

Voice



The Newsletter of the **Chester Children's Chorus**

Spring 2014

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

"It's the Music Dude!"
shout several children, as I enter a second grade classroom.

It is late February, and for the next four weeks, I'll be visiting every second grade class in Chester, looking for the 25-30 new members of our CCC Training Chorus. They will begin rehearsing in our upcoming summer session. At some point in the next few years, I will have met almost every child in the school district—I may be the only person who can claim that, having the good fortune of 20 years working with the children.

I tell the class, "Yes. I'm the Music Dude, but please call me 'John.' I'm here to play a few games with you. Would that be okay?" They reply in unison with a long, "Yeeeeeesss!"

"First game: I clap four times, you clap back. I make it harder, you clap back. I make it soooooo hard, that your heads blow up." They laugh, and then we try it back and forth.

"Next Game: My hand flies through the air, and I sing as high as I can. Then your hands fly though the air, and you sing as high as you

can." I then boast, "I'm going higher....you guys are goin' down." Of course the children sing much higher than I do, and I shout with pleasure, "You guys beat me!" They are very happy now, and they have sung in their head voices. This is the voice they'll need for the rest of the audition process.

"Next Game: Watch my lips. They are gigantic, right? (a few giggles) I'm going to make a fish face (round lips and puckered) and sing something, then you sing back. If you think this is corny, that's okay. But, if you love it, keep singing. I've been looking for you for a whole year." The children are mostly intrigued. I sing a simple, "Ring Around The Rosie-ish" tune, and they sing it back to me.

"Last game: I want to teach you a song." (It's a song that I wrote for our Sing-To-Learn Program.)

*Love is a beautiful thing.
 Hope is a beautiful thing.
 I am a beautiful thing,
 Especially when I sing.*

Now it's finally time to find our future Training Chorus. I ask, "Who thought that was so easy and so much fun, that you'd like to try it all by yourself?" Shouts of "I would, I would," mixed with "No way, not me," fill the room.



CCC HONORED ON MLK DAY

John Alston and the CCC were honored with a citation from State Senator Dominic Pileggi's office on Friday, January 17 during a Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at historic Calvary Baptist Church, Chester. The citation honored John for his work with the CCC over the last 20 years, creating the Chester Charter School for the Arts, and his overall commitment to education and the arts for the children of Chester.

On a great day, half or more of the children will volunteer to sing alone, and three to five will then be invited to join the CCC. One little girl, Anna, sings back everything I throw at her with precision, joy, and a gorgeous voice. After singing, she asks me, "Do you know Aliya?" "Yes, I do. I've known her for 11 years," I say. "Her sister is my mom," she replies a bit knowingly. We are both delighted to share Aliya, who just graduated from high school, 10 years in the CCC, and is now in college.

When our children sing with the CCC, they have the chance to become smarter and kinder; more confident and joyful; and yes... more beautiful in voice, mind and spirit.

—John Alston

UPCOMING CONCERTS



**Friday & Saturday,
 May 9 & 10, 7:30 p.m.**
 Lang Concert Hall
 Swarthmore College

Sunday, May 18, 5 p.m.
 Lang Concert Hall
 Selections from Handel's "Messiah"
 Made possible in part by a grant
 from the Presser Foundation

Saturday, June 7, 3:30 p.m.
 Lang Concert Hall as part of
 Swarthmore College's Alumni Weekend

*Admission is free!
 Donations support CCC programs.*

JOIN US FOR THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY GALA **OCTOBER 11, 2014**
7 P.M.—11 P.M.
 Sharples Dining Hall
 Swarthmore College
 Cocktails, dinner,
 a special CCC concert
 and silent auction!
 For more information,
 please call 610-328-8286.
Co-chairs: Elizabeth & Bruce Rubin, Cordelia & Donald Delson

I am pleased to make a contribution to the Chester Children's Chorus in the amount of \$ _____.

Enclosed is a check (Check should be payable to "Swarthmore College" with "Chester Children's Chorus" in memo field.)

Please charge my gift to
 Visa Mastercard Discover American Express

Card # _____

Expires: _____ / _____

My gift will be matched by my employer.
 (Please enclose your signed matching gift form.)

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Phone number _____

Give online at www.swarthmore.edu. Choose "other fund," and specify "Chester Children's Chorus."
 For information, call Executive Director Kirsten Halker-Kratz at (610) 328-8286.
 Please mail to: Chester Children's Chorus, Swarthmore College, 500 College Avenue, Swarthmore PA 19081

THANK YOU!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

Meet Christine and Sebastien Marque

The Summer Learning Program would not be possible without our wonderful volunteers.

We asked a special couple to share their thoughts about working with the children. Christine Marque and her son, Sebastien, live in France during the school year. Each summer, they travel back to Swarthmore and arrive just in time to lend a helping hand. Christine writes:

"I have had the pleasure of volunteering for the Andrea Knox Summer Reading Program during three summers, and each experience has been tremendously rewarding. I spent one hour a day with a member of the Training Chorus, the youngest children in the CCC. My reader would choose a book, and we'd find a quiet spot in Lang Hall to read and talk about it. I would help sound out difficult words and define unfamiliar ones. I'd ask the reader's

opinion of the book, and we'd often finish the hour with a reading-related game.

