

Note worthy

The newsletter of the South Hills Chorale



March, 2017

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The Director's Corner

The arrival of spring has ushered in a repertoire of choral pieces we have been working on to create new sounds and rehearse old sounds to continue to develop a unique Chorale program. We are preparing an eclectic mix of musical styles for our Chorale patrons. On May 19 and 20 we will present our concert *Rhythm Of Life* at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Upper St. Clair.

The word "rhythm" is defined as a beat, a cadence, a pulse. Since our song "Rhythm of Life" says its beat puts "a tingle in your fingers and a tingle in your feet," I hope our audience wears comfortable footwear so their toes will be able to move in all sorts of directions!

Our talented ensemble accompanied by Kathy will enhance the choral excitement. Skylar and I are having a ball putting together a musical evening that will have our fans bouncing back out to their cars at concert's end. There are new challenges for all of us as well as oldies that are sure to be hits. So, all in all, I encourage all of you to ensure that Westminster will be full both evenings.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again, it truly is an honor to be the director of such a fine group of singers. It amazes me how all of you keep up with the changes I make on a weekly basis. Keep doing your part in preparing for this concert. Sell plenty of ads for the printed program, and sell tickets to all your neighbors and friends. We are less than two months away from concert week, so attendance on Mondays is essential! See you all then.

Phil.

Musical Humor

I hate it when I am singing and the composer gets the notes wrong.

Singing in the shower is all fun and games until you get shampoo in your mouth. Then it becomes a soap opera.

The real problem with reality is the lack of background music.

Don't go out Chopin without a Liszt or you will be Bach in a minuet.

FDA musical warning!

Music is a non-addictive, mood-altering, non-substance. Ask your doctor if music is right for you. Common side effects include, but are not limited to: uncontrolled head bobbing, toe tapping, finger snapping, selective hearing impairment, and persistent melody flashbacks.

President's Ponderings

Here we are in March, halfway through our odyssey to the spring concert, and all is well, all is well. Phil and Skylar have been masterful. We're right on schedule, progressing by leaps and bounds, with not a single snow day to deter us. We're even developing new converts to "I Hear the Stars Singing" every day :-). To our new members, consider yourself part of the family. So, ladies and gents, in the weeks ahead, let's sing a tapestry of colors, lift our voices outside the snow globe, and shave the fuzz off our notes. And great balls of fire, let's sing till our eyeballs vibrate!

Karen

What do you get when you throw a piano down a mine shaft?

A-flat minor

MANAGER'S MUSINGS

Hello everyone. Here are some insights into what is happening behind the scenes in the Chorale.

LEGAL UPDATE

We have a new legal counsel since Johanna Guehl was no longer able to do it. We appreciate her dedication and service. Taking over for her is Lou Moraytis. You may recognize the last name; he is the husband of our terrific Ticket Sales Chair Pat Moraytis. Lou is retiring from a long and successful career as a contracts attorney with the Eckert Seamans law firm. His services are offered 'pro bono', legalese for 'no charge.'

Lou and I have been reviewing all contracts and insurance policies of the Chorale. We carry liability insurance which covers us in case you cause any accidental damage while participating in a Chorale activity. We have no medical insurance coverage on you. For example, if you trip and fall breaking one of Tom Early's drums, you would be covered by the liability insurance policy for the damage to his equipment but not for any medical expenses if you were injured. Lou has written a paper that explains all of the details. We will have these available at our next general meeting for you to review. Thank you, Lou.

-Rick Smith

Musical Quotes from Ray Charles

Music to me is like breathing – I don't get tired of breathing, I don't get tired of music.

I was born with music inside me. Music was one of my parts, like my ribs, my kidneys, my liver, my heart. Like my blood. It was a force already within me when I arrived on the scene. It was a necessity for me like food or water.

The important thing is to feel your music, really feel it and believe it.

My music had roots which I'd dug up from my own childhood, musical roots buried in the darkest soil.

Love is a special word and I use it only when I mean it. You say the word too much and it becomes cheap.

I can't retire from music any more than I can retire from my liver. You'd have to remove the music from me surgically – like you were taking out my appendix.

