

Note worthy

The newsletter of the South Hills Chorale

October, 2016

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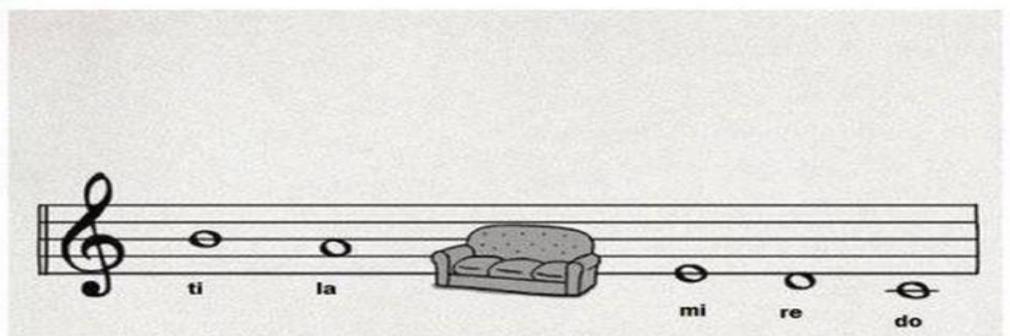
Karen Gennari



The Director's Corner

Here we are once again preparing music to entertain; enlighten, encourage smiles, lift spirits, and provide a choral experience that will make this holiday one that will live in the memories of all who are part of our audiences! We are well on our way to accomplishing this opportunity! Our selections this term provide all of you with musical challenges as well as the joy of making harmony with your chorale family! Given the fact that we are challenged with physical problems for our fellow members, I continue to be in awe of your care for each other! Keep up with your "note-pounding homework," and let's give our patrons a concert that will compliment their holiday celebration. It's such a joy to be your director!

Phil.



Musical Humor

Whenever I have a problem I just sing, then I realize my voice is worse than my problem.

- Anon

All the good music has already been written by people with wigs and stuff.

— Frank Zappa

There are two golden rules for an orchestra: start together and finish together. The public doesn't give a damn what goes on in between.

— Thomas Beecham

If you're listening to a rock star to get your information on who to vote for, you're a bigger moron than they are.

— Alice Cooper

In order to compose, all you need to do is remember a tune that nobody else has thought of.

— Robert Schumann

President's Ponderings

Here we are 90 members strong, privileged to be a part of the South Hills Chorale family, privileged to be carrying the torch for the founding members, who first sang in concert 57 years ago. Our family is a diverse one. This year we range in age from 31 to 93! We are educators, medical personnel, businessmen and women, young parents, retirees, and so much more. As Phil likes to say, we come from the south hills, the west hills, the east hills and the north hills, and all the hills in between. Yet we manage to gather together on Monday nights with one purpose in my mind: to make beautiful music together. To make that possible, we not only contribute our skills and time in learning the music but also by volunteering for committees, fundraising, recruiting new members, and serving in a myriad of other capacities. As president of the SHC for 2016/2017, I thank you for your commitment, and I look forward to the best SHC fall concert in 57 years!

Karen

Music can change the world because it can change people.

Bono



Manager's Musings

Many of you have seen this logo around Allegheny County, but do you really know what it represents? The mission of RAD is to support and finance regional assets in the areas of libraries, parks and recreation, cultural, sports, and civic facilities and programs. The District receives one-half of the proceeds from the 1% Allegheny County Sales and Use Tax, and the other half is paid directly to the County and municipal governments by the State Treasurer. Since 1995 the 1% sales tax resulted in a \$3.4 billion investment in the region. The South Hills Chorale is proud to be one of the cultural regional assets selected to be a RAD grant recipient for the 17th consecutive year. The RAD grants have significantly contributed to our ability to fulfill our mission of bringing joy to the community through song. Now, wherever you see this logo you will know that RAD has helped make it possible. Thank you, RAD.

—Rick Smith

Musical Quotes

*Some people have lives;
other people have music.*
- Will Grayson

*Life is for the living.
Death is for the dead.
Let life be like music.
And death a note unsaid.*
- Langston Hughes

*If I should ever die, God
forbid, let this be my
epitaph, "The only proof
he needed for the
existence of God was
music."*
- Kurt Vonnegut

*Treat a sick man with
music and a sad man with
music.*
- Amit Kalantri

*There is some music that
is so terrible that it
consumes all those who
approach it.*
Gaston Leroux

*Everything in the Universe
has rhythm, everything
dances.*
- Maya Angelou

*Next to music, beer was
best.*
- Carson McCullers

*Music is the divine way to
tell beautiful, poetic things
to the heart.*
- Pablo Casals

Our Newest Members



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

Irina Aristegui, Soprano.

First soprano Irina Aristegui had been looking for a choir to join. She was pleasantly surprised to discover that she was within walking distance of the South Hills Chorale.

Irina grew up in Russia. When she was ten years old, her mother's friend formed a children and youth choir, and Irina joined. The choir soon became quite polished and prominent. After five years, they were touring around Russia at choir festivals as well as touring internationally, winning competitions.

