



Associated Male Choruses of America - Spring 2003

## IT'S OVER!

Finally after many months of suffering and agonising the worst winter in my memory is over. I have put away the shovels and moved my ice scraper to the trunk. I have taken our winter coats to the dry cleaner and they are now safely tucked away – not to be looked at until at least November (maybe December if we're lucky).

All of our snow birds have returned and have swelled our numbers again; we are working hard on next November's show (I might even buy a new harmonica). It's great to see everyone at practices and at concerts and it's always a lot of fun to go out and share a few jokes and a beer with friends from the choir.

We have three legs on which our organisation stands (good music, fellowship and service to others). We have always had a lot of discussions about service to others and good music but we don't discuss fellowship that much – perhaps it's because we're too busy doing it. The district and international meetings are always a great

opportunity to meet up with old friends and see how they're doing. Joan has always lifted me up with her letters of encouragement and Tom and Noreen have been wonderful to take us under their wings. The president of the Niagara Male Chorus ensures that we are all aware of milestones and other events – we celebrate and mourn with each other. Bob Woodland and I travelled from opposite sides of Toronto to be with the Queensmen of Toronto for their spring concert.

I believe that the big part of a successful chorus is the fellowship that develops among the choristers. A chorus needs lots of formal and informal opportunities to make that fellowship grow. Make a point to talk to someone you may not know too well at the break in your rehearsal. If someone hasn't been out to practice for a while, make a phone call. Treat each member of your chorus as the treasures they are and watch how much better the music is and how much easier it is to do service to others.

## A COUPLE OF RETIREMENTS

Bob Hicks

**Mary Trolla** has retired as director of the Negaunee Male Chorus after 17 years at the podium. Following a 30 year career in music education, Mary went directly to the chorus with the intention of “just trying it for one year”. Under Mary's directorship, the chorus has grown in membership and developed a varied repertoire. In its 74<sup>th</sup> year, the chorus continues to enjoy tremendous loving support of loyal audiences.

Mary has also directed choirs at St. Paul Church for 50 years and her experience showed in the work she did with the Male Chorus. Choristers would find a lesson plan on the board as they entered the room at every rehearsal. She believed she needed the structure to get the job done. Her goals with all groups have always been to prepare and perform good music at the highest standards possible and to make that work “fun”. She will be missed not only for her leadership skills, but also for her caring dedication to the chorus and an obvious love of music.

**Evelyn Jean Bertucci** has retired as accompanist of the Negaunee Male Chorus after 14 years of perfect attendance at the piano. She led the very popular “Strictly Gospel” octet which performs a large repertoire of gospel music and enjoys a very busy schedule of performances. Her career at the keyboard includes 25 years as an accompanist of the highly respected Ishpeming Choral Club. She is still often called upon to play for church, community and school music. She also accompanies a 70 voice choir at St. Paul Church.

Evelyn has a waiting list of hopefuls trying to break into the group of 26 piano students. Evelyn will be missed for her talent, dedication and her friendly, cheerful disposition.

Evelyn and Mary have both been awarded Honorary Membership by the chorus and look forward to their new roles as supporting members of Negaunee Male Chorus audiences.

## **SOME OUTSTANDING MEN CLAYTON W. OLD AWARD WINNERS**

### **Stanley Carlson (1988)**

In 1979 Stan came up with the idea to establish a booth at district and national conventions of the American Choral Directors Association. He approached the Upper Midwest District and AMCA for funding to have something to present. He then started writing every publisher of male chorus music in Canada, the USA and Europe so he would have something to display. Stan persevered against publisher fears that the music would be copied and had over 200 pieces of music for the convention in Minneapolis in 1981. This became a successful endeavour that was sponsored by AMCA for many years.

Because the reception was so positive, Stan decided to publish a book listing all known male chorus music in print. By the time Stan was

ready to print, he had over 2000 pieces of music. AMCA sponsored the printing of the book and the Executive Secretary fielded requests for the book long after it had sold out. It had turned a profit for AMCA – but more important it had proven to be a valuable resource from AMCA to music educators.

