



Associated Male Choruses of America, Inc.

**THE**  
**chorister**  
Newsletter



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<http://amcofa.net/>

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## Christmas Remembered

Most (maybe all) of our choruses perform one or more concerts at Christmas. It's such a special time to sing beautiful carols and other songs of the season. The Rochester Male Chorus is no exception here.

This year we structured our concert somewhat differently. We normally mix together a variety of secular and sacred music, and frequently end with "Jingle Bells." For our 2005 concert, entitled "A Christmas Story," we began with individual winter and Christmas songs, but in the second half of the concert we wove all the numbers together with readings from the Christmas story as recorded in the gospel of Luke. Taking a cue from the St. Olaf College Christmas Festival, we asked the audience to refrain from applause until the program ended. It was a moving experience, both to the listeners and to those of us presenting the program.

We tackled some more difficult music this year, including a lively Mark Hayes arrangement of "O Holy Night" that we'd first seen at our Big Sing sight reading session. Despite complaints from some members, we included Thomas Luis de Victoria's fifteenth century "O Magnum Mysterium," sung in Latin. That's the first time in my decade and a half with the chorus that we have performed a song in that language. With its intertwining lines, hardly ever meeting together, the soaring tenor and sonorous bass surrounding the inner parts, we felt at times like mediaeval monks, but most of us thoroughly enjoyed the challenge. We are even nervously working on another Latin piece for our spring concert.

*Ed Armbruster*

## RMC Helps with Make-a-Wish

The City of Rochester (MN) sponsored a kick-off event for the Make-a-Wish Foundation's fund-raising drive at Christmas. Make-a-Wish works with seriously or terminally ill children, attempting to fulfill a special desire for them, such as a trip to Disney World or a party with friends. The City invited the Rochester Male Chorus to be part of the event, held in the multi-story rotunda of the Government Center. The chorus members arranged themselves on the sweeping circular steps up to the second floor, and the fill-in director (me) stood in the balcony on the opposite side. Our music filled the space, and we received several compliments, as well as TV exposure for our participation.


*Ed Armbruster*

## Program Notes

[Editor's note] I'm pleased to announce the revival of a column that ran occasionally in the Chorister in the 80s and 90s, Dr. Al Robertson's Program Notes. Dr. Al provided reviews of music aimed to help singers understand the mood and context of the songs, rather than the technical nuances thereof. Below are a couple of samples to get us started; I hope to continue this offering on a regular basis.

<b>"December Child"</b>	TTBB Shawnee Press C252 ©1977
Words	Joyce Taylor
Music	Don Moline
Arranged	Lou Hayward
<p>"December Child, born on a cold, cold morning..." Resembling a gospel hymn in a minor key, the words tell what the advent of the Christ child brought to the world. Basses and tenors exchange the melody and a counter melody, but unite in the middle of the selection in four-part harmony as it changes to the major mode with "Peace, joy and power bring love to this hour..." It ends again in the minor mode with the reflection that the Christ Child "brought Christmas Time" while a few high tenors (or a glockenspiel) sing the opening melody of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" on the tone syllable "La."</p>	
Moderate difficulty – An audience pleaser	

<b>Who's That Baby?</b>	TTBB with Baritone solo
Alfred Publishing Co 18699 ©1999	
Words and Music	Jay Althouse
<p>The basses and baritones provide a rhythmic stopped time introduction to each stanza-question by inquiring "Who – who – Tell me who – Who's that baby in a manger bed?"</p> <p>The baritone solo asks questions such as "Was he a tiny little baby? And did the shepherds come to see him?" All four parts answer each question with "Oh Yes!!" The selection ends with barbershop-like harmony as all parts question, "Who's the little baby in a man—ger bed!" This is a real up-tempo toe-tapper, popular with singers, and might be considered Black American Gospel in its format.</p>	
The publisher indicates that it is of difficulty level 3.	

 *Al Robertson*

## News from Milwaukee

The Milwaukee Male Chorus suffered a great loss in 2005 in the untimely passing of our long-time and beloved President, George Pecor. His leadership and bass voice will be greatly missed by our chorus and the Upper Wisconsin & Michigan District.

