



CHORALE NOTES

June, 2013

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Our Fall/Winter season will start August 26th at 6:30 PM at Open Door Baptist Church. We're lining up a terrific season and would love to have you join us!

We've just finished...
An Outstanding Season!



At Dress Rehearsal. From left, Sam Miles, Jack Garber, Tim Carlson Charlie Pringle and Doug Schmit get into rehearsing "There Ain't Nothing Like a Dame." The ladies all seem to agree.



Our Spring 2013 Season started with our first rehearsal on January 7th. It capped off with a dress rehearsal on April 22nd, concerts on April 26th at Open Door Baptist Church and April 28th at Culpeper Baptist Retirement Community, and ended with our performance before an audience of 350 at the Opening Week of the new State Theatre in Culpeper. We had a great time all spring with our "A New York State of Mind" theme all, and now are starting to pull together an exciting Fall Season. Throughout this issue of this newsletter, you'll see photos by Jeanette Calhoun, taken at Open Door Baptist on the Dress Rehearsal and the April 26th Concert.

Come join your community chorale in singing for the Reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th! We'll rehearse at 6:30 at Open Door Baptist this Monday, July 1st, and perform on July 4th starting 11:45 AM at the Courthouse Lawn in Culpeper

1 Blue Ridge Chorale www.brcsings.com 540-223-5462 Have you donated to our summer fundraising campaign? See how at our website, or mail a check to Blue Ridge Chorale, PO Box 1871, Culpeper, VA 22727



The Director's Corner – Carole Tomhave

If music be the food of love, play (sing) on!

-Shakespeare, Twelfth Night (lyrics used by Henry Purcell)

It is with no small amount of regret that I bid farewell to the Blue Ridge Chorale, at least in the guise of Music Director. The past three seasons have been full of wonderful music-making, much fun and many memories. From “Let There Be Light” to Christmas candlelight to the neon of Times Square, the Chorale has been a bright place in my life!

It has been a privilege to work with such hard-working and committed singers and with such an amazing Board. We have had our challenges (the alarm clock ringing in the locked organ cabinet during our spring concert) and our victories (our first- but not last, I know it!-performance at the fabulous State Theatre). We have been stretched musically and physically (we eat almost TOO well - so many good cooks!), and we have had a good bit of fun.

If there were just another two hours in the day, I might have been able to handle my career, my marriage, my home and the Chorale! As it is, my mental and physical health and sense of balance have required me to make this tough decision. I am SO gratified to know that you will be in Melissa Janes’ more than capable hands, and I can’t wait to hear where you all go in your next chapter. I will be in the audience—you couldn’t keep me away!

Thanks to each and every one—singers, patrons, audience!

Carole Tomhave

Editor’s Note: We all wish Carole continuing great success. In her too-brief sojourn with us, Carole has been wonderfully positive, creative and professional and has helped move the Chorale into a more visible role and stronger identity in our community. Carole, we’re all very sad to see you move on and we thank you for your wonderful leadership. Our loss is also our gain, though, as our own Melissa Janes, who lives, directs, sings and teaches in our community, will assume the Director role starting July 1st. Melissa brings with her a wonderful vision for the Chorale, which she will begin sharing with us in our August issue. There are good times ahead!

Executive Board Changes

The annual all-members meeting and supper on May 20th was well attended and busy. New officers were voted in, returning members recognized, and especially warm thanks to departing Board members Wanda Osborn and Donna Pringle. In her 8 years on the Board, Wanda distinguished herself as Board President as well as Corresponding Secretary, and continues in the critical role of Production volunteer, working with the Concert Master to see that risers and equipment for concerts and rehearsals are correctly set up, taken down and stored. In her two years as Fundraising Chair, Donna has innovated and overseen activities which fund the Chorale’s many programs. Many thanks to you both!

BRC Board Officers 2013-2014

- President – Johncie Carlson (pictured)
- Recording Secretary – Sheri Pedersen
- Treasurer – Tim Carlson
- Corresponding Secretary – Carolyn Osborne
- Fund Raising – **Position open**
- Librarian – Diana Cmeyla
- Program Chair – Jack Garber
- Publicity Chair – Sasha Clarke
- Social Chair – Margie Blankenship
- Concert Master/Production – Kathy Tester
- Chorale Manager – Dorothy Wright
- Chorale/Music Director – Melissa Janes
- Youth Director – Cathy ter Weele



The State Theatre of Culpeper

One of the most exciting parts of this season was performing at the State Theatre of Culpeper as part of their opening gala. On May 7th, the Blue Ridge Chorale, The Bel Canto and the Madison Chorale Society performed portions of their concerts before a warm and responsive audience of about 350 theatre-goers.



