

The State College Choral Society



NEWSLETTER

February 2004

ACAPPELLA



The news from the classical music scene is grim these days. Orchestras are folding right and left, audiences are dwindling, and support is shaky. That's why it's a particular pleasure to report good news for the Choral Society: A very generous anonymous donor has established a new fund within the Centre County Community Foundation in the name of the State College Choral Society. This "step-up fund," begun with a \$5,000 donation, will become active when it reaches \$25,000. At that point, the CCCF will begin to distribute the income generated by the fund to the Society.

As many of you know, the Centre County Community Foundation administers a permanent collection of endowment funds that benefit not-for-profit organizations within the county. Some of these funds are designated for particular organizations, and the new SCCS fund is one of these. We also receive a grant each year in support of our musical activities from a CCCF "field of interest" fund. Our new fund will help to strengthen our ties to the community and will help the community learn more about us, as well.

The new fund presents a challenge—a welcome one!—to the Choral Society. Within the next five years, we need to raise at least \$20,000 more dollars to activate the new fund. At the same time, we must continue to bring in donations for our annual needs: Those donations pay our bills. And we also want to encourage ongoing gifts to the D. Douglas Miller fund and our other memorials. We'll have to put forth our best efforts to add to all these funds, but believe me, there are worse problems to have. In these tough times, we are fortunate to have so many loyal and generous supporters. You should all be proud that your music has meant so much to our community.

– Pat Daniels, SCCS Board Chair

Welcome Back

Happy New Year to all and welcome back to Duruflé. I want to take this opportunity to thank those of you who took advantage of the chance to buy your music on January 19th; 90 singers showed up that night. For those of you who had to stand in line last week (February 2), I hope you will consider participating in pre-registration in the future.

I also would like to recognize and thank some folks who volunteered to help on an awfully wintery weekend in December: several members worked at Centre Furnace Mansion during their holiday sale selling *Messiah* tickets and *Songs of the Season* CDs. I greatly appreciate Martha Hummel, Nanette Bohren, Pat Daniels, Patty Zarkower, and Jack Lewis for taking the time to help with that project. While the amount of sales was not overwhelming, the Choral Society got some good exposure.

According to the member survey last fall, a number of you indicated that a post-rehearsal social was desired. In response, we decided to have the social last week. Many, many thanks to Martha Hummel for organizing the event and, in spite of the week's delay, it was very successful. Thanks to all who provided cookies and snacks.

We are very pleased to welcome eight new members to the Choral Society: They include soprano: Debbie Bland; altos: Erin Leathers, Nicole Kovschak, Misty Bower, Ane Schjolden, and Joan Zimmer; tenors: Zi-Kui Liu and John Barth. Please take time to welcome them to the Society.

– Margie Wyand, Chorus Manager





Some of you remember my dad, Glenn Sherman Spencer, from when he sang with us for three concerts a couple years ago. When he passed away on November 30, I lost not only my father, but also my earliest, most enduring, and most endearing musical influence.

At his instigation, our house was often full of music—somebody either playing an instrument, singing, or playing the piano. Given some of the setbacks to his musical aspirations, it is amazing that Dad never wavered in his devotion to music. After high school, he auditioned playing the cello for Syracuse University. When they asked him to play something by Bach, he asked “Who’s Bach?” His small town education had not included study on composers. Sadly, he lost the tips of three fingers on his left hand because of an accident in a book bindery where he worked to earn money for his education. And later in life, his beautiful tenor voice was reduced to a baritone by surgery to remove polyps from his vocal chords.

Despite these minor tragedies, music remained an important part of Dad’s life. He met my Mother while singing in the choir at the First Baptist Church in Syracuse, New York. Mother claims he attended church more to sing in the choir than for spiritual reasons!

While his abilities as a piano player were limited, Dad served as initial teacher for me and my sisters and brother. I can still remember him showing me middle C on the piano; I could read music almost before I learned to read. Dad was always our biggest supporter when it came to musical endeavors, and loved nothing better than to attend our concerts.