Our membership again has dropped somewhat due to illness and death. We are fortunate to gain younger men in every section except the Bass in 2005. I'm in the process of initiating an active recruiting program through the newspaper, mailings of invitation to prospective members, personal contacts, chorus brochures and open rehearsals.

We do have some positive news. We are very fortunate to have a young director, Rob Clark, and accompanist, Brett LaVelle. Both are extremely talented and have youthful exuberance and enthusiasm that is getting our chorus excited about its new direction. Mr. Clark exudes charisma in his directorship and our performances. He has excellent rapport with the audience and members of the chorus. We may be small in numbers, but he motivates us in striving for excellence in balance and sound.

When the chorus returned from its summer break and before the first rehearsal, the members attended a chorus picnic at the residence, by a lake, of our Vice-President, Bob Russell. All members, their wives and friends enjoyed a great time.

Our first singing engagement for the new season was at the American Legion Post 449 flag burning ceremony (for torn and retired flags). On December 4, 2005, we sung at the Lincoln Memorial Center for the Pearl Harbor survivors remembrance ceremonies. This was the chorus's 45th appearance

for the Survivors group. During the balance of December, we presented our Christmas programs to the Great Catholic Women's Guild, Knights of Columbus Council 3702, and the Forever Young Club. The chorus anticipates another active year in 2006. We have scheduled performances in February and March, and look forward to the Big Sing at Negaunee, Michigan, in May.

It has been a challenging task for me to “step into the shoes” of George Pecor and keep the chorus positive and maintaining its active role in AMC of A. However, I'm up to the challenge!

 *Pat Bissen*

## **Eau Claire Stays Busy**

The Eau Claire Male Chorus had a busy Christmas Singing season with two community concerts, singing at the local mall, a craft fair, senior residence center, and a local supermarket. The supermarket "gig" was a good fundraiser as they paid our carolers \$50 per hour to entertain the customers.

2006 is our 60th anniversary year. We are planning an April 1 concert with two or three guest choruses, and plan to invite back as many former members and directors we can locate. We will also be performing at the historic Mabel Tainter Theater in Menomonie, Wisconsin, on March 12, under sponsorship of the Menomonie Lion's Club. The club is raising funds to remodel the theater.

Two students have expressed interest in the AMC of A Scholarships and we are considering their talents.

We have several other things in the works for our 60-year celebration, and look forward to the Big Sing in Marshall at the end of April.

 *Bob Wierman*

## **Some of the Players – Old and New**

[Editor's note] This article is the sixth in a series by the AMC of A Chairman, Ric Addenbrooke. You can read all of Ric's articles on the Web site. Check out the Executive Council page at <http://amcofa.net/int/index.shtml>.

The series on the new bylaws continues with a look at the new Executive Director position, and the Executive Council Chairman and Vice Chairman. I will also spend some space on a few other officers just to raise some appreciation for their positions.

Discussions of revamping our organization had started when Bill Bates was still in office; indeed, Bill wrote some very considered thoughts he wished to present to the Association. One of those ideas was to couple some of the duties together for certain positions. (We are still reviewing some further considerations in this area.) The idea was that one person, capable of secretarial and financial duties, would be in a good position to cover daily operation and be contact for the public. This we attempted with the Executive Director position. The plan holds merit, but we found it has difficulties also – training is important! Jim Egan, our new Executive Director, and Norb Lehmann, our Treasurer, will work together while Norb trains Jim in the finances. Also, your executives must find a method of accountability when combining responsibilities into one office – the system of “checks and balances” for good business practice. Meantime, lend whatever assistance you can to Jim when communicating with him, such as placing pertinent information in emails, but not so much as to cloud issues; and allowing sufficient time to produce results. That's just reasonable advice when interfacing with any of our fellow officers anywhere in the AMC of A, too.

