

The State College Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

April 2004

Voices of the Holocaust: The Holocaust Memorial Concert

In its 56 years, the State College Choral Society has devoted itself to learning and performing great music and to contributing to the enrichment of arts in the Central Pennsylvania region. Now the group seeks to go further—to show that music plays a vital role in helping less-than-perfect human beings confront the challenges of life, especially in times of adversity. For its Fall 2004 concert, the Choral Society turns to the role played by music in the Holocaust.

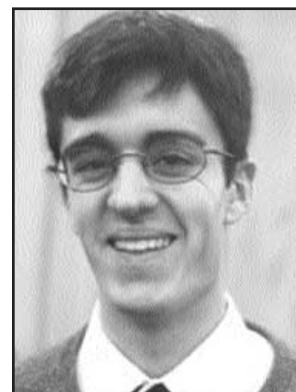
It has often been said that the way to avoid repeating the Holocaust is to “never forget” what happened and why. Fred Zeidman, chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council (that oversees the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC), remarked that the Holocaust must “survive its survivors,” meaning that the lessons learned must be remembered beyond the time when the survivors are no longer with us. The year 2004 marks the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps and the 75th anniversary of the birth of Anne Frank; in honor of these anniversaries and the still-present survivors of the Holocaust, the State College Choral Society has commissioned a full-length work based on music found in the concentration camps. The Choral Society anticipates that this work will allow the silenced voices of the victims of the Holocaust to be heard through the music that gave them hope, and that the memories may be passed to future generations.

Music reflects every emotion known to humanity; it enriches life by enhancing joys, underscoring triumphs, and accompanying the rites of passage through life. “Voices of the Holocaust” demonstrates the power of the music that helped a group of human beings to face a situation worse than death, that is, a concerted, conscious effort to strip them of their humanity, their dignity, and their worth.

In the world premiere of this piece, the State College Choral Society will present a diverse group of songs, almost all of which were written by inmates of the concentration camps. “Es Brent” (“It Burns”) expresses the agony of

watching a beloved ghetto go up in flames. “Under the Little Green Polish Trees” shares a haunting grief at the loss of family: “no more at play...our dear little children.” “Ani Mamin” brings a poignant faith in the future: “I believe the Messiah will come...” The dogged determination of the partisans to never bow down is commemorated in the words of one song, “never say this is the final road...our step beats out the message—we are here!” The victims of the Holocaust used music to express their hope, their grief, their courage, their love, their humor, and their determination to keep their human dignity.

The composition is made up of 22 songs arranged for chorus, four soloists, and children’s choir, accompanied by a string quartet and obligato instruments. The arranger, Sheridan Seyfried, is a remarkable advanced composition student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Recipient of the 2002 National ARTS Winner in Music-Presidential Scholar in the Arts, Seyfried has already composed several critically acclaimed works. Among various awards and recognitions, he received the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers Morton Gould Young Composers Award and was the winner of the Peer-to-Peer Commissioning Project.



Sheridan Seyfried

It is the hope of the Choral Society that this concert will be the culmination of a broader community effort to commemorate the lessons learned from the Holocaust. A number of initiatives are envisioned, including eminent speakers, a panel discussion by survivors, and coordinated exhibits in University and community (*continued on Page 3*)

If I Got My Ticket, Can I Ride?

Although I'm completely distorting the meaning of this old spiritual, the title asks an important question. We meet each week to invest energy, time, joy and frustration in the process of creating the chorus. Equally important is our investment of energy, time, joy and frustration in the process of creating the audience. Creating an audience is, perhaps, no less of an art than creating a chorus. Advertising agencies and corporations spend countless hours coming up with just the right combination of creativity and content to get the word out.

For the State College Choral Society, the advantages are clear. On one hand, creating the audience generates financial energy. On the other, creating the audience generates artistic energy. In *Leading the Successful Chorus: A Guide for Managers, Board Members, and Music Directors* (Chorus America, 2002), the following offers a concise look at the importance of audience/performer interaction.

If a chorus performs and no one is there to hear it, does the music sound as sweet? The answer is *no*. An avid audience is necessary for musical excellence. It is the interaction between the stage and the house, the tension and anticipation that make the thrill of live performance. Thus the function of filling the hall is antiphonal to the selection of singers.

