

CANTEMUS NEWS

Cantemus Chamber Chorus Semi-annual Newsletter

Vol. 7 / No. 2 • October 2005



CANTEMUS
Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

Sopranos

Claire Cayot
Katy Fickenwirth
Donna Gale
Elaine Gomperts
Anne Maguire
Priscilla March
Pamela Morris
Susan Nash
Bettina Turner

Altos

Georgia Bills
Kristine Harris
Elizabeth Lebel
Pat Lowery Collins
Dorothy Monnelly
Debbie Twining
Betsy Vicksell
Nancy Weinberg

Tenors

Jamie Cabot
Tom Carmody
Gary Freeman
Bill Holloway
Gary Lubarsky
Larry Zwicker

Basses

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

Music Director

Gary Wood

Accompanist

Frances Burmeister

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

P.O. Box 784
Ipswich, MA 01938

Toll free information
1-888-CHORUS-1

www.cantemus.org

Mother and Child

by Gary Wood, Music Director



Gary Wood

"Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright 'round yon virgin mother and child."

The opening line of this beloved carol provides the inspiration for our December concerts, "Mother and Child," linking to Marian and Infant themes. It is a seasonal choral program that will expand your artistic horizons and delight you with entertaining music.

The concert begins with the very early plainchant "Ave Maria" (Hail, Mary, full of grace), followed by the motet "Dixit Maria ad angelum" (And Mary said to the angel...) composed by Hans Leo Hassler, a 16th-century German composer. A contemporary setting of "Silent Night" then follows, one of three settings of this beloved carol included in this concert, providing a framework for our program.

Selected movements of Hassler's "Missa super Dixit Maria" will then follow. This is a parody Mass setting based on the Hassler motet previously sung. Parody Mass composition involves setting Mass texts with music "borrowed" from vocal parts or musical sections from another work, creating an aural reference to the original. In this case, Hassler has borrowed from himself, composing a shimmering, pleasing, and accessible Mass for the listener (and subtle challenges for the singers).

The choral cantata "Gaudete" (for chorus, two flutes, and bassoon) by Anders Öhrwall will also be performed. Öhrwall, a Swedish composer, wrote this work in 1962 to make Swedish Christmas music available for chorus and instruments. Öhrwall found inspiration in the Piae Cantiones, or "holy songs," the oldest Swedish song book for schools.

JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE MOTHER AND CHILD

Saturday, December 3, 7:30 PM

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

— **And, this December, a new venue!** —

Sunday, December 4, 4:00 PM

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
166 High Street / Newburyport, MA

See page 3 for ticket pricing and options.

Our December concerts are perennial favorites — in fact, last December, our concerts were sell-outs! And we really enjoy singing for full houses. So, bring your friends and family to share the beauty of this seasonal music with those you love!

There is much great choral music that celebrates Hanukkah, and we will sing two contemporary works in varied styles. "Hanukkah Blessings" by Ron Jeffers includes texts which bless the Hanukkah candles, express thanks for the miracle of deliverance, and the Shehehyanu prayer, recited on all happy occasions. "Haneiroit halalu" is a traditional Hebrew prayer, and composer Stanley M. Hoffman sets it for chorus with polyrhythmic motives and alternating fast/slow tempi.

The Romantic Era is represented by Johannes Brahms with his setting of "Ave Maria," the text heard in the opening plainchant. This is an early

(cont. next page)



Massachusetts Cultural Council

Cantemus is supported in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, and by grants from the 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 32 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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At Large

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At Large

Conrad Willeman
At Large

Gary Wood
Advisor

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at all major concerts.

work by Brahms (Opus 12) that foreshadows his emphasis on extended melody, key relationships, and harmonic rhythm.

The very beautiful and challenging "Three Mystical Carols" by Conrad Susa offer aesthetic inspiration through vibrant rhythms, lush harmonies, and texts that include 14th- and 15th-century writings along with a text by George Herbert, an important literary figure of the early 17th century. Susa has composed a great deal of excellent choral music, and these carols will not disappoint.

Add to this a Spanish carol, a classic seasonal spiritual, carols for men's voices, and a reprise of last year's "What Child is This?" by Dale Warland, producing an exciting and meaningful contribution to choral and musical artistry and excellence. 🎵

Burmeister Named Cantemus Accompanist



As our 2005-2006 season gets underway, Cantemus warmly welcomes Frances Burmeister as our new accompanist. Ms. Burmeister assumes the bench following the retirement of Robert Littlefield, who, after

20 years, retired from Cantemus at the end of last season. Ms. Burmeister holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied Music (Organ) from Old Dominion University, a Master of Music in Performance (Organ) from the University of Michigan, and has spent several summers at the Baroque Performance Institute at Oberlin College. She's also studied harpsichord and has 30 years experience in church music, both as a conductor and organist. In addition to her Cantemus duties, she is currently Organist/Director of Music at the historic First Religious Society, Unitarian Universalist, in Newburyport. Gary Wood, Music Director, said, "Frances brings a wide-ranging expertise to the position of Cantemus accompanist, and her dedication and artistry will contribute greatly to the ever-growing excellence of the Cantemus Chamber Chorus. I look forward to our collaborative work together." Ms. Burmeister will perform a solo work during Cantemus' "Mother and Child" concerts this December. 🎵

Fire and Ice

By Debby Twining, alto I

When the singers of Cantemus take the stage, often the last instruction received from Conductor Gary Wood is, "Hearts on fire, Brains on ice." What does this mean to a singer?

