

# The State College Choral Society



## NEWSLETTER

April 2003

# Altos Rule as Volunteers of the Year



*Cathy Greenham and Margie Wyand*

State College Choral Society members serve our community in many ways, and two of our own were recently recognized for their outstanding contributions by being named Volunteer of the Year by their organizations. Cathy Greenham was so honored by the International Hospitality Council, an organization that promotes international cultural exchange in Centre County. Cathy and her two co-instructors were recognized for the cooking class they teach which also serves as an innovative way of teaching English as a second language. Margie Wyand, who shines as our chorus manager, earned this award as a result of her dedicated service to Centre Community Hospital. Margie, who volunteers every Monday and Tuesday (and often substitutes for others), has logged more than 1,600 hours at the hospital.



## And the survey says . . .

So, have you ever wondered if there is someone else out there who thinks the way you do? Here are some highlights from a recent survey summary found in the Spring 2003 edition of *The Voice of Chorus America*.

- An estimated 28.5 million Americans regularly perform with a choir or chorus—more than any other art form.
- The 250,000 choruses include an estimated 12,000 professional and volunteer community choruses, more than 38,000 school choruses, and 200,000 church choirs.
- Early exposure to choral singing is the dominant common factor among adults who participate in choruses, with more than half of the respondents reporting growing up in households where someone regularly sang in a chorus, and more than two-thirds reporting hearing choral music frequently in their homes through recordings or radio. Almost 69 percent said they had their first choral singing experiences in elementary or middle school. This finding provides further evidence to the growing body of national data indicating that early exposure to and training in the performing arts is a key determinant in arts participation by adults.
- Choral singers are far more likely to be involved in charity work, as volunteers and donors (76 percent), than the average person (44 percent, according to a 2001 report by Independent Sector, the national organization of charities).
- Choral singers are far more likely than non-participants to be aware of current events and involved in the political process. Seventy-one percent of choral participants report reading daily newspapers, contrasted with 32 percent of adults generally; and 42 percent of choral singers say they have made contributions to political parties or candidates, nearly double the number of the general public reporting such involvement.
- Choral singers are major consumers of and supporters of other arts—and not just music. The study finds that 87 percent, for example, of choral singers report visiting a museum in the past year, whereas the most recent national study of arts participation conducted by the

NEZ in 1997 estimated general population attendance at museums at 35 percent. The number of singers who regularly attend live theater performances was nearly double that of the general public.

- The research explored the depth of feeling that participants, had about their choral experience, with many reporting that the requirements of choral singing—discipline, attention to detail, teamwork, and the social value of the experience—combine to improve their daily lives, in both their work and in family relationships. Many choristers testified to the degree to which their choral singing made them more aware of other people's life experiences, helping them to bridge social gaps. "That connection with people exposes me to ideas . . . that aren't otherwise available," one respondent said. Another chorister said of fellow singers, "These people, whom I love dearly, are politically or religiously very different from me." Seventy-four percent said they "agreed strongly" that choral participation had helped them develop new friendships.

What a privilege it is to do what we do. It's nice to know we are part of such a positive and affirming activity! May the joy continue!

More information on the study may be found at [www.chorusamerica.org](http://www.chorusamerica.org).

### Brubeck Bits

Turn your tickets in by April 21 if possible, otherwise give them to Janet (in the sealed and annotated envelope, please) at the Friday (May 2) rehearsal.

No rehearsal Monday, April 28.

Weekend rehearsals are:

Friday, May 2, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 3, 12:30 p.m.

Call for Sunday, May 4 is 2:00 p.m.

Performance is at 3:00 p.m.

## Farewell to A Friend

We were saddened to learn that Thomas Eskew, a long-time member of Choral Society, passed away unexpectedly Tuesday, April 1. Tom, a bass, was 69.

In addition to his musical interests, Tom was a scientist, dedicated grandfather, and an avid reader. He retired from his job as an electronics engineer with Designed Mass Spectrometers in 2001. Tom is survived by his wife, Mary Lou (whom he met while washing dishes after a church supper), two daughters, a son, and several grandchildren. His oldest grandson, Chris, a freshman in college, came to live with his grandparents while attending Penn State this year.

