

## Happy Anniversary, GSJC!

This season, two factors have lined up to give all of us in the Greater South Jersey Chorus a unique musical experience.

The first special event is our celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Greater South Jersey Chorus. Some of us experienced the very earliest days of the chorus and can remember the struggles that had to be overcome to get GSJC where it is today. Since we not only survived those challenging times but are now flourishing, we indeed have cause for celebration!

Part of this birthday observation will be our major celebratory spring concert, featuring a work which the GSJC premiered in the spring of 1996--Dean Rishel's magnum opus, the *Requiem for the Children*. More good news: we will be joined by a 16-piece chamber orchestra that is part of South Jersey's superb professional **Symphony in C** (formerly the Haddonfield Symphony, which itself was formerly the umbrella group for the Haddonfield Symphony Chorus which is now known as--you guessed it--the Greater South Jersey Chorus.) Rounding out the three groups required to mount this piece, we will be joined by a children's chorus which was once the Greater South Jersey Children's Chorus and has now become the distinguished and well-known **ChildrenSong**



of New Jersey. We three organizations will unite (reunite, one could even say) in April and May to present two performances of the *Requiem for the Children*. They should be events fit for a 20th anniversary gala!

The second special circumstance has been our access to a great deal of market research and audience polling across the state and even across the nation. From this research we have learned much about what makes choruses successful and what audiences desire and will buy tickets to hear. One of the revelations of that research is that audiences look forward to a traditional Christmas/Holiday concert with familiar favorites and seasonal music--all of which will put them in the holiday spirit. They also want some programs that are less formal and more accessible to children. With this in mind, our holiday concert will include a larger component of familiar holiday favorites, and we are engaging a "guest star" soprano to add a more festive element to the program. We will include an audience sing-along and a small group to perform a novelty act, along with many familiar holiday songs. It will be a family-friendly evening that will offer something for every listener.

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In past newsletters I've shared with you the tricky process of picking the repertoire for our concerts; the efforts to keep people relaxed during the audition process so they can put their best foot forward; and my enthusiasm for the music we have programmed for the upcoming concert. But I have never addressed one question that I am often asked, in various guises: "What's it like to conduct a concert?" This is a tough question to answer, because it's so difficult to explain to someone who has not been on a podium.

Let me say first off that, no matter how it looks to the audience, I do not get tired in the course of the concert. My arms never get tired and I never feel any fatigue. We can thank adrenalin for that! When a concert is coming to its conclusion, I honestly feel like I could do the whole thing over again: I feel filled with energy and excitement. A few hours later I might feel exhausted, but not during or immediately after a concert. And if I'm a little under the weather at

concert time, I'm unaware of it while I'm conducting. Any ailments disappear and I usually feel wonderful.

## Here's the Pitch by Dean Rishel, GSJC Artistic Director



### "What's It Like?"

The reason for this is that I am so intensely focused on the performance of the music that it sweeps anything else away. But what am I -- or any conductor -- thinking about while conducting? Speaking for myself, I might at any given moment be:

- Remembering any tricky or trouble spots in the music. Did we struggle to learn any entrances or nuances in rehearsal? In those moments, how can I support the singers with the clarity and precision of my gestures?
- Checking my stance and my posture. If I model good singing posture for the chorus, they should reflect this back to me and sing with better technique.
- Staying aware of the sound world of a given song. Am I showing with my face, body and gestures the tone, the degree of legato,

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# Grant Stew

by Mary Willard, GSJC Board Vice-President

I'm often asked "Mary, what is the recipe for a successful grant stew? After all, our grant stew earned us \$5000 in grants from the State of New Jersey in each of the last three years!"

Well, although I'm jealously guarding my excellent recipe for white wine sangria, I'm happy to share this one. There are a few caveats: while the grant stew will last for three years, the initial ingredients and how they are mixed are key and take about 4 months to get together. Your stew will also need quarterly maintenance and yearly stirring. But, if you dare, here goes!

1. The base of our stew, of course, is an excellent roux of mission and values: for us it is our goal to present a broad range of music in an excellent fashion and to educate our community in addition to entertaining it.
2. The next ingredient is a comprehensive listing of our history and geographic/cultural mix.
3. Next, fold in a detailed explanation of how we have achieved our goals during the previous three years, how we plan to continue meeting our objectives and more importantly to exceed them during the coming three years.
4. In order to produce the juiciest flavor and take home the "Best Grant Stew" ribbon from the state fair, you want to add in the correct order the following:
  - a summary of the music that we have performed,
  - examples of our community outreach,
  - our long range strategy plan and current tactics,
  - a detailed budget,
  - a discussion of how we plan to meet our own fiscal needs.

5. Finally, throw on the necessary garnish of copies of the program books for the last three years, the annual budgets, the long range planning instrument and pictures of our activities as well as 4 examples of our performances over the previous cycle.



Once you have mixed carefully, let things literally stew at the New Jersey State Council on the Arts for several months. Then, if you were careful in assembling and combining your ingredients, voila! In July you will have grant stew!

Now as I said, this stew is quite longstanding, but does need some special care. Three times a year, you will supply the State Council with an updated budget projection/adjustment and detail on your progress in achieving your plan. At the end of each fiscal year, you must produce a report detailing the years' activities, proof of your quality measurement and attention to the voice of the customer, a final budget for the year and justification for why you did or didn't meet your goals. Eventually, the grant stew has boiled down to a mere trickle and you are ready to start all over again with a brand new batch!

