



# Fairfield County Children's Choir

# quarternotes

The Newsletter of the Fairfield County Children's Choir • Vol. 7, No. 3 • April 2007

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## From the Music Director

Greetings! As we come to the final portion of our 2007-2008 season, the FCCC is very busy with a number of exciting performances, such as *Carmina Burana* at both the Norwalk Concert Hall and Battell Chapel in New Haven, a full length concert by our Chamber Singers featuring special guest Ivan Rutherford at Congregation Beth El in Fairfield, and our own FCCC Spring Concert in Norwalk on May 12. Please join us!!

In this issue of **quarternotes**, I would like to continue my discussion of "What do we do in the FCCC?" In the last issue I explained our instruction of music reading skills. I will now briefly share with you our approach to vocal technique. For those wanting to know more, I would refer you to the following outstanding books on the subject: *Voice Building for Choirs* and *Group Vocal Technique*, by Frauke Haasemann and James Jordan.

Beginning in our first rehearsal we teach our choristers that each singer must develop the "Four Basics of Singing," i.e. posture, breath, tone and diction. Since singing is a physical activity, we begin with stretching which helps us relax and establishes good posture. As good breath support is the key to healthy vocal production, we do various breathing exercises over the course of the year, developing both appropriate deep breathing motion and control.

To develop a beautiful, resonant tone quality, we emphasize "opening the spaces" of the vocal tract and "shaping the vowels" in a pure and uniform manner. This not only affects the overall sound of the choir, but it has a direct influence on intonation. Finally we focus on clear articulation of consonants and vowels as they apply to word meaning, which we then apply to beautiful phrasing and overall expressive musical performance.

While we provide this instruction in vocal technique from our staff, from guest artists such as Ivan Rutherford (who shared his techniques in a master class with us in October), and through textbooks, videos and recordings, I believe there is another element which is indispensable to the FCCC experience. It is embodied in the well known saying from economics, "A rising tide lifts all boats." That is, the choristers are deeply affected and influenced by the other talented and motivated singers sitting all around them. Given the capacity of these young minds to perceive and process both direct instruction as well as the peripheral sensory context, the rich musical environment of an FCCC rehearsal – involving total immersion in making music - is perhaps equally important to vocal development as the techniques in the above two paragraphs!

Finally, we say goodbye and best of luck to our seniors. Maggie McGowan (4 years), Tara Curry (6 years), Michelle Finkle & Melissa Victor (9 years – FCCC Choral Scholars) have been outstanding members of the FCCC who have been a big part of the "rising tide." We will miss them very much!!

*Jon Noyes*

## Two Conductors Celebrate Tenth Anniversary with FCCC!



Lucille Parkinson, (*right*) the conductor of our Chorus, and Lisa Bettke, (*left*) the conductor of our Chorale as well as accompanist for all of the choirs, are both celebrating ten years with the FCCC. **quaternotes** interviewed each of them about their decade making music with the choristers of the FCCC.

*First, Lucille Parkinson:*

**QN:** How did you get involved with the FCCC?

LP: I knew Jon Noyes by reputation through my affiliation with the American Choral Directors Association. He was chairperson of the ACDA Children's Choir Festival and my Milford students participated in the festival. The FCCC had been successful in its first two years and when Jon was thinking of adding a third group he asked if I would be interested in conducting the youngest group of children. When I said "yes," little did I know that I was signing on to be a part of what would become one of the premier children's choir organizations!

**QN:** What are some of the factors which have inspired you to remain with the choir for ten years?

LP: The power of the performance keeps me coming back for more! Every time the children sing on stage, the result of all the hard work and the hours of rehearsal come together in concert. It is truly a remarkable experience when I see the joy in the eyes of the children and sense the enthusiasm of the audience!

**QN:** What do you most enjoy about the FCCC?

LP: I enjoy the challenge of working with a new group of children every year who like to sing and want to learn to sing in a choral setting. It is satisfying to mold them from the very beginning and watch them grow over the years to become accomplished singers. Their achievements mean so much to me in so many ways.

Over the years I've had the pleasure of working with wonderful and talented people like Jon Noyes, Beth

Malvezzi-Rosenblatt, Marsha Whitman, Connie Sciafone, Lisa Bettke, Roger Thulin, and Kevin Cotellese, all of whom share my interests and avocation.

I also enjoy having the opportunity to work with the visiting artists. People like Nick Page, Ivan Rutherford, Rob Hugh, and many others have had an influence on the development of the children as singers and myself as an educator.

**QN:** What is your most memorable moment with the FCCC?

LP: At the spring concert of 2002, Nick Page, our visiting artist, led the audience in a sing-along. At the end of the last song, as we faded away to silence, Nick played his African mbira (thumb piano). There was a long moment of silence before the audience erupted in enthusiastic applause. The overwhelming power of music to have such a profound effect on the audience is a moment that I will always remember.

**QN:** Can you name a favorite song, or two or three?

LP: My favorite song for the Chorus to sing is "Oh Be Joyful" from Gaudeamus Hodie arranged by Natalie Sleeth. It's an uplifting song about the joy of singing together. I also use it to introduce the chorus to singing in harmony.

My favorite song for the large group is "Yo Le Canto." It is a very challenging song. The words "I sing to you all day long with affection and joy" are meaningful and illustrate how wonderful it is to sing together.

**QN:** What would you like our readers to know about FCCC that they might not be aware of?

LP: When the parents drop off their children every week and they disappear behind the rehearsal doors, their children become involved in something extraordinary in music education. We ensure that the children receive a quality choral learning experience. Most people see the end product that is the concert. However, much time is spent in selecting repertoire that is both fun and challenging to learn. The hours and weeks of rehearsal leading up to the concert are where the real work is done. The result is a high standard of musical performance in concert.

