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From the Music Director

Greetings! As we head into the holiday season, the FCCC is very busy with a number of exciting performances. Inside you will find details of these concerts as well as chorister profiles and letters. We hope you will be able to join us for many of these programs!

I often hear from choir parents who happen to join us for a rehearsal or a special concert or a tour – in other words, when they get to experience the choir 'behind the scenes' – that they didn't realize just how much is involved in what we do. So in the next few newsletters, I will try to answer the question "What do we do in the FCCC?"

The short answer is that we teach vocal and choral skills, music reading, and performance practices. Then we put all of these to use in programs which include our three major concerts, local community service events and concerts far and wide. As a result, our choristers experience many people and places; they develop friendships and have lots of fun, all the while participating in the art of music.

In this issue I would like to focus on our instruction of music reading skills. While our rehearsal time is limited, we follow a sequential approach to music literacy that is somewhat analogous to the language learning model. The basic principle can be summed up in the phrase "sound before sight."

When children acquire language, they begin by listening to others. Then they start to think in the language. Next, children speak the language and finally, after several years of developing their ability to think and speak, children are taught how to read and write.

In music, in order to bring meaning to the symbols of music notation, we must understand the aural aspects of music before we learn to read and write. The two most basic elements of music are rhythm and melody. Most of our choristers come to us with a relatively high degree of aptitude in these elements at a rote level. We help to further develop their achievement in these areas and then we teach them the tools that help to facilitate the reading of music with comprehension – solfege and rhythm systems.

For melody we use a system known as movable 'do' solfege (do, re, mi, fa, etc.). For rhythm we use the number system (1 and 2 and, etc.). By developing aural skills with these systems we hope to make the reading of music notation something that can be easily mastered over a period of time. The musical staff is introduced simply as a graph where melody is represented vertically and rhythm is represented horizontally. However, we all know that it is not quite that simple!

Our goal is to develop independent musicians, that is, singers who do not need someone else to 'show them how the music goes'. Our most advanced choirs learn their notes very quickly and then the rehearsal process moves on to polishing the expressive aspects of the music. You have probably heard the Chinese proverb, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." I have adapted it this way for our choristers: "Teach a person a song and he/she will have one song to sing. Teach a person how to read music and he/she can learn any song they wish." If you would like to know more about the teaching of musical literacy please contact me at the choir address.

Jon Noyes

The FCCC Chamber Singers performing at Pitney Bowes in September for a corporate/family party. (R. Suriani photo)



Chorister Profiles

Maggie McGowan and Tara Curry, two of our seniors this year, are very fine young ladies and strong leaders in their respective sections. Maggie has just been elected vice-president of the Chamber Singers. Tara's story is very compelling and illustrates one important part of our mission - that music is for all children.

Brava to Maggie and Tara!!



Name: Maggie McGowan
Age: 17
School: Trinity Catholic
Town: Norwalk

Favorite FCCC Song: "Goin' Up A' Yonder"

In Your Own Words: I joined FCCC as a freshman in High School and it was one of the best choices I have ever made. It opened up so many great opportunities for me such as all of the traveling that we do. I know that next year when I go off to college I will miss FCCC because I won't find this experience anywhere else. I will miss it so much. It has been such a big part of my high school years.



Name: Tara Curry
Age: 17

School: Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich
Town: Darien

Favorite FCCC Song: "St. Louis Blues"

In Your Own Words: When I went to the Broadway concert in sixth grade, I immediately knew I wanted to be a part of this amazing choir. The next year, I joined the group and have been involved ever since. Every year has been a different experience for me. I had so much fun singing at Carnegie Hall with the Cross Border Irish Orchestra, performing in the Woodland Concert Series in Hartford, and attending the Niagara Festival in Canada this past summer.