Our Newest Members

This spring we welcomed two new singers. Here are brief sketches of their backgrounds.



Cynthia Walter, Second Alto

Cynthia Walter has now joined her husband Rich as new members of the Chorale. She has been singing and learning music theory since first grade, thanks to a musically progressive elementary school in Lexington, Massachusetts. She participated in school choruses every year from elementary through high school and performed in musicals as well.

Over the years, Cynthia also sang with the choir of every church to which she belonged. Additionally, on her way to becoming an Episcopal priest, she sang in her seminary choir. Upon graduating seminary in 2003, Cynthia sang with the Northern Virginia Community College Chorus until her move in 2006 to serve a church in West Virginia. After a period of several years without a choir, Cynthia recently had the urge to celebrate in choral song once again . . . and to sing harmony for a change, which was not feasible when leading worship.

Cynthia's most memorable musical experience took place when she was singing with the North Virginia Community Choir. Shortly after she joined, her father died. One of the pieces that the choir was singing at the time was Brahms's **Requiem**, which Cynthia described as incredibly beautiful. Those who have heard it or sung it will certainly agree. But for Cynthia, the work had particular meaning: She felt as though she were singing it for her father.



Little Known Facts

'You'll Never Walk Alone' is a show tune from Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1945 musical *Carousel*. Nettie sings to Julie, the female protagonist, to comfort her after her husband, Billy, committed suicide following a failed robbery attempt. The song has been recorded by a number of notable singers including Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, and Doris Day. In the 1960s the song was adopted as a sporting anthem by the Liverpool Football Club and still sung by supporters at home games. In 1990, at the Nelson Mandela Tribute for a Free South Africa, the audience broke out in a rendition. Mandela asked what the song was. He was told that it was a football song.



Johnny Mercer (1909-1976), composer of "Dream", was a prolific lyricist who wrote the text, and sometimes music, for hit songs in four different decades. Among his well known works are: "I'm an Old Cow Hand" (1936), "Day-In Day-Out" (1939), "Fools Rush In" (1940), "That Old Black Magic" (1942), "Autumn Leaves" (1950), "Something's Gotta Give" (1955), and "Summer Wind" (1965).

Mary Meeder, Second Alto

Last December second alto Mary Meeder retired from Jumonville, a Christian camp and retreat center near Uniontown. After living and working there for 43 years, retirement prompted a move to the Monongahela area so that she and her husband could be closer to family. With her love of music and singing in choirs, she searched the Internet for choirs to join and decided that the South Hills Chorale best fit her needs.

Mary sang alto in the Uniontown Chorale for many years as well as in the choir at Calvary United Methodist Church in Uniontown, where she had also directed for 12 years. Additionally, Mary was active in the Praise Band for Wednesday night worship during summer camps for the children and families at Jumonville.

Mary's fond musical memories are so numerous that she is hesitant to choose just one. However, she can say without hesitation that she was elated to be a part of a musical that a former pastor had written, and she, along with four others from Western PA, traveled to churches to share that message.



Some Military History

The bugle call "Taps" was inspired by Civil War General Daniel Butterfield. He wanted to replace the official call for soldiers to extinguish their lights and go to sleep (*Lights Out*). He collaborated with 22-year-old bugler Oliver Wilcox Norton on a new call. The two developed Taps, a current 24-note call which was a revision of an existing one titled "Tattoo." After the first use, other brigade buglers came to Norton to learn it and started playing Taps in their own units. The tune spread unofficially. Taps became so popular that Confederate buglers started using it. Later Captain John Tidball used the call to honor a fallen soldier instead of the customary three shot volley thinking that the shots might alert the enemy to his location. In the early 1900s "Taps", together with the three-shot volley became an official part of military funerals. The "Day is done" lyrics are not official; no one knows who wrote them.

Quick ♪ Notes

If you think that driving on the left side of the road in England would be confusing for American drivers, here are the British equivalents to our notes.