*Lisa Bettke:*

**QN:** How did you get involved with the FCCC?

LB: I became involved with FCCC during the very first year as one of the accompanists. Due to some other commitments, I had to step out of those responsibilities, and I was so glad when I was able to re-join the staff a few years later as an accompanist. After several years, I also became the conductor of the Chorale, and I've been doing both jobs ever since!

**QN:** What are some of the factors which have inspired you to remain with the choir for ten years?

LB: I just love watching the children as they grow in the FCCC program and seeing them continually improve their vocal musicianship. The FCCC choristers are first and foremost there to work hard and excel in all that they do.

*continued next page*

**QN:** What do you most enjoy about the FCCC?

**LB:** I love being able to choose literature of the highest quality and far more advanced than that which can be performed successfully in school. I also love having my own students from McKinley involved in FCCC. They become the leaders at my school and their talents and work ethic serve as wonderful role models.

**QN:** What is your most memorable moment with the FCCC?

**LB:** There have been so many - if I had to choose one, I would have to say that it was when I accompanied the Chamber Singers at the ACDA Conference in Boston. The audience was filled with choral educators from throughout the Eastern Division and the performance was truly spectacular!!! I was very proud to be a part of FCCC

**QN:** Can you name a favorite song, or two or three?

**LB:** That's a really difficult question!!!! However, if I had to name a few...my two favorites would be Shine On Me and Hotaru Koi. I first taught these songs to the Chorale, and I was so happy when they were included in the Best of FCCC for our 10th Anniversary.

**QN:** What would you like our readers to know about FCCC that they might not be aware of?

**LB:** It's important that everyone realizes how much the staff works together to create the FCCC family. We are there to help each other out and make the best choices for all of the FCCC choristers. Our meetings to select the choirs for the following year and choose the soloists for the Broadway concert are very time-consuming because we truly want to be fair towards everyone. We recognize the student's hard work throughout the year...the staff, too, works very hard throughout the year!!

## High Notes Award

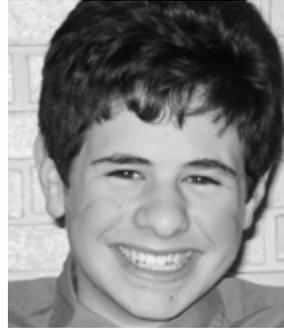
### Scott Shuler

The FCCC High Notes Award for 2007 is presented to Scott Shuler, Arts Consultant at the Connecticut State Department of Education and one of the authors of the National Arts Standards and the 1997 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the Arts. He is nationally recognized for his innovative work in arts education, believing that the arts are integral to education for all children. In addition, Mr. Shuler has been a leader in Teacher Education in Connecticut and nationally. His work on the BEST program for beginning educators has been a model for other states.

Balancing his global vision for arts in education is his genuine interest and concern for the music programs in every school in the state. His contributions to music education have been extraordinary and are deeply appreciated in the field of education. The FCCC will be honored to have Scott Shuler as our guest at our Spring Concert in Norwalk on May 12.

## Chorister Profiles

Jacob Blumenthal and Barbara Karpriel have been members of the FCCC for seven and eight years, respectively. Their interest and dedication is evident not only in their years of participation in the choir, but in their words below. Bravo and congratulations to Barbara and Jacob!!



**Name:** Jacob Blumenthal

**Age:** 15

**School:** Fairfield Warde High School

**Town:** Fairfield

**Favorite FCCC Song:**

"Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy"

**In Your Own Words:**

I can no longer remember life without something to do every Wednesday night. Over

the years my weekly schedule has changed drastically, but FCCC has remained a constant. Choir is like a family. It is so much fun to be part of such a great group of people, doing what you love. FCCC is a major part of my life and I want to keep it there for as long as possible.

**Name:** Barbara Karpriel

**Age:** 17

**School:** Fairfield Warde High School

**Town:** Fairfield

**Favorite FCCC Song:**

"I'm Goin' Up a Yonder"

**In Your Own Words:** This year

in physics I was taught that sound travels in waves, dispersing in all directions and continuing outward until it hits something and is either absorbed or bounced off. After thinking about this I realized that although this is what sound literally does, it also describes the way music affects individual people. When considering an auditorium where a performance is on the stage and people are sitting in the audience, the music produced by the performers travels outwards in waves. Although it is the same music, the people in the audience are hit with the sound waves at different angles, just like the music affects every person a different way. For some people, it simply bounces off and continues in a different direction. Others absorb the music, and each note ignites an emotion unlike one belonging to any other person. Music has always been very important to me, and this is the reason behind it. Although it can be sung through many different languages, it is truly multilingual when thinking about the way it affects others. Being in FCCC has truly added to the meaning of music for me, because I not only get the chance to enjoy it but I am also able to touch another person through the power of song.



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## 2007 FCCC Schedule

(CS-Chamber Singers; CC-Concert Choir; CH-Chorale; Ch-Chorus)

- Apr 27** Council of Churches -Project Learn Concert  
Bridgeport (CS)
- Apr 28** Carmina Burana -Fairfield County Chorale  
Norwalk (CH, Ch)
- May 5** Carmina Burana -Fairfield County Chorale  
New Haven (CH, Ch)
- May 12** FCCC Spring Concert - 7PM. Norwalk Concert Hall
- May 20** Beth El Music Series - 7:00PM. (CS)
- July 23** England/Ireland Tour, July 23-Aug 4 (CS)



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