



Spring Concert

Hymns,
French Renaissance songs,
spirituals, original gospel

2 performances:
Friday, May 11, 8 p.m.
Saturday, May 12, 8 p.m.

Lang Concert Hall
Swarthmore College

Admission free — All invited

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

A Fortunate Accident, A New Direction

For 14 of the 16 years that I have been at Swarthmore College, I've been leading two lives, teaching College classes and conducting the College chorus while guiding and developing the Chester Children's Chorus.

calling is teaching the children of Chester. Since then, I have been working toward a major change, which happened in January: I became the vocal teacher for all the chorus members.

As the children's chorus grew, balancing those two

Bernie? That's the name I've given to the turkey vulture I ran over while bicycling

Our Singers Become Composers

Our chorus members are becoming composers and arrangers as well as singers! At our spring concerts on May 11 and 12, you will hear six of our teens and pre-teens perform their original songs. "These children's gifts—their creativity, willingness to work hard, and ability to perform—are a gift to the rest of us," says director John Alston.

As members of our Composers' Circle, they create, refine their work, and practice, knowing that at the end of the semester they will present their finished pieces in concert before 700 or more people.

The Composers' Circle meets on Saturdays after chorus rehearsal. In the fall semester, John gave keyboard lessons to three members, Craig Robinson Jr., 16; Jenniffer Foster, 12; and Ja'Quay Lundy, 11. The girls learned to build scales and chords, while Craig worked on arranging and improvisation. John and Craig worked with the girls on composition, and Craig created piano accompaniments for their pieces.



Jenniffer Foster works on a keyboard exercise as a member of our Composers' Circle.

The girls' powerful performances of their works, with Craig as accompanist, were a highlight of our December concert. They drew enthusiastic applause from the audience—and urgent requests from other chorus members to join the group.

The new members this spring are Alexis Watson, 12; Asia Cherry, 11; and Jazmin Sarinana, 11. John teaches piano to all the children. In composition, Craig collaborates with Jenny and Ja'Quay while John works with the other girls. The groups come together to listen to each other's work and congratulate the team that produced the day's best new creation. "This element of playful competitiveness motivates everyone to work hard," John reports.



Director John Alston teaches sight-reading to Training Chorus members (from left) Shamar Foster, Darrin Wood, Benjamin Walker, Isis Dill, Chyna-Browne Stevenson, Aniyah Wright, and Demiah Jones.

lives became more and more of a struggle. When we hired Kellie Bowker in 2003 to work with the younger children, so that I could focus on the Concert Choir and Men's Ensemble, my two lives settled back into balance for a few years.

Then a chance meeting with Bernie in summer 2005 made it clear to me that my

downhill at 40 miles an hour. I spent 8 days in the hospital with a punctured lung, three broken ribs, a separated shoulder, and plenty of time to think and listen. What I heard, as I've said, was that my life's work should be with Chester children. I'm sure my understanding of that was helped by the wonderful cards and good food that the cho-

(continued over)

An Honor—and a Mystery

What an honor—and what a surprise!—that Director John Alston was named as one of 13 finalists for the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Citizen of the Year Award. In a Dec. 30 editorial, the *Inquirer* cited John for mining "hidden acres of diamonds" in his work with the Chester Children's Chorus. The citation quoted the person who nominated John as saying he "has fostered community, encouraged self-esteem and engendered hope in the students he directs."

Who was that person? We don't know. We learned of the nomination when it appeared in the newspaper. Thank you, whoever you are!

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!

Adult Volunteers Needed For Summer Reading

New time: 11 a.m. daily

Are you looking for a memorable summer experience? Become a Chester Children's Chorus reading volunteer!

Each volunteer is paired with a child 8 to 10 years old. We try to keep pairs together so real bonds can develop, which is easiest when volunteers come for a full week or more. You'll meet your child at 11 a.m. in Lang Music Building, choose books from our library, and find a quiet nook just right for reading and talking.



Benjamin Walker chooses books with his reading volunteer, Christine Marque.

That's right: Our reading hour will be from 11 a.m. to noon this summer. We hope this new time will allow more people to volunteer. We seek volunteers 18 or older, and we especially welcome men to read with our boys.