The ED (Executive Director) is the “go-to” man for many folks, so Jim expects to be busy. Any number of simple and complex questions will go to the ED in a given month. Consider: someone wants an article posted, but doesn't know if it goes to the Web or our Chorister; non-members wish information on AMC of A; choruses seek changes in rules; somebody is bothered by lack of information on a subject – many items will fall upon the Executive Director first, to be then “directed” to an appropriate source for consideration. Then the chores of recording membership, notifications to choruses, filing reports, and doing finances, all will become the duties for our Executive Director. We may require adjustments to our aspirations; this asks much of any one man, but we are determined to give it a worthy try.

The new positions of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Executive Council may be a curiosity for members. Why not stay with President and Vice President(s)? First, that little “(s)” implied an abundance of officers to back up the head office and just ended up requiring bodies that seemed to have no real necessity (and still carried expenses). Not to say all the past officers failed to carry their weight, but we incurred needless costs with variable results. Better to cut back to a minimum and find what we can accomplish with volunteers.

The title of Chairman seems better suited to describe that person as supervisory to a group. It implies better that the group is a fully functional entity over its given tasks but the Chairman represents expected reporting, directing of inquiries, and general coordination. The Vice Chairman will provide support of the Chairman as needed. Also, a different title aids to break the pattern of expectation and negative connotation from recent feedback connected with our Association (prior to the new bylaws). Another point considered was from my own training chairman and facilitator background. Teamwork was central to activities, with the emphasis on “team,” so I placed importance on those ideals while writing bylaws.

Other criteria will be required of our Executive Director and the Executive Council Chairs, to perhaps validate these roles more clearly. The list of responsibilities may continue to evolve for a long time as the Association makes adjustments for long term considerations. Ask questions if a lack of understanding persists, because we need to make clear our intent. For the most part, consider the Executive Director the first line of communication to the Association, the scheduler for events, and the resource for information among choruses, districts and the AMC of A.

Having stated previously that the Association historically was basically sound, and that the members of the Executive Council believe we can progress from that good foundation, I still try to caution that the future can only improve with cooperation from many sources. Districts have been good thus far to send talented leadership to the AMC of A executive level, as officers and committee chairs, etc., and we must tap those resources better for future growth. It is quite difficult for me to comment on the various choruses. I know weaknesses in my own NYP District choruses by closer association with them, and through experience I know other districts have their own problems, but not the specifics. Suffice it to say I am cognizant none of us has an easy path. Our biggest known problem right now is communications, and the AMC of A seemingly has problems everywhere in this sector, so let me highlight the Webmaster; the Editor of our newsletter, the Chorister; and our Music Committee Chair.

Feedback from the Webmaster, Dave Thomas, and the Chorister Editor, Ed Armbruster, has indicated a lack of participation. Now I am certain that many of the same contributors we had earlier, when there were more than a half dozen publications per year, are still capable of writing a paragraph or two about something the rest of us find of value in the newsletter; likewise, commentary on the website has fallen off. Your contribution is a key to our success in keeping our association intact. These offices depend heavily on the membership for correspondence – communication is their assignment.

Don Crouch needs some time to develop more of his ideas for the new framework of his Music Committee, but I am certain he appreciates any assistance from members at large to find new music, music sources and ideas we might find useful to AMC of A. While communication is also his main assignment, it is centered on the subject of music, and it includes a few other areas. We feel fortunate that Don has returned to working with the Association, and anticipate his ideas to reconfigure activities, suggested prior to his earlier departure.

Returning emphasis to the volunteers cannot be emphasized enough – volunteers most often want the job; officers may be assigned the job without serious interest in getting much out of it. For me, the difference is one of degree of enthusiasm, or even passion, for a position. Those willing to serve can find many opportunities, and this can be a rich interval in the history of AMC of A given some enthusiastic commitment locally, district and Association-wide. I have some indication we may be hesitant on the issue, but it is early and some promise has been shown also. I remain optimistic.

Having asked for written materials for the newsletter and the website, let me remind all that Bob Torborg is seeking applicants for the Scholarships and there are likely some candidates in your chorus area. Time is short. See <http://amcofa.net/scholar.shtml> for forms and details.

 Ric Addenbrooke