

# Note worthy

The newsletter of the South Hills Chorale



October, 2015

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## The Director's Corner

Hi all! We certainly are off and running toward another wonderful musical celebration in December! Mondays are so great because I get to be with all of you, your spirit of singing, and your wonderful voices!

Have you noticed: we are doing a number of what is commonly referred to as holiday carols. If you look up that word *carol*, you will find that the word came from an old French term: *carole* meaning "a circle of dance". Most likely a word used in the twelfth century. While not necessarily denoting a religious piece, the word certainly suggests celebration and happiness! So the programming for our December concert will fit that definition.

The holidays are worth celebration no matter your own personal beliefs. Given that 2015 has had its "bumps in the road" for many of us, we certainly need this joy, and choral music can do that! So as we approach this season of celebration, allow yourself to "party" to your music. The result will be audiences who will leave Westminster with an overwhelming sense of celebration! KEEP SINGING!

– *Phil*

I think music in itself is healing. It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music.

**Billy Joel**

## Musical Humor

Q: What is the difference between a fish and a piano?

A: You can't tuna fish!

Q: Why did Mozart get rid of his chickens?

A: They kept saying Bach, Bach!

I didn't want my kids to join band or orchestra, and risk being exposed to so much sax and violins.

A quarter note goes into a bar, sidles up to a dotted half note and says, "Baby, you make me whole."

Q: What do you call a musician who steals sheet music?

A: A clef-to maniac.

Q: What's the definition of perfect pitch?

A: When you toss a banjo into a dumpster and it hits an accordion.

## President's Ponderings

The air has turned cool and crisp, the daylight is shortening, and the South Hills Chorale is back singing so it must be fall! We are off to a fast start on reading our new music while still keeping the spring music ready for the RAD concert. I would like to issue a special welcome to our new singers to let you know that we are delighted to have you join us. I hope you have received a warm welcome so far. Please let me or other board members know of any ideas that you might have to make our group even better. We are a constant work in progress! It is an honor to be your President (on most days!) and I look forward to another great year of making beautiful music together.

—**Fred Barnes**

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## Poetic Warning

**Our Director of Music, Phil Aley,  
Waives his arms 'round quite gaily.  
But he'll get quite growly  
If you call him Phil Alley  
Do it, and get smacked with a shillelagh.**

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## Manager's Musings

It is always a joy for me to start a new singing season - to connect with veteran singers and meet new ones. It seems to me that we get stronger each year as the quality of Chorale is enhanced under Phil's direction. I recently forwarded a set of hints, "Ten ideas for the singer who doesn't think they can practice on their own". I'd like to focus on the fifth one which recommends that you should review the parts you have problems with rather than just singing the parts you know. The easiest way to do this is to circle those parts during rehearsal so you don't forget them. To get a fix, you could ask a fellow singer or your section leader for advice, ask Kathy to play it through for you after rehearsal, or focus on the troublesome section from the online recordings.

—**Rick Smith**

## Musical Quotes

"If I cannot fly, let me sing."

— Stephen Sondheim

"He who sings scares away his woes."

— Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

"And all meet in singing, which braids together the different knowings into a wide and subtle music, the music of living."

— Alison Croggon, *The Naming*

"In high school I used to sing in the shower. None of the football players liked it, because they were all naked and I was in a tuxedo."

— Jarod Kintz

### *Beau*

A singer broke up with her beau

After learning he'd done something low:

He'd poked fun at her pitch,

Which compelled her to ditch

Him for somebody less in the know.

Madeleine Begun Kane

## Our Newest Members

This fall we welcomed seven new singers. Here are brief sketches of their backgrounds.



### **Maria Margolis, First Soprano**

Maria is another singer who found us by searching for choirs in the South Hills. She was impressed by the material in our website and decided to sign up for an audition.

Maria has been a singer for as long as she can recall. She sang in middle school and high school and majored in music education at the University of Michigan. She taught music for six years before taking on the role of stay-at-home mother for her son and daughter. She has had extensive singing experience, most notably while living in Portland, Oregon, where she sang with the Portland Symphony Choir and the Oregon Repertoire Singers.

Her most notable singing experience was singing with a mixed sextet at Carnegie Hall in New York City, where they performed a mixed program of early and traditional classical music.

### **Jeff McClain, Bass**

Jeff was recruited for the Chorale by Diane Roberts who sings with him in their church choir.

While attending Grove City College Jeff sang in the Chapel Choir and the 40-member Traveling Choir. This latter group performed across the country performing from New England to the midwest. Since college he has sung in multiple church choirs where his wife was the minister.

His most memorable singing experience was performing Norwegian composer Egil Hovland's difficult oratorio, *Saul*, a complex piece for mixed chorus and organ.

