



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Performing with Panache

Teen Boys Revel in Medieval Carols, Bach, Doo-Wop

What to do with our four teenage baritone-tones? With their experience and musical skills, they learn in 15 minutes a piece that our sopranos and altos work on for two rehearsals. Last September they sat patiently through Saturday rehearsals but were bored—not good for them and a teacher's nightmare.

My first move was to give them their own rehearsal time on Friday afternoons. They liked this and bounded up the stairs eager to sing—but after a few weeks, I realized that they needed to work on more than concert choir repertoire to remain engaged and developing musically.

After much discussion, we decided to try some doo-wop. Thus was born the Men's Ensemble. We recruited Eric Eisenberg, a Swarthmore College junior and a very fine musician, to expand our budding group to

six members (I sing too, of course!). That allows us to sing three-part harmony with two on each part. Eric immediately bought into the doo-wop idea and came to the next rehearsal with his own arrangement of "Silhouettes on the Shade." The rest of the story is a teacher's dream.

The boys loved singing "Silhouettes," worked diligently to learn some medieval carols (using medieval pronunciation), and sang six numbers at the December concert. "Silhouettes" brought a screaming audience to its feet. A quasi-barbershop version of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," with our once-shy Craig Robinson Jr. sporting felt antlers and a flashing red nose, cracked everyone up. Rudolph wasn't part of the plan, just something we worked up on van rides home after

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The Men's Ensemble digs into a rehearsal of "Under the Boardwalk." (From left): Vincent Wilson, Craig Robinson Jr., Eric Eisenberg '06, Nkenge Daniels, Jabree Reaves, John Alston.

Enjoy the children's singing—Two opportunities!

ANNUAL SPRING CONCERT Saturday, May 14, 8 p.m.

Featuring songs of sorrow and joy from many lands and a bravura appearance by the Men's Ensemble
Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College
Admission is free—Reception to follow

SPRING CONCERT ON TOUR Sunday, May 22, 3 p.m.

Lansdowne Friends Meeting
Stewart and Lansdowne Avenues

Sponsored by Lansdowne Friends School. Admission at the door: individuals \$10, families \$15

College Students Tutor, Mentor, Make Music with Chorus Members

Stroll around the Swarthmore College campus on a Saturday afternoon, and you may come across John Krawczyk '06 hunkered down in the library over math problems with chorus members Bruce Blanding and Stefan Cassell. Or find Naima Brown '07 and chorister April Philips sprawled in the easy chairs of Kohlberg Snack Bar, deep in discussion of women's issues. Or see Serena Le '07 and alto Cibone Hutt bent over a homework assignment.

These three are among the many College students who enrich the Chester children's experience on campus by acting as tutors, mentors, and chorus section leaders. "It's wonderful that our children get to work and become friends with some of the most outstanding college students in the country," says director John Alston. "They learn more than music and academics. Being with college students helps them aspire to intellectual and artistic excellence."



(Left) Bruce Blanding (seated) and Asr McCready use the McCabe computers after a math session with John Krawczyk '06. Jenny Foster practices fractions with Karen Zaino '06 in the new Science Center.



Student section leaders this spring are Eric Eisenberg '06, Jackie Werner '07, and Naima Brown. The Saturday tutoring program began in fall, 2003, under the direction of Professor of Education Lisa Smulyan. Student tutors in spring 2005 are Rob Boostrom '05; Shreya Mahajan '05; Jyothi Natarajan '05; Anand Vaidya '05; Karen Zaino '06; and Krawczyk, Brown, and Le. Matt Smith '06 coordinates the tutoring program.

Make Your Summer Count: Read with A Child

Think how satisfying it would be to spend your summer nurturing a child's imagination, curiosity, love of books, and reading skills. That's what our summer reading volunteers do, and we encourage you to join them. We will have about 35 children, ages 8 to 11, all eager for adult partners in a summer of reading adventures.

Volunteers will read with children from 1 to 2 p.m. on all Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from June 27 through July 27 and on the three Thursdays June 30, July 7, and July 28. Children and volunteers settle down in pairs throughout Lang Music Building, choosing nooks in the hallways, spots in the concert hall, or quiet retreats in practice rooms. They can choose books from our library, and volunteers are welcome to bring books as well.

The reading is most rewarding for both volunteer and child when they read

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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:

Visa Mastercard Discover

Card # _____

Expires: _____ / _____

Amount to charge: \$ _____

My gift will be matched by my employer.

(Please enclose your signed matching gift form.)

THANK YOU!

What's New?

School Research Has Begun

Director John Alston and board member Wendy Emrich are visiting more than a dozen arts schools this spring to gather ideas about how to make our proposed arts school in Chester the best possible learning environment for students.

