

cantemusnews

Cantemus Chamber Chorus Biannual Newsletter

Vol. 3/ No. 1 • November 2001



CANTEMUS
Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

Sopranos

Claire Cayot
Katy Fickenwirth
Donna Gale
Nancy Gilbert
Jennifer Hand
Kyle Hutchinson
Priscilla March
Pamela Morris
Sarah Murray
Susan Nash
Michele O'Connor

Altos

Katya Bakulina
Dorothy Monnelly
Chris Reif
Marilyn Shepard
Marjorie Short
Marcia Siegel
Debby Twining
Nancy Weinberg

Tenors

Chris Barker
Tim Bakland
Jamie Cabot
Tom Carmody
Gary Freeman
Bill Gilbert
Chuck Mullen
Mark Pierce

Basses

Jim Berry
Richard Blumenscheid
Jud Brooks
Bill Gelwick
Doug Guy
Todd Herrmann
Nat Pulsifer

Music Director

John Hoffacker

Accompanist

Robert Littlefield

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

P.O. Box 784
Ipswich, MA 01938

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www.cantemus.org



*John Hoffacker,
Music Director*

A Charles Dickens Christmas

by John Hoffacker

When Charles Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, his audience was obviously ready for it. The first publication run sold out immediately and presses were hired to reprint the book in the tens of thousands to meet the demands in England and America. The time was right.

The Industrial Revolution was at full steam and families were trying to cope with greatly increased demands on their time. Dickens's fable about old Scrooge learning to lift his nose from the grindstone, finding love in his family and community, revealed the solution that many were looking for. Indeed, some people say that our modern celebration of Christmastime has its roots in the themes that emerged in the middle of the 19th century, especially in the importance of friends and family.



Charles Dickens

Our holiday concert this December explores the world of Dickens. To frame the first half of our program we sing several English carols, beginning with three he would have known: "My Dancing Day," "The Wexford Carol," and "Wassail." At the end of the first half we sing some modern carols that capture the convivial spirit celebrated in Dickens's story, including John Gardner's new and exciting arrangement of "Tomorrow Shall be My Dancing Day," Harold Darke's "In the Bleak Midwinter," and William Mathias's wonderful dance, "Sir Christemas."

Beyond the carol and its association with community celebration, two other forces were important in shaping the modern Christmas — the German influence and

interest in history. Albert, Queen Victoria's Prince Consort, brought with him from Germany many traditions that took root in England and America, including the Christmas tree and the lullaby. Felix Mendelssohn, England's favorite composer of the time, wrote a short motet to the text "Rejoice, all ye on earth, for the Savior has appeared!" The other two pieces we sing are a beautiful lullaby by the mysterious German composer Karl Leuner, "The Shepherds' Cradle Song," and another lullaby that you probably know. "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!" ("Silent Night") was originally composed in a small church in Austria by the parish organist. It soared in popularity when several family singing groups touring around Germany and Austria made it part of their repertoire. We'll sing Franz Gruber's original version, featuring soloists and our own Jamie Cabot on guitar.



Felix Mendelssohn

"Ave Maria," a motet by Palestrina, illustrates the awakening of interest in antiquity led by groups like Boston's Handel & Haydn Society around 1850. This theme continues as we celebrate the holidays today, surrounded by many historical elements, including medieval wreaths and Thomas Nast's 1860s illustrations of Santa Claus.

To close our concert, I've chosen a wonderful musical setting of a story by Kenneth Grahame, John Rutter's "The Reluctant Dragon." It seems to me that stories and fables convey the spirit of the season in a unique way, a way that all of us in Cantemus hope will enhance your celebration. Warmest wishes for a wonderful holiday! 🎵

Cantemus is supported in part by funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, as administered locally by the Beverly, Hamilton-Wenham, Ipswich, and Newburyport Cultural Councils.

What Is Cantemus?

Founded in 1982, Cantemus (Latin for “Let us sing”) is a nonprofit organization composed of about 30 voices from across the North Shore of Massachusetts. 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.

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Vol. 3, No. 1
November 2001

Editor:
Priscilla March

Graphic Design:
Sarah Raleigh Design

Printing:
Harborside Printing Co.



All concerts are
handicapped accessible.



Large print concert
programs are available.

Let us Sing (and Read)!

When they're not rehearsing and performing choral works, Cantemus singers consume an impressive volume — and variety — of books. Here's a sampling of recent reads and occasional commentary by their readers.



