

# cantemusnews

Cantemus Chamber Chorus Biannual Newsletter

Vol. 1/No. 2 • April 2000



## Cantemus Chamber Chorus

**Music Director**  
John Hoffacker

**Accompanist**  
Robert Littlefield

**Sopranos**  
Ruth Berry  
Claire M. Cayot  
Katy Fickenwirth  
Donna Gale  
Patty Kennedy  
Pamela J. Morris  
Susan Nash

**Altos**  
Peter B. Hoyt  
Dorothy Monnelly  
Robin Moore  
Mary C. O'Donnell  
Christine Reif  
Marilyn A. Shepard  
Lesli Suggs Todd  
Debby Twining  
Nancy Weinberg

**Tenors**  
Chris Barker  
Jamie Cabot  
Gary Freeman  
Walter F. Fuller  
Orville Giddings  
J. Douglas Guy  
Todd Herrmann

**Basses**  
Jim Berry  
Richard Blumenscheid  
Phil Bouldin  
Bob Chase  
Bill Effner  
Bill Gelwick  
Ron Pressler  
Nathaniel Pulsifer

**Cantemus Chamber Chorus**  
P.O. Box 784  
Ipswich, MA 01938

**Toll free information**  
1-888-CHORUS-1

## Conductor's Notes for the Spring Concert

by John Hoffacker



photo by Jim Berry

John Hoffacker conducts a Cantemus rehearsal.

What do you think? I've heard that humans sang before they developed spoken language. No matter which came first, there's no denying the power of singing to convey emotion and meaning. Beyond that, though, is the phenomenon of power that happens when people sing together, and in its Spring 2000 concert, *Cantemus* explores the fantastically rich palette of humanity found in choral songs about life and love.

Imagine the scene: hundreds of singers strolling through woods, taking a break from rehearsal. Our opening selections were written to be sung on such occasions. Large choruses like those that premiered Mendelssohn's *Elijah* became fashionable in England, inspired by Handel's oratorios, and spread to the European continent, where Haydn's symphonic masses and oratorios provided the core of the repertoire.

In the new age of democracy, these choruses, made up of a very large part of a town's citizens, held elections – some of the earliest significant experiments in European democracy. You will hear in Mendelssohn's songs a vitality and joy that come from awakening to the power of citizenship and brotherhood.

A very different feeling filled the English nation when John Dowland wrote his *Ayres*. England had been riding a tremendous wave of nationalism that crested with its navy's shocking victory over the Spanish Armada. Then, like a giant hangover, around 1610 a sense of melancholy

settled over the British Isles. Dowland's music picks up from the frothy madrigal tradition – the custom of middle- and upper-class social gatherings where everyone sang in small groups – and imbues that intimate art form with profound lyricism. There's still love here, and joy, but skepticism, too.

In the music of Debussy, the archaic words of Charles d'Orléans (a contemporary of Joan of Arc) and modern harmony and sound are fused. The remoteness of the poetry appealed to Debussy, but so did its artfulness. His only music for unaccompanied choir demands a great sense of nuance and subtlety from the performers – the listeners get a wonderfully direct and exquisite setting of some of the most beautiful poetry in the French language.

Our first half closes with music from our own time, with contemporary rhythms, chords, and tunes, that set the old madrigal texts in fresh, exciting ways. Listen to the directness, the exuberance of this American music, and see how it reveals the tenderness and passion of *Come Live With Me And Be My Love*.

In the second half we devote our attention to music that has sprung not from the artistry of great composers, but that has endured because of its inherent beauty and meaning. Some of today's greatest composers find their inspiration in folksong, and our concert will close with several settings of English, Scottish, Welsh, and American songs.

We sing this music because something in our lives becomes clearer, sweeter, more alive from our bringing music and words to life. We hope you'll find this revelation, too, and listen to the song in your own heart. There's truth there. 🎵



photo by Jim Berry

John Hoffacker,  
Music Director,  
conducting a  
Cantemus rehearsal.



## What Is Cantemus?

Founded in 1982, *Cantemus* (Latin for "Let us sing") is a nonprofit organization composed of 32 voices from across the North Shore. The group is dedicated to the performance of music composed for chamber chorus. Its repertoire ranges from medieval and Elizabethan to Baroque, Classical, Romantic and contemporary music from around the world.

