

The Harmonium Inchoirer

Choral Society

Harmonium Teams with Colonial Symphony

On May 6, Harmonium joined forces with the Colonial Symphony to present Mozart's *Requiem* in a "new" realization by Harvard's Robert Levin. The *Requiem* was not completed at the time of Mozart's death; it was finished by his student Süßmayer. "Süßmayer was not nearly in the same league as Mozart, but then who was?" said Colonial's new Maestro, Paul Hostetter in a recent *Daily Record* interview. "Levin looked very critically at all of Mozart's work, especially works for voice, to see what was idiomatic." The result was the thinning out of some heavy orchestrations and the addition of some elaborate fugues to balance the movements preceding them. "The *Lacrymosa* 'Amen' is especially difficult and exciting," said Harmonium's Artistic Director Anne Matlack, "Folks who thought they knew the work found they didn't!"

Morristown's Community Theater presents acoustical challenges to chorus and orchestra. "I insisted we get the proper acoustical shell, which was generously loaned by Morristown High School," said Dr. Matlack, "Otherwise we'd just be screaming the quiet moments. A lot of sweat equity went into moving shells and Harmonium's own standing risers—Hostetter himself, along with several tenors and basses!"

The result was worth it. *The Star-Ledger's* Willa Conrad called the performance "shimmering, clean, and well-balanced, prepared with detailed thoroughness." Bernie Abrams of Recorder Publishing wrote "the superb Harmonium chorus balanced perfectly with the orchestra, the solo voices standing out in vivid relief like diamonds on black velvet."

Added excitement came from that fact that May 6 was the due date of Paul Hostetter and wife Elizabeth Schulz's firstborn child, but luckily she held off a week!

A Taste of Harmonium—October Fundraiser

The date for this year's fundraiser, "A Taste of Harmonium," is Saturday, October 14th, at Grace Church in Madison. We've planned an evening full of surprises to delight one and all. Looking forward to Harmonium's holiday concerts, the ambiance of the evening will evoke a decidedly French feel, with wine, cheese, hors d'œuvres, and pastries. Both live and silent auctions will take place, along with a concert of French music presented by the acclaimed Harmonium Chamber Singers.

Come support Harmonium and get to know us. Our members volunteer countless hours to run the organization, yet we need help on the financial side. Members pay dues but this does not cover the costs of running our organization. No longer qualifying for the Dodge grant that previously supported the high school composition contest, we must raise these funds another way. Bid on a silent auction item; participate in the live auction!

Here's a hint of what's to come: a week at a Colorado home as an auction prize. Imagine spending a week nestled in the mountains near Steamboat! This package includes seven nights lodging, round-trip transportation from Hayden /Steamboat Airport, daily transportation to ski area and/or other local attractions, all breakfasts, three– four dinners, plus expert local advice and mountain guide. The guest suite sleeps five. Available in summer, too. Think hiking, rafting, fishing, world-class music festivals, or just gazing at the view while sipping a margarita— dates to be arranged in advance. Other auction items include donations from many area arts groups such as Colonial Symphony, Playrights Theater, and Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, as well as services ranging from piano tunings to homemade stews.

Tickets include both auctions, refreshments, and the Chamber Singers concert: \$40 in advance or \$50 at the door. You can also order tickets by returning the coupon (see insert). More information will be available on Harmonium's website or by phoning Beth Lohner, co-chair of the event, at 973-993-8778.

“A Well of Memories” Sung Memorably Well

Harmonium, Anne Matlack, Artistic Director, “A Well of Memories,” featuring music of Elgar, Barnwell, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Barber, Victoria, Harris and others including Jonathan MacMillan, winner of the Ninth Annual Choral Composition Contest for High-School Age Students. Presented at Grace Church, Madison (This review can be found at <http://classicalnjsociety.org/> and may be reprinted.)