Our reading days are Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from June 25 through July 25, and Thursdays June 28, July 5, and July 26. For more information, contact the chorus office at (610) 328-8180 or ccc@swarthmore.edu, or go to www.chesterchildrenschorus.org and click on "You Can Help!"

... A New Direction

(continued)

Our children and staff sent me and by the kindness of a chorus parent—a nurse at the hospital—who located my bike.

Having me take over the chorus rehearsals has been a bit of a transition for the children in our Junior Choir and Training Chorus who had worked with Kellie, loved her, and miss her. But they have come to share my excitement about what we can do together musically. Now that I know them better, I am redesigning their sight-reading and musicianship curriculum to match their abilities and needs. For the first time, I can write and arrange music for them with an understanding of their capabilities and musical

Chester School of the Arts: A New Kind of Charter School

In November, the Chester School of the Arts (CSA) board applied to the Chester Upland School District for an entirely new type of charter school. The planned school will be a model by using effective teaching methods, working with families, and finding creative ways to partner with the school district. The school will also bring new resources into the district.

CSA will open in 2008, starting with either K-3 or pre-K-2 and adding one grade a year through Grade 12. The school's distinguishing characteristics will be a core arts curriculum, rigorous inquiry-based academics, mixed-grade classrooms, programs in character development and family learning, and partnerships with the district and the city. These partnerships will include providing training for non-CSA teachers, expanding the Chester Children's Chorus so more children from the district can receive music education, and increasing our role as artistic ambassadors for the district and the city.

The board has raised \$500,000 toward the cost of starting the school and estimates its operation will require about \$1 million a year of private support in addition to state and local subsidies.

To receive a 2-page executive summary with more detail, contact managing director Wendy Emrich at wemrich@comcast.net or (610) 328-1339.

tastes. This is a musical rapport that I've previously had only with the Concert Choir and Men's Ensemble. You will hear the results at our spring concerts, May 11 and May 12, when you will also hear the Junior Choir perform a song by their member Cassandra Stevenson, which I've arranged for them.

I am thankful to Kellie for her work with the children over the past 4 years and to Swarthmore College, the Department of Music, and the Provost's office for their unwavering support as I take on this new role. I am especially blessed in the children, who accept my gifts joyfully, correct me when I make mistakes, and help make me a better person. And Bernie, of course, has my eternal gratitude.

—John Alston

What's New?

Outreach Concert in Malvern, May 19

We want to spread the joyous singing of the Chester Children's Chorus to audiences far and wide, starting with those of Philadelphia's Main Line. We are very fortunate that St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley has offered to sponsor our first Main Line concert on Saturday, May 19, at 7 p.m. St. Peter's is a beautiful, historic church; we will sing in the congregation's new Community Outreach Hall, and we look forward to filling it with song. We thank the church members and their outreach committee for creating this opportunity for us. Directions to the church are at www.chesterchildrenschorus.org under How to Get Here. Information about the church is at <http://www.stpetersgv.org>.

Our gospel CD is still available!

Get on Up!



Ordering information, lyrics, and a musical excerpt are on the Web at www.chesterchildrenschorus.org/cd/

We cannot accept on-line payment. Please print out the order form and send it with your payment. Those without Internet access may call CCC administrative assistant Elisa DeNofio at (610) 957-6049 for ordering information.

CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

John Alston, founder and director

Andrea Knox '64, managing director

Elisa DeNofio, assistant

Advisory Board

Cordelia Delson, president

Scott Kessler, vice president

and secretary

Leslie Price, treasurer

Maurice Eldridge '61,

ex officio,

Swarthmore College

Wendy Emrich

Edmund Jones '39

Mary McTernan

Sandra Robinson

Voice

The Newsletter of the

Chester Children's Chorus

Andrea Knox, editor

Phillip Stern '84, designer

Photos by Andrea Knox

and George Widman

Department of Music and

Dance

Swarthmore College

500 College Avenue

Swarthmore PA 19081

(610) 328-8180

ccc@swarthmore.edu

www.chesterchildrenschorus.org