### **Kara Getkin, First Alto**

Kara learned about the South Hills Chorale from our spring concert poster at the Jewish Community Center.

Kara grew up in McConnellsburg, PA. Like most of us, she has been singing nearly all of her life. She started group singing in fourth grade. From fifth grade on she regularly sang in school musicals and performed in her high school small choral ensemble. In addition, she was a member of the Fulton County Community Chorus. A graduate of Penn State, she sang in her church choir while in college. After moving to Pittsburgh she became a regular singer in her church gospel choir, an experience that gave her a new outlook on musical style.

Her most memorable singing experience was singing the role of Sandy in the high school production of *Grease*.

## Little Known Facts

The musical term *baritone* is derived from the Greek word *barytonos* meaning deep-sounding. It is the most common male singing range.

The first contemporary reference to baritone was in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in polyphonic French religious music. As a singing part, all lower male voices were originally considered to be bass parts.

This changed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century operatic tradition. Baritones were seen as being a separate singing voice to distinguish them from the bass parts that were associated with serious roles such as priests and kings. Soon romantic parts were written for baritones. The most familiar example is Figaro in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, considered to be the first true baritone role.

Later composers such as Verdi, Puccini, and Donizetti followed this trend, a style that continues to this day.

## Colleen Fritsch, Second Alto

Colleen is the daughter of five-year veteran Susan Fritsch. Attending numerous chorale concerts stoked her desire to join us.

A senior at Chartiers Valley High School, Colleen began choral singing in 4th grade, with the chorus sometimes rehearsing during recess! She continued singing at school through the years until she could no longer fit chorus into her schedule. It was then that she joined the Harmony Singers, an adult choir that meets at Brightwood Church in Bethel Park. She presently sings tenor with them.

In addition to her vocal prowess, Colleen has been playing piano for ten years and trumpet for nine years. She has recently taken up guitar as well.

Colleen has two memorable singing experiences. For one, her dad used to be in a band, and he often invited her on stage to sing with him. Another special memory is when her high school chorus sang at Carnegie Hall in Pittsburgh. Besides singing, she earned the privilege of playing the *djembe* for one song and the piano for another. Colleen plans to minor in music at college and aims to continue singing.



## Rachael Beam, First Soprano

Rachael began singing in elementary school and continued to do so with the Greensburg Central Catholic and Baldwin/Whitehall High School choirs. She additionally performed in several high school musicals, including her favorite—*The Music Man*.

After a long hiatus from singing, Rachael got the urge again and began Googling Pittsburgh choirs. She started taking voice lessons about a year ago. Her voice teacher, Charlotte Coleman, recommended the South Hills Chorale.!

Rachael's most memorable musical experience was singing "You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile" as a Boylan Sister in the musical *Annie*.

## More Little Known Facts

The premier of Beethoven's *Christ on the Mount of Olives* took place on April 5, 1803. It is one his earlier works completed in just fourteen days. The oratorio has three solo parts, Jesus, Peter, and a Seraph as well as a chorus and full orchestra. The theme is Jesus at Gethsemane, where he learns of his fate from the Seraph and comes to accept and welcome his approaching death. The closing chorus, "Hallelujah, God's almighty Son," is sung by a choir of angels.

The piece, his only oratorio, was composed at the same time he was commissioned to write his only opera, *Fidelio*, and saw the premier of his third symphony (*Eroica*).

In late 1802 Beethoven wrote his *Heiligenstadt Testament*, a letter to his brothers despairing over his increasing deafness. The letter was never sent. It is interesting to note that in the *Mount of Olives*, the *Eroica*, and *Fidelio* the start of a major theme in Beethoven's life and work: the fiercely self-reliant hero who overcomes obstacles and who would not yield to pressure. This culminates 24 years later in the magnificent "Ode to Joy" in his Choral Symphony.

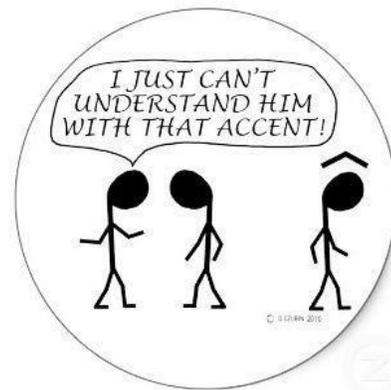
While the *Mount of Olives* is rarely performed today, it was popular with the public during his lifetime.

## Mary Ann Campbell, First Alto

Mary Ann Campbell, a member of St. Benedict the Abbot Church Choir in McMurray, first heard of the Chorale from her fellow church choir members, including her neighbor, Bill Groll. She had just retired and was looking for a new challenge.