By Robert W. Butts

One sensed that it was going to be an enjoyable concert as soon as one entered Grace Church in Madison on Saturday, June 3. Singers were standing in the hall, conversing and smiling, radiating a relaxed anticipation of positive energy. These vibes proved real as Music Director Anne Matlack and Harmonium performed one of the most joy-filled and thoroughly pleasurable choral concerts one could hope for. Which was somewhat ironic considering the theme was “A Well of Memories,” meaning there were predominantly sad, nostalgic, sentimental emotions dripping from every selection. Yet, memories are a paradoxical mixture of warm recollections of joyful past times tinged with the realization of their very pastness.

The concert opened in Harmonium’s usual surround-sound manner, filling the church with *Wanting Memories* by Ysaye M. Barnwell. A slight “pop” sound was created immediately as the men sang rhythmic syllables while the women sang words telling of the memories of “the things that made me feel so wonderful when I was young.” In listening, I was struck by the character of the music, the rhythms and melodic shapes, the syllabic background motion and the overall ensemble sound. At times, it reminded me of African music yet at the same time made me think of calypso or Caribbean music.

These thoughts came back to me when they reached the final work of the first half: *Vamuvamba*, a traditional Tiriki song arranged by Kenyan composer Boniface Mganga. First, I was struck by the unique beauty of African ensemble singing styles. It also reminded me how steeped we still are in the stereotypical misconception that African music means dominated by rhythm and percussion. Important as those factors are, it’s easy to forget that several

African cultures have produced magnificent music in an a cappella ensemble tradition as well, with its own distinctive harmonic balance and fluidity. Matlack and Harmonium sang this selection with deep understanding and involvement, bringing forth the highly sensual beauty with which they vocally enveloped the audience. As I listened, I then thought back to that opening number – an immediate memory/recall within a concert devoted to memories – and was reminded of the strong influence of African traditions on Caribbean cultures, perhaps the source of my inability to fully identify the influences I’d noticed on Barnwell’s piece. In considering the elements of similarity, I was also led to ponder the oral transmission which some of these sound influences had on the a cappella ensemble singing of early rock ’n roll.

Between the two selections were several pleasant numbers by Ron Jeffers, Stephan Chatman and Stephen Hatfield along with an energetic change of pace with Charles Villiers Stanford’s *Quick! We Have But a Second*.

Particularly interesting were three works by people Matlack described as “legitimate composers”: Tchaikovsky, Brahms and Barber. Of course, her designation really was made tongue-in-cheek and referred more to their general recognition and place in history; but with the very first notes of Tchaikovsky’s *Blazheni Yazhe Izbral*, it was clear that we were hearing a composer, if not necessarily of greater legitimacy, then of deeper complexity. Powerfully rich sounds and effective harmonization filled the church with a darkly expressive sonority. Each vocal section was distinct, yet at all times fitting within the brief psalm’s full-bodied texture. Brahms’s *Verlorene Jugend* was a very satisfying work filled with Brahmsian sentimentality and melodic wealth. Barber’s *We Have Lost Even This Twilight* (part of a larger collection set to the poetry of Pablo Neruda) was sensitively performed, with every delicate nuance perfectly conveyed. The terrific emotional arc was charged with intensity and poignancy.

There were many more great selections on the second half, but pride of place for me belonged to *A Shropshire Lament* by Jonathan MacMillan. If the composer’s name is unknown, it’s because he is the

Review continues on page 6

Meet Harmonium's Young Composers

Jonathan MacMillan was the Grand Prize Winner of Harmonium Choral Society's Ninth Annual Choral Composition Contest for High-School Age Student with his composition *A Shropshire Lament*, a setting of an A. E. Housman poem. Harmonium gave the world première of the work at its June 3rd concert in Grace Episcopal Church, Madison. Not only was this the first time the rest of the world had heard the piece, it was also the first time the composer had heard the piece performed. Because of scheduling conflicts, MacMillan had been unable to attend any of the group's rehearsals. After listening intently to the performance, he was jubilant at the result. Pictured at right is (left to right) MacMillan listening; his dad; his sponsor Thomas Carlo Bo, Artistic Director of Opera at Florham; and his impressed younger brother!