Tom's love of music began at an early age, and in college, he sang in the choir and served as organist. He "fiddled around" with the viola and played piano; he enjoyed getting together with friends on a Saturday night for an impromptu chamber musicale. A friend described him as curious, enthusiastic, easy-going, and kind.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends. We'll miss you, Tom.



Tom and his youngest granddaughter, Hanna



At a recent rehearsal, Russ mentioned that his Juniata choir sang in the town of Dinkelsbuehl when they were in Germany. His comment took me back, because my college choir sang in Dinkelsbuehl when I toured with them 30 years ago! I realized that singing with choral groups has enriched my life in so many ways and has provided me with unforgettable experiences.

My choral life began when my church music director allowed me to join the children's choir, even though I was two months shy of the minimum age. I attended a large high school that had seven choirs; I sang with the Chorale and was accompanist for the girls' glee club. Senior year, the Chorale opened the all-eastern conference of school music directors with a concert that drew a standing ovation.

As an undergraduate at Saint Lawrence University, I sang with the Laurentian Singers, who did a promotional tour each spring to high schools throughout the state. During my tenure with the group, they went further afield. As a sophomore, I traveled to Europe—we did seven countries in three weeks! The most memorable concert was in Chartres Cathedral. Two years later, we toured

South America, visiting Panama, Ecuador, and Colombia. These tours provided some of the best fun in my life; they also expanded my horizons, especially in South America where I saw poverty I had never imagined possible.

As a young wife in the military, I ran the base music and theatre center during my husband's first assignment in Germany. While we had a small community, after a while I knew who the singers were, and I put together a choir to perform Handel's *Messiah*. My neighbor had a degree in opera so she both directed and sang the soprano solos. I banged out parts on the piano for rehearsal, but we hired a German church organist for the performance. Our tenor soloist had a magnificent voice—heaven knows how he ended up in the Army!

I sang with Our Lady of Victory's Sanctuary Choir when I lived in State College in the 80s. Director Gary Penkala organized several trips to Europe—on one, we met Pope John Paul II. Again, I had the time of my life, and the experience of singing in St. Peter's and other glorious churches in Rome was beyond compare.

When I returned to State College in the 90s, I joined SCCS in time to share the stage with Sherrill Milnes, the consummate *Elijah*. So choral singing has brought me a wealth of experiences—I am so blessed, I could go on and on. And I will, with the State College Choral Society and the promise of future "unforgettables."

# Economic Uncertainty Adversely Affects SCCS Fund Raising for 2002-03

By Bill Hessert, Development Director

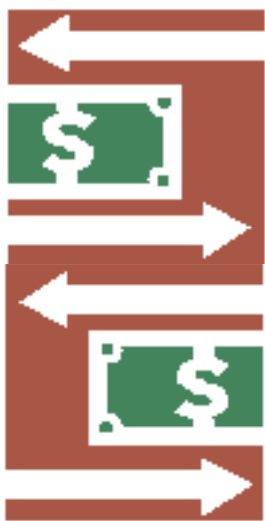
Count contributions, grants, and advertising for the State College Choral Society as victims of a shaky economy. As of March 31, the Choral Society has raised \$14,319.35 in advertising and contributions for this year, which is 17 percent less than last year's \$17,252.14. Grant funding to date has provided \$3,346, which is 20 percent less than \$4,183 in 2001-02.

Overall, the \$17,665.35 raised to date represents slightly less than 70 percent of the \$25,650 that was budgeted for 2002-03. With the stock market losing more than 20 percent of its value in 2002, it should come as no surprise that the Choral Society—or any nonprofit organization, for that matter—has had difficulty raising funds. However, that provides little comfort when we still need to pay our bills for the season.

Of course, were it not for the generosity of our members—who donate nearly 2/3 of the money contributed during the year, help sell advertisements, and provide the “stuff” sold at the annual yard sale—our financial picture would be even more bleak. To those members who have contributed this year, thank you again for supporting our group not only with your time and talent, but also with your resources.

To those members who have not contributed, it's not too late to offer your financial support for the 2002-03 season. Your gift, whether it be \$10, \$100, or \$1,000, would go a long way toward ensuring the continued success of the Choral Society!

