

UPCOMING CONCERTS & EVENTS

**Saturday, March 14th
7:30 p.m.**

St. Matthew's United Methodist Church
of Valley Forge
600 Walker Road, Wayne, PA

**Saturday, March 21st
7:30 p.m.**

Church of the Holy Trinity
212 South High Street, West Chester, PA

**Friday, May 8th and
Saturday, May 9th
7:30 p.m.**

Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College
Seating limited to first 425 guests.
Doors open at 7 p.m.

**ADMISSION IS FREE!
DONATIONS SUPPORT CCC PROGRAMS.**



From left to right: Shanaë, Aliea, Deondre, Shirleyanna, and Kaya

CCC GRADUATES 11 SENIORS

A bittersweet event, we will bid farewell to 11 high school seniors as they graduate from high school this year. Featured below, the seniors impress us with their dreams, memories, and, most importantly, their commitment to the CCC.

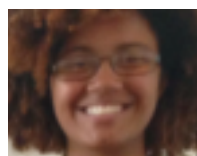


CCC FUNDRAISER AT TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES:

April 19th, 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
101 W. State St., Media
15% of sales proceeds will support the CCC.

SWARTHMORE FUN FAIR:

Sunday, May 3rd, 1-4 p.m.
The Village of Swarthmore
Stop by the CCC table to buy CDs,
Phillies raffle tickets, and to say hello!



KAYA BANTON

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:

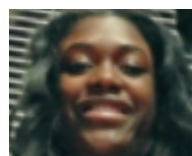
become a jazz musician
and environmental activist

Favorite CCC piece:

Hine Ma Tov

Favorite CCC memory:

Echo Hill in Maryland
"The whole trip was amazing. To go out into the woods, climb rocks and canoe and eat breakfast while singing, and having a bonfire, you don't really get to experience that living in Chester."



SHIRLEYANNA DAVIS

2 1/2 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:

earn a doctorate in psychology with specialization in industrial and organizational business

Favorite CCC piece:

"El Grillo"

Favorite CCC memories:

2014 summer car wash
"It was fun to come together as a family to accomplish something positive;"
singing at the Governor's Inauguration.



KENAN HILYARD

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:

to study psychology and one day become a pediatrician

Favorite CCC pieces:

"I'm Not Done,"
"Whisper"

Favorite CCC memory:

"There are so many to choose from, but I have to say that my first concert with the CCC will always be my favorite memory."

Seniors continued inside

Our Inauguration Day

On January 20, our Chamber Choir (our 40 strongest 5th–12th-graders) performed as a part of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf's inauguration. It was a long, challenging, and almost perfect day. Almost.

6 A.M. Our van drivers begin picking up the children. Everyone is ready. They are excited.

6:45 A.M. The children start boarding the tour bus (courtesy of the Wolf administration). A local news crew arrives, and Deondre, Aliea, and I give brief interviews. Deondre and Aliea speak confidently about the opportunity to show Pennsylvanians that Chester children are talented and accomplished. The crew asks for a song (at 7 in the morning!), so I recruit the least sleepy, and we sing a bit of "The Lord is My Shepherd." We finish loading food, keyboard, drums, and depart on schedule.

7:15–9:30 A.M. Breakfast of muffins and juice and then sleep as we travel to Harrisburg.

9:30–10:30 A.M. We arrive, unload, and check in. We are lead to a cafeteria area and issued security badges with 'TALENT' printed on them. The children love it!

10:30–11:30 A.M. We move to the performance area and do a sound check with two other groups: a marching band and an adult chorus. It is just above freezing, but we are warm because we are wearing red Land's End winter parkas. We look good, like a travelling sports team in matching coats. The sound check goes well, with no complications.

11:30–NOON Quick snack and scurrying to find bathrooms.

NOON–12:45 P.M. The pre-inauguration show begins, with the marching band playing first, followed by the adult

chorus. Then something surreal happens. The program is stopped because the legislators, who are waiting to process after we finish singing, are making so much noise that they are asked to take their places ahead of schedule, in the hopes that they will better behave (shockingly, our state's lawmakers couldn't behave themselves!). The CCC must wait, not quite understanding what is happening.

12:45–1 P.M. Our time to sing has arrived. I give the Chorus one last pep talk and then touch a few notes on the keyboard. No sound. I check the keyboard volume and try again. Still no sound. I then unplug everything and try again—nothing. The director of the adult choir offers his keyboard. We make the switch, and.....nothing. The sound crew is frantically checking cords and switches. After 5 minutes pass, the event coordinator tells me that we have to sing a cappella. I am not happy. I approach the children, explain the situation, and they tell me, "We got this." I blow on a pitch pipe, count off, and they sing "Take Me to the Water" with William Taylor keeping time on the drums. Folks around us begin smiling and swaying, and the applause is warm. I ask the children if they would be comfortable singing "Love Train" and "Joy To The World," and again they respond, "We got this." Do

they ever. They sing with so much confidence and power, and the crowd starts rocking and clapping in time. Keep in mind that everyone at the event knows that the keyboard has failed, and when we finish, the crowd screams its approval.