Mary Ann grew up in a musical family. Although they had no formal training, she and her siblings loved to sing. She went on to sing in her high school glee club and then in the Pittsburgh Hospital Nursing School Glee Club, where they would sing in the hospital around the holidays. In her senior year, they made a Christmas album that they sold as a fundraiser for the hospital. They went on the local WTAE TV to publicize it. They even gave an album to Andre Previn! Since then, she has sung in church choirs, most notably with St. Benedict the Abbot, where she has sung since 1985.

Mary Ann's most memorable choral experience took place two years ago when she sang in "Singing City," a large-scale event at the University of Pittsburgh featuring Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Training with Robert Page, they sang the "Dies Irae" section of Verdi's Requiem as well as Mahler's Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection." Mary Ann reminisced, "That was quite an experience, too. There were people my age; there were college choirs; there were high school choirs. He would get on you!" (especially if he caught you on a cell phone!)



## Alice McWreath, Second Soprano

Alice, the former director of the McDonald Community Chorus, was recruited for the Chorale by Johanna Guehl. When the Community Chorus disbanded, Alice felt the need to join a singing group and soon found a home with us.

Like many of the Chorale singers, Alice was a member of numerous singing groups in high school and college. She graduated with a music degree from Westminster College and has been the director of many church choirs in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. She was the director of the 50-member McDonald Community Chorus for seventeen years.

Her fondest memories are of directing her Chorus at the local July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration in McDonald.

## Quick ♪ Notes

“Hava Nagila” (“Let us rejoice”) is an Israeli folk song sung at many Jewish celebrations. Originally sung as a wordless melody, or *nigun*, the text was composed by Jewish musicologist Avraham Svi Idelsohn. Written in the 1920’s in British Palestine, it is one of the first popular songs in Hebrew since that language was revived as the national language 2,000 years after the destruction of the Second Temple. The melody is an Eastern European Hasidic tune brought to Jerusalem when a group of Hasidim emigrated there in the early 1900s.



“This Christmastide” was composed by Donald Fraser for well known American soprano Jessye Norman leading to its being called “Jessye’s Carol”. A link to her performance of this song is in *Where to Find It*.



Irving Berlin wrote the popular song *I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm* in 1937 for the musical film *On the Avenue*. Berlin did not intend for the song to be a Christmas favorite. It became associated with the holiday through the many popular recordings of the piece that have been played at the end of the year. There are more than 21 recordings sung by such vocalists as Tony Bennett, Bing Crosby, Doris Day, Ella Fitzgerald, and Jackie Gleason!

## The Chorale's Unsung Heroine



**ANDREA WALCZAK**, second soprano, is this edition’s unsung heroine. Andrea has been a Chorale member for nine years and has been our treasurer for the past seven. The treasurer’s job is demanding and detail oriented. The most complicated part of this job is the many reports she has to prepare. She prepares a monthly balance statement summarizing the Chorale’s financial position for the board. She also prepares state and federal tax reports as well as financial summaries for the Regional Asset District, our largest single funding source. For the more technical parts of this job she relies on **Don Moore**, our Financial Advisor. Andrea agreed to take this position although she has no financial background.

A graduate of Duke University with a degree in biomechanical engineering and minor in psychology, she returned to Pittsburgh to take a job as a technical assistant with a start-up company that focused on cutting-edge biomechanical engineering development in Bethel Park. Unfortunately, her job was eliminated due to lack of funding. She learned of a free pharmaceutical technician training program from former bass Kris Eshghy and completed it a year ago.

Andrea is a natural musician. She sang in high school. In addition, she played the violin and French horn. In college she sang in a local church choir in Durham, North Carolina and later with a gospel choir. After learning about the South Hills Chorale from Susan Bloom, she attended several of our concerts and liked our music. She decided to come to a rehearsal to see how they went, and, to her surprise, **Hank Monsch** invited her to audition immediately.

Evidence of her natural musicality can be seen in her performance of Dovrak’s glorious “Hymn to the Moon” from the opera *Rusalka*. This is a demanding piece usually sung by the most experienced sopranos. Andrea, who has never had a voice lesson, learned it on her own by listening to YouTube performances. To get it right she paid special attention to Czech pronunciation to make sure that she sang the text correctly. Since we did not have a recording of Andrea, here is a link to the aria sung by Renée Fleming <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHM3zMBQxTQ>.

## More Little Known Facts

Good King Wenceslas was not a king; he was Duke Vaclav I of Bohemia. He was 'promoted' to King by Holy Roman Emperor Otto I after his death in 935.

His was a turbulent story. The son of a Christian father, Duke Vratislaus, and a pagan mother, Drahomira, he came to power in 921 after Vratislaus' death. A struggle ensued for control of the 13-year-old Duke between his pagan mother and Christian grandmother, Ludmila. This ended when Drahomira had Ludmila strangled. Later, Wenceslas had his mother exiled.