Here is a breakdown of the Choral Society's fund-raising efforts to date:



	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Actual to Date</i>	<i>Actual Last Year</i>
Special Fund Raising	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,003.55	\$ 1,441.64
General Contributions	14,000.00	9,716.00	12,135.50
Endowment Contributions	0.00	400.00	350.00
Corporate Contributions	3,000.00	1,625.00	1,625.00
Grants	4,150.00	3,346.00	4,183.00
Program Ads	<u>2,500.00</u>	<u>1,575.00</u>	<u>1,700.00</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,650.00</b>	<b>\$17,665.35</b>	<b>\$21,435.14</b>

## *But where does the money go?*

By Janet Haner, General Manager

Wow, we took in almost \$18,000 according to Bill's figures above! Surely we must be able to get by on that amount. Actually, we also raise as much again in ticket sales, and we take in more than \$5,000 in membership dues.

So where does all that money go? The expenses involved in funding a quality choral program are considerable. The State College Choral Society has traditionally set a high performance standard that includes orchestral or ensemble accompaniment. We are fortunate in having both professional and administrative staff members who, while they work for very reasonable rates, are paid. Beyond these items are a myriad of operating expenses that include such things as rehearsal space, office supplies, copying, postage, insurance, bonding, telephone, website, and this newsletter. Costs for production cover soloists, instrumentalists, concert pro-

grams, copyright clearance fees, performance space, tickets, and advertising.

Here is a rough idea of “where the money goes” based on the 2002-03 budget:

Professional and administrative staff	\$ 21,000.00
Orchestra and instrumentalists	4,500.00
Soloists	1,000.00
General advertising	2,500.00
Madrigal production	8,000.00
December concert production*	3,272.21
May concert production	3,000.00
Operating expenses	<u>6,600.00</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 49,872.21</b>

*\*Actual amount*

# For Whom the Bells Toll

Saturday, April 5 marked a momentous anniversary—in fact, bells tolled all day in honor of the occasion! Ten years ago, the first Nittany Handbell Festival was held, and Choral Society member Gail Ritchey has been the driving force behind the annual event ever since. In recognition of her hard work and dedication to the Festival, ringers from many of the groups involved chipped in to give Gail a very special gift: a handbell composition, commissioned in her name and based on her favorite hymn tunes. Appropriately, the piece will be written by well-known handbell composer Jeffrey Hall, who was born in Port Matilda. He plans to complete the work in time so that it may be performed at next year's festival.



*Gail, handbell director extraordinaire., managing details at a past Nittany Handbell Festival.*

*A guest conductor rehearses a gym full of handbell choirs.*

Each Festival brings in a nationally known director for a day of ringing with 15-25 handbell choirs, culminating in an evening concert. Proceeds from the concert benefit a local charity or supply handbells for developing groups in places as far away as Romania or Alaska. Four years ago, Choral Society Board Chair Ryan Ditmer and two other ringers have formed a committee to assist Gail with the arrangements. SCCS Bass Section Leader Steve Houtz is a perennial volunteer.

Gail also founded and directs the two handbell choirs of Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church, Westminster Handbell Ensemble and St. Dunstan Ringers. A member of SCCS, Madrigal Singers, Arietta, and the OLV Sanctuary choir, she is also an accomplished organist. Of course, she is an alto—because (as we all know)—ALTOS RULE!

Nittany Valley Children's Choir

## Spring Sing

Saturday, April 26, 2003  
10:30 a.m.

Good Shepherd Catholic Church  
Scotia Road

*Admission is free*

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*Choral Society members share reactions to Carmina Burana*

A friend who has heard it twice before, once in Boston's Symphony Hall, said that she hadn't been very keen on hearing it again, but decided to "see" it this time, because of the ballet. Her reaction after attending? "The chorus was stunning! Beautifully balanced and nuanced. The ballet? It was O.K."

How about that? – Dan Moerdyk, Bass

I heard very positive feedback on *Carmina Burana*—i.e. at least 7-8 people. The best was from a friend of ours whose husband is a medieval lit scholar. They are long acquainted with *Carmina*, having played a recording of it frequently during the first years of their marriage ... she thought it was a GREAT performance.

– Ted Fuller, Bass

The one thing that will stay with me is what a thrill it was to be in the pit with (and almost right on top of!) those talented instrumentalists. Being so close to that wonderful orchestra made the entire experience so immediate and intense. It made for one of my most memorable singing experiences.

