



VOICEMAIL

October 2010

Annual Picnic Fun

The annual picnic was held on August 29 at the Greensfelder Memorial Shelter in Creve Coeur Park, overlooking Creve Coeur Lake. The weather couldn't have been more perfect for our Sunday afternoon gathering—sunny with picture-perfect blue skies!



Chorus members, family, and friends enjoy the picnic

In this issue:

Annual Picnic Fun

Message from the President

Reflections on Sabbatical in Norwich

Meet the Singers – Dick Deitte

The Past Season

Exaltabo Commission

Highlights from the Soirée

Approximately 50 people showed up; a nice mix of singers and board members. **Susan Greene** (alto), **Kate Leslie** (soprano) and **Kevin Leslie** volunteered to help get everything set up; **Kathleen Mead** (soprano), **Nick Beary** (tenor), **Jon Garrett** (tenor), **Orin Johnson** (bass), and **Suzanne Mannelli** (board member)

were among those who stayed to clean up after the picnic was over. Extra kudos goes out to **Phyllis Pasley** (alto) and her husband **Tom** who showed up extra early to oversee everything while I sped my way back to Sam's Club for our provisions.



Intrepid Grillmaster, John Clayton

The biggest thank you goes out to **John Clayton** (husband of **Jill Vandergriff Clayton** (soprano), who manned the grill for the duration of the picnic. He was definitely in his element, and everything was delicious!

The annual picnic is a great time to meet those who are joining us for the first time, and to reconnect with the veteran singers and board members at the start of each performance year.

Mary Chapman

The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus

PO Box 11588

Clayton, MO 63105

(636) 458-4343

www.chamberchorus.org

Season Subscriptions on Sale Now!

As a season subscriber you are guaranteed a reserved seat to hear repertoire unmatched in both quality and content, in exquisite settings selected by the Artistic Director.

\$130 or \$48 for students
www.chamberchorus.org

Message from the President

I am delighted to welcome you to our 55th season. Today's concert, *Transmigration: From Hungary to Hollywood*, features *a cappella* works by composers with Hungarian roots or connections, presented most appropriately at St. Louis' beautiful Hungarian Catholic parish church, St. Mary of Victories. This season promises to continue the inspired programming and high level of artistic excellence that have earned the Chorus recognition as St. Louis' premier *a cappella* choir. As an itinerant chorus we also offer concertgoers a unique opportunity to enjoy architectural gems not otherwise open to the public. We hope you will find that we fulfill our mission of presenting the finest *a cappella* choral works in the region's most distinctive buildings, seeking to entertain, educate, and inspire.

We are grateful to our season subscribers for their support and urge those of you who have not purchased a subscription to do so. We will gladly credit the cost of your ticket today toward a subscription. As a subscriber you will receive a \$40 savings over the price of individual tickets, reserved seating, informative pre-concert letters from the Artistic Director and certain ticket exchange privileges.

Our next concert, titled *Transition: From Babylon to Jerusalem*, will take place on Sunday, November 14 at Congregation Shaare Emeth in Creve Coeur. I hope to see you there.

Barbara Uhlemann
SLCC President

Reflections on Sabbatical in Norwich

What did I experience last season during my sabbatical in England? Apart from studying voice with one of the country's leading teachers, I was fortunate to sing in one of the most historic and beautiful cathedrals. We sang six days a week, sometimes seven, performing wonderful Renaissance repertoire complemented with some works from the 19th and early 20th centuries. The singers ranged from an eight-year-old boy to a man in his early sixties, with 11 adults accompanying a boys' choir, a girls' choir, and singing on their own once a week. We worked with three directors, the Master of the Choristers, the Organist, and the Organ Scholar, providing the music for services both intimate and grand. Though our purpose was to sing God's praises without regard to the size or make-up of the congregation, it was a delight to witness the pomp and finery of numerous civic occasions, and especially to sing for the Queen and Prince Philip.