The Theatre was built in 1938 by State Senator Benjamin Pitts as a vaudeville movie house. Senator Pitts built 30 such movie houses, and the State is unique among these in continuing to show movies. The Theatre, originally named the Pitts Theatre, was sold to Regal Cinemas in 1973 and re-named the State Theatre. For decades after that the State Theatre served as Culpeper's primary movie theater. From 1993 to 2004, the building was closed to the public. In 2004 Culpeper business man and philanthropist Greg Yates purchased the 11,000 square foot building to prevent the Theatre's demolition or conversion to retail space, and in March 2006 donated the title to the State Theatre Foundation, Inc.

After 7 years of fund raising, awareness building and community development, the beautifully and meticulously renovated Theatre opened its doors this spring. Already it has become a vibrant focus for performing arts in Culpeper. The Blue Ridge Chorale wishes the State Theatre a glorious venture in developing the arts in our community and appreciates being part of this grand, Grand Opening.



The Youth Chorale, under the direction of Cathy ter Weele, performing at our Open Door concert on April 26th. The group performed 3 traditional folk songs, and performed at the State Theatre concert as well.

Big Song, Big Singer, Big Message

This article is largely drawn from "The History and Legacy of 'God Bless America,'" by Chuck Miller for Goldmine Magazine (October, 2001) and re-published on timesunion.com on July 3, 2010. Other sources include CNN Contributor Bob Green, and Wikipedia.

On any other day, it seems, Congressmen would be busy angling for political advantage and arguing health care reform or pork-barrel bills in the great Rotunda of the Capitol, But on September 11, 2001, hours after the terrorist attacks on New York City and on Washington, our elected officials stood as one, singing Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" as a show of support in our nation's dark hour.

Irving Berlin was already a successful Broadway writer and composer when, in 1918, he was drafted into the Army. Although he was a proud and loyal American, prepared to serve his country, Berlin was not prepared for 5:00 a.m. reveille. As a writer and composer, Berlin was accustomed to working late into the night. Berlin wrote up a song about his dilemma: "Oh How I Hate to Get Up In the Morning." The song reached the camp officers, who struck a deal with Berlin. In exchange for his being allowed to work late and sleep in, he would be excused from morning reveille, if Berlin would write and compose music for an all-soldier comedy show, *Yip! Yip! Yaphank!* to help raise money for an on-base community house.

"God Bless America" was among the songs Berlin composed for the show, planning to use it as the finale. The song was inspired by Berlin's mother, who had escaped with her family from the Russian pogroms to America in 1893. As a child, Berlin remembered his mother often saying "God Bless America!"... "(and) not casually, but with emotion that was almost exaltation," Berlin later wrote. But the solemn, impassioned "God Bless America" did not fit in a ribald comedy musical, and after a few performances, the song was removed from the show.

Berlin shelved the song away in his files until 1938, at the start of World War II. Popular singer Kate Smith and her manager, Ted Collins felt that that it was important to put a patriotic song into her radio show because of the heightened tensions and war breaking out throughout Europe. Smith and Collins visited Berlin's music studio in New York City, and asked him if he had anything both patriotic and

American alto Kate Smith (1907 – 1986), a native of Virginia, was a very successful popular singer on radio and television. A big woman with a big voice (She titled her 1938 autobiography *Living in a Great Big Way*), Smith was famous for her renditions of "White Cliffs of Dover," "The Last Time I Saw Paris," and "I Don't Want to Walk Without You." Her performing career continued for 50 years, peaking in the 1940's in recordings and hosting and performing on radio and television. On July 21, 2011, Kate Smith's version of "God Bless America" was played as NASA's final wake up call for the space shuttle Atlantis, ending the 30-year shuttle program.



reverent. The story goes that Berlin just reached into a file drawer, pulled out "God Bless America," made a few adjustments and gave the song to

Collins and Smith. On November 11, 1938 (Armistice Day - now called Veterans Day), Smith told her radio audience "This year, with the war clouds of Europe threatening the peace of the entire world, I wanted to do something special – ...not only a memorial to our soldiers (but to) emphasize just how much

America means to each and every one of us ... The song is 'God Bless America'; the composer, Mr. Irving Berlin. ... As I stand before the microphone and sing it with all my heart, I'll be thinking of our veterans and I'll be praying with every breath I draw that we shall never have another war..." With that, she performed "God Bless America."

Both Smith and Berlin were flooded with requests for the song. Smith performed "God Bless America" every week on her radio show, selling nearly 400,000 pages of sheet music, and in 1939 she recorded both that song and "The Star Spangled Banner" for RCA Victor. The recording became an instant hit. Both the Democratic and Republican parties used the song as their 1940 convention themes. And as the United States entered the World

War, the song became a beacon of hope for soldiers and sailors overseas, and for their families at home.

