

# hitting the high Notes.

A Newsletter From  WILLIAMSPORT CIVIC CHORUS

Volume 19, No. 3 May 2017  
Barbara Hemmendinger, editor

## On Saturday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, a sound and light extravaganza!

The long-awaited rock tour collaboration between the Williamsport Civic Chorus and the Uptown Music Collective will take place at 7:30 pm on Saturday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, at the Community Arts Center. This melding of our two groups' sounds into magical harmonies is not to be missed!

Called "Voices Rising", our performance will feature Uptown's student ensembles and solo vocalists with the Civic Chorus' providing back-up and gospel choir accompaniment.

Young and old will thrill to hearing favorite pop tunes, including some amazing arrangements of hits like Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror", The Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band", and Madonna's "Like a Prayer", among others.

Tickets for this festive concert will be on sale from Chorus members as well as at the Otto Book Store, the Robert M. Sides Family



Music Center, and at the Community Arts Center. Williamsport Civic Chorus patron tickets will be accepted in lieu of a \$20 general admission ticket. Student and senior tickets cost \$15. ♫

## Singers' Corner: Community Outreach

February's record-breaking attendance



Michael Connor (l) & Chris Jackson (r) prepared singers for an outstanding rendition of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gerardo Edelstein (center) on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Friday, May 12, 6:30 pm.** We will perform the "Star Spangled Banner" featuring Dave Sorgen on trumpet at the American Cancer Society's River Valley Relay For Life. Come support a great cause at the South Williamsport Park Complex!

**August 2017.** Look for a possible Chorus performance during Little League World Series week.

### Our 74<sup>th</sup> season (2017-18)

**December 9, 2017.** Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at St. Mark's Lutheran Church

**February 2018.** Concert featuring American spirituals

**April 2018.** Chorus and orchestra to perform Poulenc's *Gloria* and Mozart's *Coronation Mass*

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## Know the Score



**Michael Connor**

I am surrounded daily by the world of education and primarily see myself as an educator. It seems very easy to get isolated in the classroom. One can get caught in the trap of walking into a classroom, shutting the door, and tending to one's own students. Many schools function this way, with teachers sharing nothing more than a parking lot. Some people like it this way, but an effective teacher is someone who wants to grow in the profession. An effective teacher wants collaboration.

Collaboration is not always a concept that is greeted with open arms. Effective collaboration involves common goals, high levels of trust and joint planning, decision making, and problem solving. Collaborating in the classroom is, at its core, a challenging effort. This is very often the same for the world of music performance. Performers who have

had success working in isolation may view this process as an invasion of their style and a waste of time. The key to strong musical collaboration is recognizing that music shouldn't be the responsibility of only one performer, but of all performers.

In the same way that teachers' interaction can no longer be defined by the parking lot we share or by idle discussions in the lounge, a professional music culture requires musicians who are willing to share, support, and explore together. Developing a collaborative music culture will result creating a dynamic music community. The Williamsport community is a thriving music community. Practically any night of the week one can step out and hear live music. Just head into town and find live performances at the Community Arts Center, the Scottish Rite, and at local restaurants and pubs, as well as theatre shows at CTL and the Pajama Factory. Artistic collaboration is all around us in Williamsport.

The Williamsport Civic Chorus is honored to have the Uptown Music Collective join us in this collaborative effort. When I pitched the idea to UMC's Executive Director, Dave Brumbaugh, we both lit up. This performance immediately became a living, breathing, collaborative effort, taking a life of its own. I knew that it would enhance the lives of Dave's students and my choir members.

A passing note... Some of the greatest moments in music

were as a result of collaboration. Queen and David Bowie performing "Under Pressure," Aerosmith and Run-D.M.C., The Beatles and Clapton... In 1956, the "Million Dollar Quartet" happened upon one another, seemingly by pure chance. Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and Johnny Cash all happened to be at Sun Records. What happened next was an impromptu recording of four music icons.

"Voices Rising" has been in mind for more than a year. I cannot wait to for this performance to come together on May 27<sup>th</sup> at the Community Arts Center! ♫

*"Know the Score" is provided for the enjoyment of our readers by Michael Connor. Currently in his second year as music director of the Williamsport Civic Chorus, Michael also directs the Harmonia Gesang Verein. He holds a master's degree in education with music specialization from Bucknell University, having served as a graduate assistant to Dr. William Payn there. Connor teaches choral music at Central Mountain Middle School and has also appeared as a frequent vocal soloist with the Chorus and with numerous other performing organizations. He is also the proud father of Aidan, Gabrielle, and Liam.*

*The Williamsport Civic Chorus receives state arts funding support through a grant from 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.*

## Editor's Interview with Uptown's Director, Dave Brumbaugh

**BH:** What are you hoping for in our joint performance when Uptown students interact with an older group of (mostly) classically experienced singers from the community?

