Choral Activities at MSU ~ Fall 2011

We have an excellent group of new and continuing graduate students in choral conducting. We have two new DMA students. Joel Tranquilla received degrees from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada, and the University of Michigan and is currently serving as chorus master of the Windsor (Ontario) Symphony Orchestra and as artistic director of the Windsor Classic Chorale. Frank Watkins holds an undergraduate degree from Jackson State University and master’s degrees from the University of Arkansas (in piano) and Northwestern University (in choral conducting). He previously taught at John Tyler High School in Tyler, Texas, and at Jarvis Christian College. Our new DMA students are Dwight Jilek, a graduate of Concordia College, who comes to us after leading the choral program at Northfield (Minnesota) High School; Barbara Lamon, who has completed her seventh year of teaching at Vienna Middle School and Northeastern High School in South Vienna/Fairport, Ohio; and Kyle Zeuch, who has been teaching at River High School in Brownsville, Texas. Both Barb and Kyle are graduates of Capitol University in Columbus, Ohio, where they were students of our DMA alumni Lynda Hasseler. Our summer master’s program continues to attract students from Michigan as well as other parts of the country. This summer we welcomed six new students: Maggie Blair, a graduate of the University of Kentucky, who teaches at Bowling Green (Kentucky) High School; Christy Elsea, a graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia who teaches in Rolla, Missouri; Ben Henri, who holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and currently teaches at Grosse Pointe (Michigan) North High School; Christopher Nickelson, who received his undergraduate degree from Ithaca College; and now teaches at Winchester High School in Boston and serves as music director at First Congregational Church of Stoughton, Massachusetts. Ryan Person, a Luther College alum who is the choral director at West High School in Iowa City, Iowa; and Garth Starr, a graduate of the University of Michigan-Flint who teaches at Seymour Elementary School in Flushing, Michigan, and directs the Lapeer County Concert Choir.

In addition, Brandon Urech, vocal music teacher at Stoney Creek High School in Rochester, Michigan, has been accepted into our DMA program and began his studies this summer.

In our continuing effort to save paper and minimize printing costs, we are not including a schedule of vocal-choral events for the 2011-12 season with this mailing. You can find those performances on the College of Music website (music.msu.edu) in the “Ensembles” section under “Choral.” Or, I’d be happy to send you a PDF of the schedule on request (rayld@music.msu.edu). It’s an amazing list and serves as a reminder of the many superb performance opportunities that are available at the MSU College of Music.

Performance Highlights

On Saturday, November 5, the MSU Choral Union, Choral, and State Singers will join the Lansing Symphony Orchestra, under the baritone of Timothy Muffitt, for a program that includes Mozart’s “Coronation” Mass. On Saturday, December 10, the same ensembles, along with the MSU Children’s Choir, conducted by artistic director Kristin Zaryski, will join forces with Leen Gregoriant and Jonathan Reed and the MSU Symphony Orchestra for MSU’s “Home for the Holidays,” a concert of seasonal music for the entire family. On Sunday, April 15, the University Chorale will perform Britten’s Cantata Misericordium (conducted by Sandra Snow) and Bach’s motet Der Geist hilft unsrer Seelen (conducted by David Rayl) and will then join with the Choral Union...
for a performance of the Fauré Requiem. The academic year concludes on Saturday, April 28, when the combined forces of the Choral Union, Chorale, and State Singers join the MSU Symphony Orchestra and faculty soloists for a performance of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony. This will be Maestro Gregorian’s final concert before retiring.

The MSU Opera Theatre will again present two fully staged productions with orchestra this year: Gilbert and Sullivan’s The Pirates of Penzance on November 18, 19 and 20; and Offenbach’s monumental Tales of Hoffmann on March 30, 31, and April 1. Both productions are double cast and include many undergraduates, a tribute to the continuing quality of our vocal program.

**Gifts in Action**

**Helen Bartlett Fellowship in Choral Music Established**

Dr. Dale Bartlett, retired college of Music faculty member, MSU alum (BM ’55; MM ’56), and current conductor of the Lansing Arts Chorale, endowed a fellowship in memory of his late wife, Helen, who was a long-time member of the Choral Union. This year’s recipient is master’s student **Dwight Jilek**. Thank you, Dale!

**Robert Harris Fellowship**

Dr. Robert Harris, director of choral organizations at Northwestern University, a Michigan State alumnus (PhD ’74), and former MSU director of choral activities, continues to fund the Robert A. Harris Award for Excellence in Choral Performance to be given annually to an outstanding choral musician. This year’s recipient is doctoral student **Zeb Highben**. Thank you, Bob!

**Smith Fellowship Recipient**

The Charles K. Smith Endowed Fellowship in Choral Conducting, created upon Smith’s retirement in 2002 by members of the MSU Choral Society, is now fully endowed and provides important financial help to graduate students in choral conducting. This year’s recipient is master’s student **Kyle Zeuch**. Thank you to the many donors who have contributed to this endowment over the years!