MacMillan, a sophomore at Vernon Township High School, is not a stranger to winning composition contests, having won second place in the 2005 New Jersey American String Teachers Association composition contest with *Passacaglia for String Orchestra*. In fact, the orchestra is his primary musical venue: he is concertmaster of the Northern New Jersey Youth Orchestra and principal violist of the Northern New Jersey Regional Orchestra. He has been a member of New Jersey all-state orchestras for several years. MacMillan also plays jazz piano, and his winning choral composition has an accomplished piano accompaniment.

MacMillan won a \$1000 award as Grand Prize Winner. His sponsor, Thomas Carlo Bo, with whom MacMillan is studying music theory and composition, is clearly impressed with the natural talent of his young student. "His composing is prodigious," Bo remarked. "I just try to teach him the fundamentals of composition without getting in the way of what he's producing, and hope that the two parts will someday come together."

Composition Contest First Runner-Up **Julian Cartwright** is also a violinist and guitarist who has won performance competitions on both instruments. Cartwright, a senior at Summit High School, is first violin in the school's Hilltop Quartet, which was



Jonathan MacMillan listening to the performance of his winning piece; his dad; his sponsor Thomas Carlo Bo, Artistic Director of Opera at Florham; and his impressed younger brother.

PHOTO BY LOUISE KARGER

selected for the Twenty-Second Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Young Artist Program, among other honors. His compositions have won prizes in a number of competitions and have also been performed by Juilliard's Pre-College Orchestra and Music Educators National Conference. Cartwright will receive \$250 for his composition *Memory*. His sponsor was Wayne Mallette, Summit High School Choral Director.

Matthew C. Brown, a junior at Jackson Memorial High School, and Califon resident **Brenton Partridge**, a sophomore at Voorhees High School in Glen Gardner, received honorable mentions for their entries—*Music, When Soft Voices Die* and *An Ancient Air*, respectively.

Contest Winners continues on page 7

Harmonium Featured on NPR

Harmonium was featured on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" in January, 2006, in a piece called "Choral Singing and Happiness" put together by our new-to-Harmonium alto Michelle Mercer, a music critic and freelancer who also teaches journalism at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison. This turned out to be the most emailed NPR story of January and beyond, thanks to the many folks in the choral world who sent it around! If you missed it, you can find the link to the podcast at www.harmonium.org

Upcoming Season Features French Christmas



Christopher Kenniff

December Concert

On December 9 and 10, 2006, in the beautiful acoustic of the Church of the Redeemer in Morristown, Harmonium's concert will feature the a cappella *Mass* and *Four Christmas Motets* by Francis Poulenc (1899-1963). "Poulenc's style is quite individual—and so French!" says Artistic Director Anne Matlack. "Although the *Mass* is less well-known than the popular *Gloria*, it has the same appeal in a shorter work—it is less often performed because of the difficulty of its a cappella nature. The *Four Christmas Motets* are better known and quite popular; and Baroque composer Charpentier's brief *Christmas Cantata* will be presented between the two sets in the first half to 'cleanse the palate.' The second half will feature the acclaimed Chamber Singers, followed by French carols in fabulous arrangements by Alice Parker, Stephen Hatfield, and others."

The concert will also feature a chamber ensemble of flute, oboe and bassoon.

March Concert Features Guitarist

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Romancero Gitano* for Chamber Singers and Guitar (Spanish text by Lorca) and Matthew Harris's *Oceanic Eyes* for full chorus, guitar and string quartet (text by Neruda in English translation) will be the central works of the concert on March 3 and 4, 2007.



*14 year-old champion fiddler,
Connor Leszczuk, guest artist in
June 2007 concert.*

