

hitting the high Notes.

A Newsletter From  WILLIAMSPORT
CIVIC CHORUS

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Barbara Hemmendinger, editor

Spending an afternoon with Mother Goose



The Williamsport Civic Chorus begins its gala 70th anniversary season on Sunday, November 24th with a concert called *An Afternoon with Mother Goose*. Given the importance of exposing small children to good music and

rhyme, parents and caregivers are encouraged to come with their youngsters. Fiona Siobhan Powell, renowned storyteller, folklorist, and public radio host for WVYA/WVIA-FM (see story on page 3), will recount children's tales, and the Chorus will perform exciting arrangements of familiar nursery rhymes.

The concert will take place at 3 pm in the sanctuary of St. Luke Lutheran Church, 1400 Market Street, in Williamsport, and an audience reception will follow in the Church's social hall immediately afterwards. In commemorating the Chorus' start of its eighth decade, plans are underway to provide surprise souvenirs to the young people. On a sadder note, the Chorus will dedicate this performance to the memory of James W. Buckman, long-time member of the bass section,

Board member, and friend. Jim died on September 27th.

Concert tickets may be purchased at the door as well as at Robert M. Sides Family Music Center, the Otto Book Store, and from Chorus members. Advance purchases receive a \$2 discount off the box office prices of \$12 for general admission and \$10 for students and seniors. Courtesy of a generous grant from the Woodcock Foundation for the Appreciation of the Arts, the Chorus is able to offer \$5 admission to the first 50 parents who buy tickets and who bring children ages 12 and under, who are admitted free. As those seats are expected to sell quickly, early purchases are advised. ♪



Singers' Corner

In singing nursery rhymes, we tap into ancient oral traditions that transmit cultural and linguistic rudiments to our little ones. For all of us exposed to Anglo-Saxon lore, those songs may also

convey long-forgotten historical satire (think of the hated 13th century English taxation on wool as it is embodied in lyrics like "one for my master and one for my dame and none for the little

boy...") as well caregivers' own unacceptable impulses (think of the baby plummeting "cradle and all"). Such multi-layered text is rich with meaning, and it

(Continued on page 4)



Ned's Notes...



Mother Goose rhymes set to music have been part of my life for as long as I can remember. I was fortunate to have been born the first child of a first grade school teacher. It was the fifties, and my mother was a stay-at-home mom. She played Mother Goose rhymes and songs on 45 rpm vinyl records. They were bright yellow. I am sure my mother also sang to and with me as we listened. Now when I hear those tunes and rhymes, I recognize them instantly as if they were part of my DNA. In graduate school I met a doctoral student who was writing a thesis that dealt with how people develop "perfect pitch". His hypothesis was that early listening experiences much like mine, rather than DNA, are one of the major influences. I am also sure that the words, rhymes, meter, and pat-

terns in the rhymes have a positive influence on language skills. In addition to all that, what better bonding experience could there be than a child's sitting on her mother's lap reading, singing, and laughing?

Although our *Afternoon with Mother Goose* will not be quite so intimate as mother and child, we will celebrate words and music, rhyme and harmony, and wonder and fantasy. Our concert is built around traditional Mother Goose rhymes. The Chorus will present a wide variety of settings of rhymes – some simple, some edgy, some very, very fast, and some kind of silly. The spoken rhymes will be presented by our consummate guest storyteller, Fiona Siobhan Powell, who will appear in full costume. As she gathers the children around her spinning wheel, Fiona will make those familiar verses come alive. Not only does she recite the rhymes beautifully, she also conveys vast knowledge of their history and of the stories behind the stories.

Beyond Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill, Mary and her lamb, and all those other characters, this concert will give us all a huge dose of humanity, which is sometimes lacking in today's world. The rhymes and the music teach us something about ourselves and our world. They remind us of our human foibles. They keep us from taking ourselves too seriously.