**DB:** The Uptown Music Collective is always seeking new experiences for its students. For several years now we have collaborated with orchestras in our performances, including the Williamsport Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Williamsport Area High School Orchestra, and most recently, the Lycoming College Community Orchestra. Those experiences heightened our students' awareness of the power and beauty of the orchestra, and hopefully gave them a greater appreciation for it.

Through the experience with the Civic Chorus, we wish to achieve the same result—to raise their awareness and to show them the grace and the power of mass voices.

We also firmly believe in the musical village's raising the child. We are fully confident in the education we provide, and we are always seeking more voices and musical viewpoints to share with our students to help them become the "well rounded" musicians our credo demands.

**BH:** What drives your students' passion?

**DB:** Our students come to us usually as beginners with an interest in music. Our program is based on musical immersion. Students are plunged into an environment where all activities are geared ultimately towards the performance of music.

For most of the students, the performance becomes a carrot that

drives them towards developing skill. The skills they develop lead to success on stage, and all of that increases their love and deeper understanding of music and musical expression.

When they hear the roar of the crowd and find that they can express themselves through music, their passion for it really starts to grow.

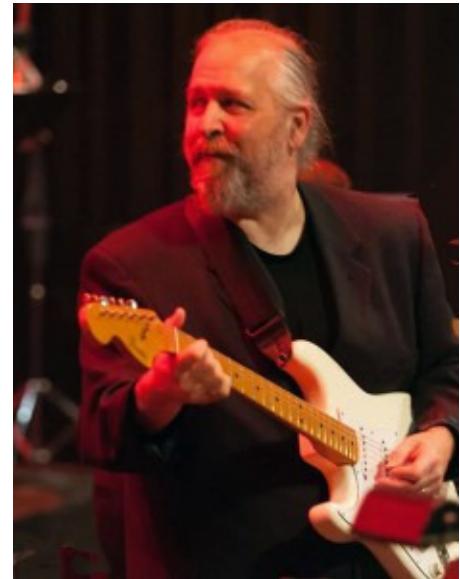
The environment we create also drives their passion. We strive to create a supportive, inspiring, and loving musical family and peer group. The young people build life-long friendships through the process and learn to play music and express themselves through it, together strengthening the bonds.

As I'm sure all of your choir members know, there's nothing better in the world than performing music with your friends.

**BH:** Why does contemporary music command such a large following compared to classical or traditional styles?

**DB:** To answer completely honestly, young people (and since I'm 54, I'm speaking about people in their 40's on down to their teens) generally have no basis for understanding classical music. They were never taught the true beauty of the music, only told that it was great and that they should listen to it and appreciate it (and you know how well commands like that work with kids). So, they generally find it really hard to engage with it, and boring to listen to or watch.

Classical forms are generally way too long and complicated for modern ears that are used to pop and



Dave Brumbaugh

rock formats, and the music does not make them want to dance, or generally sing along. As I'm sure you can see, the soundtrack for our chaotic world is over-processed, repetitive, and rhythmically driving.

Also, education has changed. Our schools do not really teach music anymore. To truly engage with music, you must understand it and most importantly, feel it, and without an inspired teacher's sharing the stories and pointing out the beauty of it, there isn't a connection.

Frankly, music also continues to move on. Of course, timewise, the genesis of so many of the great works of classical music are continually moving further and further away from the present, which makes it harder and harder for young people to wrap their brains around the fact that Bach was born 335 years ago.

As a person who has devoted half his life to educating young people

(Continued on page 4)



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**73<sup>rd</sup> SEASON**

**"Voices Rising"—  
a Rock 'n Roll  
Collaboration with the  
Uptown Music Collective"**

**Saturday, May 27, 2017**

**7:30 pm**

**Community Arts Center  
220 West Fourth Street**

**PATRON TICKETS WILL BE HONORED**



**"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 3)*

ple in the art of music, I am regularly asked by traditional musical performance groups, "How do you get young people to your performances?" and "How do you get them to appreciate your musical style?" The painfully truthful answer is that you must engage them, entertain them, interact with them, and show them the power of what you do.

The Uptown Music Collective seeks to engage students where they are. They come to us only liking the music of say, Katy Perry, and we teach them to sing or play their cho-

sen instrument with the goal of performing a Katy Perry song at the next Student Showcase. This approach keeps the students interested and learning. Once we've got them hooked on learning music, we ultimately lead them to appreciate a whole world of music beyond the pop music of Katy Perry, as their teachers broaden their musical horizons by suggesting other artists to listen to and trace the music back to its roots.

It seems obvious to me that traditional musicians who would like to engage young people need to find

ways to make their performances more engaging. This might possibly involve multi media and more story telling so people can find ways to connect to the story of the music.

There need to be musical outreach programs that target young kids and regularly educate them in a compelling way about the beauty and soul of great music. We can't just appeal to their minds; that doesn't usually work. You've really got to grab them by their soul, that's where music resides. ♫