For several years Irving Berlin gave Kate Smith the exclusive right to perform and record “God Bless America.” Smith used the song to help sell War Bonds. Irving Berlin donated all his royalties for “God Bless America,” in perpetuity, to the Boy Scouts of America.

Not everyone was equally pleased with “God Bless America,” though. It was an impassioned era. Some critics felt that the song is too sentimental and didn’t like the mix of politics with religion. WWII Isolationists felt it had an interventionist message. American anti-Semites rejected the song because it was written by a Jewish immigrant.



On October 8, 1987, this statue of Kate Smith was dedicated on the grounds of the Philadelphia Spectrum.

Hockey Anthem

In the 1970’s, “God Bless America” achieved a new popularity. In hopes of re-invigorating his Philadelphia Flyers, team vice president Lou Scheinfeld replaced the usual opening game rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner” with Kate Smith’s immortal classic. The Flyers won that first game, a 6-3 thrashing of the Toronto Maple Leafs, and “God Bless America” became a good luck charm for the Flyers. On four occasions, Kate Smith was actually chauffeured from her home in New York City to the Philadelphia Spectrum, and stepped onto the ice to sing “God Bless America” for the Broad Street faithful. Whether “God Bless America” was sung live, or whether it was played on tape, the Philadelphia Flyers won 63 games, against only 15 losses and three ties with their musical good-luck charm.

A perennial hit even so, “God Bless America” was re-released many times, both in Smith’s original 1939 version, and with new recordings. Smith and Berlin were both honored for this patriotic music. In 1955, Berlin received a gold medal from President Dwight Eisenhower in recognition of his services in composing patriotic songs for the country, including “God Bless America.” In 1982, President Ronald Reagan gave Kate Smith the Presidential Medal of Freedom, saying, “Those simple but deeply moving words, “God bless America,” have taken on added meaning for all of us because of the way Kate Smith sang them. Thanks to her they have become a cherished part of all our lives, an undying reminder of the beauty, the courage and the heart of this great land of ours.”

“This Land is Your Land”

It’s said that Woody Guthrie wrote “This Land is Your Land” in 1940, in protest to “God Bless America.” While he was wandering across America, Guthrie heard the Irving Berlin song over and over, playing on radios in humble kitchens in devastated communities. Guthrie started feeling it glossed over the lop-sided distribution of property and wealth which he was seeing in his travels and remembered from his childhood. His song’s final line was “God made America for me,” which he later changed to “This land was made for you and me.”

“Land that I love”

Composer/songwriter Irving Berlin was very successful, not only because of his immense talent (think of the emotional appeal of “White Christmas,” and then of the amazing construction of “There’s No Business Like Show Business”), but because he taught himself to succeed, every step of the way. When Berlin arrived in America, he was 5 years old and knew no English. He grew up in New York’s impoverished Lower East Side. He overcame many disadvantages, and taught himself music and the music industry.

Berlin loved what he did and he protected his work. But, he consciously handed away forever the profits of the song he was said to have loved the best: “God Bless America.” Berlin had his attorneys draw up solid contracts give every penny the song earns in perpetuity to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America for application to Scouting programs in disadvantaged areas. So far, the income from this song has been over \$10 million dollars.

Why did he do this? Berlin never forgot his roots, and was convinced that America was meant to be a place where anyone can shine. It was tribute to that dream, which rescued him, which he paid with “God Bless America” and which continues today.

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Doug Schmit opened the show with a sax and vocal solo.

A New York State of Mind

Spring, 2013



Our program was narrated by Jon Krawchuk of Culpeper Media Network.



The beat of the City was provided by Andrew Rivenburg, Logan Desbrais, Doug Schmit, Bill Webber and Jeff Wolf on drums.

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Haley Fritz (left) and Johncie Carlson sing "For Good" from *Wicked*.



Margie Blankenship sings a solo in a *West Side Story* medley



Alex ter Weele, Bass, rocks Gershwin

...Concert Photos.....Concert Photos.....Concert Photos...

Cathy ter Weele and Sam Miles singing "All I Ask of You" from *The Phantom of the Opera*.



Haley Fritz, Soprano



...Concert Photos.....Concert Photos.....Concert Photos...



The "Kyrie" from Rene Clausen's Memorial, with **Kathy** and **Scott Tester** accompanying.



Johncie and **Tim Carlson** sing "Our Children" from *Ragtime*

...Concert Photos.....Concert Photos.....Concert Photos...



Maddison Hicks and Jack Garber
sing solos from *Les Miserables*.



...Concert Photos.....Concert Photos.....Concert Photos...



The big Finale! "New York, New York" was sung by the Chorale, with dancers from the Excell Dance Performing Group, Laura Crowne directing.



What a fun season! We did so much, we enjoyed so much and we sang happily! See you soon!