## Board of Directors 2000

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## cantemusicnews

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## Keep These Dates Open for the Cantemus Spring Concerts:

The Spring Concerts are scheduled for Friday, May 5 at 8:00 p.m. at Christ Church in Hamilton and Saturday, May 6 at 8:00 p.m. at Central Congregational Church in Newburyport. Admission is \$14 for adults and \$12 for seniors; students 18 and under are free. Advanced sales purchases are discounted \$2. Tickets are available at the Book Shop of Beverly Farms, Hobson Gallery in Ipswich, Nazir's Fine Jewelers in Hamilton, and the Newburyport Printmaker. Both concerts are wheelchair-accessible. As always, concert-goers are invited for refreshments at a post-concert reception. For more information, call toll free: 1-888-CHORUS-1. 🎵

## December 1999/January 2000

Thank you to all who came to enjoy the *Here Come the Holidays!* concerts in December. We had a busy month performing in different venues. Our concerts in Hamilton and Newburyport were well attended and warmly received. Cantemus also performed part of our concert program at Castle Hill as a benefit for the Trustees of the Reservations. We also performed a program of carols for residents of Cable Gardens.

On January 6, Cantemus participated with a number of local choirs to perform a benefit concert for the Acord Food Pantry based in Hamilton. The grand finale of this event was all choruses coming together to sing a rousing rendition of *Amazing Grace*. 🎵

## Composers Featured in the Spring Concert



Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

where the entertainment was often Felix conducting a guest orchestra. At the age of 17 at one of these garden parties, he premiered his *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He started his career as administrator and conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts, conducting the first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* since the composer's death. Mendelssohn was a prolific composer throughout his career and was influenced by Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. His most famous

**Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy** was born in 1809 into a wealthy family and eventually became the most successful and prolific of the Romantic composers. When he was a teenager, his family hosted large parties that might include several hundred guests

compositions include *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Hebrides Overture*, *G Minor Piano Concerto*, the *Italian Symphony*, *Violin Concerto*, and *Elijah*. His most recognizable piece of music is *The Wedding March* used in wedding ceremonies today. Known for his remarkably sunny disposition throughout his life, he died at the young age of 38 following a series of strokes. Choirs both professional and amateur love his music for its vitality and expressiveness.

**John Dowland** was born in 1563, probably in London. He was a notable lutenist, but was unable to secure a position in royal service in England because of his religion and in 1598 he worked as a musician in the court of Christian IV of Denmark. He returned to England in 1606 and was finally appointed as one of the King's Lutes in 1612. He composed one of the best known songs of his time, *Flow my tears*, and his themes of melancholy were widely imitated. Cantemus will sing two of his songs in the spring. *Come Again* is from the *First Book of Songs* published in 1597. *Flow not so fast, ye fountains* was in the *Third Book of Songs* published in 1603 and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I following her death that same year. John Dowland died in 1626.

**Claude Debussy**, born in 1862, was the creator of French musical impressionism. He studied piano at the Paris Conservatory, but after graduation rarely performed in public. He focused on composition, spending his time mainly enjoying the Parisian café life surrounded by

*(continued next page)*



## Cantemus Goes Online!

What's the latest on Cantemus' current season? Who's singing in the tenor section this year? How do I get to the concert venues? How do I get tickets? Can I purchase a recording? Answers to these questions and a lot more can be found on the new Cantemus website, [www.cantemus.org](http://www.cantemus.org) Log on, look around, and let us know what you think of our new home in cyberspace.

poets and painters. He wanted his music to sound like improvisations and did not have many composers among his friends. Debussy's first orchestral work, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (1892-94) established the style of impressionistic music. His only music for unaccompanied chorus is the set of songs setting the texts of the 15th century poet/politician Charles d'Orléans, and they are among the masterpieces of the medium. You might also know his *Claire de Lune* from the *Suite Bergamasque*. In about 1910 Debussy developed cancer, and he died during the German bombing of Paris in 1918. 🎵

## A Brief Note About the Folk Tradition



We have a collection of folk songs in our spring concert. *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* defines the folk song as "song which has grown up amongst the peasantry of any race, being transmitted orally from generation to generation and sung without accompaniment." Folk songs were passed along by someone who heard the song, probably forgot some of it, added some lyrics or new melodic elements of their own, and then sang it to someone else. The result is that there is usually no definitive version of a folk song.

