

VOICE



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

FALL 2021



WE WILL ROCK YOU

The first day of Summer Camp would be the first time in nearly fifteen months that all of the CCC children would be together. Of course, we were all ecstatic to finally see each other again, but there was an unexpectedly different feeling; so much of camp was just peaceful. One hundred and ten children, third through twelfth grade, peaceful? Sure, there were little arguments and personality clashes, but mostly, I think the children were comforted by all the attention and affirmation they received after more than a year of pandemic. They played happily, sang enthusiastically, and studied math intensely.

After an emotional and well-sung outdoor concert, and with COVID cases declining steadily throughout the summer, we were looking forward to rehearsing inside our new building, sans masks, soaking in everyone's radiant faces. That's how good our summer was...

And then Delta arrived, to combine with the still millions of unvaccinated Americans, forcing us to hold our fall rehearsals outdoors, and prepare an outdoor fall concert in four weeks, in mid-October, before it became too cold.

In December, we will invite you to watch our virtual **Holiday Concert II**: selections from our summer and fall performances. You will see and hear that CCC is nimble, creative, responsive, and committed. Our Math Practice Program continues to offer our children the opportunity to work side-by-side with Swarthmore College students, who lead our children through remediation to eventual mastery. You must know that we will never stop caring for our children. We will always find a way to listen to them, guide them, laugh at and with them, and admire them.

Serene summers, stadium rock concerts, math practice, and transporting and feeding one hundred children...your support makes all this happen.

Thank you for your gifts, and for cheering for our beautiful Chester children.

With gratitude,

John Alston



OUR FALL SEMESTER

MUSIC MAGIC

CCC began fall rehearsals on September 20 and sang our We Will Rock You concert in the Swarthmore College stadium on October 17. With only eight rehearsals for each student, we've never prepared a program so quickly while overcoming so many obstacles.

Our rehearsal tent sits between the right field wall of the College baseball field and the visitors' side of the stadium. The pre-game music and on-field banter constantly interrupted our singing, and occasionally a baseball bounced against our tent. Our only option was to make the stadium venue work for us.

Stadiums are not built for choral concerts; they are built for spectacles. So we embraced the situation and planned an evening rock concert, with our obligatory classical music introduction.

The children sang Tallis' beloved *If Ye Love Me* angelically. Then, during our halftime break, the Concert Choir decided to double-time trot our way back to the risers, football team style, with Queen's iconic *We Will Rock You* pounding along. Steadily the audience joined in, *stomp-stomp-clap, stomp-stomp-clap*, and then screamed wildly as we filled the risers, just like a great sports movie. The children crushed Joan Jett's *I Love Rock & Roll* and Elton John's *Bennie and the Jets*. The most beautiful moment was singing John Lennon's *Imagine* while the audience waved their cell phones in the air. Eight rehearsals and a great concert: **with love and hard work, we will always rock you.**



MATH MAGIC

While music was happening outside this fall, math was happening inside our new building. All of our third through sixth graders and nearly all of our seventh through twelfth graders practice math either before or after every rehearsal. With guidance from Dana (Education Director) and Kevin (Lead Math Teacher) and 23 Swarthmore College students, our children steadily practice and master math concepts from previous grades and receive help with current homework. It is difficult to balance both of these; imagine a ninth grader who has not mastered fractions approaching algebra. Unlike preparing a concert, with its inherent drama, triumph, and public spectacle, math practice is private, mostly between just two people.

With explanation and encouragement, our older students relearn all of the troublesome middle school math that is needed for algebra and geometry. The first bit of magic is that our children, after a long school day in masks, are willing to work on math after school while still wearing masks. The magical magic happens countless times in every lesson between a CCC and Swarthmore College student, when the college student finds the right way to explain a concept and the CCC student says, "Oh, yeah, I get it." **With love and hard work we will rock math, too.**





THIS SUMMER 52 CCC CHILDREN DID SCIENCE PROJECTS AND PRACTICED SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY WITH SWARTHMORE COLLEGE FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS.

PICTURED ABOVE: FIFTH GRADER ARIANNA BRICE WORKING WITH SWARTHMORE COLLEGE BIOLOGY PROFESSOR LIZ VALLEN, WHO CREATED OUR SCIENCE FOR KIDS PROGRAM.



EXPLOSIVE ENERGY DURING THE GAMELAN & DANCE CONCERT

SUMMER

The fall '20 and spring '21 semesters were difficult for the CCC children and staff. We rehearsed outside on a church lawn when the weather permitted. We met only in small groups, not as a full choir, and consequently, could not sing or hear harmony. For musicians, harmony sounds and feels like love. Our math practice program was entirely virtual. Miraculously, after tedious days of virtual school, our children dutifully zoomed with their college coaches for more math study. After nine months of math zooming and no harmony, everyone was aching for a real summer camp.

We were all so happy and grateful to be together. We rehearsed in tents and the amphitheatre, studied in all of the largest college classrooms, and played everywhere. The children filled the campus with joy, optimism, and sweet, sweet harmony.

We sang our summer concert in the college amphitheater. Despite the challenges of singing outside—it's really tough to hear each other—the children sang beautifully. When I told the audience that we were "a little rusty after not performing for a year," several of the older girls shouted out, "Who's rusty? You're rusty!" The Concert Choir gave a stellar rendition of the wickedly difficult *Geographical Fugue*. We closed the show with some Stevie Wonder and Whitney's *I Wanna Dance With Somebody*. The children sounded so good.