The good duke was a pious man who managed to keep the Bohemian people free from external domination in a period of internal and external strife. Yet, he was assassinated on his way to Mass by his brother, Boleslav, later called Boleslav the Cruel.

The text for the carol "Good King Wenceslas" was written by English hymn writer John Mason Neale in 1853. His lyrics are set to the medieval melody *Tempus adest floridum* (Now is the Time for Flowering). Apparently, the text is a rough translation of a Czech poem written by Caclav Alois Svoboda. Academic critics have criticized Neale's translation and were puzzled by why the king and page would carry firewood to a peasant who lived by a forest.



## Important Dates

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| October  | 5 Rehearsal<br>11 RAD Concert<br>12 Rehearsal<br>19 Rehearsal<br>20 Board Meeting<br>26 Rehearsal                                      |
| November | 2 Rehearsal<br>9 Rehearsal<br>16 Rehearsal<br>17 Board meeting, 7:00 p.m.<br>23 Rehearsal<br>30 Rehearsal                              |
| December | 7 Rehearsal<br>14 Rehearsal<br>15 Rehearsal<br>18 & 19 <b>Winter Concerts</b> , Westminster Presbyterian Church, arrive BEFORE 7:00 pm |

For those who like to plan ahead for next singing year

**Spring Concert** May 13 & 14, 2016

*A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.*

~Chinese Proverb.

## Our Section Leaders

Here are the folks who volunteered to be our section leaders. Feel free to check with them before rehearsal if you have been absent.

### 1st Soprano

Janet Bodnar

### 2nd Soprano

Andrea Walczak

Sue Mazur

### 1st Alto

Fran Kayatin

### 2nd Alto

Dee Grubor

Phyllis Neff

### Tenors

Fred Barnes

### Bass 1

Dennis Sweeney

### Bass 2

Rick Bloom

## Remember Amazon *Smile!*

### How to use Amazon Smile to support the Chorale.

- Log in to **Smile.Amazon.com** on your computer using your current user name and password.
- In the box labeled "Or pick your own charitable organization" enter *South Hills Chorale* and then click on the **Search** button. You will see South Hills Chorale Inc. listed.
- Click on the **Select**. The Chorale will be your permanent charity whenever you make a purchase from Amazon Smile. We will get 0.5% of the purchase price.
- Finally, order as you normally would from this site. There may be some purchase restrictions.

Be sure to pass this information on to family and friends so we can get maximum benefit for the Chorale.



"There's one Christmas carol that's suitable for my voice. The one where the dogs bark Jingle Bells."

## Even More Little Known Facts

The text for *The Bells* is the first stanza of Edgar Allen Poe's poem of the same name. The poem, published posthumously in 1849, is four stanzas long, each representing a different mood. Starting with joyous, jingling and tinkling, the poem moves to mellow wedding bells followed by clanging and clashing bells foretelling danger, and ending with melancholy iron bells that moan and groan somberly.

It is thought that the source of *The Bells* is the Fordham University bell tower that Poe would have heard from his lodging in the neighborhood. The poem has many interpretations. One is the passage of life from joyous youth to old age. Another is that the poem represents the passing of the seasons.

There are many musical settings for *The Bells*. Rachmaninoff's choral symphony, *The Bells*, is based on a Russian adaptation of the poem. Pink Floyd referenced the poem in the song "Time" in *The Dark Side of the Moon* album. We have a link to a hip hop performance of the complete poem by MC Lars in *Where to Find It*.

## Where to Find It

Links to examples of the music we will be singing for the winter concert.

### Hallelujah Chorus, Mount of Olives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK-IHpN1HBs>

### Jessye's Carol (This Christmastide)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTZbQkze0Bw>

<https://fairweatherlewis.wordpress.com/2010/12/11/this-christmastide-jessyes-carol/> (Jessye Norman)

### Mary, Did You Know?

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/mary-did-you-know/222295/?s=1>

### I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/ive-got-my-love-to-keep-me-warm/299585/?s=1>

### Angelic Christmas Fanfare

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/angelic-christmas-fanfare/366119/?s=1>

### The Bells

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wzs-4sh111Q>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Bells\\_%28poem%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bells_%28poem%29) (MC Lars)

### An English Carol Medley

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/english-carol-medley-an/326746/?s=1>

### Carol of the Birds

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/carol-of-the-birds/380839/?s=1>

### Santa's on His Way Medley

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/santas-on-his-way-medley/339391/>

### Believe

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/believe-from-polar-express/469108/?s=1>

### Sing We Noel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUC4KUzwcms>

### Hanukkah Nagila

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/hanukkah-nagilah/439094/?s=1>

### Joy To the World

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/joy-to-the-world/354820/?s=1>

### Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth

<http://listeninglab.stantons.com/title/little-drummer-boy-peace-on-earth-the/436978/?s=1>