



## GSJC Brings You Home for the Holidays

By R. M. Cornell, Editor

Through the years, the Greater South Jersey Chorus holiday concert has set a reliable standard for excellence in its performances. We have come to expect each December a dignified, gracious musical experience: the full Chorus performs a series of short works in the first half, during which the Chamber Chorus offers three or four similar pieces. The second half features a major work for chorus and some sort of instrumental accompaniment. The whole affair ends with an encore designed to create a final impression of delight in the audience.

There is certainly nothing wrong with this traditional program: it has satisfied audiences and singers for many years. However, this is our 20th Anniversary season: we want to give our friends, families and patrons an experience whose uniqueness reflects this special year. Now, if you expect us to come onstage in elf outfits and Maestro Rishel to greet you with a rousing "Ho, Ho, Ho!" you overestimate the degree to which choral groups usually pursue innovation! Our holiday program is well within the traditional bounds of taste, and really quite delightful. The title, "Home for the Holidays," reflects our desire to evoke a memory of the family gathering for a joyous evening of song. We draw inspiration from every musical tradition and offer music for every generation.

One special attraction of this concert is the participation of a guest soloist. Soprano Kelly Anne Bixby will not merely take part in a single musical number: she will have a presence throughout the program, singing both alone and in partnership with the chorus. She will evoke a joyful mood in Handel's "Rejoice Greatly" and Mozart's Alleluia from "Exultate Jubilate"; soar above the Chamber Singers in Dean Rishel's new arrangement of the traditional carol "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella"; and join the entire chorus for the breathtakingly beautiful "Ave Maria," also arranged by Mr. Rishel. Kelly Anne will add a star quality to this year's choral selections.

Another departure for GSJC is a fully choreographed novelty

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## Here's the Pitch

by Dean Rishel, GSJC Artistic Director

### "A Snow-globe Holiday Concert"

One look at the logo for our upcoming Holiday Concert--the Snow Globe--and our thoughts turn to the days of childhood, when something as simple, non-electronic, and non-digital as a snow globe embodied the beauty and wonder of the season. This December, that is exactly what the Greater South Jersey Chorus is planning on doing--capturing the child-like wonder of the holidays with a very different kind of concert. We are beginning the celebration of our 20th anniversary with a concert designed to provide delights for the entire family; and we encourage all families to come out and share the traditional music of the season with us. In this fun and exciting program, perennial favorites will share the bill with delightful contemporary seasonal songs. We'll even have a sing-along so you all can join the chorus, raising your voice with us in traditional Christmas music.

We are especially excited to be joined by our guest artist, soprano Kelly Ann Bixby, who will be singing some familiar favorites from the seasonal repertoire. Another new highlight will be the featuring of our wonderful accompanist, Oleksii Ivanchenko taking a solo turn, with a fantastic arrangement of "O Holy Night". You'll hear some less familiar carols as well, along with many familiar Holiday songs designed to delight children and adults as well: "Jolly Old Saint Nicholas," "Jingle Bells," and others.

You may wonder why we're taking a departure this year from our more serious Holiday fare. Very simple: the reason is you. Audience surveys taken not only by us but also by choruses across the country tell us that you really love to hear the traditional music of the season, maybe even participating in the evening's program. You enjoy a concert where the whole family can have a wonderful, fun musical evening. So we've listened and have planned a concert where you can feel comfortable bringing your children--children 14 and under and admitted free with a paying adult--and enjoy a less formal evening with the celebratory music of the season. We'll have guitars, drums, carols both familiar and less well-known. We'll cap off the evening by responding to your request and offering the original version of "Auld Lang Syne."