But what did I learn? Well, I appreciated anew how a director sets the tone for both a rehearsal and a performance, good and bad; I shared my colleagues' frustration at the lack of contemporary music in our

repertoire; in the absence of recordings and broadcasts I realized how much we missed their particular challenges. As with my own rehearsal technique and concert performance, I saw much to emulate and to avoid. In sum, the year gave me invaluable perspective on how choirs are managed and fostered. I never tired of the building itself, and repeatedly I reflected on the importance of the physical setting for performers, and the camaraderie that enlivens a good choir.

This sabbatical has not only sharpened my own musicianship, but it has also reminded me of how blessed we are to enjoy such a remarkable chamber choir; and in a city with as rich a heritage as St. Louis. The talents of the singers and my fellow conductors, the leadership of an outstanding executive director, and the stewardship of a committed board ensured that the past season was a great success. It is now my responsibility to maintain and indeed build upon that achievement, and this is a challenge that I warmly embrace.

Philip Barnes

Meet the Singers — Dick Deitte

Our featured singer grew up in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin as the seventh child in a family of nine. His parents were singers; his father sang in commercials and his mother and sisters sang all the time. Dick Deitte sang with his musical family, but did not have any formal music training during his childhood. He recalls lining up on the stairs with his brothers and sisters to sing Christmas carols for their parents.

Dick first learned to read music when he was nineteen and sang in the adult choir of St. Joseph's Catholic Church. It was not long before his lovely bass notes were discovered. His sister Sue, who became a professional singer, often sang solos in church and they quickly became sought after to sing duets. It helped that the family owned a bridal shop so they began to sing at weddings. He earned \$5 at his first paid event!

After high school, Dick entered the family business and ran the formalwear department. He took singing lessons from **JoAnne Ridley**, a professor of music at Marian College in Fond du Lac, and Chair of the Choral Department.

Dick's wife Kathryn has a finance degree from Wisconsin-Oshkosh. In 1984 they moved to St. Louis where Dick found a job in the insurance industry and Kathryn landed a job with the Federal Reserve Bank. She later earned a degree in nursing at St. Louis University and now oversees the oncology department's conversion to electronic health records.

Dick and Kathryn have three children, William (23), Carrie (21), and Samuel (18) and they all play golf. The boys played for Lutheran St. Peters High School and went to state in division II. Both boys are students at Concordia College in Bronxville, New York, where William majors in international marketing and Samuel in accounting; they continue to play golf for the school. Carrie is a junior at Missou, studying business administration. They have a five-year-old black pug called Charles.

The family joined Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Charles and Dick sang in the choir. He learned a lot from **Al Loesel**, the organist and Music Director of the church and school. Al furthered Dick's ability to sight-read music. In 1990, he sang in the Boars Head Festival held by the church in late December. This event includes madrigals, jesters, dancers and beefeaters and Dick continues to sing in the Festival every year. Dick also sang when the former Pope came to St. Louis, and sings a great *Old Man River*.

In 1993, Dick met former Chorus member **Dee Schlemeier** who encouraged him to audition with the SLCC. He was offered a full place as a low bass. He was impressed by **Philip Barnes** but initially fearful of him! The first concert he sang in was not only extremely difficult music, but in Czech! He somehow survived it and has been with the Chorus ever since.



Dick Deitte

Dick says that the Chorus is filled with outstanding singers, but notes that **Linda Ryder** and Philip are highly qualified professionals who make the SLCC exceptional. He loves how Philip plans programs, picking venues and finding music to match. He

says Philip is meticulous in any language, insisting on perfect diction. He knows the feeling of a piece of music and that adds so much depth to the performance.

Dick had occasion to bring a little music to the Chorus—literally! He was in Australia attending a convention in Sidney in 1998. He found a couple of music stores in the "Rocks" area and brought back some hard copy treasures for Philip. He also found a catalog of Australian music in the Art Centre. Philip was able to use some of these for the Australian Christmas concert held in 1999 at Christ Church Cathedral.

Dick is excited to begin studying in October under **Sheila Duggan**, a well-known voice coach here in St. Louis. When he is not singing or playing golf, Dick loves to cook, and has a passion for wine.