As the music reviewer for AMCA, Stan performed a very valuable service to all choruses and directors looking for new music. Stan also was a pioneer in inviting college male choruses to perform at Big Sings beginning in 1985 with the University of North Dakota Bards – a practice that has been continued in his district and beyond.

### **Russell Fleharty (1993)**

The presentation to Russ was to have been made during the 1993 International Big Sing concert in Marquette, MI but unfortunately, due to ill health, Russ was unable to attend.

The February 1994 issue of *The Chorister* reported that Russ had a long and distinguished association with AMCA beginning in 1942 when he joined the Cosmopolitan Male Singers in Muskegon, MI. In 1948 he moved to Grand Rapids and sang with the Schubert Glee Club for

two years before his job took him to the Detroit area where he joined the Chevrolet Glee Club.

During his active years Russ held many offices at all levels of the Association (President and Governor of his own chorus, VP of AMCA, Scholarship Fund Chair and Executive Secretary). The success of our association over the years has been due to the dedication and personal commitment of members such as Russ Fleharty.

### **Bill Bates (1998)**

Bill started singing with the Toronto Men Teachers Choir and later joined the Queensmen of Toronto. He has held several executive positions in these two choruses and has also been active in the Ontario District as Secretary and then President. Bill has also been active at AMCA serving as VP, President, Historian, Scholarship Fund Chair and Executive Secretary.

Bill is an innovator who has been instrumental in establishing the Big Sing Policy Statement,

Common Repertoire Policy Statement, promotion of the Clayton W. Old Founder Award and suggesting the Axdahl Scholarship Award to honour long-time treasurer, Lester Axdahl.

Bill is currently the Secretary of AMCO and sings with the Kawartha Male Chorus in Lindsay, Ontario

***Who will be the 2003 Winner? Look for the answer in the next issue.***

## LAST REPORT FROM BILL BATES

This could be considered to be Bill's "State of the Association" Report. The number in brackets are last year's numbers.

District Numbers include Michigan with 306 singers (332) in 10 choruses(11), New York Pennsylvania with 174 (178) in 6 choruses, Ontario with 148 (138) in 5 choruses, Upper Midwest with 464 (493) in 13 choruses and Wisconsin Upper Michigan with 109 (126).

Since June 14th (2003) is to be my last meeting as your Executive Secretary, it is appropriate that I conclude with an expression of appreciation for the opportunity to have served in this capacity. While I have enjoyed my time in this office, I leave with great regrets that the "Blueprint for Progress" initiatives that I was instrumental in bringing forward and together with others, spent a large amount of time and effort in promoting, has not realised any significant results. There are probably a number of reasons why the plan did not work, but certainly paramount was the six month delay in implementing the plan that saw most of the grass roots volunteers lose interest and not respond to requests for assistance. The

"Blueprint" initiative is all but dead with the one exception of the outstanding efforts on the part of member Doug Farley, who mounted a recruitment campaign that reached many potential chorus members and created much interest but unfortunately gained AMCA no new member choruses although there is still interest amongst a few. Kudos to Doug for his devotion to the cause!

AMCA will be interviewing a candidate for the Executive Secretary's position on Friday, June 13th and are hopeful that he will be both willing and able to assume the responsibilities.

**This will be my last column and I thank those that supported my efforts to communicate by accessing "Interactive" and occasionally offering words of encouragement.**

Most especially, I offer my sincere appreciation to our web manager, David Thomas, for his encouragement, dedication and patience over the past years without which this column would never had been possible.

## SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS REPORT

(Dave Thomas)

### Leah Gordon

Just a quick note to let you all know what I have been up to. I was privileged enough to be a recipient of an AMCA scholarship for three years. Next year I will be going into my last year of University at the University of Toronto

I have received a mark of 88 on my final recital, am ready to compete in the provincial competition with hopes to advance to the nationals, soloed with the orchestra in Vaughan Williams "Dona Nobis Pacem" and with the

massed university choir in Schubert's "Mass in G", and played the sentinel in Beckwith's "taptoo". I am looking forward to soloing in the Canadian Premiere of Haydn's "La Fedelta Delusa" as well as "Israel in Egypt" and "Messiah". I will be attending a summer opera workshop in St. Andrew's, NB.

