

# hitting the high Notes

A Newsletter From  WILLIAMSPORT  
CIVIC CHORUS

Volume 22, No. 1 October 2019  
Barbara Hemmendinger, editor

## Sing "Hallelujah," We Are 75!

On September 10, 1944, Walter McIver assembled 57 singers to rehearse for the first time ever as the Williamsport Civic Choir (now "Chorus"). On September 9, 2019, Michael Connor held the first rehearsal of this season with 68 individuals. In the intervening 75 years, our venerable ensemble has rehearsed and performed continuously throughout the region and beyond, and our concert on Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> will treat you to glorious music that we have performed over those many years.

Bookended by Beethoven's and Handel's different "Hallelujah" compositions, we will celebrate and praise the Chorus' history and the work of so many people, both contemporary and those who preceded us, who have contributed to our success.

On the eve of this performance, Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, there will be a gala anniversary dinner featuring musical entertainment at the Genetti Hotel. Please see page 5 for details and reservations,

which are due by October 15<sup>th</sup>. Admission to Sunday's full concert, "75 Years in Review," in St. Mark's Lutheran Church at 3 pm, is also available. Concert tickets may be purchased for \$8 (students and seniors) and \$10 (general admission) at the Otto Book Store, R.M. Sides Family Music Center, and [online](#). Tickets bought at the door will cost \$10 and \$12, respectively, and all children under 12 years old as well as supporters with patron tickets will be admitted without charge. 🎵

### Singers' Corner: "Visiting Ireland," a poem by Sue Border

Learn your music and  
Pack all of your bags.  
Make sure you have your passport and  
check your luggage tags.

Get over to the bus on time and  
for the group photo: Smile!  
We're on our way to Ireland,  
the lovely Emerald Isle.

Following signs and following arrows  
we're finally on the plane.  
There's barely room to breathe, so  
How can I make a poem rhyme?

When we're driving in the country  
we're all counting sheep.  
I guess it's no wonder that  
we're all falling asleep.

*(verse courtesy of Eleanor Uckele)*

Our tour director Des  
is nothing short of dedication.  
And, Sean can make a bus squeeze  
through any tight situation.

Awe inspiring beauty and  
warm welcomes await us.  
We lift our voices at St. Nicholas  
in the shadows of Columbus.

Lucy and Eric played their whistles  
on the magnificent Cliffs or Moher.  
Mike and Lisa have been dubbed royal.  
It's the Bunratty crowns they wore.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5,  
6, 7, 8, and 9,  
10, dot dot dot 46.  
Everyone's here on time!

We sing at St. Fin Barre's Cathedral  
in the Irish city of Cork.  
The goose bumps arise when we arrive.  
We sing in praise to the Lord.

Learned a lot and a taste test, too.  
Guinness is a hop-ing place.  
St. Patrick's Cathedral is deep in prayer.  
Our music adds to its grace.

We visit Trinity College  
to see the Book of Kells.  
Christ Church is the final place  
our voices lift and swell.

A stop at the Jameson Distillery  
to taste the Water of Life.  
It's time to say goodbye to Ireland and  
catch the Aer Lingus flight! Slán! 🎵

*For more reporting about the Civic Chorus' Irish tour, please see the special insert.*

## Know the Score



**Michael Connor**

The Nike Swoosh, I ♥ NY, a burger and fries, a 1955 Chevy Bel Air, baseball, apple pie, and fireworks on the Fourth of July, Levi Jeans, the Sydney Opera House, Helvetica, Citizen Kane, Anna Karenina... All of these things; "classics."

The songs in our first concert represent the first pieces of music that got me hooked on the masters. They characterize some of the greatest musical works of all time. This concert's "classics" are my introduction to the great composers and my gateway into an immeasurable musical world. At first, we as performers are tied to the singing of the music. The masters resonate so wonderfully. They are fun to sing. They stick to you when you're done. They come back to you years after the fact and reveal new and exciting possibilities. But, then the stories behind the songs reveal depth and truth. The stories about the masters are often as intriguing as the pieces themselves. Mozart and Beethoven are almost unbelievable characters.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a master of the musical forms and conventions present in the 18th century. A child prodigy, he composed

over 600 works, both sacred and secular, in his short life, including masses, operas, cantatas, songs, symphonies, chamber works, and concertos. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians observes, "He excelled in every medium current in his time. He may thus be regarded as the most universal composer in the history of Western music."

