



VOICEMAIL



CONCERT SERIES NEWLY IMAGINED



The 65th SLCC ‘concert’ season opened on Sunday October 4th with the first in a series of six presentations to be held at Third Baptist Church. Subscribers could choose to participate remotely by tuning in to a streamed presentation or attend in person for a live, socially distanced event. The capacious seating allowed ample room for the 40 or so attendees to enjoy the ‘live’ presentation; the rest of the subscribers viewed from the comfort of their homes.

The theme for the first program was to delve into the 65-year history of the Chorus (with various name changes along the way) in a format that involved discussions between Artistic Director Philip Barnes and Board President Dick Brickson interspersed by various recorded musical selections. One delightful result was hearing more of Philip’s anecdotes about composers and their music that are usually limited to a few minutes during a live concert. His extensive program notes are always fun and informative to read, but it was so much better to hear the tragic or amusing tales in more depth!

In her St. Louis Post-Dispatch review of the event, music critic Sarah Bryan Miller said “the conversations were well-paced and sufficiently laced with humor that they never ceased to hold interest; the music was well-chosen and well-sung, particularly in the selections from recent years. The music was illustrated by appropriate, colorful photos selected by Dan Hanson; many of them were taken (often in exotic settings) by Hanson and Matt Chapman.”

Philip had some interesting observations about the experience:

A comment you will have heard in numerous contexts during the pandemic is “I am having to acquire skills I never thought I’d need.” That’s certainly the case for us as we’ve labored to put together our new series of presentations exploring the history, mission and legacy of the Chorus. Planning and rehearsing a concert now seem child’s play compared with the demands of a streamed presentation/podcast. I probably should have gone through 30+ years of archival recordings at some point, but I wasn’t planning on it for 2020. But now that I have (in excess of 150 hours!), I’m left with so much gratitude for this amazing ensemble, and I’m eager to share some of its achievements with you.

That might explain why the first presentation was longer than I had originally intended! It was almost two hours of music, images, and conversation, but the reports received were overwhelmingly positive. The new format allowed subscribers at home the flexibility to come and go as their schedules allowed, and even hear a piece a second time. As we progress, we are still ‘fine tuning’ the process, but we’re off to a flying start!

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THE
SAINT LOUIS
CHAMBER
CHORUS

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT We Miss You!

Dear Singers in the St. Louis Chamber Chorus - we miss you. The regular audience members of your concerts miss you. The board of directors misses you. The community members who love music, who love choral music and who love *a cappella* music miss you. The composers who we would have commissioned to write new music for you this season and who would have loved to hear you sing their new music miss you. And, I suspect that you miss each other, miss the joys and aggravations that weeks of long rehearsals on Monday nights bring you and miss the satisfaction that singing together for concerts and for recordings brings you.

While it would have been good to put on a regular series of programs for this, our 65th season, maybe this "timeout" offers instead a good opportunity to reflect on the Chorus, to think about what role we play in the St. Louis community and to take a "breather" to understand what our music means to

us, to our community and to you, the singers. This season, we will explore our history, why we advocate women composers, why we have had "composers-in-residence", why we emphasize architecture and different locations around the city and the wonderful and unexpected experiences we have been able to share together that have enriched all of our lives. We will play your music from past seasons at each presentation, emphasizing music that is not available on previous recordings.

So, while we will miss hearing you directly for now, I hope this season will give you and our audiences and community something a little different - a chance to understand the Chorus from different perspectives and to understand that the reasons we do what we do are important to all of us.

Dick Brickson

AMANDA VERBECK - A LONG TIME SLCC ENTHUSIAST!



Amanda Verbeck is a St. Louis native who has been involved with the SLCC for 18 years. As a child, her parents laid the groundwork for her lifelong love of music and art. She remembers learning to harmonize while singing Christmas carols with her Mom and learning to love Motown while working in the garage with her Dad. And her earliest memories almost

always included some kind of visual art, from summer art classes at the Saint Louis Art Museum to entertaining herself with drawing and craft projects at home. She has incorporated both her love for art and music in her work with the Chorus.

Amanda sang with the St. Louis Children's Chorus in her younger years and went on to sing with multiple groups while at Oakville Senior High School and later in college. Amanda attended Washington University, graduating in 2001 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a minor in Architecture. While at Wash U, Amanda experienced her first opportunity to sing with the SLCC in a joint concert. She remembers being so impressed!