– Sarah Andrews Cook, Alto

I thought *Carmina Burana* was one of the most exciting pieces of music we have ever done. I also think we were just plain professional, excellent, and extraordinaire! Singing with Ms. Bea and that great orchestra was a thrill. Too bad we couldn't do another performance. My husband and I had some friends come up from Philadelphia just to hear us and were thrilled with the performance. They are still talking about it.

– Nancy Derk, Soprano

Everybody I talked to thought *Carmina Burana* was spectacular!

– Nina Federoff, Alto

Several friends told me the *CB* performance was totally marvelous—the beautiful movement of the ballet and the rich music were entirely engrossing. Singing in it was a grand experience, but I wish I could have watched!

– Ted Vallance, Tenor

I have had the most unsolicited positive responses from the concert of the *Carmina* that I have ever had from a SCCS concert. People I didn't know who attended, have indicated that it was the most phenomenal event they had seen!

– Steve Houtz, Bass

Friday night was brutal; when I came out, I was exhausted, mentally and physically. But Saturday made up for Friday!

– Ryan Ditmer, Tenor

My girlfriend, who has attended *Carmina* ever since she was little, a giant family tradition, stated "the three-D effect of the orchestra, performers and singers added a new dimension I've never seen before at Eisenhower, or elsewhere, and we just loved it."

– Shawn Quinn, Soprano

My next door neighbor (a retired optometrist) and his wife attended the ballet, and he spent TEN minutes the next day telling me how wonderful our performance was ... they loved the ballet performers and the orchestra, but he said we singers were THE BEST ... and brought it all together!!

So, I e-mailed him to ask if he would send me a brief paragraph summing up his feelings. Here it is:

"The thrilling chorus, orchestra, and ballet combined to make the *Carmina Burana* one of the most outstanding events we have attended in many years. The combination of magnificent sound and lush visual is an experience we would be more than happy to hear and see again."

– Winnie O'Halloran, Alto

I thought the *Carmina* concert was FANTASTIC—everyone (except one) was delighted with the music, singing, ballet, orchestra—I felt the crowd was absolutely enthralled, or pretended to be, anyway—they were so enthusiastic, how could we help but sing forth with beauty, etc. Thumbs up for this performance.

– Ellen Trumbo, Soprano



This project was supported by Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA), the regional arts funding partnership of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency. State government funding comes through an annual appropriation by Pennsylvania's General Assembly and from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. PPA is administered in this region by the Pennsylvania Rural Arts Alliance.

State College Choral Society concerts are funded in part by a grant from the Centre County Community Foundation.

## New Kids on the Block

Introducing new members in SCCS  
by Margie Wyand, Chorus Manager



### Maria Green Cohen



Although a native of Connecticut, Maria Green Cohen has lived in many places throughout the United States, and in Mexico as well. She grew up in a very musical family—her grandmother was a pianist and her mother played in a symphony orchestra—so being involved with music from an early age was a logical life

plan. She is very proud of becoming a member of “Collegium Musicum” at Oberlin College, where she obtained a degree in English.

Her husband’s job took Maria to Indiana, New York City, Mexico, and Texas (not necessarily in that order). While living in Bloomington, Maria received a master’s degree in folklore as well as a law degree. Then it was off to Texas, where she sang with the Brazos Valley Singers in College Station. It was there that she experienced her most memorable musical experience: during a performance of the Brahms *Requiem*, she was standing behind the brass section of the orchestra and, eight months pregnant with her first child, she has a vivid memory of her unborn child jumping in time to the music.

Maria also has fond memories of the Renaissance Street Singers in New York and the Wright State Community Choir in Dayton. And singing at The Cloisters in New York was a very special experience.

In her spare time, Maria reads, edits and works crossword puzzles, and enjoys cooking and swimming. Oh yes, she also keeps busy raising her seven-year-old son, Max, and three-year-old daughter, Anna. If you ever meet Anna, she will be happy to sing a song for you. Maria has lived in State College since December of 1999 when her husband joined the Penn State family. Welcome to the alto section, Maria!



## Oh, Baby!

Choral Society bass Vic Sparrow and his wife, Hilda, are the proud parents of a brand new baby girl, Marissa Eleanor, who was born Monday, April 7 (okay, okay—that’s an acceptable excuse for missing rehearsal!). Marissa weighed in at 8 pounds, 4 ounces, and measured 22 inches. Vic has been a member of SCCS for more than ten years and has served on the Board and in many other ways as well. Congratulations, Vic & Hilda!