In 2003, at the age of 22, Irina parted ways with the choir and emigrated to the United States. She became an au pair in Worcester, Massachusetts, but still found time to join her host mother's choir—the Salisbury Singers. In 2006, she moved to the Pittsburgh area. She joined a church choir but was looking for something more challenging and rewarding. Hopefully, she has found what she was looking for.

Irina's most memorable musical experience was singing with her childhood choir in a competition in Italy. She recalls her director's advice to calm their nerves: Treat the experience as a concert rather than a competition. Don't just think about hitting the right notes but also about the meaning of the piece and how you feel the music. They left Italy with a second place silver medal! Other than winning a silver medal, why was this Irina's most memorable experience? It was her first time out of the country, her first international singing competition, *and* it was her birthday.



Dawn Moeller, Tenor

The South Hills Chorale is Dawn's first formal singing experience. She heard of us from fellow choir members at the Unitarian Church in Mt. Lebanon. This does not mean that she has no musical training. She has studied piano since she was in second grade and has composed a number of songs.

Dawn's most memorable musical experience is having the Mt Lebanon High School perform "Voices Carry", a musical for which she composed the music.

Little Known Facts

Jingle Bells was written by James Lord Pierpont with the title *One Horse Open Sleigh* and published in 1857. Some think that it was composed in a tavern in Medford, Massachusetts where it was inspired by the town's popular sleigh rides.



Mack Wilberg has arranged many of the pieces we will be singing. Born in 1955 in Price, Utah, he has been the director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir since 2008. A prolific composer and arranger, he is also an accomplished pianist and former member of the American Piano Quartet.



God Rest You Merry Gentlemen is one of the oldest Christmas carols, dating back to before the 16th century. However, the earliest known *printed* edition dates to 1760. The meaning of the word "rest" has changed over time. In 17th century England it meant "to keep" or "continue to remain". The current meaning of the title would be 'God keep you merry, gentlemen' (since Christ was born today).

Diana Roth, First soprano

Diana is no stranger to the South Hills Chorale. She has a number of friends in the choir, and she has attended several of our concerts.

What a resume Diana has! She began her musical career with piano lessons at age 5. That led to singing in her high school choir before attending Illinois Wesleyan as a music major. Well equipped for her life's work, Diana went on to teach public school vocal and general music at all grade levels, and she currently gives private voice lessons. Additionally, she has performed in stage productions of musical theater classics with the Civic Light Opera and was a member of the Pittsburgh Opera Chorus.

Diana's most memorable musical experience took place early in her career when she taught at a U.S. Department of Defense school in Okinawa, Japan. That experience helped her to realize the power of music in crossing cultural and language boundaries. She has also experienced great satisfaction in working with student musicians "to help them develop their potential and find joy in music."



Lisa Rulong, Second Soprano

Phil Aley invited Lisa to join the Chorale. She had been good friends with Phil's late sister Mary Ida Ritchey. They had worked together for a number of years. Mary Ida was the organist at First Bethel United Methodist Church, and Lisa sang at the church's weddings and funerals.

Lisa sang in the Bethel Park High School Concert Choir and musicals, and in the 1980's, she sang with and was dance captain of Indiana University of Pennsylvania's music & dance ensemble, The I-Uppers. After college, she sang in church choirs as well as the Three Rivers Choral Society. Due to time constraints, Lisa took a hiatus from singing but has now hopefully found her new musical home in the Chorale.

Lisa's most memorable musical experience was singing at her mother's funeral. It was difficult, but she really wanted to do it, considering that her mother had specifically requested it.

Musical Definitions

A Patella: accompanied by knee-slapping.

Accidentals: wrong notes

Augmented Fifth: a 36-ounce bottle

Barline: singers gathering at a tavern

Cadence: when the audience hopes you will stop, but you don't

Da capo al fine: I like your hat!

Heroic tenor: male singer who gets by on sheer nerve and tight pants

Metronome: a short person who lives in the city

Hemiola: hereditary blood disease caused by chromatics

Interval: how long it takes you to find the right pitch

Intonation: singing through your nose, or groping for the right note

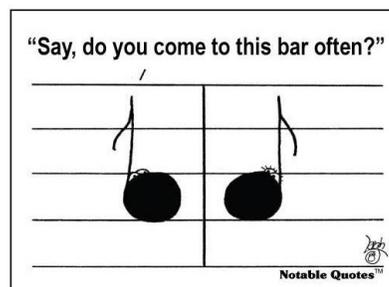
Pizzicato: a small Italian pie garnished with tomato sauce, cheese, and pepperoni.

Kelly Bivens-Levin, Soprano

Kelly heard about the Chorale from fellow church choir singers. She was sold on us when she attended last spring's concert where she was captivated by both our singing and the little boy who stood in the aisle and conducted along with Phil.

Kelly has an extensive singing background. She started while she was student at Northfield School in Lake Placid, NY and continued when she went to Bryn Mawr college where the choir frequently sang with the Philadelphia Orchestra. In the following years she sang as a soloist in a variety of churches. Work pressures forced her to stop singing for a number of years. After her husband's death she decided to start singing again in the choir at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Mt. Lebanon.

