

CANTEMUS NEWS

Cantemus Chamber Chorus Semi-annual Newsletter

Vol. 7 / No. 1 • April 2005



CANTEMUS
Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

Sopranos

Kristine Buckridge
Claire Cayot
Katy Fickenwirth
Donna Gale
Elaine Gomperts
Anne Maguire
Janet Glasser Melanson
Pamela Morris
Susan Nash
Bettina Turner

Altos

Kristine Harris
Elizabeth Lebel
Pat Lowery Collins
Priscilla March
Dorothy Monnelly
Chris Reif
Ann Tucker
Debby Twining
Betsy Vicksell
Nancy Weinberg

Tenors

Chris Barker
Jamie Cabot
Tom Carmody
Gary Freeman
Gary Lubarsky
Mark Pierce
Larry Zwicker

Basses

Richard Blumenscheid
Bill Dowdall
Michael Fosburg
David Geikie
Nat Pulsifer
Richard Salandrea
Justin Turner
Conrad Willeman

Interim Music Director
Gary Wood

Accompanist
Robert Littlefield

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

Toll-free information
1-888-CHORUS-1

www.cantemus.org

Discover American Treasures With Cantemus this May



Gary Wood

by Gary Wood, Guest Conductor and Interim Music Director

In our May concerts, we celebrate the contributions of some important choral composers of America. These composers have a place in the canon of American choral music, and we offer these "American Treasures" in tribute to their compositional mastery.

Daniel Pinkham's "Wedding Cantata" is set to Biblical texts from the Song of Solomon, and the music possesses a quality of "song" in each movement, along with sturdy harmonies, metrical variety, and dynamic shading.

Samuel Barber's "Reincarnations" are generally hailed as masterpieces, set to poetry of James Stephens. Barber's music is noted for its intense lyricism and harmonic luxury, and this set of three works does not disappoint: the listener can sense a lover's adoration for "Mary Hynes," a tragic death for "Anthony O Daly," and a couple's rapture in "The Coolin."

"Stomp Your Foot" and "The Promise of Living" are two choruses from Aaron Copland's opera *The Tender Land*. The composer of many well-known instrumental works ("Rodeo," "Appalachian Spring," and others), Copland is perhaps *the* most identifiable American composer. These two choruses showcase Copland's grasp of "down-home" rhythms and hope for the future.

The centerpiece of our "American Treasures" concert is Randall Thompson's "The Peaceable Kingdom," a multi-movement work for unaccompanied choir. The chorus sings in a variety of textures, including the four-part SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), eight-part SSAATTBB, and two separate SATB choirs. Commissioned to write this piece for the Harvard Glee Club

(cont. next page)

COME AND DISCOVER American Treasures

Saturday, May 7, 7:30 PM

Christ Church of Hamilton and Wenham
149 Asbury Street, Hamilton, MA

Sunday, May 8, 4:00 PM

Central Congregational Church,
corner of Pleasant & Titcomb Streets
Newburyport, MA

Our December "Celtic Christmas" concerts were sell-outs — a Cantemus first! We'd love to sing for full houses again. So, besides filling your own spot in our audience in May, *please fill the seats next to you, too*, by bringing friends and relatives to the concert. As one December audience member wrote on a survey card, "Your concert took my breath away, and I turned to my friend during a break and said, 'Don't you wish everyone you love could be here right now?'"

Fans tell us that one concert was all it took — but we need new listeners to convert into fans, and you are our best ambassadors! (By the way, we are working on plans for next December: either larger venues or more performances.)



Massachusetts Cultural Council

Cantemus is supported in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, and by grants from the Beverly, Gloucester, Hamilton-Wenham, Ipswich, Newburyport, and West Newbury Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the MCC.

What Is Cantemus?

Founded in 1982, Cantemus (Latin for "Let us sing") is a nonprofit organization composed of 35 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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Conrad Willeman
At Large

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Cantemus News

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at all major concerts.

and Radcliffe Choral Society, Thompson found inspiration in an Isaiah-inspired Edward Hicks painting entitled "The Peaceable Kingdom"; this led Thompson to set several Biblical texts from Isaiah. The genius of this work is in its presentation of the varied textual messages rather than their meanings; he moves beyond the meanings to carefully present the text in a musical way. Thompson's choral writing, while not difficult in itself, is made challenging by the interpretive markings, articulatory gestures, and musical demands placed on the chorus. That's what makes it exciting.