The Last Place on Earth by Roland Huntford, about the race to the South Pole between Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott. It's highly condemnatory of Scott, but it had to be to make its point, and rightly so. (Chris Reif)

An Interrupted Life, the letters and diary of a Dutch Jew, Ety Hillesum, which tell of her persecution during the Nazi occupation. She helped a lot of people before she was gassed at Auschwitz in 1943. Also, a biography of Philip II, 16th century Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain. I wanted to find out if Philip was really as detestable as the librettist in the opera *Don Carlos* (and some historians) made him out to be. I guess he wasn't. I'm also finishing a biography of Amenhotep III, the father of Akhenaten, the 18th dynasty pharaoh who mandated monotheism for his subjects. (Gary Freeman)

The Fig Eater: A Novel by Jody Shields, a fictional murder investigation of one of Freud's real patients in 1910 Vienna. Also, *French Lessons: Adventures with Knife, Fork, and Corkscrew* by Peter Mayle — latest in the entertaining series that began with *A Year in Provence*. In preparation for a trip to Provence next summer with the Newburyport Choral Society. (Susan Nash)

Jan Swafford's *Charles Ives — A Life with Music*, which renders Ives as more complex than what we've come to imagine. Especially compelling is its description of Ives's repeated efforts to get his music played despite the condescension of the music establishment. Also, *When Harlem was in Vogue* by David Levering Lewis, a detailed and deconstructive study of the writers, musicians, consumers, and political activists of the Harlem Renaissance. (Marcia Siegel)

Guns, Germs, and Steel by Jared Diamond (non-fiction and extremely relevant to today's troubles), and the

novels *A Soldier of the Great War* by Mark Helprin and *Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis de Bernieres. (Jamie Cabot)

John Adams by David McCullough. Another recent favorite is *Winterdance* by Gary Paulsen, about the famed Iditarod dog-sled race. (Deb Twining)

Anil's Ghost by Michael Ondaatje, author of *The English Patient*. The story is set in Sri Lanka during recent social upheaval that led to many mysterious disappearances and deaths. The main character conducts forensic investigations for humanitarian purposes. Fascinating story, wonderful writing. (Dorothy Monnelly)

Mrs. Jack: An Autobiography of Isabella Stewart Gardner by Louise Hall Tharp. It makes one appreciate her museum with a renewed interest. A lively and entertaining account of the extravagant personality and her times. (Katya Bakulina)

The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron, for those who struggle to accept themselves as artists. It was recommended to me by my sister, a painter. Cameron's idea is to help readers overcome creative barriers by writing three pages first thing in the morning as a form of meditation. Also, who can go to bed at night without a chapter installment of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the third novel in the J.K. Rowling series? (Jen Hand)

The Battle for God by Karen Armstrong, about the rise of fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the effects of modernization on the monotheistic religions. Also, the *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Philip Pullman — fabulous young adult fantasy with references to Blake and Milton and stuff I don't even get. (Kyle Hutchinson)

Alva, That Vanderbilt-Belmont Woman by Margaret Rector, the first biography of one of America's richest and most powerful women. I picked it up in Newport, where she was responsible for the building of The Marble House and was an important figure in American politics, finance, and society of the early 20th century. (Nancy Gilbert)

The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior (2001) by David Sibley, author of last year's colossal success, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Also, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, by Eric Hoffer who wrote about why people become fanatics and dedicate themselves to fanatical causes. It was published in 1951 and I'm re-reading it from my college days. The relevance of this book today is total. (Jim Berry) 🎵

Keeping Music in the Family

You know how important the time is that we spend with our families. Parents with young children have a difficult time finding ways to enjoy cultural events together, and while music can be one of the greatest joys to share, concerts are not usually family-friendly. Cantemus is changing that. All concerts are free to our fans 18 years of age and younger, and we hope parents will bring their kids.

On Wednesday, November 14, Cantemus presented a joint concert with six area high school chamber choirs at Ipswich High School. It was a wonderful chance for younger brothers and sisters to see their siblings in a really big show! On March 9, we're presenting a concert designed for the whole family — and it's free! This Saturday morning concert will last about 40 minutes and will feature some of our favorite music and some songs we can all sing together. Look for more details to come on our "Family Concert." 🎵



Share the Holidays with Cantemus 2001 HOLIDAY CONCERT SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 1, 2001 8 p.m.

Central Congregational Church
Pleasant & Titcomb Streets, Newburyport

Sunday, December 2, 2001 4 p.m.