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## GSJC News and Notes

- A fine crop of new singers has joined the Greater South Jersey Chorus this fall, with additions to all four sections. Above, from left to right, they are: **Walt Klieba, Denise Augustyn, Emily Traver, Ernesto Villalas, Nicole Nattia, Kelly Lord, Lauren Carragher, Jennifer Bloomberg** and **Laura Gaffney**. Not present for the photograph were **Myra Cubero** and **Austen Wilson**. We are delighted to welcome all of our new singers!
- On Sunday, November 6, GSJC Assistant Artistic Director **Ken Ewan** featured a performance of *Gloria*, by Antonio Vivaldi, in his regular all-music service at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Cherry Hill. Several GSJC singers--some of whom are members of Ken's choir; others who are not--joined in to perform this delightful work.
- GSJC baritone **Ed Nace** was recently elected Treasurer of the New Jersey Choral Consortium at its November 13 annual meeting. The NJ Choral Consortium is an association created to help Garden State choral organizations develop and grow by sharing information, fostering cooperation and supporting choral arts education.
- GSJC's annual pretzel sale, held to raise funds to support our Holiday Concerts, was a record-breaking success. Committee Chair **Rose Boland** has announced that the sale earned the chorus over \$3,000. Equally exciting was the Chorus' participation rate of 95%.
- We extend our best wishes for a swift recovery to soprano **Anita Frenzel**, who suffered a stroke in mid-November. Anita has been on leave from singing due to health issues. However, she has continued to serve GSJC by logging and directing voice-mail inquiries for the Chorus.
- On Saturday, December 3, the **GSJC Chamber Singers** will present a program of holiday music at the 22nd Annual Dickens Festival in Medford. The Chamber Singers, an auditioned corps of about 30 voices, will appear at the Medford Friends Meetinghouse at 7 PM.
- From the GSJC Wishlist: File cabinets needed to store music library and archives. Must be 4-drawer, metal, letter-size, and locking. Please contact Board Secretary **Nancy Simon** (email: Haimisheh18@aol.com) if you can help.
- As part of GSJC's commitment to community outreach, members of the chorus presented a special holiday concert on Tuesday, November 29 for students at St. Cecilia's School in Pennsauken. Students heard from chorus members how they began singing, and how choral singing has enriched their lives.

# 20 Years of Making Music: A Time to Celebrate

by Marna Carlton,  
President, Board of Trustees

2012 will mark the 20-year anniversary of the Greater South Jersey Chorus and there are many reasons to celebrate. Founded in 1992, the chorus has provided many special musical moments over the years, and has steadily grown into one of southern New Jersey's most prominent choral organizations.

What does it take to sustain such a non-profit arts organization over a long period of time while continuing to deliver quality programs? Three elements come to mind: an artistic director with a vision and passion for choral music; a dedicated group of chorus members who are equally passionate about choral singing and willing to support an all-volunteer organization; and, of course, the audience, who continue to encourage and support our programs year after year.

For most of its twenty-year history, GSJC has been privileged to have noted conductor and composer Dean Rishel as its Artistic Director. Under Dean's direction and tutelage, the chorus has evolved into one of the leading performing arts groups in Southern NJ. His passion for choral music, his skill as a conductor and his experience as a composer all combine to provide the leadership that continues to take us to new heights.

Membership in GSJC has grown steadily and now has reached close to 100 singers from the tri-county area. As an all-volunteer organization, we rely on our members to assist with the many "behind the scenes" tasks that are required in order to have things run smoothly: Board of Trustees, publicity, marketing, concert management, music library and ticket sales, to name just a few. Chances are that each person you see singing in the chorus performs another task to help bring our audiences the quality musical experience they have come to expect from GSJC.

And speaking of audiences, GSJC is grateful to have had such loyal followers over the years. It has been particularly gratifying in recent years to see our audiences include not only supportive family and friends, but also individuals seeking out quality arts performances in our region and recognizing what GSJC has to offer. We frequently hear comments following a concert such as, "Wow, I had no idea.....!" or, "Please put me on the mailing list and I will bring a friend next time!". There is nothing as rewarding to our choristers as performing to an enthusiastic crowd.

To our distinguished Artistic Director, our dedicated choristers and devoted audience--a sincere "Thank you." We look forward to celebrating this anniversary with a special encore performance of Dean Rishel's Requiem for the Children. We are very excited to be partnering with Symphony in C (formerly Haddonfield Symphony) and ChildrenSong of NJ for this concert series. A portion of the proceeds from the anniversary concerts will be donated to Robin's Nest of Glassboro, New Jersey, a wonderful organization that provides services to children and families in need.

We hope you will join us in celebrating this special anniversary of the Greater South Jersey Chorus.



**Above, from top to bottom:** performers Terry Duvall, Meg Kobb, Maria Alu, Dean Rishel, Randy Cornell, Jim Diaz, Emily Gibson, Santana Smith, Austen Wilson, and Oleksii Ivanchenko



## Artists' Showcase a Great Success

The Greater South Jersey Chorus presented the 2011 Artists' Showcase on Sunday, October 16 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Cherry Hill. A record number of participants performed, and it was universally agreed that the artistic quality of the performances achieved a record level.