Kelly has a number of notable singing experiences. The first was when she was the soloist in the Vesper service at Northfield School, surprising her parents who did not know that she had a principal role. The second was singing with the Philadelphia Orchestra under its former director, Eugene Ormandy.



Joel Redfoot, Tenor

Joel sings in Phil Aley's church where Phil recruited him to sing with the Chorale.

Joel has an extensive singing background. Since his father was a minister, he sang in church and choirs in high school and college. He was recruited by Max Peterson to sing in Pittsburgh's Bach Choir, where he performed for more than a decade. He also sang with the Three Rivers Choral Society until that group disbanded.

His most memorable singing experience was a college choir tour to Romania while it was still under Communist rule. The group performed ten concerts. As musical ambassadors they had to memorize the Rumanian national anthem but learned only the first verse. When their audiences continued singing additional verses, they had to improvise.

Quick 🎵 Notes

I'll Be Home for Christmas was initially recorded by Bing Crosby in 1943, the height of the Second World War. It was written with the overseas soldiers in mind - those who longed to be home at Christmastime. The song was initially rejected by publishers for being too sad. The flip side of Crosby's record is *Danny Boy*, thought by some to be an Irish wartime ballad sung by a father to his son.



In pre-Christian times many evergreen plants were used to celebrate the winter solstice and to ward off evil spirits and celebrate new growth. Early Christians adopted the spiky holly leaves as a symbol of the crown of thorns and the berries representing drops of Jesus's blood. In pagan times, Holly was thought to be a male plant and Ivy a female plant. An old tradition from the Midlands of England says that whichever one was brought into the house first over winter, tells you whether the man or woman of the house would rule that year! But it was unlucky to bring either into a house before Christmas Eve.

<http://www.whychristmas.com/customs/hollyandivy.shtml>

Rich Walter, Baritone

Rich is a relative newcomer to Pittsburgh's South Hills. He moved here recently from Wheeling. He wanted to have a chance to get involved with a community singing group and checked us out on our web site. Later he heard our RAD Heinz History performance and was impressed enough to join us.

Rich has extensive experience in small group singing. He performed in a barbershop quartet in Charlottesville and was a choral performer. While living in Washington, D.C., he sang for 6 years in the Northern Virginia Community Choir, a group that focused on the classical repertoire.

Rich's most memorable singing experience was singing Brahms' *German Requiem* with full orchestra and soloists.



Keith McGaha, Baritone

Keith is another newcomer to the South Hills. He recently moved to the area from Charlotte, North Carolina. His wife heard about the Chorale from a book club member, so the two of them came to our Spring concert. Liking what he heard, Keith decided to join us.

Keith grew up in a church environment in Dallas, where he was an active singer in choirs from an early age. He went to Temple University where he earned a music scholarship his last two years. After graduation he continued to sing in a variety of groups as his career took him around the country.

Keith's most memorable singing experience was traveling with a collegiate sextet in the western United States for a ten-state singing tour where they specialized in a variety of sacred and secular songs.

Quick ♪ Notes

While Handel was popular when he composed the *Messiah* as an Easter oratorio in 1749, he was broke and facing debtor's prison. Strangely, the piece was commissioned to provide relief to help free men from Dublin's debtor's prison. The Dublin Music Hall was packed. With more than 700 people in the audience, ladies were asked to wear dresses without hoops so there would be more room.

The contralto, Susannah Cibber, was involved in a shocking divorce, drawing many people to hear her sing. Her performance, where she sang, "*He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*" was so moving that audience member Rev. Patrick Delaney leapt up and shouted, "Woman, for this be all thy sins forgiven thee!"

While the initial performance was a success, *Messiah* was not well received in later London performances. It took several years for it to become accepted as a staple Easter piece and then be co-opted for Christmas time.

The Chorale's Unsung Heroine



Karen Christensen, Second Alto.

Karen has been a member of the Chorale for 47 years where she has been a staunch supporter and active member of the alto section. Her continuing contribution has been as the Show Chair, a job that takes care of the myriad of concert details so the director can concentrate on the musical performance. She is essentially a stage manager, reminding singers of concert decorum, arranging for ushers and ticket takers, setting up the lobby display, assisting the director with staging, and double checking the audience head count. This twice-a-year activity calls for careful planning and attention to detail, Karen's strengths.

Karen's musical background began with her membership in the Allerdice High School *a cappella* Concert Choir. Following her move to Mt. Lebanon, she became involved with Welcome Wagon where the Chorale gave a short performance. She was hooked. In her more than four decades as a member, she considers the Chorale to be her primary social support group where she met her closest friends.

Karen's worked her entire career in the medical field. Her last job was at St. Clair Hospital as an administrative assistance in the Medical Imaging Department. She has two children - a son and daughter, four granddaughters, and a great grandchild.

Clearly, music plays a central role in Karen's life. In summers she sings with Berkshire Choral International, a group that performs serious classical music both in the United States and internationally. Next summer she plans to sing the Brahms *Requiem*. She will prepare on her own and then travel to Budapest, Hungary in August to rehearse with almost 200 singers from all over the world for their performance.

Karen said one song sums up her approach to life: *What would I Do Without My Music?*