



ANDREW STEEL '04

Members of the Concert Choir and Junior Choir share their pride over the 10th anniversary concert with director John Alston. The 12-member Training Chorus will also sing in the concert, Saturday, May 15, at 7:30 p.m. in Lang Music Building at Swarthmore College.

## It's Been 10 Wonderful Years!

This spring marks the 10th anniversary of the Chester Children's Chorus. In the decade since our founding, we've taught music to nearly 150 children, sung dozens

of concerts, and created a strong year-round program that gives Chester children an unparalleled opportunity for learning and artistic expression.

**Come Celebrate With Us!**  
**10TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT AND RECEPTION**  
**SATURDAY, MAY 15, 7:30 P.M.**  
**Lang Music Building, Swarthmore College**  
*Music old and new, from far and near*  
**John Alston, Director**  
**Anniversary reception with dessert buffet**  
**will follow the concert.**  
 Admission is free—all are invited.

### LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

## A Decade of Making Music, Nurturing Souls

The beginnings of the Chester Children's Chorus 10 years ago were, to put it gently, modest. Starting in the spring, I gathered seven second- and third-grade boys for weekly rehearsals in a Chester classroom. That summer, I picked the boys up at their homes every morning in a college van, sometimes getting lost en route, and made my way back to campus. We snacked, learned songs in unison, worked on music-reading skills, and tried a bit of group piano—can you imagine trying to teach seven boys all at once how to play the piano? What was I thinking? Afterwards, we'd hit the field for some softball. With only four or five boys fielding



at any one time, the scores were more like those of a football game.

At the time, I was living on campus, and some days we'd go back to my apartment to hang out and have pizza, or we'd go to a movie, before I took the boys home. That camaraderie was clearly important to us: Three of the boys still drop by my house to hang out, and I'm still happy to see them.

### A Decade of Growth

Even though I've watched the program grow over the years, I'm still amazed at what has evolved from that modest beginning.

During the school year, we now bring 37 boys and girls from third through 12th grade to Swarthmore College twice a week for rehearsals and music lessons. This year, in our Summer Learning Program, we will have



PHOTOS BY STEVE GOLDBLATT '67 AND JUDY LUZAK



CHORUS ARCHIVE PHOTO

Craig Robinson, 13, overcame his shyness to display his talent as he sang the boy soprano solo in Leonard Bernstein's Chichester Psalms with the Swarthmore College Chorus in November. Until two months before the performance, Craig resisted the idea of stepping into the spotlight. When he decided to go for it, he was taking a risk: his voice had already dropped to alto, and he would have to memorize a Hebrew text. Craig rose to the challenge, sang beautifully, stole the show, and lit up the hall with the biggest smile ever as he took his bows. Chester Children's Chorus Director John Alston directed the College chorus. The harpist was E.B. Fouts.

*continued, over*

To make a tax-deductible contribution, please detach this coupon, complete, and mail to the following address:

Chester Children's Chorus, Swarthmore College, Department of Music and Dance, 500 College Avenue, Swarthmore PA 19081

- Enclosed is a check in the amount of  \$35  \$75  \$100  \$250  \$500  \$1,000  Other: \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Check should be payable to Swarthmore College with Chester Children's Chorus in memo field)
- Please charge my gift to my:  
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- My gift will be matched by my employer.  
(Please enclose your signed matching gift form.)

**THANK YOU!**

## A Decade ... *continued*

50 boys and girls divided into three choirs; a training chorus director and assistant training chorus director; five college counselors; three chorus members serving as junior counselors, including two of the original seven boys; breakfast and lunch each day; about 40 volunteers to read with our children; and two or three field trips. We and the College are seeking funding for a week of workshops with guest artists in African dance, drumming, storytelling, and masquerade, and for science classes for 10 children to be taught by college students with faculty supervision.

I don't recall giving a concert that first summer. This summer, the children will learn so much music that we will easily fill an hour's program with music in three parts, written between 1500 and today, expressed in many languages, and reflecting many cultures.

### Caring Still Important

During the school year, I lead four weekday after-noon sectional rehearsals and spend six hours on Saturdays in full rehearsals.

Assistant Music Director Kellie Bowker works with the Training Chorus two afternoons a week and on Saturdays. We now have three van drivers who pick up children five days a week. Recently, when we were temporarily one driver short, I filled in. It reminded me that picking up children is one of the best parts of the job. Like talking and laughing over pizza, this kind of informal association builds a rapport that eventually finds its way into our music making—and into caring relationships that go hand-in-hand with music in nurturing a child's soul. 🍷

—John Alston

PHOTOS BY JUDY LUZAK, STEVE GOLDBLATT '67, AND ELEFTHERIOS KOSTANS

## Summer Reading Volunteers Needed!

Most days during our Summer Learning Program, there's a happy scramble in Lang Music Building about 1 p.m., as children rush to meet their adult reading buddies and comb the bookcases for appealing titles. Then comes a hush, as reading pairs settle into seats, stairwells, and other reading nooks. The next 45 minutes is a special time for sharing the joys of reading.

Many volunteers feel they gain as much from the experience as the children. Become a reading volunteer this summer and find out why!

We are seeking more than 40 volunteers this summer to read with children from 8 to 13 years old. The reading hours are 1 to 2 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays from June 28 through July 29. For more information and to volunteer, call Managing Director Andrea Knox at 610-328-8180.



Volunteer Ed Way and chorus member Roland Hice enjoyed reading together last summer.

## What's Up For Spring See Us in Lights!

Our 10th anniversary concert, on May 15, will be featured on the circling lights atop the PECO Energy Building in Philadelphia, easily visible from the Schuylkill Expressway in Center City. We'll be in lights on May 8, 13, and 14.

### Four Sing in *St. John Passion*

Four chorus members will sing in J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion* with the Swarthmore College Chorus on Friday, April 30 at 8 p.m. in Lang Music Building. They are alto Craig Robinson and basses Nkenge Daniels, Steven Savage, and Vincent Wilson.

### "In the Spirit of the Spiritual"

Director John Alston gave three exhilarating performances of his pro-

gram "In the Spirit of the Spiritual" in February, one at Swarthmore College and two at churches in Wynnewood and Malvern. John and his accompanist, Jay Fluellen, gave many of the songs a jazz/Gospel/R&B spin, and John finished the shows with a spectacular display of vocal gymnastics à la Bobby McFerrin. The shows also conveyed a somber message, as John read letters written by slaves, which powerfully underscored the spirituals' message of the intense physical and emotional suffering to which their first singers were subjected. 🍷

## Thanks to Our Supporters

The Chester Children's Chorus is funded by financial contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and by in-kind support from Swarthmore College and founder and Director John Alston.

We give particular thanks this spring to the late Judy Lord, who asked that contributions in her memory be made to the chorus, and to all those who have made gifts in her name. Judy was a friend of the chorus from its founding, helping as a volunteer, as a contributor, and in many ways through her position as coordinator of the College's Department of Music and Dance. 🍷



Training Chorus Director Kellie Bowker prepares for the May 15 concert with (from left) Glenn Simpson, Leon Hunter, Tiani McCarthy, and Janeia Bobo.

## HESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Founder and Director: John Alston  
Managing Director: Andrea Knox

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### Voice

The Newsletter of the Chester Children's Chorus

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ANDREW STEEL '04



"Strong Voice, Strong Mind, Strong Spirit"