## Help Secure SCCS’s Future

I am assuming every one of us who loves singing in the State College Choral Society hopes this opportunity will be available for years to come. But as the economy does its roller-coaster thing, our Society needs a solid financial foundation to be sure we will be able to offer quality performances year in and year out.

Here is how you can help (painlessly): Make a will and name the SCCS as a legatee.

Every person should have a will. Death is notoriously indiscriminate; it happens to one at any age. The wise person plans ahead for distribution of one’s estate, small or large, according to one’s own values and desires, rather than leaving such decisions and a large tax bite to the government. Do it now. If you already have, consider amending it to include SCCS.

Among the causes we care about, enriching community life with great choral works is high on our list. Therefore, put SCCS in your will. My will has a provision allocating a certain percentage to the Centre County Community Foundation for the benefit of the State College Choral Society, assuming a fund for that purpose will be in place at that time. (Note: That fund is now in process of being established; you will hear more about that soon.)

Thus my challenge: Every member makes a will naming SCCS in it by the time we gather in the fall to prepare next season’s music. Where there’s a will, there’s SCCS!

I will will; will you?

— Ernie Hawk, Bass

Vote in the SCCS Board elections—it’s your civic choral duty!



# ACAPPELLA



he days are growing longer and warmer, buds are coming up out of the ground, and birds are singing outside my den window. Our 2001-02 season is coming to its end. This was definitely a season of surprises.

We hadn't even started rehearsals when our concert schedule was thrown by the cancellation of the *Sing for the Cure*® concert. But quick action by the SCCS staff and board resulted in the addition of a Christmas concert in a space SCCS had not sung in recently. The warmth and enthusiasm that came out of that concert was something we didn't expect.

The Madrigal Dinners were held in December, and the audience response reassured us that the dinners are a special treasure in our concert schedule.

We followed the madrigals with a performance of the *Messiah* at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona. For many of our members this was the first time they had sung in a space so large and glorious. Imagine ... a cathedral ... in central Pennsylvania!!

Then came *Carmina Burana*. No one that sang that concert will forget that Friday night rehearsal, nor will they forget the power that we gave at the Saturday night performance. Surprise!

And now we're in preparation for the Brubeck *To Hope* concert. This composition is the SCCS starting to fly. We spread our wings with Britten, Bernstein, Thompson, and Della Joio, but now a group that has historically sung mostly traditional classical repertoire will participate in a sacred jazz concert. Surprise!

For me, singing *Carmina Burana* in March brought me full circle with SCCS. I joined in January 1991, when the group was rehearsing the Duruflé *Requiem* and Orff's *Carmina Burana* for the May 1991 spring concert. In the twelve years that I've been a member, the only other composition that has been repeated was the Brahms *Requiem*.

I've been a member of the SCCS Board of Directors for six years, and for five of those years, I've been Board Chairman. I've watched our organization evolve to where it is today. If I have any concerns for our future, they would be membership participation in the direction/operation of the Choral Society and membership dedication to the SCCS.

A volunteer board of directors maintains us as an organization. Each year finding SCCS members or members of our community willing to serve on the board (helping us to continue to grow and remain one of the best arts organizations in central PA) gets more difficult. In fact, finding members willing to serve as section leaders within the chorus has been frustrating. It also seems that in the last few concert seasons, getting members to commit to a complete year of performances has become an issue.

The SCCS Board recognizes these concerns and is working on methods to alleviate them, but it is up to us, the individual members of the group, to step up and say "I'm willing to help this organization continue." This is especially important in these times, when other art and musical organizations are ceasing to exist.

This is my last "Acappella" for the *SCCS Newsletter*. As of June 30, my second term on the Board is complete, and I return to being just another member of the SCCS tenor section. Two sentences from this season keep going through my mind:

Patty Coldiron, soprano, said in an interview that being a member of the SCCS "is the one thing that I do for myself."

At the Christmas concert in December, we distributed audience survey forms to get some idea of what our audience and patrons thought of the Choral Society. One respondent's statement stood out from the others. It said simply "I appreciate glimpses of heaven."

We do something for ourselves that offers glimpses of heaven to someone else ... Surprise!

## *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.

