

CANTEMUS NEWS

Cantemus Chamber Chorus Semi-annual Newsletter

Vol. 8 / No. 1 • April 2006



CANTEMUS
Small Chorus. Grand Sound.

Cantemus Chamber Chorus

Sopranos

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

Altos

Georgia Bills
Elizabeth Copp Lebel
Pat Lowery Collins
Priscilla March
Dorothy Monnelly
Debby Twining
Marcia Siegel
Betsy Vicksell
Nancy Weinberg

Tenors

Jamie Cabot
Gary Freeman
Bill Gelwick
Bill Holloway
Gary Lubarsky

Basses

Richard Blumenscheid
Bill Dowdall
David Geikie
Doug Guy
Hugh McCall
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

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Reflections: Old Texts, New Tunes

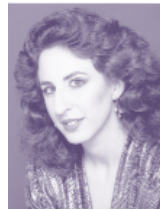
by Gary Wood, Music Director



Gary Wood

Think of some of your favorite music. Which came first? The text? Or did the tune pre-exist? Our concert features choral works with highly regarded old texts set to new tunes that seek to reflect the multi-faceted words.

Our program's centerpiece is Aaron Copland's "In the Beginning." We are fortunate to feature our guest artist, Pamela Dellal, as soloist for this choral masterpiece. Written for the Harvard Symposium on Music Criticism in May 1947, Copland chose the opening 38 verses of the Old Testament (Genesis I through II:7), setting it for mixed chorus with mezzo-soprano solo. The rich Creation story, with its marvelous images and mysterious wonders, is spread across 17 minutes of challenging choral writing, guided by the sweeping solo voice. Nearly 60 years after its composition, "In the Beginning" still sounds like a new tune for a very old text.



Pamela Dellal

Howard Hanson wrote primarily for the symphony orchestra, sometimes with chorus. At age 80, he wrote "A Prayer of the Middle Ages," his first work for unaccompanied chorus in eight parts. From the opening of this work, Hanson arranges a majestic choral landscape to amplify the 8th-century poetry: "We declare unto all the ages... There wert Thou, O God."

César Alejandro Carrillo (b. 1957) set "O Magnum Mysterium" in 2000, and it has quickly become a favorite of our singers. Carrillo sets the first two verses of this Christmas Day text, including the radical message of God coming to earth among the meek and lowly. The juxtaposition of modern harmonies and 2000-year-old text manifest beautiful sweet music from this South American composer.

Reflections: Old Texts, New Tunes

Saturday, May 6, 7:30 PM

Christ Church of Hamilton & Wenham
149 Asbury Street • Hamilton, MA

Sunday, May 7, 4:00 PM

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

For supporting this program, we are grateful to the Newburyport and West Newbury Cultural Councils, local agencies supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Saint Francis of Assisi wrote "To You, O God, All Creatures Sing" in 1225 while ill and temporarily blind. He died a year later. Julian Wachner, a California native well-known in the Boston area, set this text for chorus and organ in 1992, using the translation "All Creatures of our God and King." The familiar hymn tune is heard throughout this arrangement, often accompanied by contemporary, flowing chords and melodies from the organ.

The question arises, is this all religious music? Are these composers advocating a particular religious view by choosing particular texts? I think not. These texts are evocative sacred stories, reflected through the lens of time: they provide a composer with opportunities to re-cast their meanings and inflections within a modern musical idiom. (cont. p. 2)



Massachusetts Cultural Council

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

Cantemus also gratefully acknowledges support from the Essex County Community Foundation.

What Is Cantemus?

Founded in 1982, Cantemus (Latin for “Let us sing”) is a nonprofit organization composed of up to 40 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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Large print concert programs are available at all major concerts.

Animal Crackers a Hit!

Seeing the delight on children’s faces makes singing for them a real joy—at least that seemed to be the consensus among Cantemus singers after performing “Animal Crackers,” our Free Family Concerts on February 11.

Cantemus presented two free concerts that morning, one in Beverly and one in Gloucester, for over 200 listeners, most of them under the age of six. One of the more challenging moments proved to be the split-second thought required to decide on the sound



Altos Debby Twining (left), on recorder, and Georgia Bills, on trombone, helped accompany Cantemus during the “Animal Crackers” free Family Concert.

a zebra makes during the singing of “Old MacDonald” (especially since one youngster had already identified a horse in the MacDonald menagerie).

Quick-thinking Conductor Gary Wood suggested “ZZZZZ” for the zebra sound – and the audience and chorus “ZZZZZed” with gusto. Liberally sprinkled with similar sing-along favorites, the program also featured a number of new arrangements of children’s animal songs written by Cantemus’s own alto Georgia Bills.

Cantemus’s Free Family Concerts introduce newcomers of all ages to the joys of choral music. “By sparking an interest in choral singing especially among the very young, we hope to be a catalyst for their future explorations into music,” said Wood. “Our goal, however, extends to their parents, not only to entertain them, but also to motivate them to build more singing into their homes.”

Cantemus gratefully acknowledges “Animal Crackers” grant support from the Beverly and Gloucester Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. 🎵

Reflections (cont. from p. 1)

Further, and far more important, these texts offer an intellectual and musical challenge, as the composer asks “What does this text offer so that I can create a musical work of value that others will want to hear and perform?” The idea that composers sit silently and wait for religious inspiration is generally a myth. Musical composition is hard work, sweat, tears, and blood. By looking at some of Beethoven’s original scores, you can almost see this great man struggling to create something. For me, a composer seeks to provide a conduit to excellence, to cause humankind to experience something beyond the day to day, something greater than the small worlds in which we exist. Do we dismiss Beethoven’s music as religious? Certainly not! Each of you will take something different away from each work we perform.