The concerts will be Harmonium's first collaboration with Christopher Kenniff, classical guitarist, critically acclaimed recitalist, and chamber musician who performs throughout the New York metropolitan area and abroad. *The Star-Ledger* has described him as "a young player with a lush, liquid tone, remarkably clean fingering and a nicely varied touch," while *Classical New Jersey* writes "Kenniff's presentation and playing stood out among the concerts of the Access to Art Series. His quiet, poignant play with dynamics was mesmerizing... his playing was idiomatic, beautifully voiced, and technically flawless...he left the listeners with the impression that he himself was thrilled to give the performance." Mr. Kenniff was awarded first prize at the Councour de Guitarre (Quebec, Canada), the Music Teachers National Association Competition and the National Federation of Music Clubs Biannual Competition. He holds BM and MM degrees *Magna cum Laude* from Southern Methodist University where he was awarded the Dallas Music Teacher's Award "presented to an outstanding undergraduate or graduate performer at SMU." He also holds an Artist Diploma from Indiana University. Kenniff is a member of Kean University's Concert Artist Faculty. He directs the American String Teacher's Association (New Jersey Chapter)

Solo Strings Competition, the annual ASTA NJ Chamber Music Institute, and the New Jersey Youth Symphony Classical Guitar Camp. Mr. Kenniff is frequently heard as a member of the critically acclaimed ensemble Duo Fresco with violist Brett Deubner. He has released a solo CD featuring works by Turina, Tedesco, Ponce, Dowland, Scarlatti and Mertz as well as a CD with Duo Fresco titled *Transfiguration* (www.duofresco.com).

No Place Like Home

The final concert of the season will be a typical eclectic mix around the theme "Songs of Home," including works by Paulus, Hatfield, Ramish, and Brahms, plus many folksongs and spirituals celebrating home. It will be the 10th anniversary of our Student Choral Composition Contest for High-School Age Students, and will also feature young Connor Leszczuk, fiddle, guest artist.

For ticket information, see the subscription season flyer in the middle of this newsletter.

Harmonium Goes West!

Former Harmonium alto and board member Val Davia and her husband Warren Luce and son Cory set off across the continent in June to "retire" to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Val served as President for several years, as well as singing MANY gigs with the outreach chorus and writing grants. She will be sorely missed!



Val Davia, husband Warren Luce (R), and son Cory (L) at their new home in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Although she loves her new locale Val writes: "Being here several weeks now, I realize how much of my social life revolved around singing. I so miss you all—both the music and the camaraderie." So far, she hasn't found any music groups other than church choirs, but is determined to find or start something once fall returns. And she's already plotting for a Rocky Mountain Harmonium tour. Meanwhile, you can bid on a week's stay in their brand new guest apartment (sleeps five) at Harmonium's "Taste of Harmonium" Fundraising Auction on October 14th. (See article on cover page).



View from Val's deck in Colorado.

Copp Wins Volunteer Award

Baritone and Board Member David Copp was honored at the annual Volunteers of Morris County celebration in May. He was honored for his work with the Harmonium board, tour committee, Outreach Chorus, and much more. "David makes the world a better place, and we are fortunate to know him. It's his art form, and like everything he turns his talents to, it's well done, yet unassuming," said his letter of recommendation from Harmonium. Congratulations, David!

Replacement CDs Available

Some CDs from December 2005's concert, "A Wreath of Wisdom," and March 2006's concert, "A Wealth of Blessings," have a manufacturing defect and won't play correctly in some older CD players. If you are having difficulty with your CDs, please contact Harmonium for replacements: [Email: manager@harmonium.org](mailto:manager@harmonium.org) / [Phone: 973-538-6969](tel:973-538-6969).

Review, continued from page 2

winner of Harmonium's Ninth Annual Choral Composition Contest for High-School Age Students. Though only a sophomore at Vernon Township High School, MacMillan demonstrated a sophisticated compositional awareness. His writing was technically solid and consistently engaging. Audience attention was grabbed immediately with the introductory piano passages and increased with the well blended vocal entrances. His harmonic sense, while largely within the bounds of conventional tonality, was interesting and filled with effective surprises. The relationship between the piano and the voices was especially intriguing. It rarely resembled accompaniment, but was more of an individual voice of its own, yet was supportive and part of the whole even when maintaining an independent distance. The greatest tribute to the composition was something I and a couple of other listeners felt: of all the wonderful pieces on the program, MacMillan's setting of Houseman's poem was one piece I would most like to hear again.

