

cantemusnews

Cantemus Chamber Chorus Semi-Annual Newsletter

Vol. 3/No. 2 • April 2002



CANTEMUS
Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

Sopranos

Claire Cayot
Katy Fickenwirth
Donna Gale
Jennifer Hand
Kyle Hutchinson
Priscilla March
Pamela Morris
Sarah Murray
Susan Nash

Altos

Katya Bakulina
Betsy Lebel
Dorothy Monnelly
Chris Reif
Marilyn Shepard
Marjorie Short
Marcia Siegel
Debby Twining

Tenors

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

Basses

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

Music Director

John Hoffacker

Accompanist

Robert Littlefield

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

P.O. Box 784
Ipswich, MA 01938

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1-888-CHORUS-1

www.cantemus.org

A Concert from the Heart

by John Hoffacker

Home cooking: There's nothing like it. The real taste of what people love. In our May 2002 concert, we're offering a banquet of music from the heart – music so genuine and beautiful, it will be like nothing you've heard before.



John Hoffacker,
Music Director

Our banquet has been prepared by master chefs, great composers who created masterpieces for the intimate sound of a virtuoso chamber choir. And our banquet has three courses: folk songs, sacred choruses, and, to conclude, a setting of the Mass for soloists, choir, and organ by one of the Romantic era's great composers of religious music.

Béla Bartók chose four Slovak folk songs from the thousands he collected to arrange for mixed chorus and piano. Leoš Janáček and Bedřich Smetana wrote music for men's and women's chorus respectively, also in the folk tradition, and we'll present several stirring examples.

Music for the church makes up the second part of our program. Sergei Rachmaninoff, perhaps the greatest pianist of the twentieth century, in 1915 wrote one of the towering landmarks of sacred music, the *Vespers, opus 37*. We will sing the central motet of the *Vespers*, "Praise the Name of the Lord." Following this and, in contrast to the glorious sonority of the Rachmaninoff motet, Igor Stravinsky's quiet and simple setting of the "Hail Mary" prayer (in Church Slavonic) which lasts barely a minute.

And then we come to a thrilling moment for all of us in Cantemus – the American premier of a major work by the Czech Republic's leading composer, Petr Eben. *Prague Te Deum 1989* was written for the visit by Pope John Paul II to the city of Prague after the fall of the Iron Curtain. I'll be giving a short talk before the concerts about this piece.

The second half of our program is the *Mass in D*, and the best word I can think of to describe it is *delightful*. Antonín Dvořák felt free of any requirement to write impressive music, since the *Mass* was commissioned for the consecration of a small rural church. It is full of lovely, homespun tunes, yet profound in its harmonic expression. The *Mass* is a heartfelt statement of faith by a master composer. 🎵

SPRING 2002 CONCERT SCHEDULE

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

Antonín Dvořák's Mass in D

Petr Eben's Prague Te Deum 1989
(U.S. Premiere)

Béla Bartók's Four Slovak Folk Songs
and more...

Saturday, May 18, 2002 at 8 p.m.

Central Congregational Church
14 Titcomb Street, Newburyport

Sunday, May 19, 2002 at 4 p.m.

Christ Church of Hamilton and Wenham
149 Asbury Street, Hamilton

From Petr Eben's Preface for the *Prague Te Deum 1989*:

During the last forty years, we in Czechoslovakia have had no good cause for singing a "Te Deum." What I wrote in 1950 was a bitter "Missa Adventus et Quadragesimae"; a mass for freedom and faith, those of a Church fighting for existence.

When, in 1989, we suddenly achieved the freedom so long denied us, the Gregorian melody of the "Te Deum" hymn – with its joyfully ascending *ductus* – just swelled up in my soul and, despite all the turbulence accompanying the revolutionary period, I managed to compose the *Te Deum* over New Year, 1990, as an act of thanksgiving for all that had happened.

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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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Jud Brooks
At Large

Bill Gelwick
At Large

Peter Hoyt
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Hugh McCall
Non-Singing

John Hoffacker
Advisor

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QUIZ

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Can you match the composers featured on our May program (see page 1) with the titles of other music they've written?

