

hitting the high Notes.

A Newsletter From  WILLIAMSPORT
CIVIC CHORUS

Volume 18, No. 1 Sept., 2015
Barbara Hemmendinger, editor

Enjoy a new season, a new director, and an old festival!

The Chorus begins its 72nd season under the baton of Michael Connor. New to the directorship but not to the Chorus, Michael has planned three innovative programs for the year. We officially kick off with "Oktoberfest in Song: A Musical Celebration" at 3 pm Sunday, October 18th at Pennsylvania College of Technology's Klump Auditorium. Performing a repertoire of informal German songs traditionally sung at a *Hofbräuhaus*, or brewery, as well as music of German masters, we will be joined by the Williamsport Gesang Verein Harmonia. For an extra bonus, area residents may sample some of this music, but not the beer, on First Friday, October 2nd in downtown Williamsport, 6 pm at the Susquehanna Bank pavilion at the Community Arts Center, and 7 pm across the street at the Moon and Raven

Public House. Tickets for the October 18th concert may be purchased at the Otto Book Store, R. M. Sides Family Music Center, and at the door. Children 12 and other are admitted free with a ticketed adult.

Our exciting second and third concerts will be held on Sundays, December 13th and April 24th, featuring celebratory Christmas music with brass accompaniment for the holidays and an area premiere of Sir Karl Jenkins' haiku-themed "Requiem" with full



orchestra and Turning Pointe School of Ballet dancers in the Spring.

We hope to see you at all of these performances, and better yet, to your becoming a Chorus patron! 🎵



Singers' Corner

"Hello, goodbye" sums up our last five months in the singing world.

On May 16th, we bade farewell to former Music Director Ned Wetherald on the occasion of his retirement from the Civic Chorus. Singers held a surprise dinner at the Cloud 9 Restaurant at which he was serenaded by Greg Kohler (banjo) and Steve Hulslander

(guitar) to words composed by our own Eric Albert (bass guitar). Chorus members also presented Ned with an original print created by artist Claire Brassard that featured musical notation inscribed with the name of every one of the 50+ concerts Ned conducted during his tenure here.

The current season began to take shape in the intervening



months. Music Director Michael Connor has energetically encour-

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Know the Score...



Michael Connor

Hello!

Long time reader, first time writer.

Traditionally, Oktoberfest kicks off the month of October. According to the all-knowing Wikipedia, "Oktoberfest is a 16 to 18-day festival held each year in Munich, Bavaria, Germany, running from late September to the first weekend in October... The original Oktoberfest occurred in Munich, on October 12, 1810, (when) for the public commemoration of their marriage that took place five days before, Crown Prince Ludwig (later King Ludwig I) and the Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen organized a great horse race."

Things took off after that first successful horse race, and as the years went by, organizers added more days of revelry and more events, including agricultural fairs, games, and a parade. Chol-

era outbreaks cancelled the festival for a few seasons, but the Bavarians more than made up for lost time when they started.

The rest is pretty much history, with several modifications (and some additional cancellations, thanks to world wars and baggage that comes from them). By 1960, Oktoberfest went global, and now for many, the whole month of October equals an excuse to drink beer with stick-to-your-ribs foods like smoked sausages, potato pancakes, and *Spätzle* while singing (read: shouting) and, perhaps unwisely, dancing to folk music.

Sounds good to me, said the Irishman, for whom kielbasa was not a staple of my diet growing up! If you are in the mood to listen to great German music like a Bavarian, you've got a fantastic chance when the Williamsport Civic Chorus teams up with the Williamsport Gesang Verein to celebrate Oktoberfest on Sunday, October 18th on the campus of Pennsylvania College of Technology's Klump Academic Center!

Now, could somebody please pass me the sauerkraut with a side of Schumann? 🎵

"Know the Score" is provided for the enjoyment of our readers by Michael Connor. Currently in his inaugural year as music director of the Williamsport Civic Chorus, Michael comes to us from the Harmonia Gesang Verein, where he is entering his third year as conductor. He holds a master's degree in education with music specialization from Bucknell

University, serving as a graduate assistant to Dr. William Payn there. Connor currently teaches choral music at Central Mountain Middle School in Clinton County and has also appeared as a frequent vocal soloist with the Chorus and with numerous other performing organizations. Along with his wife Denise, Michael is a proud parent of Aidan, Gabrielle, and Liam.



"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!

PayPal[™]

Visit us:
williamsportcivicchorus.org

 Find us on
Facebook

72nd SEASON

Oktoberfest in Song

Sunday, Oct. 18, 2015

3 pm

Klump Academic Center
Pennsylvania College of Technology

Glorious Christmas

Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015

3 pm

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

Regional Premiere: Karl Jenkins' Requiem

Sunday, Apr. 24, 2016

3 pm

Location to be announced

About the GVH

Most people know that Williamsport is home to longstanding musical organizations such as the Repasz Band (est. 1831) and the Civic Chorus (est. 1944), but readers might not be aware that the Civic Chorus' October concert partner, the Williamsport Gesang Verein Harmonia, has been in continuous existence here since 1892. Founding members of that German-language "singing and social society" had surnames of Beiter, Fischer, Glunk, Graf, Staib, Stopper, and Willman. Most were sons and grandsons of immigrants (although several were born in Germany) who came to the United States by 1870, which was before Germany itself was a unified nation. Besides camaraderie, the society's mission was to "promote the sense for the beautiful and noble...especially among the younger generation". Members first met in the old St. Boniface School. In 1895 the group built its own hall on the lot between Franklin and Penn Streets, where to this day it continues to hold rehearsals, parties, meetings, and dances.

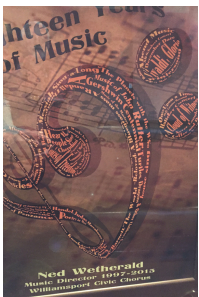
As with other immigrant benevolent societies, membership decreased during the first half of the 1900's due to assimilation as well as members' aging and in this case, the waning of things German during two world wars. In 1947, the GVH affiliated with the United Singers Federation of Pennsylvania, and it has competed in prize singing at the Federation's



annual *Sängerfest* ever since. Several of these competitions, including one in 2013, have been held locally. Although it is still chartered as a private men's club, the Williamsport GVH formed a *Damenchor*, or ladies' chorus, in 1967. Even today, women must have a male relative belonging to the club in order to join.

In 2013, Dr. Gary Boerckel passed the director's baton to Michael Connor under whose leadership the GVH hopes to host the 2017 Pennsylvania *Sängerfest* here in honor of the group's 125th anniversary. Other goals are to increase public exposure and to gain new members for both the men's and ladies' choruses. Speaking German is not a requirement, says spokesperson Heidi Stopper, as "we only have two German-speaking singers. The rest of the chorus picks up words phonetically in singing the folk and classical music that were founding members' favorites." For more information about joining these choruses, please contact director Michael Connor, or find the Gesang Verein Harmonia on Facebook. 🎵

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



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aged his two groups, the Williamsport Gesang Verein Harmonia and the Civic Chorus, to join forces for an October 18th performance,

“Oktoberfest in Song”. This collaboration was foreshadowed by a late August “meet and greet” picnic at Riverfront Park in Loyalsock where singers and families from both organizations mingled.