Having said that, however, I must also say that I would welcome another hearing of almost every other piece as well. Tomas Luis de Victoria's *Jesu Dulcis Memoria* was beautifully performed. Luis Carlos Romero's *El Mambi* (in an arrangement by Carlos Abril) was filled with evocative sentiments, conveying images of a Cuba known now only from the memory-filled recollections of those who knew the island in pre-Castro days. Blind Blake's *Run, Come, See Jerusalem* was filled with tremendous exuberance.

The concert closed with two songs guaranteed to bring forth nostalgic feelings and the poignancy of memories, though the songs themselves, like all memorable events, might not have a specific so much as a general sentiment of nostalgia. *The Sidewalks of New York* is one of those songs so familiar, it's hard to believe it was actually written (Charles Lawlor and James Blake, here arranged by Robert de Cormier). An extremely nice touch was Matlack's invitation to sing along – an invitation the audience didn't hesitate to accept. Appropriately, Harmonium closed with a deeply moving performance of *Auld Lang Syne*.

But, just as Robbie Burns' *Auld Land Syne* often signals the end of something at the beginning of another, so, too, did Harmonium not exactly close with this classic, but chose to encore with a rousing and thoroughly memorable rendition of that traditional hymn *Old Time Religion* featuring an outstanding solo performance by Joan O'Donnell.

Outreach Chorus Builds Community

The Outreach Chorus began its year in October, with the biannual family-friendly Halloween Concert, Grace Madison, a benefit for Food for Friends. School shows included Far Hills Country Day in February and a "Choir Day" for the West Essex School District 6th-8th graders in May. Library appearances included Jefferson and Madison, and church appearances at St. Dunstan's, Succasunna and St. Mark's, Basking Ridge (Chamber Singers). We closed the year with a performance at Morris View Nursing Home. But our most moving event of the year was an appearance at "Jan Jam," a benefit for the family of Montville High School Choral teacher, Jan Kucher-Patenaude, who died from a brain tumor in the spring. Many of us knew Jan, and her "kids" were our Harmonium Partnership Chorus in 1999. We were joined by Mark Miller at the piano on the Drew Concert Hall stage, for a healing rendition of his *God is Able*.



Composer Michael Mendoza (L) from the College of New Jersey, with director Anne Matlack and librettist Jabez Van Cleef at the dress rehearsal for the world premiere of "A Christmas Suite" in December 2005. The work is available on "A Wreath of Wisdom" CD at www.harmonium.org.

PHOTO BY LINDA ERIKSEN

Contest Winners, continued from page 3

The contest, generously funded by the Dodge Foundation, is looking for a new sponsor for its 10th anniversary year. The judges were **Anne Matlack**, the Artistic Director of Harmonium, organist, flutist and frequent choral adjudicator; **David Sampson**, member and Composer-in-Residence of the Colonial Symphony, whose commissioned work *Jersey Rain* Harmonium premièred with the Masterwork Chorus and Colonial Symphony in 2002; **Ted Corson**, composer and former Harmonium bass with a musical typesetting and arrangement business; **Jason Tramm**, Rutgers conducting faculty member and Chorus Master of the New Jersey State Opera; **Eddie Hill**, Minnesota composer whose composition *There is No Age* Harmonium commissioned in celebration of our 25th anniversary and premièred last June and on our Italy tour; and **Matthew Harris**, Manhattan musicologist and composer whose *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, another Harmonium commission, was a sellout when we premièred it in 2002. All contestants, not just the winners, receive written comments from the judges; and early registrants were given the opportunity for one-on-one tutoring in composition with **Johnathan Reale**, Harmonium tenor and contest coordinator, who is also a vocal ensemble composer and arranger. Check our website in the fall for details, deadlines, and poetic texts. Tell a young composer you know!

IN MEMORIAM JOHN LITTLE
(APRIL 8, 1920–FEBRUARY 18, 2006)

Harmonium dedicated their March concert to bass John Little (1921-2006), who passed away peacefully on February 18. At the time of his death, he was singing in Harmonium, Summit Chorale, Calvary Chorale and Calvary Church choir! When "a chorus of his friends" was invited up to sing *How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place* from Brahms' *German Requiem* at his memorial service, few were left sitting in the pews! John had just toured Italy with Harmonium, and spent December singing every "carol gig." We will miss him, but we know that wherever he is, he's singing!