The first one is done for you:

- E Dvořák (*Mass in D*)
_____ Janáček (*Inconstant Love*)
_____ Bartók (*Four Slovak Folk Songs*)
_____ Rachmaninoff (*Praise the Name of the Lord*)
_____ Smetana (*Three Choruses for Women's Voices*)

- A** *The Bartered Bride; Ma Vlast*
B Three piano concertos and two symphonies; lots of great piano music
C *The Cunning Little Vixen; Glagolitic Mass; Sinfonietta*
D *Concerto for Orchestra; Microkosmos*
E Nine symphonies, including one *From the New World*

What Cantemus Is Listening To

While they study their concert performance music with a singular purpose, individual members of Cantemus possess eclectic "extra-curricular" musical listening tastes. From Bruckner to B.B. King, and Philip Glass to the Grateful Dead, Cantemus singers relax with their favorites, old and new:

Jim Berry

My favorite CDs of late are recent issues from Bruce Hornsby, Lisa Gerrard (formerly of Dead Can Dance), Mark Knopfler (the heart of the old Dire Straits), Patti Smith, and Phish. I've also stocked up on Shostakovich – symphonies and string quartets. Unlike choral and symphonic music, chamber music doesn't interest me unless it's from the 20th century.

Jamie Cabot

I listen to a lot of "old cutting edge" rock like the Grateful Dead and Steely Dan, a mix of blues, soul, jazz and folk ranging from Laura Nyro to B.B. King to Sonia Dada to Paul Simon to Ray Charles to The New York Voices – you know, the good stuff! As to classical music, my tastes aren't quite as educated and refined, but I tend away from the "classical" classicals, like Mozart, Haydn, and toward the Baroque and

pre-Baroque, and in the other direction, toward the stormy late Romantics and early moderns.

Gary Freeman

The Tallis Scholars' interpretation of barely published English manuscripts have provided the most interesting listening lately. It's music whose composers WBACH can't even spell, let alone play. And there are a couple of unbeatable recordings of Prokofiev's piano music and Shostakovich symphonies that aren't regulars on the Vivaldi/Mozart/Mendelssohn tape that most radio stations are playing these days.

Jen Hand

I've been listening to Morten Lauridsen's *O Magnum Mysterium* and *Flower Songs* performed by The Nordic Choir, with Lauridsen at the piano and conducted by Nicol Matt. The CD features the Lauridsen pieces Cantemus performed last spring. Exquisite sound and musicianship on this recording.

Kyle Hutchinson

I've been listening to the Kronos Quartet's recordings of Philip Glass's string quartets, which are very accessible and beautiful but you can still tell they're Glass. Also Gillian Welch's *Time (The Revelator)* a new bluegrass/alt-country release which is really layered and draws you right in.

Dorothy Monnelly

I'm listening to an oratorio by Handel – *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (1701) – translated as "triumph of time and disillusion." It was recently broadcast in two installments over WGBH and my husband taped it. Yet another gorgeous oratorio by Handel.

Chuck Mullen

At the moment, I'm listening to the Naxos recording of Bruckner *Motets*. Recent acquisitions include a posthumous a cappella collection directed by Robert Shaw – *O Magnum Mysterium* and *De Profundis* – music by Arvo Part. The Part has some strange stuff in it, but none of it is inaccessible. My three favorites on it are *The Beatitudes*, which turns out to be stunning; a dream-like piece about Jesus dining in the house of a Pharisee – haunting; and a beautiful *Magnificat* – the most "normal" sounding thing on the album.

Chris Reif

I'm listening to Duke Ellington's *Black, Brown and Beige*, a triple disc set featuring the title classical-style symphonic work, but also numerous excellent charts with Billy Strayhorn, Johnny Hodges, Tommy Dorsey, Oscar Pettiford, and many others that make me want to say, "They don't make 'em like they used to!" I've also been playing a lot of Gene Krupa on vinyl, since I inherited a number of recordings of his band from a friend's uncle.

Marcia Siegel

I just got the new Bang on a Can recording of Terry Riley's *In C*. This piece was a lynchpin of the minimalist movement in the '60s and '70s. The project of Riley and his immediate followers wasn't about making music as small as possible, but about showing how much there is in the most microscopic musical idea. I was very moved to get in touch with this again. 🎵

Meet the Singers



Matt Dorman, First tenor. One of Cantemus's newest singers, Matt joined the group in January 2002. "As a new member, I find that Cantemus has a great sound. I enjoy John's conducting style; he makes the rehearsal fun and energetic at the same time."

Matt auditioned for Cantemus because he knew it had a significant history on the North Shore and enjoyed a reputation for high-quality performance. He's enjoying rehearsing all the music Cantemus is currently preparing and enjoys the "good feeling of accomplishment" that comes from learning the music bit by bit. He's looking forward to the May concerts, particularly the Dvořák *Mass in D* and recommends that concert-goers pay particular attention to the Mass's *Credo* — "It's like a little dance."

