

The State College Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

November 2003

A Letter of Thanks from a Departing Member



Tim O'Connell

Dear Choral Society Benefactors,

After nine years in the Happy Valley, three of them spent applying for faculty jobs elsewhere, the stars have aligned and I will move my family to Stillwater, Oklahoma this summer where I'll be an assistant professor of zoology at Oklahoma State University. It's a two-day drive to Stillwater, so I'm afraid I will be leaving the State College Choral Society after next week's performance.

I grew up in an economically depressed area of Central New York and spent twelve years in a Catholic school system that struggled to afford luxuries such as heat. Music education was always one of the first things cut from our budget, and I really never had any more than two-three months of weekly "music class" during those twelve years. I still have no idea how to beat time, nor do I know what it means to "be the third."

I always knew that I could sing, though, and that I loved it. I joined my church's folk group in junior high. In college I fronted two really bad rock bands when I should have been studying. Through most of my life, the greatest fulfillment I could get from singing was to cover my favorite Springsteen anthems.

When I came to Penn State in 1994, I finally bit the bullet and returned to church singing. I cantored for the Penn State Catholic Community for several years, and finally got the sense that I was using my voice for the reason God gave it to me. I met Cathy Anderson there, and she taught me a great deal about blending, dynamics, breathing, pronunciation, etc. She also introduced our rag-tag group of student singers to the "Lacrymosa" from Mozart's *Requiem*. For the first time in my life, I had used my voice for "real" music, and I was hooked. I dedicated myself to learning and performing Handel's *Messiah* somewhere, somehow.

It was Cathy who invited me to audition for the SCCS when she joined a couple of years ago. I saw it as an excellent opportunity to learn *The Messiah*, so I did it. Still with no experience whatsoever in a real choir, I jumped in to learn Beethoven's *9th* in something like five weeks. I was so lost that I almost quit several times. But I survived that experience, and was then rewarded with intensive practices for *Messiah*. Not only had I never performed this piece before, I had never been to a performance of it, and had never heard of several of the movements before we started practicing them.

Well this story is getting longer than it needs to, and I think you can tell where it's leading. My short time with the Choral Society, whether learning *Messiah* or any of the pieces we've performed, has been nothing short of magical for me. For someone with so little training in basic music education, the practices have been a huge challenge. But the payoff come concert time has been that much more rewarding. "I DID IT!" is how I usually feel after each performance, and it's an incredible rush.

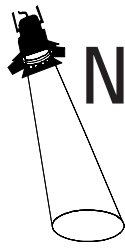
I still have so much to learn, but I have begun to think of my voice as a musical instrument. I'm also coming to grips with the realization that I may, in fact, be a tenor!

From the bottom of my diaphragm, THANK YOU one and all. The SCCS succeeds as a marriage between a core of dedicated people who sacrifice their valuable time to make this thing exist in time and space, and a talented conductor committed to unwaivering excellence. You good people have given me a gift that I can only repay by continuing to learn, grow, and share musically. I'll do my best.

~Tim

(Timothy J. O'Connell was a Ph.D at the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center.)





New Kids on the Block

Introducing new members in SCCS

by Margie Wyand



Tina Hay



Tina Hay grew up in Somerset, Pennsylvania, and while she sang in the junior church choir and in the high school chorus, choral music, for the most part, was missing in her life until now. She sang in several *Messiah* sing-alongs at Eisenhower (alto, of

course), and with prompting from several Choral Society members, she finally took the plunge this fall and tried out. Many of you may have read her account of that experience in the latest edition of *The Penn Stater*, the alumni magazine for which she is editor. Tina took piano and guitar lessons as a child and has always been interested in folk music. At one time she booked performers for the Acoustic Brew Coffeehouse in Lemont.