"Singing is a very physical activity but it's also very mental. Singers must always be thinking about how they are singing," says Dr. Wood. Posture is important – knees slightly bent; high, open chest; relaxed jaw and lips; shoulders relaxed. Then there is the emphasis on how to shape the vowels in the mouth so that they sound consistent and not spread or too open. How and where are you breathing – is it from low in your body producing a long column of air to support the voice? Do you know the music well enough to have your eyes on the conductor with only an occasional look at the score to check entrances or text? That is the voice production part.

Then there is the message of the text. How do you phrase the text as a group of singers to best express the meaning of the piece? Where do the dynamics change and how? How do you enunciate to be sure the audience can understand the words?

In every rehearsal we work on all these techniques and think about these issues so that, come concert time, much of it is second nature. It is hard work. But most of us sing for the joy and passion of the music and it is important to impart those feelings as well. Sometimes it feels like an exercise of rubbing your stomach and patting your head simultaneously. But with practice it finally comes together.

"We're out there to really make something happen, but it's not going to happen unless the singers and I are mindful of the technical challenges that we are about to undertake," says Wood.


Perhaps it is the total involvement of the body and mind, *Fire and Ice*, that ultimately makes choral music so satisfying to the singer and the audience. 🎵

More Best of the Best on Nov. 30th!

Don't miss Cantemus' 6th annual celebration of the choral art, featuring selected high school choirs from the North Shore. The event takes place at Hamilton-Wenham High School on Wednesday, November 30, at 7:30 PM. Tickets are \$5 at the door.

As we went to press, the following high school choruses have accepted the invitation to perform at the "Best of the Best" concert, and others may join them.

- Masconomet Regional (Brian O'Cock, Choral Director)
- Manchester-Essex (Laura Hargrove, Choral Director)
- Georgetown (Laura LaFlamme, Choral Director)
- Hamilton-Wenham (Claudia Frost, Choral Director)
- Lynnfield (Doug Hodgkins, Choral Director)

Each of the choruses, including Cantemus, will perform separately, so the audience will hear a broad range of styles and repertoire. The concert's format also gives the school choristers a rare chance to listen to each other in a non-competitive environment. As in previous years, at the end of the evening, all the singers will perform jointly in a rousing finale. Hope you can join us! 

Everyone Loves Music... & Tickets at a Bargain

We offer many ways to obtain discounted advance tickets to our December concerts. To receive advance tickets by mail, mail your ticket request and check (made out to "Cantemus") to Cantemus Tickets-by-Mail, c/o 18 Turkey Shore Rd., Ipswich, MA 01938 by November 28, 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).

Please also visit our ticket outlets for advance-price 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 Cantemus' "Small Chorus, Grand Sound!"

Buy at the door	\$20 adult, \$15 senior (21 and under free always!)
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!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR MORE UPCOMING CONCERTS!

Animal Crackers – A Free Family Concert

Sat., February 11, 2006

Don't miss this music and fun for kids & adults of all ages!

10 AM at First Parish Unitarian Church, 225 Cabot Street, Beverly, MA
12 PM at Gloucester Town Hall, 9 Dale Avenue, Gloucester, MA

Old Text, New Tunes

Sat., May 6, 2006

Sun., May 7, 2006

7:30 PM at Christ Church of Hamilton and Wenham, Hamilton, MA
4 PM at Central Congregational Church, Newburyport, MA



CANTEMUS
Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

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

Cantemus
P.O. Box 784
Ipswich, MA
01938

Cantemus Information/Contribution Form

Cantemus' ticket sales provide only a portion of the funds needed to support our annual budget. That's why we 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 \$ _____.
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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 took root and 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:



Pat Lowery Collins, alto 2 — *Best memories:* Singing Handel's *Halleluia* chorus with a bunch of Welshmen on the fourth of July in a Welsh pub. *Lessons learned:* Discipline, precision, and teamwork. A big

surprise to me is that my voice has improved as I've gotten older. *What she brings (and takes) from choral music:* I bring a love of singing, something we choral singers probably all possess. I take away musical knowledge I never would have had access to, a growing repertoire, and wonderful friendships. According to a report I once read, choral singers also have stronger immune systems. I'll take all I can get of that!



Gary Lubarsky, tenor 1 — *Best memories:*

After my freshman year at UMass Amherst, I spent three weeks with the UMass Chorale on a tour of Europe. We sang in Italy, Austria, and Germany, performing choral pieces by classical masters in the kinds of churches and halls they knew, with acoustics they understood. It was the summer of 1974, an uneasy time to be traveling through the airports of Europe, which resembled armed camps due to frequent airline hijackings. But the beauty of the music

we made, and the fun we had in the cities and towns, which back then were still entirely European, completely overwhelmed any tension we may have felt. It was a fabulous trip.



Bettina Turner, soprano 2 — *Early memories:*

Being a shy and mousy little thing, I was rejected after my first audition for the grade school choir and went home crying. However, I wanted to sing badly enough to gather my courage and ask the teacher for a second chance. She allowed me in, and I have been in one chorus or another ever since. *What she takes from choral singing:* Over the years I have been in at least a dozen choruses in two countries and many cities, finding almost instant community for at least one night a week. Choral singing has been a source of shared focus and joy. Along the way I learned a lot of repertoire, I learned to sight-read and started taking voice lessons. I have become a better musician and singer, and credit choral singing more than any other formal music education I have received. Also, I am not shy and mousy anymore. That changed when, after 20 years of singing alto, I became a soprano and got in touch with my inner diva!



Nancy Weinberg, alto 1 — *Best memories:*

My music teacher in the Swampscott public schools adored me, and I her. I remember that she always smiled when she watched me sing which, I'm sure, was what taught me to look up! *What she takes from choral singing:* It is my life... or maybe it saves me from my life. I've been known to drive back from Florida (more than once) to get to rehearsal! 🎵