While we encourage lots of young listeners, all listeners will enjoy this *Afternoon with Mother Goose*, which promises to be rich in words and music. 🎵

"Ned's Notes" is provided for the enjoyment of our readers by Ned Wetherald. Currently in his seventeenth year as music director of the Williamsport Civic Chorus, Ned is minister of music at State College Presbyterian Church. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in music and choral conducting from Shenandoah University.



"This performance is supported in part by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency."

Patrons Reminder

The Civic Chorus patron campaign is underway. You can now make those very important contributions by mail at P.O. Box 752, Williamsport, PA 17703, or on our website using PayPal. Thank you!

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williamsportcivicchorus.org

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Fiona Siobhan Powell, storyteller

By now, most of you are aware that Fiona Siobhan Powell, folklorist and storyteller, is our guest artist for *An Afternoon with Mother Goose*. What you may not already know is that Ms. Powell spins fiber as well as stories. Indeed, her first career was that of a shepherd, and despite having lost her sheep, Fiona still creates fiber crafts and clothing.

More familiar though, is Fiona's being the Williamsport voice for WVYA, our local PBS radio station, where she can often be seen at the control board inside the Community Arts Center. There, she hosts "Williamsport Today", a weekday show about local arts and musical events. She also engineers and produces "Jazz Standards" for host Sascha Feinstein.

Born in the United Kingdom to a Welsh-American lawyer and British actress, Fiona's early years were spent in Japan and France. At age 10, she, her mother, and her stepfather took up residence in a small village outside Canterbury, Kent, where her stepfather worked at the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. Her household was often the site of family skits, with frequent visits from wonderful guests practicing their lines. And on visits to her father in Paris, Fiona was to discover the classics, poetry, and the art of argument. Immersed in culture and acting, Fiona nonethe-



less matriculated into university studies at the British Agricultural College, thus setting the stage for eventual work in Somerset, Wales, and Scotland.

Upon moving to the United States with her four children in 1987, Ms. Powell realized that her literary and storytelling skills were in greater demand than shepherding, resulting in her happily taking on the role of professional folklorist.

A former member of the Williamsport Civic Chorus' Board, Fiona is listed with the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts, where she specializes in appearances at Head Start programs and other early childhood centers. She also presents frequently for the Reader's Series at the Stadler Center for Poetry at Bucknell University, and when not engaged in all the above, Ms. Powell travels to her beloved Wales to further her knowledge of folklore and history. ♪



70th SEASON

An Afternoon with Mother Goose

Sunday, Nov. 24, 2013
3 pm

St. Luke Lutheran Church
1400 Market St., Williamsport

Mass in B Minor

J.S. Bach

Palm Sunday, Apr. 13, 2014
3 pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
142 Market St., Williamsport

**WOODCOCK
FOUNDATION
FOR THE APPRECIATION
OF THE ARTS**




“The Williamsport Civic Chorus is an open community of singers dedicated to making fine music accessible to all through education, participation, and inspiration.”

(Continued from page 1)

likely accounts for the popularity of nonsense tales with kids and adults, alike.

So, just how does enchantment function in child development? Story-telling helps youngsters deal with sometimes violent and definitely fearful topics in a playful, pretend manner while in face-to-face contact with a trusted protector. Catchy ditties can transmit the phonemes of one's native language rhythmically

so that kids will want to repeat those sounds and begin to generate those very small variations that will help them learn to read eventually. Moreover, nursery rhymes and lullabies provide babies, toddlers, and their preschool peers with a common universe of shared images and melodies, and they help us singers feel good as we recall and pass down foundational lore to future generations. That is why we all need to spend an afternoon with Mother Goose! 



Fall Fundraising Extravaganza
Nov. 25, 2013: With a coupon or group #, 20% of your Hoss's bill goes to the Chorus.
Dec. 9, 2013: Items ordered from Wolfgang Candy, salsa sale, and Rada are delivered.