So, dear reader, that is indeed all it takes to make a robust grant stew. ALL cooks are welcome in this process and if interested, they may contact me, Mary Willard, at [www.greatersjchorus.org](http://www.greatersjchorus.org) to learn from my grant-cooking experience.

*Bon Appetit!*

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

- the desired degree of rhythmic vitality or the relaxation of the pulse? to create a more ethereal, less accented effect when it's needed, or an emphatic rhythmic pulse when that's called for. Am I modeling the volume that's needed for every given phrase?
- Mindful of the audience. Sometimes I can "feel" through my back just how the audience is receiving a song, and wondering if I should make any adjustments to ensure that the audience is involved with and enjoying the song we're singing.
- Aware of the noise in the room. I know we're recording and I'm often very aware of sneezes, coughs, dropping books, toddlers fussing--and thinking "Well, there goes a clean recording of that song." Then I have to remind myself that the concert is for the audience, not for the CD!

But I don't have to worry about every tiny little detail: the chorus is prepared and the details have taken care of. My job is just to remind the singers--through the way I conduct--of everything we've worked on in rehearsal.

Finally, the most often-asked question: Do I get nervous before a concert? Easy answer: No! I'm excited and my mind is racing to remember everything I want to do. But nervous? Never!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Rish".

## Happy Anniversary, GSJC! cont. from p. 1

So it will be a very special year, indeed. There will be some innovations in our programming, and the chance to repeat a major work which is some of the most moving music that the Greater South Jersey Chorus has performed. And we will have the opportunity to join forces with the other two best-known and distinguished musical organizations in South Jersey.

We are sure you will all want to be part of this celebration of our 20th year of making beautiful music.

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## The Newbie

by Jim Díaz, GSJC Tenor 1



From the moment I took my place among my GSJC chorus mates on the riser this past April, I knew that all the time and effort had been so worth it! I was doing something significant that made me happy and fulfilled and I was able to give back and share my gift of music with others. You cannot beat that feeling. But it was not just the performance end of things that gives me such joy: it is also the giving back!

It is never easy to be the “New Kid on the Block”, especially among so many seasoned veterans. I was the only new addition to the tenor section: I had no fellow newbie tenor to commiserate with. Though I tend to be shy person, I know from earlier chorus experiences how important it is to become familiar with your section mates. Fortunately, the two gentlemen that I first introduced myself to were Randy and Ken. Randy is our section leader and Ken is the assistant conductor of our chorus and the director of music for the Unitarian Church where we practice. Both were extremely welcoming and became great mentors for me during my first season.

After only a few rehearsals I felt right at home. I had established my seating space within the section (first seat, second row) and quickly established a routine of getting my music prepared in my folder, pencil out for marking my score, a bottle of water (at room temperature) and Ricola drops to help with the occasional frog and dry mouth. I had truly arrived!

I have joined this this outstanding chorus at a very important time: 2011-2012 marks the Greater South Jersey Chorus’ 20th Anniversary season. Our distinguished director, Dean Rishel, has already begun preparing us for the musical demands of our upcoming anniversary year. Our spring 2011 concert featured the challenging *Dixit Dominus* by G. F. Handel presenting us with music which by all standards was a most challenging repertoire.

Thanks to our director, and the many hours put in by the dedicated chorus, we performed this piece with the strength, style and elegance which the music demanded. These performances stretched us as a chorus, calling upon each of us to improve on our vocal and performance skill sets and it really showed. Each performance was greeted by our audience with overwhelming applause and the occasional “Bravi!” Both performances were just magical: I will treasure the memory for the rest of my life.

As a newbie, I quickly learned that this chorus runs on the dedication of many volunteers who give their time, talents and treasure to the organization. They make it possible for us all to do what we ultimately love to do—sing and perform. I was able to volunteer my marketing skills to help promote our concerts and help establish a base of future GSJC members from our local high schools. These are ongoing projects that help support this organization in both the present and the future.

As a new member, you might have the talent and skills to take part in or even to lead any of a number of volunteer activities. It is as simple as asking “What can I do to help?” You will quickly become familiar with the key people who have welcomed me: alto Marna Carlton, who is the President of our Board of Directors. Dr. Mary Willard, who is the Board Vice-President; Secretary Nancy Simon; Personnel Committee Chair Rose Boland—and of course our Artistic Director and Conductor Dean Rishel. Many others graciously give of themselves to support the chorus in various roles, and often in multiple roles.

So, I sit here now, preparing for my second season with great anticipation and excitement. I continue to aim high: next week I will be auditioning for GSJC’s select chamber ensemble. With this also being the GSJC’s 20th Anniversary season, I could not be more excited and proud that I can play many roles in the events planned for this celebration.

Being a part of this group has given me great joy both on and off the risers. It is an honor and a privilege that I proudly call myself a member of the Greater South Jersey Chorus. So, for you newbies (and prospective newbies): if you experience half the joy that I had in my first season with the chorus, you are in for a real treat. Welcome to the Greater South Jersey Chorus!

# 2011-2012 Performance Schedule

## Artists' Showcase

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

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

## "Gala 20th Anniversary Concert"

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

## "Home for the Holidays"

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

## Third Annual "Cabaret"

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

and

Sunday May 6th, 2012  
3:30 PM  
Christ The King Catholic Church,  
200 Windsor Ave.,  
Haddonfield, NJ

and

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