News & Notes 🎵

- 🎵 Special thanks to those who helped with the WPSX pledge break on December 11: Melissa Deines, Bill Haner, Steve Houtz, Ed Novitsky, Julie Peterson, and Margie Wyand. SCCS gets good publicity from this in addition to performing a public service.
- 🎵 Alto Marty Harbison will be undergoing surgery soon—please keep her in your thoughts and prayers. Send good wishes to her at 1171 Chestnut Ridge Drive, State College, PA 16803.



Mom and Dad celebrating 60 years of wedded bliss.

When we moved to a small town with no church choir, Dad volunteered to direct and did a great job. The choir did so well, the church decided to hire a paid director; he cheerfully joined the bass section. He was often called upon to sing solos; one of his favorites was “O Rest in the Lord,” from Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*.

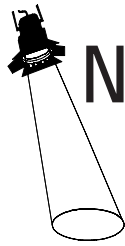
Our family always sang at home. For several years, my parents lived north of Watkins Glen on Seneca Lake. While my husband and I were in Germany on military assignments, we would receive tapes at Christmas of the “Seneca Lake Singers.” If we went home to visit, my Dad would beg us to sing with his choir at the local church. When he came to visit, Dad would sing with my choir; one of the basses in my church choir in Washington state exclaimed after hearing my Dad, “How come this guy can sing this better than me after one rehearsal? I’ve been working on this piece for three weeks!” My father was even in a publicity photo for an OLV Sanctuary Choir trip to Italy—he happened to be singing with us the day they took the photo.

In his 80s, Dad was thrilled to be able to sing with the Choral Society. He loved both major classical works and musicals. When he and Mom celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary last year, he regaled us with a wonderful rendition of the title song from *Camelot*.

Today, my sister Patricia is a professional flutist—both Dad and Mother have taken great delight in her career. My sister Meg is a perennial performer in community musicals, and my brother Tom, while not a musician himself, is an educated listener. And me? Music has become my avocation, a very necessary and rewarding part of my life ... not so very different from my father. Thanks, Dad, for leaving me a wonderful legacy.

Janet

Janet A. Haner, General Manager



New Kids on the Block

Introducing new members in SCCS
by Margie Wyand



Debbie Bland

Debbie Bland is one of our newest members and the only new soprano for this spring's concert. Debbie grew up in Newark, Delaware, and upon graduating from the University of Delaware with a degree in computer science, moved to State College to

work for HRB (now Raytheon) as a computer specialist. She currently works out of her home. She has two children, Megan, age 11, and Adam, age 13. Megan sings in the children's choir that sang with us in November. In her spare time, Debbie enjoys needlepoint, knitting, and crocheting, and takes piano and voice lessons. She is happily married; her husband, Lance, works at Penn State.



Zi-Kui Liu

Zi-Kui Liu just joined the Choral Society and sings in the tenor section. He is a native of China but has also lived in Sweden and the United States. During nine years in Sweden, he and his wife received Ph.D.'s at

the Royal Institute of Technology. Their two sons, Erik and David, were both born in Stockholm. They moved to State College in late 1998 from Chicago where Zi-Kui and his wife worked for a small company. Prior to that time, they were in Madison, Wisconsin for two years. Zi-Kui is an associate professor in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Penn State, working on computational thermodynamics and kinetics of materials. His hobbies include golf, downhill skiing, and tennis. He has enjoyed singing since he was small. In the 1970's, he participated in "The Long March" Symphony choir organized by his local school, which was a great experience. He learned numbered musical notation in China and is in the process of learning our musical staff. Toward the end of 2001, Zi-Kui worked

with several Chinese friends to form the "Happy Valley Chinese Chorus" and they have been performing at various gatherings celebrating Chinese festivals. In April of last year they had their first concert at Esber Recital Hall. We are very pleased to have Zi-Kui with us.

Kim Powell



Kim Powell joined the Choral Society last fall, jumping in with both feet to sing with the Madrigals as well. Growing up in Hyannis on Cape Cod, music has always been an important part of her life. Kim did her undergraduate degree at Mt.