Meet the Harmonium Board

At its July meeting, Harmonium's Board of Trustees elected officers and appointed new members to fill vacant slots.

President Carolyn Dorflinger has sung in Harmonium since 2003. Everyone knows our Vice President, John Lamb, a longtime Chamber Singer and our webmaster. Debbie Wohl has just completed her first year as Treasurer, and we all appreciate the many hours she put into the budget and our first audit. David Copp, our Secretary, has served Harmonium for many years, both on the Board and elsewhere. (He even arranged our recent tour to Italy!)

Also continuing on the Board this year are Susan White, who handles our concert subscriptions, and Dee Billia, who has just joined the New Jersey Symphony as Vice President of Communications. New Board members include Jonathan Cassady, an attorney with Wolff & Samson, PC; Kathy Ornstein, systems analyst and a Chamber Singer; Bob Verbrugge, a relatively new Harmonium member and a medical writer; and long-time member Mary Jane Wilkie, who is a freelance writer and Sunday School director. Both Dee Billia and Jonathan are non-singer / Community Board members.

IN MEMORIAM STANI BURCHARTZ
(JULY 1, 1991–JULY 21, 2006)

Beloved daughter of Harmonium alto and former president, Dorothee, and granddaughter of Hans and Klara Burchartz, retired Harmonium singers. Stani was adopted from Bulgaria at seven, after a long-awaited process. She was a fixture at rehearsals (adored babysitter of Anne's daughter, Grace) and concerts, often ushering, helping out, or just acting as our biggest fan with her sweet smile and joyful heart. Her Mom writes "Her appreciation of a broader variety of music beyond what is played on Z100 is one of the things that gave us a deeper connection, and is one of the things I will really miss. She was a leader, had a wonderful ability to connect with young children, loved school and learning, loved church, and loved people and animals. She was always ready with a hug and a smile. She was sensitive, caring, affectionate, helpful, responsible, and devoted to her family, her friends, and her church."

Harmonium

Choral Society

SAVE THE DATE!!
A Taste of Harmonium
Saturday, October 14, 2006
Please see front cover for details.



P.O. BOX 1317
MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY 07962-1317
Change of Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MORRISTOWN, NJ
PERMIT #401

Thank you, Advertisers, 2005–2006 Season.

Acupuncture Center of N.J. • Altos • David Axelrod • Basses/Baritones • Boxwood Music Inc. • Jill S. Brueckner, DMD
• Cadence • The Calais School • Church of the Redeemer • Coldwell Banker • Colonial Symphony • Community Theater
• Creative Ink • Frank Davis & Sons, Landscaping • DeMartinis Landscaping, Inc. • Drew Concert Hall • Linda Eriksen
• Foundry Music • Frogmore Country Store • Drs. John & Carmine Galdieri • GMP Networks • Grace Community
Music • The Guy Louise Group • Chris Hatcher • Mark Hewitt, Architect • Dan & Louise Karger • King of Kings
Lutheran Church • Kings Fine Wines of Berkeley Heights • Davd Lutter • The Masterwork Chorus • Mendham Bakery •
Music at Christ Church • The Music Den • Nancy's Critter Sitters • Natale's Deli • Nous Theatre • Darren O'Neill • Dr.
Roger L. Paetzell • Pandora Book Peddlers • Kel Pilshaw • John Pivarnik • Carol Flamm Reingold • Ridge Light Opera •
Riegler Dodge, Inc. • Sibylle Schroeder • Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey • Smooth-On, Inc. • Sopranos • Sovereign
Bank • St. Matthew Trinity Lutheran Parish • St. Peter's Episcopal Church • Summit Chorale • Tenors • Tullen Sound
Recording • Jerry Vezza Musical Services • Larry Viarengo, P.G.A. Professional • What in the World • Beth Wilson •
World of Music • Paul Ziegler