Last year, I informed the rest of the Chamber Singers that I have Asperger's Syndrome, a condition that sometimes makes it hard for me to control my emotions, such as when a rehearsal runs late or the music is harder than usual. Being a member of this choir has helped me understand the challenges and joys of performing in a professional group. I know FCCC is helping me grow as a singer, as a team member, and as a person.

FCCC Winter Concert

Dec. 3, 3^{PM}. Klein, Bridgeport, Feliz Navidad!

Our annual winter program will showcase all four of our choirs performing many wonderful selections, including nine selections either in Spanish or having a Spanish 'flavor.' Our special guest will be Alejandro Jimenez, a composer, educator and well known salsa band leader from Hartford.

West Point Holiday Concert

Dec. 10, 3^{PM}. Eisenhower Hall, U.S. Military Academy

This show, featuring our Chamber Singers with the USMA Band under the direction of Lt. Colonel Tim Holtan, will be spectacular! Pieces will include seasonal selections, gospel, jazz, dance numbers and even a medley of well known songs from holiday television specials. The performance will also take place on December 9 at 7:30 P.M. These concerts are free and open to the public.

Civic Orchestra of New Haven

Dec. 10, 3^{PM}. Battell Chapel at Yale University

Led by the dynamic Chris Hisey, the CONH has invited our Concert Choir to be their guests at their annual winter program. Come and enjoy this wonderful orchestra in the historic Battell Chapel on the New Haven Green as they perform the music of Vivaldi, Mozart and Bernstein as well as seasonal selections. Our own Kevin Cotellese will conduct the orchestra and choir on a few pieces!

Broadway Concert & Auction

Feb. 3, 7^{PM}. Klein Auditorium, Bridgeport

This year we will feature medleys from *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Lion King*, *Wicked* and *The Sound of Music*. Returning as our special guest will be Ivan Rutherford, a Broadway star and fantastic voice teacher who joined us in October for a masterclass. Our auction opens at 5:30 and there will be lots of fantastic items which will be of great interest. Many thanks to *Auction Co-Chairs Michele Sullivan and Martha Wood for their outstanding leadership in this, our largest fundraiser. Please help us keep the choir tuition affordable by supporting the auction!!*

Three Generations of Song

Mar. 4, 3^{PM}. Quick Center, Fairfield University

This program is a celebration of the state of the choral art in Connecticut. It features our Chamber Singers, the Fairfield University Glee Club and the Mendelssohn Choir of Connecticut. Each of the groups will perform alone, followed by a thrilling combined finale!

Look for the FCCC!

FCCC will be featured on Smart Screens (*full motion ads that run on screens*) which will promote our upcoming concert, compliments of Adspace Networks in the Trumbull Mall, Connecticut Post Mall and Danbury Post Mall starting November 16th. Thank you to Jeff Jensen, parent of Marlee.

Letters

Our letters are from Marina Philips, parent of Rachel and someone who has traveled with us many times over the past years, and Lauren Bagley, a former member and leader of the Chamber Singers 'back in the day.'

Dear Jon,

Traveling with the FCCC Chamber choir to Niagara for the Niagara International Festival this summer was an amazing experience. I have chaperoned many trips in the past, but found this group to be one of the nicest that I have traveled with. Everyone enjoyed each other's company and was happy to be there. At the end of the trip, I found myself wishing that we could do this more often. As Maggie McGowan said in her letter "Chamber is a very warm loving group that is like a family."

The festival itself was a great learning experience for all of us. I love going on these trips because I love music and enjoy hearing both our choir and other choirs perform. On this trip, not only did I hear great music, but also witnessed the kids have an "AHA... moment". Watching the choristers gather around you after their performance to critique themselves and the other choirs was remarkable. All you said was "What did you think of your performance?" and the kids went on a roll!! They had so much to say, and were so thoughtful and insightful. This is when I realized how much our children learn from these trips. Learning to sing and perform well takes a lot of training, but learning to be "critical" singers and performers takes experiences such as this. I hope the kids are able to pass on what they learned on this trip to our newer Chamber Singers.