Mozart is still an enigma to most of us. In contrast to the multitude of sacred pieces he composed for Archbishops Schrattenbach and Colloredo while in Salzburg, Mozart composed only two religious works during the last ten years of his life in Vienna. One was the "Ave Verum Corpus"; the other was the *Requiem*, his last work, which was completed posthumously by his student Süßmayr.

One of history's most revered composers, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) demands no special introduction; his musical legacy speaks for itself. Much of his music is well known today for its expressive emotion, dynamic virtuosity, and triumphant heroism. In Beethoven's letters and conversation notebooks, he matter-of-factly defines his deafness and the rather interesting plethora of pills, herbs and ointments that were prescribed to treat Beethoven's deafness and other health issues.

Beethoven's "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Christ on the Mount of Olives* was completed in 1803, when it is believed that Beethoven had only 60% of his hearing. His oratorio *Christus am Olberge* depicts the final moments of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane before he is taken away to be crucified. After Jesus accepts his fate at the hands of the Roman soldiers, the oratorio concludes as the chorus of angels heralds a jubilant "Hallelujah." Fol-

lowing a grand introduction, the majestic chorus builds to an exciting fugue in which the orchestra fittingly quotes the recognizable "Hallelujah" theme from Handel's *Messiah*. I can barely contain myself during this piece of music. It is like Beethoven is accepting his own fate, but ultimately, Beethoven didn't go out without a fight.

This season we celebrate 75 years of making music. A classic design might only be a few years old; a classic car falls into the category after 20 years. I'd like to say we are a classic choir at 75 years, and I also wish to say that we are

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*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.*

**Visit us:**  
**[williamsportcivicchorus.org](http://williamsportcivicchorus.org)**

**Find us on**  
**Facebook**

## Our Second European Tour, Ireland 2019

Dawn was breaking on Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup> as 46 sleepy travelers with the Williamsport Civic Chorus deplaned in Dublin. Tour guide extraordinaire, Des O'Brien, and Olympic motor-coach driving champion (this should really be a sport), Sean O'Connor, greeted us cheerily. We had planned this trip over the course of more than one year and were embarking on a week-long performance tour that many of us could have only dreamed about. Our senses had awakened to Ireland!

As the bus rolled westward, we caught glimpses of verdant country, and we alighted to visit the monastic ruins and high crosses at Clonmacnoise. Setting foot on that moist soil, a panorama of cows and sheep grazing in the surrounding fields opened before us. Later, back on the bus, high noon brought full sun and our arrival in charming Galway, a port city known for its quaint old town, university life, and crowded pubs and eateries.

The next morning in Galway, the Chorus sang during Sunday services before a full and welcoming congregation at the St. Nicholas Collegiate Church, named for St. Nicholas of Myra (a.k.a. Santa Claus) where the sermon about inclusion was also music to our (visiting) ears. That performance would be the first of four scheduled for the tour and the only one at a church having a local congregation. Later in the

week, Conductor Michael Connor and our accompanist Christian Humcke were to delight in bringing our combined voices to three cathedrals—St. Fin Barre's in Cork, and St. Patrick's and Christ Church Cathedrals in Dublin. In each of those glorious settings, our spirits soared as we presented sung services and largely American choral selections to appreciative listeners of locals and tourists alike.

Speaking of tourists, the Chorus visited Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, enjoying a picturesque afternoon at Kylemore Abbey in Connemara, with its stunning architecture, lush formal gardens, and ornate interiors. Arriving at the famed Cliffs of Moher the next morning was in stark contrast to Klyemore's built environment. At Moher on the Atlantic coast, we trod on cliff top trails high above the sea, permitting the breeze and crashing waves far below to surround us with nature's unfailing beauty. And did we mention the Kerry bog ponies and our encountering sheep with paintball-like brandings in the nearby countryside, or the scent of burning peat as we continued traveling along the shoreline past the championship golf club at Lahinch?

