grants, too, are becoming more scarce and smaller.

Our audience is made up of family, friends, and a limited number of the general public. The mainstay of our support is those of us with a passion for choral singing. You may be surprised to learn that individual support is what makes it possible for most community choral groups to balance their budgets. The SCCS Board and staff had a session two weeks ago with Ellen Sheppard, former executive director of the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh, who took that organization from a \$40,000/year budget to \$250,000/year. As she related her story, Ellen gave us some great ideas, and she told us that individual donors make the difference—not the ones who give big amounts, but *the many who give small amounts*.

The Board works diligently to manage costs, but SCCS must learn to support and promote itself in order to realize its potential as a top-level choral organization. So for those of you who love to come and sing, here are your assignments:

- Work on those program ads—you need only approach one business, maybe a store or shop you often patronize. If you're shy about doing this, tell them how much you enjoy their business. You don't need to ask for a decision on the spot—just leave the packet and say, "I hope you'll consider including your wonderful business in our program."
- Sell tickets to your family and friends, then ask someone you haven't approached before—you may get a pleasant surprise. This is a wonderful family concert, a great impression to pass on to youngsters in school music programs.
- And consider giving a donation, of whatever size, to SCCS. Think of it as a gift to yourself—an investment in the tradition of quality choral singing in our community.

Thanks for your commitment to our common cause.