Cantemus is just the latest in Matt's choral activities. He loves to sing and has done so his entire life, all through high school and college concert choir, madrigal groups, musicals, and some solo work. He has also sung with Coro Stella Maris (an early music group) and Chorus North Shore. He enjoys playing the piano in his spare time as well.

Matt works full-time at the Sylvan Street Grille as an assistant manager.



Bill Gelwick, First bass/Second tenor. Alternating between baritone and second tenor, Bill Gelwick is now in his fourth year with Cantemus. But he still remembers his first Cantemus rehearsal. "Everyone was sight-reading and they sounded better than other groups I'd been in after

rehearsing," he says. "This is just a great group to sing with." His favorite Cantemus performance so far has been Mendelssohn's *There shall a star come out of Jacob* sung during the holiday season in 2000. "It was so beautiful that it made me want to just stop and listen." His favorite selection in Cantemus' upcoming spring concerts is the Dvořák *Mass in D* — "Not any particular part... whatever we're singing at the time — that's my favorite part." Bill's seen nothing but positive change over the years he's been singing with Cantemus. "Newcomers bring a fresh sound," he says.

Bill is retired from General Electric after serving in various financial, contract and international marketing positions. He is also retired from politics, having served six years on the Board of Aldermen in Beverly, the last four as president. His retirement from politics was finalized when he was defeated in a run for the mayor's office.

Bill's hobbies keep him busy, with singing and gardening taking up much of his time. He has served on the board of directors of Symphony by the Sea, and sung with the Beverly Men's Glee Club. He is currently a member of the Boston Bel Canto Opera Chorus and Chorus North Shore in addition to Cantemus.



Betsy Lebel, Second alto. For Betsy, what began as a search for sanity turned into a passion for all things musical and theatrical. As the youngest of four girls growing up in a busy Connecticut household, her voice was often the least heard among the cacophony of women. "Fortunately, least heard often equaled least blamed!" she says. So when she stumbled upon music and the stage after years of shower, campfire, and family sing-a-longs, she was hooked. Throughout school and past

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college Betsy kept auditioning and participating in productions and choirs in and around the Boston area.

After a several-year hiatus, during which she and her husband produced two children, the itch returned. “In a second search for sanity (two little kids and me — all day!),” she became involved in the Hamilton-Wenham arts community by joining the Soltice Singers and the First Church Choir, producing the local Ed Fund Follies, presiding over the Friends of Fine Arts, producing the Miles River Middle School production of *It’s About Time*, volunteering at SAFE art therapy studio in Ipswich, and attending as many area concerts and performances as she could. Betsy’s been attending Cantemus concerts since she moved to this area. “As I sat listening to this year’s holiday performance,” she says, “I realized that I wanted to be a part of this incredible combination of music and voices.” She joined Cantemus in January.



time with the clarinet, too, “but neither of us enjoyed that.” After falling in love with Leontyne Price (the Verdi/Puccini album), she started

Susan Nash, Second soprano. Coming from a long line of musicians, Susan started studying piano when she was six. By the time she was nine, she says, “My teacher issued an ultimatum: ‘You practice, you give it up — or you join my church choir.’ I opted for the choir.” She did

voice lessons in high school, studied a bit in college, then resumed lessons six years ago. Susan loves singing music she would never otherwise perform. The highlights of her 10 years with the Newburyport Choral Society were concert tours to Eastern Europe and Italy. She’s been with Cantemus since 1988.

Cantemus keeps her coming back because its small size makes each voice important: “Everyone must take musical responsibility,” she says. “We have a terrific group that gets better every year — and the programs John selects are always varied and interesting for us and for our audiences. I especially like singing “songs,” those gems that create a mood and tell a story, all in three minutes. This spring’s Bartók *Folk Songs* do this... and the spectacular harmonies of the Rachmaninoff piece will give everyone, on and off stage, the shivers.”

Susan’s other avocation is gardening. She and her husband are confessed fanatics: they’ve named 12 different garden “rooms” at their house. On June 15, they’ll be on the Newburyport Historical Society’s annual Garden Tour.

Susan’s vocations have included advertising and public relations (says Susan: “My dubious claim to fame is getting the International Chicken Flying Meet into *People* and *The Wall Street Journal*”); book publishing for the English firm of Faber and Faber; and serving as editorial manager for Parker Brothers and Hasbro Games for 13 years. 🎵