Tina's road to State College was not one to become a student. She felt she wasn't ready for college, so upon graduation from high school, she left home for a job as an all night disc jockey at WQWK-FM, a rock 'n roll station in town. She had worked part time as a disc jockey in high school and loved it, so she was very excited about the prospect of having a full-time job in that field. (Mom and Dad were not quite as excited.)

She broadcast news and sports for WRSC for four years before pursuing a degree in business management. To quote Tina, she changed majors "186 times." After graduation, she was employed by the University and has worked there for the past 20 years. Her voice is well known to Lady Lion Basketball fans since she has served as their public address announcer for 18 years.

Tina's hobbies include playing soccer, ice hockey, and basketball, when her 46-year-old lower back allows it. She is also an avid photographer. During a recent one-week trip to Prague, she took 19 rolls of film, and in Antarctica, she took 38 rolls! She was very moved in Prague by a concert given by a string ensemble and a singer in an 18th century cathedral. But her most memorable music event comes every year around Christmas when she and her sister make sand tarts (cookies) using a special family recipe. They love singing Christmas carols in the kitchen as they bake, and the holidays just wouldn't be the same without this special family tradition.

Mary Husdon

Mary was not a stranger to the United States when she moved here just one year ago this month from Scotland, as she had traveled here before. Now she is delighted to be a resident in the State College area. Her husband's job with Penn State (teaching in the biology department) brought her here, and she was immediately introduced to the Choral Society by Katriona Shea, another alto who is also a native of the U.K.

Music has always been a part of Mary's life and so it was only natural that she pursue a degree in music following high school. She received her degree in London. She has taught in schools at all levels but admits that she prefers teaching younger children. Her work experience also included working for a lawyer. Before coming here, most of her adult life was spent in the remote area of Sterling, Scotland, which is situated between Glasgow and Edinburgh. During that time, her only chance to sing was in small ladies' choirs. When asked what the most memorable musical moment in her life was, she quickly responded that it was singing *Carmina Burana* with the Choral Society last February.

Mary enjoys gardening, traveling, and native art, and is currently working with her husband to build an addition to their house in Port Matilda. She brought one dog with her from Scotland and has since added two puppies to her family. She also has numerous birds and reptiles. Oh, yes, she also has a son, 19, and a daughter, 22, who are in college in the U.K.

Brian Orland



Brian, a baritone, is another native of the U.K. who recently joined the Choral Society. He has been in State College since the fall of 2000, and is on the faculty in the Department of Landscape Architecture. He is not new to the States, however, as he taught at the University of Illinois for 18 years prior to coming here. Brian grew up in the midlands of England—Rugby, to be exact, and was a boy chorister since the age of 8. His undergraduate degree was in architecture from the University of (continued on the next page)

Schedule Changes for January

The following are changes from the original schedule on the purple sheet:

January 19 - Gather at Good Shepherd Church to buy the Duruflé music and enjoy listening to a recording of the Duruflé *Requiem*.

January 26 - First rehearsal for the spring concert.

WPSX Pledge Break

Please sign up with Janet Haner if you can help answer phones for the WPSX Pledge Break on Thursday, December 11 from 8:30-11:00 p.m. The program for the evening features the Raleigh Ringers Handbell Choir.

New Kids on the Block

Continued from page 2

Manchester and he first worked in Tanzania in that field. It was there that he met his wife, Martha, who is a native of Indiana. He eventually went to grad school at the University of Arizona, getting a degree in landscape architecture, before ending up in Illinois. He and Martha have two children, ages 16 and 20, who go to State College High School and Washington University in St. Louis, respectively. Brian is active in his church and recently went to Haiti for a week to help with a missionary project there. Brian has many memorable musical moments which include *Carmina Burana*, both here and at the University of Illinois. He sang with the University Oratorio Society at Illinois for 15 years. He also has great memories during high school when he and his dad sang *The Messiah* at Coventry Cathedral in England with 2,000 voices. Brian's hobbies include photography, gardening, and being a "handy man" around the house.