Christ Church, 149 Asbury Street, Hamilton



Meet the Altos



Rehearsing for the December 2001 holiday concerts.

Katya Bakulina joined Cantemus this season and reports that she very much enjoys singing with the group. Other activities filling her life include biking, yoga, and fighting for pillow space with her cat. In her "spare time," she acts as an accounting manager for a mid-size mail order business and pursues her quest for the perfect sushi bar.

This is **Dorothy Monnelly's** 13th season singing with Cantemus. She also sang for many years with the Newburyport Choral Society. Having studied piano, organ, and voice, she feels that music is a wonderful companion for life and the artistic spirit. As a landscape photographer, she spends many hours in her darkroom listening to music and singing while she works. Dorothy has worked with the Ipswich Open Space Committee to develop and implement plans to protect significant open space in Ipswich, is on the board of the Essex County Greenbelt Association, and is a member of the Crane Ecology Committee.

When not rehearsing for Cantemus performances, **Chris Reif** tries to keep up with work, parenting, volunteering, and home repair ("Cleaning was dropped long ago."). She also sings with the North Cambridge Family Opera (with husband and son) where she helps with costumes

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and the stage crew. Chris's other interests include playing instruments ("mostly brass, but anything you blow into"), hiking, biking, canoeing, sketching, and sleeping. She does a wicked good imitation of Robert Goulet and Ethel Merman. ("People love me at parties!") For pay, she's a senior mechanical engineer in a semiconductor-related firm.

This is **Marilyn Shepard's** fourth year in Cantemus, but singing has always been central in her life. She was a vocal performance major at Boston University and studied with Ella Lou Dimmock of Lexington, MA. She has also sung and served as soloist with the Newburyport Choral Society and the Master Singers of Lexington. She has enjoyed several years in community theatre, where her favorite role was Vera Charles in "Mame." Currently, her time is filled with redecorating a house in Wolfboro, NH. A gourmet cook, Marilyn finds the kitchen refitting particularly time consuming.

Margie Short is an Oscar-nominated documentary filmmaker and a member of the Motion Picture Academy, for which she serves on the first-round Oscar screening committees for short and feature documentary films. She's currently involved in raising funds for a PBS program, "Sacred Music – Sacred Spaces" which explores the history of Western sacred music where the music came to life. She also curates and hosts "Oscars Shorts," an annual fundraiser for the Coolidge Corner Theatre Foundation in Brookline. Other interests include travel, nature hikes, photography, flamenco dance, art, theatre, and gourmet cooking.

Marcia Siegel is currently the dance critic for the *Boston Phoenix* and is working on her sixth book, *Howling Near Heaven – Twyla Tharp and the Re-invention of Modern Dance*, which will be published by Palgrave/St. Martin's Press. Marcia started serious choral work in the 1950s with an informal group in North Andover led by the organ builder Charles B. Fisk. She was a founding member of New York's New Amsterdam Singers and New Amsterdam Singers Chamber Chorus where the highest point was performing Mahler's "Resurrection Symphony" with Jessye Norman and the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein.

When not singing with Cantemus, **Deb Twining** works part-time at the Book Shop of Beverly Farms where she is also a co-owner. Obviously, a fair amount of her spare time is spent reading (see what books her nose has been into in "Let us Sing (and Read)!" on page 2). She also enjoys sailing, gardening, and doing a goodly amount of volunteer work at First Church, Wenham where she is a member.

Having sung with Cantemus on and off for four years, **Nancy Weinberg** is currently otherwise occupied by moving into what was originally built as a summer house for the founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Nancy, who "worked in sales forever," now splits her time helping elderly people organize their households and handle chores they can no longer do alone and assisting in a friend's catering business. Nancy sang with the Newburyport Choral Society for over 10 years and served as its Board's media director. She has a 16-year-old son. 🎵

Looking Ahead ▶▶▶

SPRING 2002 PROGRAM

Music from the Heart of Europe: Czech, Slovak, and Bohemian Music

- Antonin Dvorak's *Mass in D*
- Petr Eben's *Prague Te Deum 1989* (U.S. premiere)
- Bela Bartok's *Four Slovak Folk Songs*
- and more

Friday, May 17, 2002 – 8 p.m.

Christ Church, 149 Asbury Street, Hamilton

Saturday, May 18, 2002 – 8 p.m.

Central Congregational Church
Pleasant & Titcomb Streets, Newburyport