Cecil Effinger's "Four Pastorales" are set to poetry by Thomas Hornsby Ferril. Effinger has composed a work for chorus and solo oboe, alternating their soundings throughout the four short works. The clarity of the choral writing and the richness of the oboe timbre permeate this music.

Barber's short work "Sure On This Shining Night" captures the beauty of James Agee's poem, with the soprano and tenor sections carrying the lyrical weight while the alto and bass provide the grounding harmony. Thompson's "Alleluia" is perhaps his best-known choral work, written for the opening exercises of the Berkshire Music Center in 1940. James Erb's setting of the classic American folksong "Shenandoah" offers an aural sensuality that undeniably celebrates the choral art.

These are but a few of the many "American Treasures" of choral music. Many pages of commentary could be written about these great composers and the depth of these works. Our hope is that this concert will inspire you to look deeper into this music — it will enrich your life in so many ways. Please join us in May! 🎵



*It's not too early to
plan to hear Cantemus
during the holidays!*



**Save the weekend
of December 2-4, 2005**

*when we'll delight you with musical gifts
of the season. We're looking into adding
more concert dates and locations to
accommodate our growing audience!*

Watch your mailbox for updated information.

Longtime Accompanist to Retire from Cantemus

by Bettina Turner, Soprano 2



Robert Littlefield

Robert Littlefield's reassuring and familiar presence at the piano and organ has been a part of Cantemus since 1985. His laid-back attitude belies the fact that he is a superb accompanist who can play practically anything set in front of him and a musician with a lifetime of outstanding accomplishments. Cantemus is only one of seven choruses Robert accompanies; the others being Chorus North Shore, three choruses at Briscoe Middle School in Beverly, MA, and his two choirs at First Parish Unitarian in Beverly, where he has been Music Director for 40 years. He also teaches piano and organ. He holds Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Music from New England Conservatory, where he majored in organ and minored in harpsichord and choral conducting. Sadly, this will be his last season with Cantemus as he is looking to move into semi-retirement.

In an interview for this newsletter, Robert allowed some glimpses of the man behind the keyboard.

How did you get started in music?

My parents took me to church at Easter when I was four, and I thought the organ was God! I talked about it for weeks. I started to study the organ in eighth grade, as soon as I was tall enough. Before that, I already sang in the choir at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Newburyport. My first paid job was singing in a boys' and men's choir at age 11. They paid 25 cents per rehearsal, 25 cents per Sunday, 25 cents per solo, and, if you had perfect attendance and no "mark downs" for bad behavior, you got double pay. I decided at 11 years old that I wanted to be an organist and choir director. My first organist job was as a high school sophomore. In my youth I also played flute, clarinet, tuba and baritone horn. I was an only child, a "prince," and my parents were supportive of my choice to become a musician. My father, a tool and die designer, sang in the same choir I did and I learned a lot about music from him. My son, Mark, who is an excellent musician and pianist and presently heads the math department at Newburyport

High School, also followed the family tradition and sang in the choir at St. Paul's.

What were some of the high points of your career?

I really enjoy accompanying choruses. I accompanied chorus rehearsals under Aaron Copland at NEC when he was conducting his own pieces. I also accompanied for Erich Leinsdorf and the Boston Symphony. I was the piano soloist for the Beethoven Choral Fantasy with the Salem Philharmonic.

What are some of your favorite keyboard works?

Besides Bach? Probably organ pieces by Franz Liszt, who did not even write a lot for the organ. It's hard to have a favorite; it depends on what day of the week it is and what organ you are on.

What kinds of things are you looking forward to doing in semi-retirement?

I read a lot. I especially like books on architecture.

How have you changed during 40 years of playing, conducting and accompanying?

Other than the reading glasses, the gray hair, and that I got a lot heavier?... I am not as good as I thought I was in my twenties, but I know that I am better now than I was then. 🎵

American Treasures Bargain Hunt

Why not get your Cantemus tickets at a discount? We offer many ways to obtain discounted advance tickets to our concerts. To receive advance tickets by mail, simply mail your ticket request and check (made out to "Cantemus") to Cantemus Tickets-by-Mail, c/o 18 Turkey Shore Rd., Ipswich, MA 01938. For Cantemus' May 7th and 8th concerts, orders must be received by May 2, 2005; late-request tickets will be held at the door. Tickets-by-Mail are sold at the advanced-price rate of \$15 (adults) and \$10 (seniors). And don't forget that students aged 21 and under are always admitted free to our concerts!