En route back to Dublin and our special performances there, the group took in a medieval dinner at Bunratty Castle replete with mead and meat, period entertainment, and the investiture of

our Earl-for-an-Evening, Michael Connor. Some hearty stair climbers and contortionists among us also kissed the cold, hard Blarney Stone atop another castle, while others from the group luxuriated as they shopped for soft woolens and finely textured linen products.

No trip to Ireland would be complete without sampling traditional foods including stews, smoked fish, quiches, and surprisingly, curries. Guinness and Jameson alcoholic beverages abounded, and we learned about their production during taste-testing visits to flagship breweries and distilleries. Dublin's famed Trinity College with its 9<sup>th</sup> century Book of Kells on display and floor-to-ceiling medieval library immersed us in that love of learning that we, of course, share with people from an earlier millennium.

The love of learning and the love of beautiful music were what this trip was about. One Chorus member remarked that "this was the best experience I ever had." Another commented on just how important going abroad was. In small and large ways, we all experienced the wonder of being together, giving to others, and taking in new vistas. 🎵

*Please see page 4 for a performance tour photo collage. More photos and links to all four videotaped performances in Ireland may be found at [williamsportcivicchorus.org](http://williamsportcivicchorus.org).*







## 76<sup>th</sup> SEASON

(All venues are in Williamsport)

### "75 Years in Review"

Sunday, Nov. 3, 2019

3 pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

142 Market Street

### "An Evening at the Pops"

Sunday, Feb. 9, 2020

3 pm

Pajama Factory, Clearstory

1307 Park Avenue

### "The Lake Isle" and more by Ola Gjeilo

Sunday, May 3, 2020

3 pm

St. John's United Methodist Church

2101 Newberry Street

Hear us in the community, too:

Dec. 14, 10 am, caroling at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Market at the Pajama Factory

Jan. 5, 3 pm, *Messiah* Sing, Pine Street United Methodist Church, co-sponsored with Williamsport Music Club

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala!

Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

at the Genetti Hotel, 200 W. Fourth Street, Williamsport  
musical entertainment provided; cocktail attire suggested

### 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala

Saturday, November 2, 2019

Genetti Hotel

5:00 pm—Cash bar; 6:00 pm—Dinner



Please mail \$35/person and choice of entrée(s) to the address shown by October 15<sup>th</sup>

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

Choice of one:

- ☐ bruschetta chicken
- ☐ garlic sesame salmon
- ☐ mushroom, spinach and cheese risotto

Mail to:

Williamsport Civic Chorus  
PO Box 752  
Williamsport, PA 17703



**WILLIAMSPORT  
CIVIC CHORUS**

### Holiday Shopping?

Give a basket containing Chorus fundraiser items—

- Rada Cutlery
- Gardners Candies
- Assorted Candy Bars

Details from singers and online.

### Patrons Reminder

The Civic Chorus patron campaign is underway. You can now make those very important contributions by mail at PO Box 752, Williamsport, PA 17703, or on our [web-site using PayPal](#). Thank you!

**"75 Years in Review"**

Sunday, Nov. 3, 2019

3 pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

142 Market Street

Williamsport

[williamsportcivicchorus.org](http://williamsportcivicchorus.org)

"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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really just getting started and have many more to go!

Whether you are new to the classics, or they are right up your alley, "75 Years in Review" is a collection of some of the greatest songs ever written, a "best of" concert by the masters--Mozart, Handel, Beethoven, Bach, Vivaldi, Haydn, and more. I hope to see you there! 🎵

*"Know the Score" is provided for the enjoyment of our readers by Michael*

*Connor. Currently in his fifth year as music director of the Williamsport Civic Chorus, Michael holds a master's degree in education with music specialization from Bucknell University, having served as a graduate assistant to Dr. William Payn there. Professor Connor is director of choral activities at Lock Haven University and teaches choral music at Central Mountain Middle School in Clinton County. The proud father of Aidan, Gabrielle, and Liam, he has also appeared as a frequent vocal soloist with the Chorus and with numerous other performing organizations.*

**Directors'  
witticisms**

**Michael: "Everyone's singing mezzoissimo."**

**Ned: "I see a small village on the risers."**

**Grace: "Remember, it's 'slumber snot.'"**