The collection of folk songs we will sing are from United States, England, Scotland and Wales. The songs cover a wide range including ballads, a sea chanty, and a lullaby. We hope you enjoy hearing these diverse folk pieces-both familiar and not so familiar. 🎵

*We will greatly miss the wonderful voice of Bill Barron who performed with Cantemus for many years. Bill and his wife moved to Maryland in December.*



*Cantemus altos Debbie Twining and Dorothy Monnelly sing in rehearsal (see article on next page).*

## Thank You!

For each of the last two years, Cantemus has run a capital drive with the aim of augmenting our coffers that are filled primarily with member dues, ticket sales money and grants. There is never quite enough to do everything we would like in terms of hiring instrumentalists, offering choral workshops, trying new ways of community outreach, and CD production. Your generous response to our solicitations means that we have made progress on all these fronts and are able to plan new and exciting things each year. THANK YOU! \$5,000 a year can make a huge difference to a small, nonprofit, charitable arts organization such as *Cantemus*. Should you wish to contribute, you may do so by sending a check to: Cantemus, P.O. Box 784, Ipswich, MA 01938. (See form below.) 🎵

## NEWS FLASH!

The sopranos and altos have recorded Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* with harpist Emily Halpern Lewis. Look for a new CD of this and other Christmas favorites coming soon!

Preview ▶ Vorschau ▶ Exhibition préalable

## Spring 2000 Program:

*Drei Chorlieder* by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

*Four Ayres* by John Dowland

*Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans* by Claude Debussy

*Songs of Love* by James McCray

*A Garland of Folksongs* by various composers in the folk tradition



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Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

- I'd like my name added to the Cantemus mailing list.
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## Meet the Section Cantemus Altos



**Peter Hoyt** received a B.A. degree from UNH in Education, a Master degree in Education from Salem State College, and his C.A.G.S. from the Northeast Consortium. He is an elementary school principal by profession and currently a vocal soloist at St. John's Episcopal Church in Beverly Farms. He has performed as a classical soloist in many venues and sung with the Cambridge Madrigal Singers and the New England Vocal Ensemble.

**Dorothy Monnelly** has been a Cantemus singer for over a decade and continues private study in voice. Her musical talents include piano and organ as well. By profession she is a fine art landscape photographer and part owner of River Gallery in Ipswich. She has sung with the Wheaton Choir, Wheaton Whims, and the Newburyport Choral Society. Dorothy is an advocate for conservation serving on her town's Open Space Committee and the Board of the Essex County Greenbelt Association.

**Mary O'Donnell** lives in Beverly and is manager of overseas operations for an Internet application service provider. She has a B.F.A. in Musical Theater from The Boston Conservatory and an MBA from Boston University. She has sung with the Middlebury College Choir, the Mission Basilica Choir and The Paul Madore Chorale. Mary has performed on stage since childhood and in 1997 received the EACT Award for her performance of Delores Dante in *Working*.

**Christine Reif**, from Ipswich, is new to Cantemus this year. Chris is a mechanical/materials/process/quality engineer and mother to a wonderful young son. In whatever free time she can find, Chris likes to play instruments, hike, canoe, sew, create stained glass, cook and sleep.

**Marilyn A. Shepard** resides in Newburyport. She studied voice with Dorothea Pliatska and went on to Boston University as a vocal performance major. She has performed in recitals and as a church soloist throughout greater Boston. Marilyn is a member of the choir and soloist at Christ Episcopal Church in Hamilton. She has sung with The Master Singers Chamber Chorus of Lexington.

**Lesli Suggs Todd**, from Winthrop, is a social worker and director of the Cornerstone School and Residential Program. When she's not singing with Cantemus or working, she likes to play piano and restore furniture. Her favorite recent CD is the "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me" soundtrack.

**Debby Twining** is a Hamilton resident who is co-owner of The Book Shop of Beverly Farms. She has an A.B. in Music from Wheaton College and has made music an integral part of her life. Debbie has been a Cantemus singer for 13 years and has also sung with the Berkshire Choral Festival, Chorus North Shore, The Cape Ann Singers, The New A Cappellas, and The Essex Chamber Singers. She plays the recorder and loves to travel. Debby is the proud mother of two grown children.