1:15–2:30 P.M. Speeches, speeches, speeches. The sound crew continues to work on the keyboard problem. Finally, a crew member discovers that someone has turned down a volume knob on my amplifier. There are two knobs, neither of which I touched after the sound check. I always, always turn down the volume on the keyboard. The crew leader would not admit that his crew touched the volume. So it goes.

2:30–3 P.M. Governor Wolf finishes his speech, and we begin singing my arrangement of "America, The Beautiful" and surprise the crowd with a Gospel-like section. When we finish, as before, the crowd screams its approval. As everyone exits, the legislators and governor approach us with wide smiles and congratulate us. The children are glowing with pride.

And in that moment when the governor, legislators, and people from around the state looked at our beautiful children and told them how impressive their performance was, I know that many assumptions about our children melted away.

Overcoming the cold, fatigue, noisy legislators, delays, and sound problems, our chorus showed Pennsylvanians that Chester and its children are filled with great potential, talent, and spirit.

—John Alston

A special thank you to the Pincus Family Foundation for their support to purchase the winter parkas.



Saluting Our Seniors ... *continued*



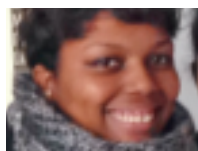
DEONDRE JORDAN

11 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
become a surgeon and ultimately, return to help rebuild Chester

Favorite CCC pieces:
Mozart's *Requiem*,
Psalms 23, Sicut Cervus

Favorite CCC memory:
When John conducted his final year of the College Chorus, "I was invited to sing with them, and I fell in love with Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms. It was a big leap in my musical development, and I was honored to be invited."



ALIEA ROTHWELL

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
become an architectural engineer and own a business

Favorite CCC pieces:
"Crazy in Love," Mozart's *Requiem*

Favorite CCC memories:
riding the zipline at Echo Hill in Maryland; meeting Whedai (dance teacher) for the first time. "She told me I'd be a great dancer."

A note of thanks to Leslie and Andrew Price who made the Echo Hill, Maryland trip possible on October 9 and 10, 2010.



VINCENTE SALDANA

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
become a professional mixed martial arts fighter

Favorite CCC piece:
Handel's *Messiah*

Favorite CCC memory:
going to see the play *Memphis* in New York City. "It was such a great experience going with everyone. I still have the playbill!"



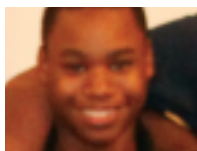
JORDAN SARINANA

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
to become a lawyer

Favorite CCC piece:
Mozart's *Requiem*

Favorite CCC memory:
Echo Hill, "It was great to get away from the city and do something new."



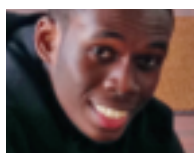
DARIUS THOMAS

9 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
become an audio engineer

Favorite CCC piece:
Mozart's *Requiem*

Favorite CCC memory:
"I have enjoyed meeting so many new people in the CCC."



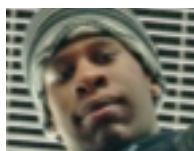
DA'SHON TOLER

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
study computer science, but unsure of exact field

Favorite CCC piece:
The 70's Tribute

Favorite CCC memory:
trip to Round Top Mountain Resort. "It was so much fun to go on the zipline and water slides."



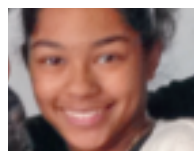
DARIAN TOWNS

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
become a carpenter

Favorite CCC piece:
Mozart's *Requiem*

Favorite CCC memory:
Echo Hill in Maryland because "we got to stay overnight together."



SHANAÉ WILLIS

10 years in the CCC

Professional aspiration:
early childhood education

Favorite CCC piece:
"Lacrimosa" from Mozart's *Requiem*

Favorite CCC memory:
"I remember being a little girl and poking, hitting, and endlessly bugging John."



CAROL SWINGLE (Swarthmore '76) can't remember the first time she went to a Chester Children's Chorus concert, but what she does remember clearly is when she started volunteering with the Andrea Knox Summer Reading Program. She remarks, "I've been a reader for the past five summers. The experience allowed me to develop a close relationship with a new CCC student while reading with the same child for several weeks. It was seeing the breadth and depth of the summer program that made me understand what a profound impact the program has on the children who are lucky enough to be a part of this organization. Seeing them reading, singing, dancing, going to science labs, having fun, and caring for each other and being deeply cared for by adults is a very moving experience."