TRAINING CHORUS



A COMMUTE TO CLASS TURNS INTO AN IMPROMPTU FOOTBALL GAME.



FESTIVAL CHOIR AND SOPRANOS

HARMONY



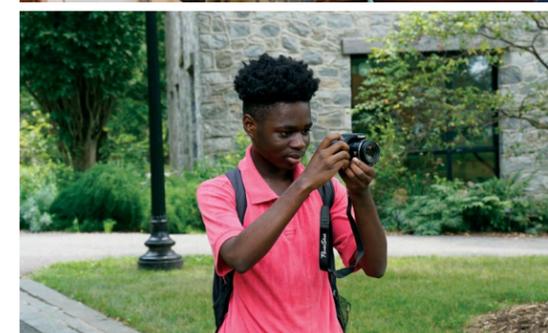
FIELD TRIP TO SAHARA SAM'S



70 STUDENTS PRACTICED BALINESE GAMELAN, AFRICAN, HIP-HOP AND MODERN DANCE. 75 CHILDREN PARTICIPATED IN ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY CLASSES, EXHIBITING THEIR WORK AT THE END OF CAMP.



JUNIOR CHOIR



SUMMER MATH

More than 90 chorus members practiced math this summer. 15 math coaches supported small class lessons taught by Kevin and Dana, and worked one-on-one with our middle and high school students. The children worked hard to master math content, reviewing concepts from the previous school year, and preparing for the year ahead. Along with skills practice and daily problem-solving, there were lots of math games and projects, such as graphing and analyzing the results of a paper plane competition, and designing and building tiny houses to scale.



THANK YOU! We are happy to share that "A Home of Our Own Campaign" has exceeded our goal of \$50,000! We are grateful to the 247 supporters for their generosity and support of this very special campaign to ensure our children have what they need in our new space. New items: Furniture for the Math Practice Program; A document camera to use during math instruction that can project and magnify images; Two flat screen TVs, 65" and 85", for our Music Program that will be used for instruction during piano lessons, rehearsals and Composer's Circle; Additional electronics, such as a new sound system, amplifiers, speakers and microphones; and high-quality lighting for our Music floor. Thank you for your thoughtfulness!



CELEBRATING OUR NEW HOME

On a beautiful September Sunday afternoon, 60 CCC supporters shared wine, cheese, and Scotch, walked through our new building, and enjoyed an hour of jazz. CCC senior Skyy Brooks, accompanied by John and other professional musicians, sang jazz standards, including *Body & Soul*, *Someone To Watch Over Me*, and Ella's blistering version of *How High The Moon*.



YOU'RE INVITED!

The Chester Children's Chorus Virtual Holiday Concert Special II

Hosted by John Alston

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2021
7:00 PM – 7:45 PM EST

Celebrate the holidays with the joyous music of the Chester Children's Chorus as John shares highlights from our wonderful summer and fall performances, stories of our successes and challenges, and cameos from a few members of the CCC.

RSVP at www.chesterchildrenschorus.org
Please pre-register to receive the viewing link.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

VIRTUAL HOLIDAY CONCERT II December 11, 2021

The children sang wonderful performances in July and October, and on December 11 we will share our virtual Holiday Concert II, our "best of" from our recent concerts, along with beautiful photos, candid stories of our success and challenges. You'll also have the chance to get to know a few of our students, as they talk about the importance of CCC.

SPRING CONCERT May 7, 2022

This coming spring, we will perform again in the Swarthmore Stadium on May 7! CCC Stadium Concert II —That's The Way (uh-huh, uh-huh) We Like It. Renaissance music, Earth Wind & Fire and the 70's—slightly surreal, always joyful.

ALUMNI WEEKEND CONCERT May 28, 2022

CCC will sing during Swarthmore College's Alumni Weekend, Saturday May 28 @ 3:30 in the Amphitheater. We invite all returning alums to sing selections from Faure's Requiem with our older children and then enjoy our reprisal of our That's The Way We Like It party set.



CCC STAFF

John Alston, Executive & Artistic Director
Elisa De Nofio, Program Coordinator
Kevin Downs, Lead Math Teacher
Carolyn Marzo, Director of Development
Dana Semos, Managing & Education Director
Sean Tripline, Assistant Music Director

VOICE FALL 2021

Design: Karlyn Rosen Aires
Photography: Jonathan Hodgson,
Laurence Kesterson, John Wehmiller,
and CCC Staff

The Chester Children's Chorus is an affiliated program of Swarthmore College and receives generous in-kind support from the College, but raises its own funds to cover all direct expenses. Official tax receipts for charitable contributions to the Chorus come directly from the College.

CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS
500 COLLEGE AVENUE
SWARTHMORE, PA 19081
610-328-8180



CCC & VACCINATIONS

In June, CCC hosted a vaccine clinic for our families, and 8 children received their shots. In July we offered a trip to Six Flags to all children who were already vaccinated, and any who would receive a first shot by the end of camp. For our teens, we are offering a NYC dinner and Broadway show to all who are vaccinated by the end of the year. In our Concert Choir (mostly high-schoolers), 23 are vaccinated, 4 are not. In our Festival Choir (middle-schoolers) 10 are vaccinated, 8 are not. We continue to encourage when there is an opportunity.



CCC TEENS VACCINATED BY THE END OF 2021 WILL RECEIVE A TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY, INCLUDING DINNER AND A BROADWAY SHOW.

CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS
STRONG VOICE • STRONG MIND • STRONG SPIRIT