**Guest Clinicians**

Karen Kennedy, newly named director of choral activities at the University of Miami, will be our guest for the Choral Invitational on October 24, where she will work with eight high school choirs from around the state. She will spend the following day working with our ensembles and graduate and undergraduate conducting students.

David Wordsworth, music director of England’s Addison Singers, was our guest on October 3-4. He is especially noted for his performances of new works by contemporary British composers. This repertoire was the focus of his presentations to our graduate students. This year, the society provides assistance for DMA students Zeb Highben and Ryan Beeken and MM students Megan Boyd, Kyle Zeuch, and Dwight Jilek.

**Keeping Up with MSU Alumni**

This section of the newsletter is intended to help you keep up with the careers of our MSU choral alumni. It’s a very impressive list of accomplishments and demonstrates that our graduates are leaders in our profession. The list is obviously incomplete, so please contact me if you’ve recently changed jobs or want to share some aspect of your professional life with our alumni.

- **Jessica Allen**, MM ’04, conducts the Women’s Glee Club at Middlebury College, in Vermont. Last fall she taught voice and performance skills at Kharkiv State University of Arts, Ukraine.
- **Ross C. Bernhardt**, DMA ’97, won first prize in the Amadeus Choral Composition Competition for “Salmo 23,” which will be published in Spain by Coro Amadeus. Another of his compositions, “The Gift Disguised,” won first place in the Ithaca College Choral Composition Competition (“Salmo 23” won one of the six finalist slots in the same competition, making Bernhardt the first composer ever to have two compositions in the finals.) A third composition, “How Clear, How Lovely Bright,” won special commendation in a competition sponsored by the Phoenix Singers of Shrewsbury (England), who performed it’s premiere.
- **John Bragle** completed his MM degree this past summer. He continues as director of choirs at the Interlochen Arts Academy.

**Choral Society News**

The Choral Society sponsored a Cabaret Evening on Saturday, October 1. This was a relaxed, informal evening of fun, food, and fellowship with entertainment by Choral Union members as well as some of our graduate conducting students.

The Choral Society will again sponsor a “singing along” Messiah on Sunday, December 4, at Edgewood United Church in East Lansing featuring student soloists. This annual event has been well attended and enthusiastically received in recent years. That was even true last year, when we had eight inches of snow but still managed to attract a good crowd.

Through its dues and fundraising activities the Choral Society provides scholarship assistance to graduate students in choral conducting. This year, the society provides assistance for DMA students Zeb Highben and Ryan Beeken and MM students Megan Boyd, Kyle Zeuch, and Dwight Jilek.

ACDA Division Convention

I hope you will be able to attend the ACDA Central Division Conference in Ft. Wayne on March 8-10, where you will be able to enjoy performances by the Northwestern University Chorale, conducted by Robert A. Harris (PhD ’74); the Goshen College Men’s Chorus, conducted by Scott Hochstetler (DMA ’98); and the choir of Stoney Creek High School in Rochester, Michigan, conducted by DMA student Brandon Ulrich. Unfortunately, neither Dr. Reed, Dr. Snow, nor I will be able to attend the convention, so there will be no MSU reception. But we look forward to seeing you at the National Conference in Dallas in 2013.

- **Marella Briones**, MM ’05, is employed by Mozart Systems, an information technology firm in St. Louis. She is a paid member of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus and regularly performs as a soloist on their outreach programs.
- ** Roxanne Bruner** completed her MM degree this past summer and has taken a new position as director of choirs at Shrine Catholic High School in Royal Oak, Michigan.
- **Jeffrey Buettner**, DMA ’05, spent part of last year as a Fulbright Scholar at Kharkiv State University of Arts, Ukraine, where he conducted and taught American choral music. He also was the recipient of a grant from the Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation to study seventeenth-century contrapuntal vocal music in Leipzig and London. He remains on the faculty at Middlebury College in Vermont.
- **Jennifer Tompa Burkermp, MM ’06, will direct the Hinsdale Central High School Chamber Choir in a featured performance at the Illinois Music Education Conference in January.
- **Andrew Crane**, DMA ’05, has accepted the position of director of choral activities at East Carolina University. This past summer he sang with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. In March he will present an interest session on vocal instruction for inexperienced singers at ACDA’s Southern Division conference.
- **Jerry Custer**, DMA ABD, conducted the Nassau County (New York) All-County Chorus, lectured on rehearsal techniques and Renaissance choral music to the doctoral conducting students at the University of South Carolina, and assumed music directorship of the Seaway Chorale and Orchestra (Trenton, Michigan). His symphony for chorus and orchestra on poems by Walt Whitman, “Everything Indicates,” was premiered by the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra and Chorus of New York at Carnegie Hall.