Carol has even made it a "family affair." Her daughter Lizzy was a reading volunteer the summer after she graduated from college. Her son, Pat, is a professional musician who has volunteered time to play with one of the older students who is interested in jazz. And she talks to nearly everyone she knows about the chorus, encouraging them to attend a concert. "Until you attend a concert, you can't truly understand or appreciate how amazing the CCC is."

The children themselves, and their joy in making music, are what keep her coming back. "Having goals, working as a group, striving for excellence, developing perseverance, and maintaining long-term commitments—these are important lessons learned by CCC students. As audience members, we get to reap the benefits through thrilling, inspiring, wonderful music performed by beautiful and enthusiastic children. What could be better than that?" Carol has already made plans to attend the next concert in March, and to be a reader for the 6th summer!

If you would like to join Carol, please check out the reading information at our website, www.chesterchildrenschorus.org and click "Volunteer or Give," or call Kirsten Halter-Kratz at 610-328-8286.

THANK YOU to all of our guests, committee members, the CCC members, the Ward Marston Dance Band, our corporate sponsors, supporters, Sharples dining hall and staff who made the CCC benefit gala such a wonderful success! We raised over \$40,000 for all Chorus programs!

SUPPORT US!

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

☐ Enclosed is a check (Check made 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 _____

To give online, visit our website
www.chesterchildrenschorus.org,
and select "Volunteer or Give!"

For information, call Executive Director
Kirsten Halker-Kratz at (610) 328-8286.

Please return this form to our address below.



THANK YOU!

CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

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

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

Voice credits:

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Kirsten Halker-Kratz
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John Wehmiller
Andrea Knox
Jonathan Hodgson

Get to Know the CCC

Maurice Eldridge (Swarthmore '61) is currently the vice president for college and community relations and executive assistant to the president at Swarthmore College. More specifically, he is Kirsten and John's boss! He helped start the CCC in 1994, is an ex-officio member of the CCC advisory board, and is the vice president of the Chester Charter School for the Arts board of trustees. Maurice is beloved by all who have the pleasure of working with him. We asked him to reflect on his personal experience with the CCC.

John came into my office more than two decades ago with an idea. Quietly getting over the question in my head about whether this handsome guy with a ponytail was a student or a faculty member, I listened to his idea of starting a boys' choir. He was motivated by his own life-changing experience with the Newark Boys' Choir and wanted to do the same for youngsters in Chester. He started with the boys and soon saw the interest among their sisters who



Maurice dances with CCC 2014 benefit gala honoree, Peggy Thompson.

Maurice Eldridge

sat through his rehearsals, and so we moved to a children's chorus and CCC was born. Twenty years later, it continues to enrich the lives of now 140 girls and boys who enrich our lives in turn. I cannot choose a favorite song for it never fails to thrill me to hear them sing any and everything in their repertoire!

The success of the chorus inspired John, and me right along with him, to start a school. If we could make a difference in lives through this wonderful organization, why not go even further into their educational and developmental lives with a school. And so, the Chester Upland School of the Arts (CUSA)—now Chester Charter School for the Arts (CCSA)—was conceived and has been adding a grade a year ever since. Next year, it will start its high school and be a K-9 school. My hope is to see both CCC and CCSA continue to thrive and grow in their power to change lives and help create a better future for the children and for Chester.

CCC "NOTE-ABLES"

- ★ **KENAN HILYARD** is a member of the Archmere Academy Mastersingers choir, which will be the featured choir at the National Youth Festival Choir on March 15 at Carnegie Hall. Kenan also had a solo in the school play, *Fiddler on the Roof*, the last weekend in February.
- ★ **VINCENTE SALDANA** has been competing in the North American Grappling Association tournaments and training in jiu-jitsu, kick boxing and mixed martial arts. He has achieved Brazilian jiu-jitsu third degree purple belt and judo first degree white belt.
- ★ Interim Swarthmore College President Constance Hungerford will award three honorary degrees at the College's 143rd commencement on May 31, 2015. We congratulate **JOHN ALSTON** on being one of these degree recipients!

Additionally, John was named one of KYW Newsradio-1060's 2015 Game Changers. His interview was published on February 12. He also appeared on CBS-3's *TalkPhilly* on February 26 with two other award recipients.

On February 8, seven CCC students had the opportunity to hear jazz singer Gregory Porter in concert at Montgomery County Community College. Afterwards, they were guests at a meet-and-greet event. Pictured left to right: K'yanna Reeves, Darria Brooks, Shalayia Seth, Mr. Porter, Kadraya Taylor, Na'Jae Collins, Kaya Banton, and Tienne Na-El.



PHOTO BY LOU LIGUORI