We will also hear Ms. Dellal as soloist with the men of Cantemus, in Franz Schubert’s beautifully moving love song “Ständchen.” This “serenade” depicts the restless lover knocking at his beloved’s door.

Our program also includes a musical setting of a Shakespeare sonnet, a work for women’s chorus from the Song of Songs, three musical “pictures” of nature from the American northwest, and a spirited arrangement of songs by Stephen Foster, one of America’s most important 19th-century composers.

We humbly offer this wide array of choral works, these “old texts” as a vehicle for “new tunes.” We hope that our performance reminds you of the timeless, regenerative, redemptive, and unending creativity that is music, as we sing a new song! 🎵

Cheers — Here’s Music to Your Health!

Instead of an apple a day, how about a tune a day? Cantemus singers can tell you singing improves their lives, but scientific studies are taking a closer look at the various health effects brought by music.

In an ongoing study begun in 2001 on creativity and healthy aging cosponsored by George Washington University and the National Endowment for the Arts, persons aged 65-100 are being monitored as they participate in community arts programs, such as choruses. Compared with a control group of


(cont. next page)

Cheers (cont. from p. 2)

seniors who aren't involved in an arts program, the choir members not only are physically healthier but also more involved socially, less depressed, and in better spirits overall. Other studies have shown that the multiple dimensions of music making—combining intellectual, physical, and social aspects—appear to set it apart from other cognitively stimulating activities like crossword puzzles that also can help keep us stay mentally alert as we age.¹

Singing is also linked to lower heart rate, decreased blood pressure, and reduced stress, says Patricia Preston-Roberts, a New York City board-certified music therapist. She also said that singing seems to block some neural pain pathways. But you must sing correctly to receive optimal health benefits, she says. Start by practicing abdominal breathing, which supports your singing with the lower body, not the throat. Singing has distinct advantages over everyday chitchat. "When we sing instead of speak, we have intonation, melody line, and crescendo, which gives us a broader vocabulary to express ourselves," says Suzanne Hanser, chair of the music therapy department at Berklee College of Music. "Because singing is visceral (something we do with our bodies), it can't help but effect change."²

1 Cole, Diane. "Singing Helps Keep Your Brain in Tune." *U.S. News & World Report* 139.24 (Dec 26, 2005): 70.

2 Lowenstein, Marisa. "Make a joyful noise: keep singing in the shower—no matter what the neighbors say. It could reduce your pain and prolong your life." *Natural Health* 35.5 (May 2005): 96(1). 




Buy Early for Ticket Deals

Everyone loves a bargain, so be sure to take advantage of discounted advance ticket pricing for our May 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. Orders must be received by April 26, 2006; 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 Cantemus' "Small Chorus, Grand Sound!" We can accept one discount per ticket purchase.

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 with this form to:

Cantemus
P.O. Box 784
Ipswich, MA
01938

Cantemus Order/Contribution Form

Cantemus' ticket sales provide only a portion of the funds needed to support our \$34,000 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!

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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:



Jamie Cabot, tenor 2 — *Early experiences with choral music:* When I was about two, my sister was christened in the Manchester Cathedral in England and, in the confusion, they left me in the church. When they got home, they realized their

mistake and went screaming back, expecting to find me traumatized for life, but instead, they found me standing in rapt amazement, looking up at a stained glass window and listening to the choir rehearse. I have only a dim memory of this, so much of it is probably fabricated on what my folks told me but, since then, stained glass and choral music have always affected me in a deep, visceral way.



Betsy Lebel, alto 2 — *Best memories:* At church choir camp (I sang in the church choir for 12 years beginning at age 9) I learned two things: how to whistle using the first two fingers of each hand and how to catch a fly with sugar syrup and fly it

around on a string of hair. Seriously. I'm not making that up. *Lessons learned:* That the very best and kindest people sing in choruses. *What she takes from choral singing:* Singing is simply part of who I am. I feel physically better when I sing.



Deb Twining, alto 1 — *What she takes from choral singing:* It always feels like a bit of “soul release” when I sing and the more of that I get the better! Also, I think it has made me a good, active listener, not only musically (for tone and pitch, etc.), but also for instruction from a conductor. You really have to think/listen about what the conductor is asking you to do, learn from it, and then apply it in a variety of situations.



Elaine Gomperts, soprano 2 — *How she started singing:* Ever since I could talk, I wanted to sing and perform. I made my first recording at age 5—“How Much is that Doggie in the Window?” In first grade, I tap danced to “The Good Ship Lollipop” and did a ventriloquist act with a “Dapper Dan” doll at a variety show.



Anne Maguire, soprano 1 — *Best early choral music memories:* When I was 5 or 6 years old, in the church children's choir, I didn't know how to match the words with the music on the printed page, but was too shy to ask! We were lined up in the church basement, looking angelic in our white robes, ready to go upstairs and sing. Someone sensed my confusion and leaned over to show me how to sing one line of text and then go back and sing the second verse and so on. It was exhilarating! And in high school, my best memory was singing Randall Thompson's “Alleluia” with my high school choir on the top deck of the ferry in New York Harbor as we watched that impressive skyline recede in the distance. 🎵