I have been a choir parent for many years, first with George and now with Rachel, and have enjoyed every trip we have taken. I look forward to our next trip to England and Ireland this coming summer.

Thank you,

Marina Philips

Dear Jon,

I left Fairfield to go to college five years ago, and since I've returned, I have been in contact with Jon Noyes, and attended a few rehearsals to see and hear the

progress of this "little" choir. After we last saw each other, Jon suggested the idea of writing a letter for an Alumni section of the newsletter, and I jumped at the chance. But when I sat down to begin it, I found myself completely overwhelmed.

How could I pick one memory from tours, concerts, rehearsals, friends, or teachers when there were so many? And how could I ever pick one favorite? And how could I make a connection with choristers nearly seven years after I'd stopped singing?

Singing has never stopped being a major part of my life. Last year, I taught kindergarten in a bilingual school in Washington. One of the first connections I was able to make with my students was through song, as many of the children came in speaking no English. Now, as an intern at Mill Hill Elementary School while I get my Master's at Fairfield University, the Fairfield County Children's Choir is something I gravitate back to.

One memory that stands out more than others was when we went on the Canadian tour to sing with other choirs from around North America. That was the first time that we as a choir were exposed to several great children's choirs, most of which we'd never heard before. One of the most stunning moments for us was listening to the Nebraska Children's Chorus sing Adiemus. It was the first time we'd heard a children's choir that inspired each of us, so much so that as soon as we got on the bus to go back to the hotel that night, we had a unanimous, impromptu rehearsal.

The inspiration continued throughout the remainder of the trip, during which, in our free time, we held our own rehearsals, unknown to Mr. Noyes and the other directors. I remember sitting on the stone spiral staircase in a tiny hall with two of my friends and practicing Non Nobis Domine in three parts just to hear ourselves sing. That kind of unspoken determination became a permanent motivation in each of us, and is something that continues to drive the FCCC to new heights.

Singing has never stopped being a part of my life. As an educator, I hope that I can draw on my experiences in the FCCC to inspire a new generation of voice.

Together in song,

Lauren Bagley



Ivan Rutherford visited a rehearsal in October for this masterclass.
(R. Clair photo)



 **Fairfield County Children's Choir**
quarternotes

The Newsletter of the Fairfield County Children's Choir
Vol. 7, No. 2 • November 2006

quarternotes is published by the Fairfield County Children's Choir
P.O. Box 110588 • Trumbull, CT 06611 • (203) 414-4292

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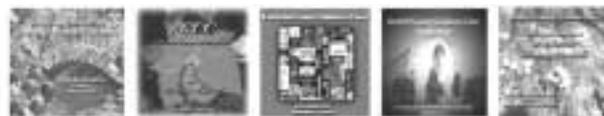
2006 FCCC Schedule

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

- Dec 3** FCCC Winter Concert 3 P.M. Klein, Bridgeport
- Dec 10** West Point Holiday Concert 3P.M.(CS)
- Dec 10** Civic Orchestra of New Haven, Battell Chapel 3P.M. (CC)
- Dec 13** Trumbull Mall 7P.M. (CH, Ch)

2007 FCCC Schedule

- Feb 3** Broadway Concert & Auction - 7P.M. Klein, Bridgeport
- Mar 4** Three Generations of Song 3P.M. Quick Center (CS)
- Mar 17** United in Song Festival - New Haven (CC)
- Apr 15** JCCS Holocaust Commemoration Service - 4P.M. (CS)
- Apr 27** Council of Churches -Project Learn Concert (CS)
- Apr 28** Carmina Burana -Fairfield County Chorale (CH, Ch)
- May 5** Carmina Burana -Fairfield County Chorale (CH, Ch)
- May 12** FCCC Spring Concert - 7P.M. Norwalk Concert Hall
- May 20** Beth El Music Series - 7:30P.M. (CS)
- July 23** England/Ireland Tour, July 23-Aug 4 (CS)



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