The great majority of the performers were non-professionals--members of the chorus--who have developed their soloist skills to a remarkable degree. Their choices of repertoire represented a wide range of composers and styles--from Monteverdi and Mozart to Barber and Finzi. Returning to take part were two professional soloists: **Maria Alu** and **Emily Gibson** presented works by Donizetti and Mozart respectively, to the great appreciation of the audience. Chorus accompanist **Oleksii Ivanchenko** presented a bravura performance of a lesser-known solo work by Rachmaninoff.

Artistic Director **Dean Rishel** has maintained a steady commitment to the Artists' Showcase since his return to the helm of the chorus in 2006. "This is an opportunity for our friends, family and patrons to hear the amazing individual talents of our singers. And it is an opportunity for our singers to expand their skills and experience into an area where many of them might not be able to go."

The Artists' Showcase is not the only such opportunity. Mark your calendars now, and plan to attend our winter tribute to popular music genres, the **GSJC Cabaret**, scheduled for March 10, 2012. Come and enjoy your favorite songs from Broadway, film and the world of pop music.

**Left:** Soprano Carla Branyan accepts congratulations from Nancy Seely; Baritone Mike Alu and Artistic Director Dean Rishel with their daughters, featured singers Maria Alu and Emily Gibson; Soprano Meg Kobb, Assistant Artistic Director Ken Ewan, and Conducing Intern Austen Wilson share impressions of the Showcase.

Photos courtesy of Janet Van Sant.

## Home for the Holidays, *continued from p. 1*

number. The GSJC women will present a heartfelt tribute to the modern holiday shopper--rushed, hassled, harried, courting bankruptcy--yet still determined to snag the bargain of the season! Dare we hope that they will be the only ones singing the "Christmas Shopping Blues"?

This holiday concert will feature an unusual amount of individual participation by chorus members--of both a vocal and an instrumental nature. Vocal solos or duets feature in five of the selections, while chorus members and friends will take instrumental support roles in two others. For the first time, this concert will feature a piano solo by our outstanding accompanist, Oleksii Ivanchenko, who will play a virtuoso arrangement of the venerable "O Holy Night."

Finally, we will wrap up this holiday extravaganza with a sing-along! Mr. Rishel and the chorus will lead the audience through a selection of holiday favorites--guaranteeing that all of us will leave the concert imbued with the holiday spirit in all its facets.

So, the times they are a'changin', and the Greater South Jersey

Chorus is embracing change in our twentieth anniversary year. We hope that our supporters will take delight in our presentation this season; that it will evoke for everyone the joy, the wonder, the rapture--and even the silliness--of the holiday!

## Here's the Pitch, *continued from p. 1*

So this year we will indeed be "Home for the Holidays," reveling in the magic of Christmas and Hanukkah. When I was a very young child there was a popular song making the rounds called "Let's Take an Old-Fashioned Walk." That's exactly what we're offering with our December musical evenings--an old-fashioned walk through the music of this magical season. We're sure you and your families will enjoy strolling along with us through a snow-globe Christmas!

# 2011-2012 Performance Schedule -- Save These Dates!

## Artists' Showcase

Sunday October 16th, 2011  
3:00 PM  
Unitarian Universalist Church,  
401 Kings Highway  
Cherry Hill, NJ

*Hear chorus members and friends perform works from the classical repertoire. You will enjoy operatic arias, art song and instrumental performance.*

## Home for the Holidays

Sunday December 11th, 2011  
3:30 PM  
Christ The King Catholic Church,  
200 Windsor Ave.,  
Haddonfield, NJ

Saturday December 17th, 2011  
8:00 PM  
St. Isaac Jogues RC Church,  
3 Lord Place,  
Marlton, NJ

*Bring the whole family to a delightful program of holiday favorites and songs of the season!*

## Third Annual Cabaret

Saturday March 10th, 2012  
7:00 PM  
Unitarian Universalist Church,  
401 Kings Highway  
Cherry Hill, NJ

*Our ever-popular showcase for members' talents for lighter music. Come and enjoy your favorite songs from Broadway, film and the world of pop music.*

## Gala 20th Anniversary Concert

Saturday April 28th, 2012  
8:00 PM  
St. Isaac Jogues RC Church,  
3 Lord Place,  
Marlton, NJ

Sunday May 6th, 2012  
3:30 PM  
St. Isaac Jogues RC Church,  
3 Lord Place,  
Marlton, NJ

*Join us to celebrate our 20th year of excellent music-making. We feature the moving "Requiem for the Children," assisted by Symphony in C and ChildrenSong.*

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