Her college music professor, **John Stewart**, suggested that she try out for the Chamber Chorus. She started out in the alto section, and she loved singing under **Philip Barnes**. The experience provided a great challenge to stretch her abilities musically and sing an amazing range of repertoire. She also performed on three SLCC CD recordings: [A Pageant of Human Life - Granville Bantock](#), [Saint Louis Commissions](#), and [Songs of the Soul](#).

During her time as a singer, she had the opportunity to do some design layout work for several CD covers, the first one being for [Saint Louis Commissions](#). She also created unique and artistic invitations for the SLCC's 50th Anniversary Celebration and several annual soirées.

After singing with the Chorus for over five years, Amanda stepped back from her role as a singer and joined the Chamber Chorus Board for several years. She had just started her own business, Pele Prints, a fine art printmaking studio where she works collaboratively with other artists to create works on paper. These pieces of art end up in private and corporate collections around the world. Her new business required much of her time and energy, so being a member of the Board allowed her to maintain her involvement with the SLCC in a new way. While on the Board, Amanda provided a fresh perspective for younger patrons and incorporated her visual arts skills with new designs for the concert programs, newsletters, and the website.

While she is no longer on the Board, Amanda continues to work for the Chamber Chorus by designing and maintaining the website and PR emails. "It really has been such an honor to wear so many hats in my time with the Chorus. It's such a unique organization, and I feel lucky to be a part of the work it does."

Amanda and her husband **Wes Buchek** enjoy playing softball together. Throughout the pandemic they have headed to their neighborhood ball field for batting and fielding practice, even though they haven't been able to play games with the full team. They also love spending time cuddling and walking with their 'fur baby' Arya, a sweet Doberman Pinscher.

SLCC WELCOMES RON GINES AS NEW BOARD MEMBER



Ron lived in four different towns in Southern Illinois before moving to Indianapolis when he was four. He remembers a Grundig Majestic radio/record player that his father brought back after serving in Germany in the US Army. It was tuned to the classical station and never turned off. His mother was trained in music education. She taught music at school, played organ and piano for their

church and was the church choir director where Ron was 'voluntold' at a young age. His father had toured with several male quartets in the 1950s, so Ron was 'drenched in music' throughout his childhood.

During junior high school Ron took up trombone and played first chair in every band, orchestra, or ensemble he could. He also fell in love with instrumental jazz. When he was thirteen, they moved to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. His musical interests in high school included instrumental blues and progressive rock. In college, he became interested in music production. He worked in the college radio station at Greenville University, was responsible for repairing and managing the audio and video equipment on campus and helped organize and produce a day-long music festival each year. He joined the college choir not to sing, but because of a certain young female named Tracy - they were married during Ron's senior year!

Tracy graduated with a degree in Voice Pedagogy and Literature. Ron graduated with a degree in Physics. (Ron reminds us that music is a highly organized waveform transferring energy through a medium that is converted to electrical signals within our ears!) After moving to St. Louis, Tracy worked and sang with the St. Louis Symphony Chorus. Ron earned master's degrees in Business Administration and Information Management from Washington University before starting his career with IBM.

Their three children, Lisa, Danielle, and David were surrounded by music. Tracy taught them the joys of Wagner, Brahms, and Handel and Ron taught them true music royalty such as B.B. King, Queen, Yes and Al Jarreau. Sadly, Tracy was lost to cancer in 2006 and Ron raised their kids on his own. They enjoyed many long multi-week car trips visiting all 48 lower states and five Canadian provinces. Everyone picked destinations and Ron formed a serpentine route to connect them. During the drives, they took turns playing music from each other's playlists. To this day most of Ron's new music interests come through his kids; he hopes that they never stop sharing.

Although Ron leans towards instrumental music, that changed when he heard Tracy sing with the St. Louis Symphony's first performance of *Carmina Burana*. One of the most moving musical performances he had experienced, it was also when he learned to suspend the words and focus on the harmonics of the human voice as he would an instrument.

A couple of decades later Ron heard Lisa sing with the Chamber Chorus and heard that perfect vocal instrumentation he had explored before. When Danielle also joined the Chorus, Ron bought season tickets! Lisa and Danielle are no longer Chorus members; Lisa is in China teaching English and Danielle is completing an aeronautical engineering degree. And what of David? In college, he was privileged to be a bass soloist for a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. His hopes to join SLCC for the 2020-2021 season were put on hold due to the pandemic.