BLACK DRESSES

While ordering the black dresses for our new members this fall, I was informed by our dress provider, Southeastern Performance Apparel, that they will no longer keep our dress, the Descant, in stock. However, there is no need to panic. As long as they can get the material (and black crepe is about as basic as it gets) they will make dresses for us as needed. That will mean that we must allow time, when ordering, for the dress to be made.

But I need your help, ladies: If you leave the area and are no longer a member of the Choral Society, it is important that your dress be recycled. We have had no problems selling dresses for members who move—it seems to be a "win-win" situation. The Choral Society will not buy your dress, but will act as an intermediary and, as long as we have a new address for you, the person who buys your dress will send you the money directly. Occasionally, a member may resign even though she is not moving away. In such cases, I encourage you to make your dress available for purchase. Thanks so much for your cooperation!

– Margie Wyand, Chorus Manager

STATE COLLEGE
CHORAL SOCIETY
Purple T-shirts

\$12.00

Purple order forms available from Janet

ACAPPELLA



George Frideric Handel, having written *The Messiah* in 24 days, rehearsed it in Dublin before its first performance in 1742. His contemporary, Charles Burney, tells this story (I have modernized his spelling):

He applied to Mr. Baker, the organist,...to know if there were any choirmen in the cathedral who could sing at sight...Mr. Baker mentioned a printer of the name of Janson, who had a good bass voice, and was one of the best musicians in the choir...A time was fixed for this private rehearsal at the Golden Falcon, where Handel was quartered; but alas! on trial of the chorus in the Messiah, "And with his stripes we are healed,"—Poor Janson, after repeated attempts, failed so egregiously, that Handel let loose his great bear upon him; and after swearing in four languages, cried out in broken English: "You shcauntrel! tit not you dell me dat you could sing at soite?"—"Yes, sir," says the printer, "and so I can; but not at first sight."

Don't you sympathize with poor Mr. Janson? And aren't you glad that Russ doesn't swear at us in even one language, no matter how dire the provocation? For there aren't many of us in the Choral Society who are note-perfect at first sight either. I know that I wouldn't be able to keep up without my weekly sessions with my piano and boombox.

This sort of homework makes a huge difference at rehearsal time and at concerts. It allows us to pull our faces out of our music to watch the conductor, follow his tempo and direction, and look and sound like the dedicated musicians that we are. I know that it can be hard to find time, and I know that some singers don't have pianos or other instruments handy to help them out; but it can still be done. You can cover a song or two in a ten-minute session; you can play a recording in the car on the way to work; you can read through the words in rhythm during a commercial break in your favorite TV show. (You didn't really want to see Edgar Snyder again, did you?)

If you look around the choir during rehearsals, you can easily see that the quality of our singing is in direct proportion to the number of people looking up at the conductor. Let's all try to find time to learn the music as early in the season as possible—if not at first sight, then maybe at third, or fourth—and make ourselves proud.

And now, having written this, I'd better go practice "Worthy is the Lamb," or I will embarrass myself completely.

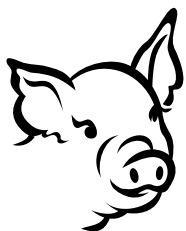
— Pat Daniels, SCCS Board Chair

Volunteers Needed

The Proud, The Few, The Riser Crew

Calling all able-bodied SCCS members: please give your name to Janet if you can help move and set up risers for Saturday's concert.

Madrigal Dinner Tickets



still available for both
Thursday, December 4
and Friday, December 5

Call 861-1277 to get yours!



Friday, December 5 Noon–7:00 pm
Saturday, December 6 9:00 am–6:00 pm.
Fraser Street Courtyard

A winter festival featuring craft vendors, musicians providing music of the season, street performers, and booths with food and drink in the style of European Christmas Markets.

Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Centre Orchestra Volunteer Corps, the Downtown State College Improvement District, and Forever Broadcasting
Proceeds to benefit Pennsylvania Centre Orchestra