Holyoke, majoring in music and psychology. She went on to attend Harvard, earning a degree in education, and working for "Project Zero," an educational research organization that focused on the arts, learning, and schools. While in Boston, she directed musical theater and sang with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, the Cambridge Madrigal Singers, and Boston Cecilia (a group that sings mainly Baroque music). Kim moved to San Francisco to obtain a doctorate in education at Stanford with a concentration on the arts and culture while minoring in anthropology. She sang with the Chamber Chorale at Stanford as well as with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. In San Francisco, Kim met her significant other, David, who now has a tenure track position at Penn State in the College of Education. There are many memorable musical moments in Kim's life: One was singing with the Tanglewood Festival Chorus at the U.N. with Sergio Ozawa conducting; the performance was broadcast live in Nagano, Japan during the Olympic Games. She also sang with the SF Symphony Chorus in Carnegie Hall with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the "Symphony of Psalms" and "Svadebka" by Stravinsky (the most difficult work she has ever done). And finally, there was the premiere of John Adams' "El Nino" conducted by Robert Shaw. Kim's hobbies include practicing yoga and cycling, a recent venture that she says is the best way to see Centre County. Her black and white cat, Pishi, is a very big part of her life.

February 2004

Dear Singers:

As I think about working with you, there are several things for which I'm grateful. First of all, thank you for your dedication and commitment. Sharing a serious and purposed approach to classical choral music is a continuous source of encouragement. Monday nights remain a highlight of my workweek as we meet to create the chorus and find the beauty in the literature before us.

It was a joy to hear the Messiah performance in December. Sitting in the first tier of Eisenhower allowed a unique perspective not possible on the podium. The choral sound was well blended, articulate and purposed. Maestro Jinbo added some wonderful twists that made for a determined and meaningful presentation. I was proud to be introduced as your Music Director.

With the growth of annual performances, it is important that we not overextend. Taking us to the cusp of too much allows us to expand our outreach and exposure while maintaining an advanced performance level. Your feedback is critical to identifying the cusp. Please know your comments are welcome and necessary.

Secondly, thank you for your persistence and patience. The process isn't the goal, but it is 98 percent of what we do. We all seek those moments in rehearsal when our efforts meet the intent of the composer and we all become aware of the profound reality that accompanies the captured elusive.

Although many of us would do what we do regardless of the presence of an audience, it is important that we do our part to ensure the future of live classical choral music by effectively recruiting singers and listeners. Thank you for such a successful October program ad sales campaign. May the passion that characterizes our music also characterize our efforts to promote financial support and concert attendance. Our product is worth selling and should never be kept a secret!

I'm aware of your investment of time, talent, and money and do not take for granted the sacrifices you make as we seek to serve the greater State College area. In addition, the sacrificial beyond-the-call-of-duty work provided by Janet, Margie, Nancy and the rest of the staff literally makes it all possible. As we enter our time with Duruflé, may we create a sense of accomplishment and purpose that propels us into the future with the energy and optimism worthy of the traditions and opportunities represented by the State College Choral Society.

Sincerely,

Russ

Russ Shelley, Music Director

THE WIT OF MAESTRO EUGENE ORMANDY

Eugene Ormandy, during his many years as music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, was known to have a unique command of the English language. The following list includes some of these witticisms as collected by members of the Orchestra.

Who is sitting in that empty chair?

I'm conducting slowly because I don't know the tempo.

I conduct faster so you can see my beat.

I am thinking it right but beating it wrong.

I can conduct better than I count.

I guess you thought I was conducting, but I wasn't.

I purposely didn't do anything, and you were all behind.

Don't ever follow me, because I am difficult.

It is not as difficult as I thought it was, but it is harder than it is.

The notes are right, but if I listened they would be wrong.

I wrote it the right way, so it was copied the wrong way right. I mean the right way wrong.

Someone came in too sooner.

Start at B. No. Yes. No. Yes. No.

Did you play? It sounded very good.

If you don't have it in your part, leave it out, because there's enough missing already.

Percussion, a little louder. ("We don't have anything.")

That's right. Play it louder.

I need one more bass less.

There are no woodwinds at number 6. ("We're at number 15.") I know. That is why.

Brass, stay down all summer.

He is a wonderful man and so is his wife.

Bizet was a very young man when he wrote this symphony, so play it soft.

I never say what I mean, but I always manage to say something similar.

I don't mean to make you nervous, but unfortunately I have to.



Contributed by Elizabeth Specht, who found this on the Berkshire Choral Festival Website (www.chorus.org/ourstory)