There are several if/then truths I believe inform any plan to encourage folks to take responsibility for creating the audience:

- 1) Singers must believe in their product. If I don't have confidence that the person I'm inviting will enjoy the experience, then I'm less than passionate in my invitation.
- 2) Singers must clarify the importance of their product. If I'm not committed to the need for live classical choral performances, then I'm less than genuine in my invitation.
- 3) Singers must understand the fiscal realities of a community chorus. If I don't know how much money it takes to support the Society, then I'm less than urgent in my invitation.
- 4) Singers must find value in the process and the product. If rehearsals and performances are not fulfilling, then I am less than enthusiastic in my invitation.

Together, we must all find the joy in creating a worthy product, affirming the need for live classical choral performances, being aware of fiscal realities and searching for meaning in our time together.

Antiphonal? Indeed! May our performances be marked by meaningful reciprocity between the stage and the house. The ride that awaits is certainly worth the cost of selling the ticket.

Russ

Russ Shelley, Music Director



Wow, WOW, **WOW!** This is an exciting time to be working with the State College Choral Society. Our role in providing choral music to our community is crescendo-ing into a veritable oratorio, thanks to many new initiatives in the works.

Voices of the Holocaust: The Holocaust Memorial Concert promises to be an inspiring concert. Not only will this be the world premiere of an important new work, many university and local organizations will be involved—a true interaction of town and gown. This project is well worth your time and effort—if you would like to get involved, see Ralph Locklin, committee chairperson.

SCCS is truly blessed to now have two funds that ensure the continued creation of choral music in Central Pennsylvania.

The first is the D. Douglas Miller Fund contributed by an anonymous donor three years ago; a generous \$50,000 was the basis for that endowment fund. The recent establishment of a named fund with the Centre County Community Fund will provide a lasting source of funding—if we can meet the challenge of raising the necessary funds beyond the original \$5,000 from another anonymous donor. We owe a world of thanks to these folks for underwriting the future of the Choral Society.

Another event—one that is sure to be a lot of fun—is the end-of-year dinner scheduled for May 3, 2004. This banquet will be a gala retrospective on the year past and a celebration of what is to come. Every SCCS singer, donor, and friend should plan to attend.

Janet

Janet A. Haner, General Manager

Voices of the Holocaust

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art museums and libraries. Penn State Hillel, International Programs, the College of Arts & Architecture, the German Department, the Jewish Studies Department, the Office of Educational Equity, and the Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs have already agreed to serve as co-sponsors, as has the State College Synagogue, Congregation Brit Shalom. Other plans include an essay contest for young people, a high school honors choir to join the Choral Society for the concert, and pertinent film presentations. SCCS hopes to bring in a speaker such as Elie Wiesel as part of the series of events. All of the activities are directed at the overall objective, which is to help see to it that the Holocaust survives the survivors.

Here is a very tentative schedule of events:

Main Events

- Wednesday, November 10 Panel discussion by local Holocaust survivor(s)
- Thursday, November 11 Speaker
- Friday, November 12 Film; rehearsal
- Saturday, November 13 Dinner for composer, sponsors, and soloists; dress rehearsal
- Sunday, November 14 Concert and reception

Accompanying Events

- High school honors chorus to sing with SCCS
- Essay Contest for area high school students, topic "Voices of the Holocaust"
- Art exhibit of college level students, with theme "Voices of the Holocaust"
- Sculpture or architectural memorial to be placed on the grounds of the Spiritual Center
- Library displays in Schlow and Pattee/Paterno
- Art exhibits: Zoller Gallery, Palmer Museum
- German Department speaker: Ernest Schürer on life as a child under the 3rd Reich
- Possible arts speaker: Gunther Demnig, artist who is placing memorial paving stones in front of Holocaust victims' homes ☼

Our deepest sympathy to soprano Gail Lent, who recently lost her husband, Bob, after a brief illness. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Gail. We hope you will be back singing with us soon.