Ron currently works as the Automation Systems Engineer for Thermo Fisher Scientific at their St. Louis plant where they manufacture BioPharmaceuticals. He serves on several non-profit boards, including SLCC. He lives on 9 acres in Illinois (his escape from technology), plays bass for his church worship team, and loves listening to music from his personal collection of over 67,000 MP3s.

The Supporting Cast

Now that we can no longer enjoy live SLCC concerts this season due to the pandemic, and while we are not seeing our talented singers in person, you may have noticed the absence of Singer Highlights in our newsletter. Instead, an opportunity has arisen to feature some unsung heroes. When thinking of the Chamber Chorus, naturally one's attention is drawn to the music, the singers and composers and the artistic direction of the Chorus and repertoire by **Philip Barnes**.

There is a lot more going on behind the scenes! We have highlighted other individuals who support the Chorus and who provide different perspectives and skills to keep this wonderful organization running smoothly. In our July issue, you met our new Executive Director **Katie Sandquist**, and learned about the new role for **Laura Frank** as Director of Advancement. In the August issue we recognized the long tenure of **George Durnell** as he retired from the Board,

and **Dan Hanson** 'imagined' what music looked like, when designing his collage of images for the 65th season's concert speaker series. Board member **Deane Thompson** wrote two articles about the characteristics required to be a singer in the SLCC.

In this issue we highlight the skills **Amanda Verbeck** has brought to the Chorus, first as a singer, then as a Board member, and when sharing her visual arts expertise. And **Ron Gines**, our newest board member who seems to be knowledgeable about - well everything!

In future issues, look forward to meeting more dedicated folk who support the Chorus in different ways; those who volunteer for big or small events, who write about the Chorus, provide historical reviews, record and broadcast our programs and much more!

Gill Waltman

NOTEWORTHY NOTES

SAINT LOUIS PREMIERES CD - NEW REVIEW

The American organ journal, *The Tracker*, included a review of our recent disc. Despite some factual errors, it is very complimentary.

Founded in 1956 by Ronald Arnatt, the Saint Louis Chamber Choir has had only one other director [not quite right!], Philip Barnes. Both directors are from Great Britain, so the ensemble of 40 or so voices has an affinity for English choral music, but it also makes contemporary music a key component of its repertoire. A "composer-in-residence" program has elicited many fine new works, and almost all performances feature one of these or commissions from today's leading composers. That is the focus of this CD, a collection of fascinating music premiered by the Chamber Chorus.

About half of the offerings have been published. The others were performed from the composers' manuscripts. All are unaccompanied. The opening and closing numbers are of various moods and textures, all beautifully realized by the composers and the choir. In the center of the program is a selection inspired mostly by ale, but also by wine. This opens with an arrangement of the traditional "Drink to me only with thine eyes" and moves from there to Robert Walker's *The Ale Songbook*, five settings of poems ranging from an anonymous Elizabethan ode to another in praise of ale by Edgar Allan Poe. This bibulousness is closed by advice from Proverbs 31: 4-9, "It is not for kings, Lemuel," in which leaders are admonished to leave the drinking of wine to those who are perishing and in anguish.

Altogether a delightful musical treat that deserves a place in your collection of fine choral music.

[George Bozeman]

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH REVIEW

In her review titled "St. Louis Chamber Chorus launches an unconventional season", **Sarah Bryan Miller** compared the myriad ways that the 2020-21 arts season tackled the disruption to its programming due to the pandemic. Some organizations cancelled or postponed their seasons, others went online or offered pop-up concerts, but none were quite as inventive as the Chamber Chorus who had taken a different tack. She described the series of presentations to be given this year by the Chorus at Third Baptist Church and went on to write a detailed review of the first event held on October 4th.

You can read the full article here:

<https://bit.ly/32IJOv9>

SLCC CONCERT SPEAKER SERIES

The recording of the first presentation held on Sunday October 4th is now available on YouTube for everyone to watch! You can access it on our website at www.chamberchorus.org/season65-pres1 or go to www.youtube.com and search The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus.

We hope you will enjoy listening to the choir and learning a little more about its history. If you would like to learn more, please join us for the next presentation on November 8th. We will be highlighting an important aspect of our mission: advocacy for women composers. You can purchase tickets or subscriptions on our website - tickets will not be sold at the door.

Katie Sandquist, *Executive Director*

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Advance Ticket Purchases:

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www.chamberchorus.org

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