Whole Note

Semi-breve

Half note

Minim

Quarter Note

Crotchet

Eighth Note

Quaver

Sixteenth

Semiquaver

Thirty-second

Demisemiquaver

Sixty-fourth

Hemidemisemiquaver

Finally, there is the

Quasihemidemisemiquaver

∞

In 1996, Ringo Starr appeared in a Japanese advertisement for apple sauce, which is what "Ringo" means in Japanese.

∞

Renaissance composer Orlando de Lassus was kidnapped many times as a boy because of his beautiful singing voice.

Interesting Stuff

"The Rhythm of Life" is one of the songs from the Musical *Sweet Charity*. The story is an adaptation of Federico Fellini's 1957 Oscar winning movie *Nights of Cabiria*. The movie is bittersweet, following the days and nights of Cabiria, a prostitute searching for the stability of love but who finds only one unhappy affair after another. The movie closes with Cabiria smiling hopefully through her tears after being jilted by her final lover.

Sweet Charity follows the same arc. It is the story of Charity Valentine, a New York taxi dancer at Fandango Ballroom. Like Cabiria, her story starts with her being jilted by her boyfriend who pushes her into a pond and steals her purse. Later she is encouraged to get more street smarts as her dance hall friends sing, "Hey Big Spender." Later, Charity is picked up by movie star Vittorio, who has just broken up with his girlfriend. She accompanies him to his apartment. Amazed by her good fortune, she sings, "If My Friends Could See Me Now" but ends up being locked in a closet when Vittorio's girlfriend returns to reconcile with him.

Later, Charity finds herself locked in an elevator where she meets Oscar, a tax accountant. He guesses that she works in a bank. He takes her to his hippie church where they sing, "The Rhythm of Life." Later she confesses to Oscar that she is a dancer, but he says he doesn't care and wants to marry her. After saying goodbye to her friends at Fandango, Charity and Oscar walk through Central Park. Unexpectedly he declares that he cannot get over his jealousy of the men she has danced with and cannot go through with the wedding. Then he proceeds to push her into the lake like her previous boyfriend did. Always seeing the positive side, Charity proclaims that at least she still has her purse and optimistically sings, "I'm the Bravest Individual."

The musical was nominated for nine Tony awards and was later adapted for film in 1969 starring Shirley MacLaine.

More Interesting Stuff

The musical *Oliver!* is an adaptation of Charles Dickens's novel, *Oliver Twist*, or *The Parish Boy's Progress*. The book is written in the typical melodramatic fashion common to fiction in the 1800s. The hero, Oliver, is an orphan who faces multiple misfortunes as he survives 1830s London.

The book, like many of Dickens' novels, was serialized in installments in the monthly magazine *Bentley's Miscellany* from February 1837 to April 1839 under the author's pseudonym, "Boz".

The novel takes much of its thematic material from Dickens's life experiences. His father was arrested and sent to debtor's prison, and twelve-year-old Dickens was sent to work in a shoe polish factory. One of his co-workers was Bob Fagin, a character who appears in the novel and musical.

Oliver Twist like many of Dickens works, is a commentary on the nature of British society. In this case it highlights the injustices of poverty and social caste. It also contains a recurring theme of good versus evil and the hypocrisy of many the middle-class people Oliver encounters.

Come, Sing and Be Joyful

Our text for "Come Sing and Be Joyful" is very loosely based on Vivaldi's choral work *Beatus vir* "Blessed is the man...", the first words in Psalm 1. I said 'loosely' since there is no relationship between Vivaldi's Latin text and our English version. Here is a more accurate translation.

*Paratum cor ejus, sperare in Domino,
confirmatum est cor ejus; non commovebitur
donec despiciat ini-
micos suos.*

*Dispersit, dedit pauperibus:
justitia ejus manet in saeculum saeculi,
cornu ejus exaltabitur in gloria.*

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord,
his heart is established; he shall not be afraid
until he see his desire upon his enemies.
He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor:
his righteousness endureth for ever,
his horn shall be exalted with glory.



Quick ♪ Notes

James Weldon Johnson, author of "I Hear the Stars" was more than a poet. Born of a freeborn Virginia father in Jacksonville, Florida on June 17, 1871, he graduated from Atlanta University and later worked as a grammar school principal. He founded the newspaper *The Daily American*, a paper that focused on issues in the black community. He later became the first African American to pass the Florida bar.