The schools visited include the Cab Calloway School of the Arts in Wilmington; John's alma mater, the Newark (N.J.) Boys Chorus School; and four Philadelphia schools: the Russell Byers and Philadelphia Performing Arts charter schools, the Girard Academic Music Program, and the Penn Alexander Partnership School. John and Wendy have seen students bubbling over with exuberance about their school, teachers, and classes. "That kind of joyful learning is what we want," John said. John and Wendy will also visit schools beyond the Delaware Valley that are known for their educational successes.

The next step is to develop a full plan for the school in consultation with the Chester community and with experts in education, curriculum, and facilities. John and those working with him are enthusiastically committed to this huge task.

John Alston Presents Spiritual Recital in NYC, D.C.

John and pianist Jay Fluellen took their recital, "In the Spirit of the Spiritual" to

New York City in February, where they performed for Swarthmore College alumni. They were scheduled to present the recital in March at the Hyde Leadership Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. John uses these performances as an opportunity to talk about the Chorus and our proposed Chester arts school to new audiences. If you can help us arrange a performance within a two-hour drive of Philadelphia, please contact the chorus office at CCC@Swarthmore.edu or 610-328-8180.

Nineteen Chorus Members Win Attendance Awards

Nineteen chorus members – nearly half the chorus! – were rewarded for their perfect attendance in either spring or fall of 2004. Concert Choir members were treated with a trip to hear award-winning Christian a cappella group Take 6 in Philadelphia. Junior Choir and Training Chorus members enjoyed a pizza and bowling party.

Children with perfect attendance were: Concert Choir: Nkenge Daniels, Jennifer Foster, Demar McKoy, Asr McCready, Jamilah Queen, April Philips, Jabree Reaves, Craig Robinson Jr., Aliya Tanner, Vincent Wilson. Junior Choir: Janeia Bobo, Taylore Harris, Glenn Simpson. Training Chorus: Taquyyah Bond, Va'Sir Gary, Tray Jones, David O'Neal, Royce Tabron, William Taylor, Darian Towns.

Chorus, Men's Ensemble Give Guest



At the bowling party, David O'Neal (left) watched as Assistant Music Director Kellie Bowker and Tray Jones checked the scoreboard, while Director John Alston advised William Taylor on technique.

Performances

Our spring calendar includes two guest performances. The Men's Ensemble will be featured at the Delaware County Bar Association's Law Day observance on Friday, April 29, at the Old Chester City Courthouse. The Concert Choir and Junior Choir will sing for Swarthmore College alumni at their annual reunion on Friday, June 3, at Swarthmore College.

In December, the Men's Ensemble spread Christmas cheer by performing for senior citizens at Chester Towers and for residents of Chester's St. James Place assisted living facility.

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rehearsals. After a few tries it sounded so good that we knew we had to go public with it. The boys were wonderful on stage—confident, playful, communicative, and in tune—and experienced intensely the power and confidence they can draw from performing.

Three of the boys—Vincent Wilson, Nkenge Daniels, and Craig—sang with the Swarthmore College chorus in the fall. In January, the youngest ensemble member,

14-year-old Jabree Reaves, joined them. They will sing Bach's Mass in B minor—in Latin—with the College chorus on April 29.

Our Friday rehearsals, although filled with laughter and the most wonderful esprit de corps, are a rigorous two hours of music making. We begin with sight-reading and discussion of key signatures and intervals and then spend 45 minutes on the Bach. We move on to spirituals, which I arrange for the boys. This sometimes leads to discussions of slavery and American politics. I'm always pushing them to ask ques-

tions about justice and responsibility—sometimes too hard, I fear. Eric, our doo-wop meister, supplies us with the music to keep us singing happily for another hour. Listen for his arrangements of "Under the Boardwalk" and "America the Beautiful" at our Spring Concert on May 14.

Rehearsal spills out into the hall at 5:30 p.m., with the four Chester boys singing their way down the stairs of Lang Music Building like a Hollywood ending—except that it's true.

—John Alston

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together on a sustained basis, getting to know each other and creating a shared experience of the books they read. If you can volunteer for all or most of our five-week program, please contact Managing Director Andrea Knox for more information, at (610) 328-8180 or ccc@swarthmore.edu.

Volunteer Carol Sabersky read last summer with Janeia Bobo, 9, of the Junior Choir.



CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

John Alston, *founder and director*
Andrea Knox, *managing director*

Advisory Board

Cordelia Delson, *president*
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Wendy Emrich
Edmund Jones
Elbert Sampson

Voice
The Newsletter of the Chester Children's Chorus

Andrea Knox '64, *editor*
Phillip Stern '84, *designer*
Photos by Andrea Knox unless noted otherwise.

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Summer rehearsal



"Strong Voice, Strong Mind, Strong Spirit"



At the Kimmel Center to hear Bobby McFerrin