Please also visit our ticket outlets for discounted tickets: The Book Shop in Beverly Farms, Nazir's Fine Jewelry in Hamilton, Ipswich Shellfish Fish Market, and the Newburyport Printmaker.

There are so many ways to save while hearing our "Small Chorus, Grand Sound"!

Buy at the door	\$20 adult, \$15 senior (21 and under free always!)
Buy early via Tickets-by-Mail	\$15 adult, \$10 senior
Buy early at ticket outlets	\$15 adult, \$10 senior
Show AAA card, WGBH Member card, or GBCC VIP card at door	\$15 adult, \$10 senior
Show ESSEX PREFERRED card at door	Buy one ticket; get one free!



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Please make checks payable to **Cantemus** and mail this form to:

Cantemus
P.O. Box 784
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01938

Cantemus Order/Contribution Form

Cantemus' ticket sales provide only a portion of the revenue needed to support our \$38,000 annual budget. That's why we, as a nonprofit community chorus, depend on the generosity of individuals, foundations, and local and state granting agencies to balance our budget. Will you help us keep the art of choral music alive and well by making a donation to Cantemus today? All donations are fully tax-deductible. We thank you!

- I am enclosing my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____.
- I'd like to have my name added to the Cantemus mailing list.
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- LAST CHANCE!** I'd like to purchase ____ (number) of the Cantemus "Joy Shall be Yours" CD (\$8 per CD or two for \$15 plus \$2.50 shipping per order).

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How Choral Music Has Changed Our Lives

Although some Cantemus singers employ music as part of their professional lives, we all (professional musicians or not) sing for the love of it, a love that often sprouted very early in our lives. We thought it would be fun to ask our singers to share how their involvement in choral music, early on and as adults, has affected their lives. Here's what they had to say:

Gary Freeman, tenor 1



Lessons learned: In elementary school, the music teacher gathered me into a make-shift chorus to perform at a teacher's workshop. I remember watching the music teacher's cue, and singing my solo, "Let There Be Peace on Earth." I sang it as fast as I could, relieved when it was over. At the end, everybody applauded, and I joined in. But I had forgotten that I'd been troubled that day by stabbing pains in my arm, which were increasing as I applauded. A few hours later at the doctor's office, I found that I had broken my arm earlier that morning when I'd fallen while running. I've learned that if you want to be a star you'd better not run before a major performance. But if you do, don't applaud when you're done.

Dorothy Monnelly, alto 2



Best memories: An elementary school performance of "Evening Prayer" from Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. Yes, I was one of the angels, complete with halo, and I couldn't get enough of the music. Later, I always sang in church choirs, although the memory that comes to mind is stealing the organist's shoes and marching out with them concealed under my choir robe. **What she brings to choral music:** I am often struck by the parallels with photography (what I do with the rest of my time). Ansel Adams said that the negative is the score and the print is the performance (he was a fine pianist, so he understood the full mean-

ing of his words). To move from the negative to the final print, or from the score to the performance, I am aware that the attention to detail and technique is similar, as is the continuing sense of the "big picture" which guides and inspires the process.

Mark Pierce, tenor 1



Best memories: My most outrageous memories of singing involve musical comedies, not choirs. I have performed dressed in an emerald green hoop skirt, a yellow sandwich board, as a corpse, a soldier, a cowboy, and as a sleazy bartender (my personal favorite). Each of these extravaganzas involved dancing as well. You have not lived until you have tried to carry a tune while being "clothes lined" by another dancer. **Lessons learned:** What have I learned? Duck! Also, that the key to performing well is performing confidently then letting go. The key to performing confidently is preparation, but even that won't eliminate mistakes. When mistakes occur, forget them immediately and continue on confidently. Somehow, things will turn out all right.

Nat Pulsifer, bass 2

How choral music changed his life: Singing was more important than smoking. So I quit!



Chris Reif, alto 2



Best early choral music memory: I sang in chorus in school until 6th grade, the highlight being when we performed with Karen and Richard Carpenter on their "Sing A Song" tour. **What she takes from choral singing:** One beautiful thing about choral singing (as opposed to instrumental music) is that you can practice in your car. Another is that, though arthritis can make it an ordeal to play guitar chords or press trumpet valves, it has no impact on your ability to sing. Finally, the measure of success is how well you blend with others to form one rich sound; it's not about competition, it's about unity. 🎵