Johnson and his brother wrote more than 200 songs for the Broadway musical stage. Their most memorable song is "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in celebration of Lincoln's birthday, a song that later became the official anthem of the NAACP.

In addition to his work as a civil rights activist, educator, and author, Johnson was a diplomat. Theodore Roosevelt appointed him to positions in Venezuela and Nicaragua in 1906, posts he held until 1914.

Discouraged by the lack of meaningful social reform in Washington, Johnson retired to become the Professor of Literature and Writing at Fisk University. He died at the age of 67 in an automobile accident while vacationing in Maine.

The Chorale's Unsung Heroines



First soprano Carol Steffen and first alto Mary Seibert have been our costume committee co-chairs for the past eight years. As one of our most experienced singers, Carol enlisted Mary, a new member, to partner with her for the job following the excellent work done by Debbie Smith.

Their work in this role calls for good fashion sense, attention to detail, and an unfailing good humor as they try to make costume selections that meet the needs of our group. While the decision for men's wardrobe is relatively straightforward, making choices for women's concert wear is much more challenging. Their decision has to factor in the various shapes, sizes, heights and ages of our singers as well the concert 'look' we want to project to our audience. The first major costume selection they had to make was for the Chorale's 50th anniversary. For this season they chose a gold jacket to match with black palazzo pants, an excellent choice for our golden anniversary and Pittsburgh's traditional color scheme.

Carol, is one of the Chorale's most senior members, has been a singer with us for 57 years. Her parents, both musicians, encouraged her to join them in the Chorale. Carol recounted many notable singing experiences, but her most memorable one occurred when the Chorale participated in the professional stage production of the musical **Kismet** in 1975. Another favorite was when the Chorale sang with Andy Williams.

Mary has been a member of the Chorale for ten years; we are her first organized singing group. While she always loved music and the theatre, it was not until after her husband died that she needed something to do as a pastime. She noticed an audition announcement in the Greensheet and decided to make the leap. She was put on hold after her first audition and decided to join her church choir to develop her voice and singing skills. Six months later she joined the Chorale. She now sings with a number of groups including the *Harmony Singers*, the *Teutonia Damenchor*, and her church choir.

More Little Known Facts

Jerry Lee Lewis recorded "Great Balls of Fire" in 1957. *Rolling Stone* ranked it as the 97th greatest song ever selling over one million copies in the first ten days after its release. It is one of the best selling singles of all time.

Lewis was a prodigy who grew up in near poverty in Ferriday, Louisiana. He started playing a piano at nine years old; his father mortgaged their home to buy him his first real piano. He was known to copy the musical styles of black preachers and choirs and was kicked out of Texas Bible College for playing traditional hymns in this style. After two failed marriages the 23 year-old Lewis married his 13-year-old cousin which led to a boycott of his records and many concert cancellations.

After 1958 Lewis's rock and roll career faded. He recorded several additional hits and successful albums, but he never regained the peak he achieved with "Great Balls of Fire." In the late 1960s he switched to country music and had 30 songs reach the top ten country and western rankings with songs such as "Me and Bobby McGee" and "There Must Be More to Love Than This". He continues to tour into this century and release new albums.

He seems to be a serial groom. He has been married seven times. His most recent wedding was in 2012 to Judith Brown.

A Song to Commemorate the Birth of a Son

"Come, Come Ye Saints" was written in April, 1846, by William Clayton. He and part of his family were escaping religious persecution in Nauvoo, Illinois that drove them and other Mormons from their homes. Clayton was forced to leave the youngest of his four wives, Diantha, behind since she was expecting her first child. The early spring weather on the trek west was miserable. One of the members of the party recorded thirty-four days of constant storm, either snow or rain, in late March and April. On March 30 one of the members of the group received a letter announcing that Diantha had a baby boy and that the child was healthy. The evening after he received the news, Clayton composed a song titled "All Is Well" in thanks for the birth of his son and as a prayer for Diantha's health. This is the song we now sing as "Come, Come Ye Saints."