Thank you AMCA for your support over the past three years. God Bless!

### Christina Rice

Thank you for your support for the past two years; it has surely been a blessing. I am currently finishing my sophomore year at Central Michigan University. My 18 credit hours have kept me very busy, but being able to graduate a year earlier is worth the extra work. After exams, I cannot wait to begin my first experience as a choir director for a summer camp for underprivileged children. It'll be a good start to see what I am getting myself into. Thanks again.

## WORDS FROM A WISE MAN (Don Crouch)

### The Three "M's" of Learning New Music

Directing a choir of non-professionally trained singers can sometimes present major problems. Throughout my years as choral director I have had choirs who could sight-read almost any music, to those who could not find their place on the page. Over the years I have come up with a short, simple method of training the choir singer as easily and as uncomplicated as possible. Learning music begins with understanding the "Three M's": The Map, Mechanics, and Musicianship needed to learn every song.

#### MAP

I call it the road map. This is simply the layout of the music on the printed page. What line does the singer read? Are there repeats? If so, how are they notated? Are there first and second endings? Where is the end? How is it notated? If there is accompaniment... what kind? Where is it notated on the page? Does it have the three "...ludes"? a prelude, an interlude, a postlude? Without singing a note, you need to be able to follow the entire score of the song as written.

#### MECHANICS

To the written notes you must be able to find pitch, rhythm, and text. Pitch is within your part's singing range from one note to the next (intervals). Then put a rhythm with it and finally add the words. Rhythm and text may be learned without pitch at the beginning. Speaking the text in rhythm is a great technique especially when the rhythm is difficult or confusing. Being able to learn the two parts make adding the pitch much easier. All of this should be done at a comfortable level of singing. A mezzo-forte is considered your average loudness. It is very difficult to learn at a forte or fortissimo or the whisper of a pianissimo when unsure of the three parts of the mechanics. Mezzo forte (mf) is in the middle of the range, so use this to learn.

A special part of the mechanics to be considered is where to start--or what section should you learn first? I try to find a unison, or an easy section to begin with which does not necessarily mean at the beginning of the song. Then go to something hard, difficult, unusual, confusing. After these two spots have been conquered, the entire song will come together quickly. And you need to be sure to do the three sections of the mechanics with each section before moving on to the next. There have been some songs that I have worked on maybe 8 to 16 measures for several rehearsals before moving on to the rest of the piece. Don't try the three steps on the entire song at once--work in sections.

#### MUSICIANSHIP

Here is where you add the dynamic levels--from pianissimo to fortissimo, the notation marks such as ritard, tempo and a tempo, crescendo, decrescendo, fermatas, accent marks: whatever the composer has put on the page and in the style the composer has indicated. It is also here that you add the accompaniment to the music (from only the parts which you have previously had with the mechanics). When learning the mechanics it becomes much too difficult to try and put all the musicianship into the music when you are unsure of pitch, rhythm or text. When you get to the musicianship it gives you a new meaning and approach to what is on the page. (We do get tired of repeating the same things time and again in order to learn them.) Musicianship is fresh with a new twist on something that has maybe become tiresome yet familiar. The hard part of the mechanics is over, and the artistic result is now apparent--and most enjoyable for the singer.

So often singers will get ahead of themselves in the learning process. I don't know how many times a member of my chorus will say that while we are learning the mechanics it is supposed to be sung softly, or loudly, when in reality we are not ready for that portion just yet. The "Three M's" are the three steps you need to learn the music before you. You can't skip any, you can't rush any and you can't do it all at once. They have to be in order. Once this is accomplished you are ready to become the true "choral artist" --a title which most chorus members are unaware belongs to each of them.

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