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Ed Armbruster

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“Songs of the Prairie”


The college town of Marshall, in far southwestern Minnesota, was the site for the 2006 edition of the Upper Midwest District Big Sing. We started Friday evening with our annual adjudication concert, during which each chorus presented two numbers prepared especially to demonstrate choral variety. Two of the three judges evaluated each performance and provided the chorus with written and oral feedback on the chorus’ strengths and weaknesses. The venue, the brand-new high school fine arts wing, seemed to inspire the choruses. Even the small groups filled the auditorium with sound, and the audience was treated to a very exciting concert. This is a great time to get professional advice to improve a group’s quality and also provides the rest of the choruses a chance to hear some possibly new music presented well.

After a morning packed with sight reading, vocal workshops, and a concert by the Southwest Minnesota State University Concert Choir, and then a massed choir rehearsal in the afternoon, the members of the twelve choruses combined their voices in the noisy university gymnasium for the Saturday evening concert. Five of our twelve choruses presented individual solos, along with eleven massed numbers. An unusual twist, at least for our district, involved a new song: “A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody,” which called for finger snaps as accompaniment. Can you imagine 350 male chorus members snapping in unison? Nah, I can’t either, but it went remarkably well.

Each chorus also provided part singers for a select chorus rendition of the Robert Scholz arrangement of René Clausen’s “All That Hath Life & Breath Praise Ye the Lord!” directed by Russ Svenningsen, head of vocal studies at SMSU. This was a challenge, since many of the singers had to rehearse the music entirely on their own, with only a single hour on Saturday afternoon to jointly run through the piece before the concert presentation. On-the-fly soloist and small group selection (“you seven in the middle, sing this”) made for an even more interesting experience.

We enjoyed sharing our music with an appreciative audience. We also enjoyed the food and fellowship of the afterglow and were pleased that we only had to walk to the side of the gym to partake.


Next year it’s the turn of the Männerchor from Cold Spring to continue the tradition of excellent and worthwhile Big Sings.

 Ed Armbruster

AMC of A Executive Council Meeting


Just prior to, and in conjunction with, the UMW Big Sing in Marshall, elected and appointed members of the Executive Committee met under Ric Addenbrooke’s able leadership. Several items deserve special mention; see

following articles. One purpose of holding meetings at Big Sings is to allow Council members to see how different districts approach the concert organization and execution. Consequently, several of the non-UMW members participated in or observed the various activities of the weekend.

 Ed Armbruster


International Big Sing

Polls of our membership have consistently shown that Big Sings are the most important activity involving the AMCA organization. One of the most important decisions to come out of the Executive Council meeting in Marshall was that the already-scheduled sing in Eau Claire, WI, on April 25-26, 2008, would be designated as an International Big Sing, with the hope of reuniting all of our districts and perhaps some of those districts, or at least choruses, which have left the AMCA. Keep this date in mind and start saving money to come to Eau Claire year after next.

 Paul Carlton


AMCA Music Available

The AMCA office has a large number of copies of music belonging to the organization that can be purchased for a small fee by member choruses. There are two pieces available, "Salutation" and "You'll Never Walk Alone" (a special arrangement). Now is the time to throw away all those repeatedly-photocopied pages and replace them with "the real thing." Contact Jim Egan (jpegan@mywdo.com) if you want to take advantage of this offer.

 Jim Egan

Sharing Unwanted Music

Don Crouch, South St. Paul director and Music Committee chairman, proposes that choruses go through their libraries and identify pieces that they will never use. Make a list of what you have available and include at least title, publisher, voicing (TTBB, etc.), number of copies and original cover price (no illegal copies, please). Additional information such as difficulty and language (if not English) would also be helpful. Then send the list and your contact information to Ed Armbruster for publication in the *Chorister* (ed_armbruster@msn.com). Everybody wins; you make a little money, and music you don't want may be a treasure to another chorus. Good summer project for someone in your chorus.

 Don Crouch

AMCA Committees Need Members


There are several openings on operating committees of the Association. This is where much of the real work of the AMC of A gets done. Bob Torborg (ttrain@cloudnet.com) is looking for scholarship candidate evaluators for next year from NYP and WUM districts; all the current evaluators are from UMW. Doug Farley (dougfary@com), our newly-appointed volunteer chairman of the recruitment committee, needs at least one representative from each district, and ideally would like one from each chorus to exchange ideas on attracting and retaining members and choruses. Don Crouch (dcrouch@mn.rr.com) still needs a music committee member from NYP and WUM districts. Contact these committee chairmen directly if you could serve in any of these capacities. Only by more individual participation can the organization grow stronger and more relevant to all of us.

There are other committees and positions that need not only members but leaders. The committee on constitution and bylaws is one example. In addition, we still do not have a historian to watch over our archives. Contact Ric (rica@pce.net) if you're interested in either of these areas, or you want to know how else you might serve. The AMC of A needs you!

 Ric Addenbrooke

Web Site Is Lonely

Have you visited our organization's Internet presence lately? Take a look at <http://amcofa.net/> and tell David Thomas (dathomas@visi.com) what you think of it. Dave says, "Your help is greatly appreciated in keeping me informed of AMCA, District or Chorus ACTIVITIES and INFORMATION CHANGES. To share any information bits with the rest of us in AMCA, just send items directly to me."

 David Thomas