Gill Waltman

The Past Season

When Philip first asked me to be one of two assistant conductors, the word "surprised" does not describe my initial reaction. Then when he announced his sabbatical, and that the assistant conductors would be responsible for rehearsals and most of the concert conducting, I was dumbfounded. And I didn't know just what I was saying 'yes' to until rehearsals started.

My first assignment was conducting rehearsals for the first concert. My hands were clammy and my arms heavy as I lifted them for the downbeat, but once the choir began singing, my nervousness gave way to sheer joy. The singers in our Chorus are amazing! As we muddled our way through that first rehearsal, the smiles from my fellow singers assured me that the 2009-2010 season would be one of which Philip would be proud. **Orin Johnson** and **Martha Shaffer** were my sounding board for questions about interpretation and conducting. Thanks to email, Philip was never too far away, but it meant a great deal to me to have Orin and Martha at each rehearsal.

If there was a single thing I learned during our year without Philip, it is that one can never study a score too much when preparing for a rehearsal or a concert. The worst part? Wishing we had the luxury of just one more rehearsal! The most memorable parts? Working with **Mikhail Palatnik** (Senior Lecturer in Russian, Washington University) in preparing the *Tchaikovsky Vespers*, and performing **Yakov Gubanov's** *Psalmus XXVII* and *Benedicta et Venerabilis* in Concert IV; and working with the **Hanser-McClellan Guitar Duo** for Concert V. The Chorus gave a talented performance of the Gubanov pieces, particularly the *Psalmus*, which had only been "heard" by the composer in his head.

The dedicated singers, with the support of Linda Ryder, Martha, and the Board helped ensure a successful season. Orin and I strove to maintain Philip's high standards and did our best to keep the Chamber Chorus in good hands until his return.

Mary Chapman

Exaltabo Commission

At the *Home Thoughts from Abroad* concert last season, I had the rare opportunity to experience hearing a piece commissioned in my honor by my husband, **John Wahlers**, and mother, **Maria Verbeck**. The piece is **Magnus Williamson's** *Exaltabo*. As a former singer and current board member, I have had the pleasure of singing and hearing many premieres of new choral music. But there is nothing quite like listening to a piece written just for you. It was beautiful, overwhelming, surreal...and a gift that I will never forget.

Amanda Verbeck

Highlights from the Soirée

On May 30, following the last concert of the 2009-2010 season, an enthusiastic group of Chamber Chorus friends, singers, and board members gathered at Lucas Park Grille on Washington Avenue for a Spring Soirée. Conversation focused on the beautiful concert—*Home Thoughts From Abroad*—which had just concluded at nearby Christ Church Cathedral. It was especially nice having Artistic Director **Philip Barnes** in attendance. Philip had interrupted his sabbatical in Norwich, England to direct this final concert.

Nearly seventy guests toasted the success of the Chamber Chorus' 54th season with drinks and hors d'oeuvres served in Lucas Park's private dining room. Each dinner table was decorated with spring wild flowers and carried a musically-related name like Howells, Britten, Norwich, or Christ Church. Following the sit-down dinner, the Chamber Chorus Octet, led by Assistant Conductor **Mary Chapman**, delighted everyone with a program of lively madrigals. Selections like Thomas Morley's *Now is the Month of Maying* created the perfect complement to the season of the year and the spirit of the occasion.

Gailya Barker

For more information about
concerts, tickets or auditions:

PO Box 11588
Clayton, MO 63105
(636) 458-4343
www.chamberchorus.org

Graphic Designer, Amanda Verbeck

Advance Ticket Purchases:

Buy tickets online at our website
www.chamberchorus.org
or contact
Linda Ryder, SLCC Exec. Director
(636) 458-4343

For questions, comments or
to submit ideas/articles for
VoiceMail newsletter:

Gill Waltman, Editor
35 Frontenac Estates Drive
St. Louis, MO 63131-2615
(314) 993-3505
grh@slu.edu