After just the first day with a new child, a special bond was created. The joy of seeing a big smile and getting a warm welcome hug every day was immeasurable. At the end of each summer program, it was hard to say goodbye to the children. CCC is a remarkable program for so many reasons, and I feel very fortunate to have been able to be a small part of it."

Her son, Sebastien (age 17), volunteered as a junior counselor:

"I have been a volunteer counselor with the CCC for the past two summers, I did African dance and sports with the Junior Choir boys. After lunch I walked the boys to the dance room in the town center and helped



Christine and her son Sebastien come from France each summer and have been volunteering for the Summer Learning Program since 2010.

with rehearsals for the summer performance. Following the dance, we headed outside for sports for the rest of the afternoon.

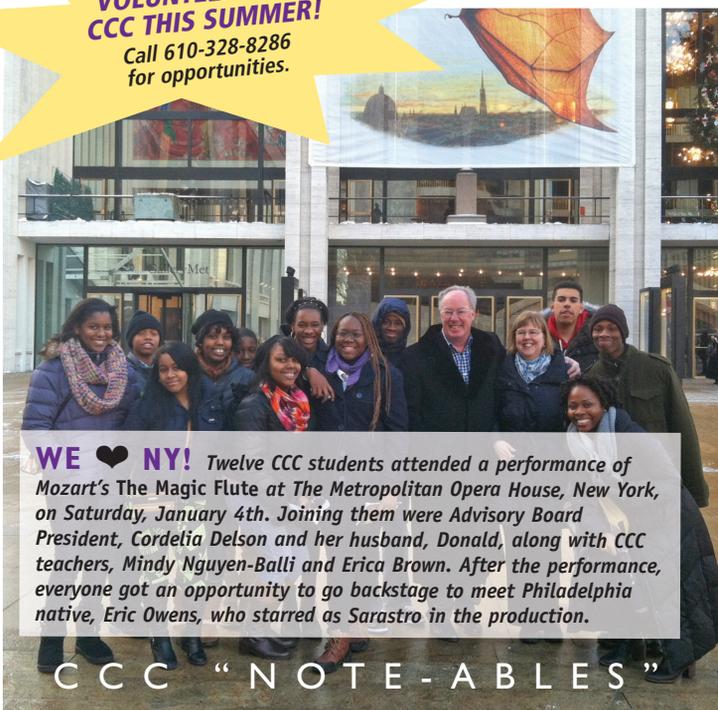
Last year I spent the first week helping to organize the African dance practice, but before I knew it, I was playing the cowbell with the African drummers and ended up performing with the musicians on the day of the show.

What I liked the most was hearing my name shouted out when I arrived at lunchtime every day. Even though I was only there a few hours a day, I still felt like I made a difference. At the end of each summer, I couldn't wait until the next one started."

If you would like to join us for the 2014 Summer Learning Program, please contact Kirsten Halker-Kratz at 610-328-8286. All volunteers must obtain criminal background checks and child abuse clearances.

VOLUNTEER WITH CCC THIS SUMMER!

Call 610-328-8286 for opportunities.



WE ♥ NY! Twelve CCC students attended a performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at The Metropolitan Opera House, New York, on Saturday, January 4th. Joining them were Advisory Board President, Cordelia Delson and her husband, Donald, along with CCC teachers, Mindy Nguyen-Balli and Erica Brown. After the performance, everyone got an opportunity to go backstage to meet Philadelphia native, Eric Owens, who starred as Sarastro in the production.

CCC "NOTE-ABLES"

CCC CONGRATULATES OUR 2014 SENIORS...



ASHA ROTHWELL

Years in CCC: 10

Voice part: soprano

Aspirations: attend Lincoln University and study psychology

Favorite song: Psalm 23

Favorite CCC memory: During my second summer, we painted horses and went horseback riding. It was awesome!



TAUSHI BURRELL

Years in CCC: 11

Voice part: alto

Aspirations: to go to college and study business and finance

Favorite song: Everything I Am

Favorite CCC memory: the boys soaking John with water every summer on John's birthday

The 2014 Summer Learning Program Begins June 23rd.
Current CCC students, look for early bird registration packets in the mail on April 1!

New Faces of the CCC



Sean Tripline joined the chorus as the new assistant music director in December. A gospel pianist and tenor, Sean came to us from Second Mount Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia and was a student at the Creative and Performing Arts High School. He graduated from West Chester University.

Karen Vesely has been elected to a first term of board service for the chorus. Karen is a retired investment industry professional specializing in non-profit organization and family wealth management.

CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

John Alston, founder & artistic director
Sean Tripline, assistant music director
Kirsten Halker-Kratz, executive director
Elisa DeNofio, assistant

Voice credits:

Editor: Kirsten Halker-Kratz
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If you have received an extra copy of this newsletter, please notify us at 610-328-8180 and share the copy with a friend.

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www.chesterchildrenschorus.org

Check us out on the web: www.chesterchildrenschorus.org



"Strong Voice, Strong Mind, Strong Spirit"

Celebrating 20 Years



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