ACAPPELLA



ay you live in interesting times" is said to be an old Chinese curse, but in the case of the Choral Society I believe it will turn out to be a blessing. Since I first joined the board only two years ago, the SCCS has taken on several ambitious new projects and our behind-the-scenes work has burgeoned accordingly. The Holocaust memorial concert alone is a multi-day, multidisciplinary event that already involves dozens of people inside and outside of the Choral Society in planning for speakers, contests, dinners, grant-writing, and community liaison. The welcome addition of the new CCCF fund to our existing endowments and memorials is pushing us to become more active and sophisticated about our fund-raising. We've developed a provisional strategic plan (which needs refining) and have reinstated several working committees. Board meetings are running past 10:00 at night; Janet Haner is putting in so many hours that the "part-time" in her job description must be a joke.

All this hard work will not transform the Choral Society into a different organization. It will help it live up to its long history as Central Pennsylvania's strongest musical group, one that is willing to take on new challenges. I'm counting on all of you for your ideas and especially your energy as we move forward.

– Pat Daniels, SCCS Board Chair

Board Elections

The State College Choral Society will hold its annual election for Board members at rehearsal next Monday, April 5th. While Russ is our artistic director, the Board sets policy, determines procedures, and facilitates funding for all SCCS activities. It is important that those on the Board be knowledgeable of the choral music arena and be prepared to dedicate considerable time to the work involved, especially fundraising. The Board currently has three openings to be filled. Board members need not be members of SCCS or even singers; in fact, the scope of the Board is increased by having folks from the University or local community. Two years ago, the Board recommended that one position on the Board be filled, if possible, with a graduate student, since their young voices add so much to our chorus, yet they often have a different perspective (artistic and financial) from traditional SCCS members.

The nominating committee this year, made up of Bill Hessert, Andrew Revell, and Pat Kelley, present the following slate of candidates for your consideration:

Ymene Fouli, soprano, is a third-year doctoral student in the Department of Soils Science at Penn State. Her home is in Tunisia.

Tom Penkala is a member of the bass section and sings with Madrigals. He is associate director of Donor Relations and Special Events at Penn State. A life-long resident of State College, he has cantored and served as assistant choir director at Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church.

Lewis Jillings, who is currently filling a vacated position on the Board, is associate vice-provost for International Programs at Penn State. An "educated listener" in terms of choral music, he is also a German professor who taught courses in the Holocaust - appropriate given our concert next fall.

Other nominees will be accepted from the floor. If you would like to volunteer, please see one of the members of nominating committee or any Board member. ☼

SPECIAL THANKS to our newest Board Member, who is filling in for another member who was unable to complete his term:



LEWIS JILLINGS

Email: lxj9@psu.edu

Phone: 863-4030 (o)

GIVING TO SCCS AND TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Thanks to a generous anonymous donor, the State College Choral Society has joined the growing group of community organizations who are represented by funds within the Centre County Community Foundation. Begun with \$5,000, the fund must reach \$25,000 in the next five years in order to become active and begin yielding income for the SCCS. This year, we'll begin a campaign to boost that fund to the \$25,000 mark and beyond-and you can help us kick off that campaign with a contribution.

It's easy to give to the new fund. The simplest method is to send a check made out to the Centre County Community Foundation (or CCCF) with a note designating it for the State College Choral Society Fund. Here's the address:

Centre County Community Foundation
P.O. Box 648
State College, PA 16804

The CCCF will acknowledge your contribution and send you the relevant IRS information. The donation is completely tax-deductible.

If you're thinking long-term, you might also consider some of the other ways of giving offered by the CCCF. For instance, you could make a bequest to the SCCS fund in your will, name it as a beneficiary in your retirement plan, or make a gift of securities or property. Information on these methods and others is available from the CCCF's website, www.centrecountyccf.org/index.htm, or from their offices at (814) 237-6229.

Giving to the SCCS fund allows you to contribute both to your community and to the Choral Society, so that we can continue to bring the gift of music to our neighbors well into the future. Our thanks to all of you for your support; we look forward to some great years ahead! ☼

SAVE THIS DATE

Monday, May 3, 2004
State College Choral Society
End-of-Year Banquet
Toftrees Le Papillon