Holiday Concerts 2023



The Pemigewasset Choral Society Music from the Heart

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Celebrating 50 Years of Singings

LIGHT BEYOND DARKNESS

100 Voices, One Goal — To Spread the Joy of Choral Music! William Gunn — Music Director | Laura Belanger — Accompanist

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

"O war and power, you blind and blur ... through darkness and pain and strife I'll sing ... a light of song, shining strong" (from Earth Song by Frank Ticheli)

"I shall find the crystal of peace above me, stars I shall find" (from Stars I Shall Find, words by Sara Teasdale, from her poem "There Will Be Rest")

In the northern hemisphere, people have for centuries found ways to see the light beyond this darkest time of the year, and to seek renewal as they look towards the light to re-emerge following the winter solstice. Music is often a part of community gatherings to ensure and celebrate that darkness will not prevail.

A very warm welcome as our chorus of more than 100 singers brings you our holiday concert, "Light Beyond Darkness." It is our joy to share our love of singing with you, our friends, families and neighbors. Your support of our regional chorus is greatly appreciated.

The Pemigewasset Choral Society presented its first concert in May of 1974, so this year we are celebrating 50 years of bringing high quality choral music to Central New Hampshire. This program includes a brief history of those 50 years. With support from The Laconia Putnam Fund, our concerts in May of 2024 will include special celebrations at The Colonial Theatre in Laconia and at the PSU Silver Center. In honor of our 50th anniversary, the chorus will première a commissioned piece by composer Moira Smiley.

Our Director, Will Gunn, chose our December theme and title last spring as he planned the coming chorus year. This fall, it is becoming increasingly obvious how much we need to look for light beyond darkness. We need the light of friendships, we need the light of our deepest relationships, we need the light of family, we need the light of community, we need the light of acceptance of our varied backgrounds and experiences, and we need the light of compassion.

May our music provide some support for this journey as we look for the light we so badly need in these difficult times.

- C. G.

Susan C. Scrimshaw President, Pemigewasset Choral Society



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The Pemigewasset Choral Society P.O. Box 115, Plymouth, NH 03264 • pemichoral.org

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WILLIAM GUNN music director

William Gunn is the director of music at Plymouth Regional High School where he conducts the Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, Concert Choir, Chamber Singers, and teaches

a year-long guitar elective. Mr. Gunn received his bachelor of music in music education from Ithaca College and his masters of music in conducting from Colorado State University. Mr. Gunn has studied conducting with Wes Kenney, Dwight Bigler, Steve Peterson, and Eric Hammer. Mr. Gunn is the immediate past president of the New Hampshire chapter of the American Choral Directors' Association (NHACDA) and serves as the High School Repertoire and Resources chair for ACDA Eastern Region. On March 31, 2023, it was announced that the NHACDA had selected Will as the 2023 Choral Director of the Year.

Mr. Gunn's choirs have consistently received high ratings at local and regional festivals. In 2014, the PRHS Chamber Singers were chosen to be the featured choir at the All New England Choral Festival. In 2016, the PRHS Concert Choir premiered a new work in collaboration with the ALS Association of New England and raised over two thousand dollars for ALS research. The new composition included text by a local author and community member who lost the battle to ALS in 2015. Mr. Gunn has also collaborated on new commissions with Dr. Jonathan Santore and Michael John Trotta. Mr. Gunn regularly guest conducts and adjudicates at local and regional festivals. In 2018, he was a Conducting Scholar at the Delaware Choral Academy in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Mr. Gunn lives in Plymouth with his wife Gaia, their son Nico, and their pitbull mix, Linny.



LAURA V. BELANGER ACCOMPANIST

Laura V. Belanger received her degree from Manhattan School of Music where she studied under Bronson Ragan and Frederick Swan. She holds Choir Master (ChM) and Associateship

(AAGO) certificates from the American Guild of Organists (AGO).

Ms. Belanger is an active composer and has directed and accompanied choruses and church choirs throughout New England, including the University Glee Club of Providence, RI. She is an avid enthusiast of musical theatre and as such has served as music director for many community theatre productions, including *Once Upon a Mattress, Godspell*, and *Cinderella*. In 2017, Ms. Belanger was nominated for "Best Musical Direction in a Community Theatre Production" by NH Theatre Awards.

Ms. Belanger is retired from Steinert's Pianos where she was a Steinway sales consultant. She lives in New Hampshire's Lakes Region and serves as organist at the Sanbornton Congregational Church in Sanbornton, NH.

You can learn more about Laura at her website: OrganSymphonyAssistant.com



SAI-LY ACOSTA

VIOLIN

Sai-Ly Acosta's performance is sponsored by Mandy and Victor Gennaro A native of Montreal, violinist Sai-Ly Acosta was a member of the Long Beach Symphony Orchestra for 20 years. She also performed as Acting Principal and Assistant Principal

Second violin. As a freelance violinist in Southern California, she has played with the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, the San Diego Opera Orchestra, the San Diego Chamber Orchestra, the Pacific Symphony Orchestra, the Long Beach Opera, and the Pageant of the Masters Orchestra. She has served as Concertmaster for the Concordia Masterworks Orchestra and the Long Beach Chorale. She now plays with the Portsmouth Symphony Orchestra, freelances in New Hampshire and last summer performed with the New Hampshire Music Festival Orchestra. She recently performed as Soloist and Concertmaster for the Eleva Chamber Players in Vermont.

As a sought-after studio musician she travels to Los Angeles for various performances and recording projects. Mrs. Acosta has participated in many summer Music Festivals, including the Cebreros Music Festival in Spain, the Fairbanks Music Festival, Domaine Forget, and has spent numerous summers playing in the Boris Brott Music Festival in Canada. She received her Advanced Studies Certificate in violin performance from the University of Southern California under the tutelage of Robert Lipsett with a full scholarship and studied at McGill University with Denise Lupien and Thomas Williams also with a full scholarship. She now resides in Plymouth, New Hampshire with her husband, cellist John Acosta, and her three children.







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The Pemigewasset Choral Society Celebrates 50 years of performances!





We look forward to seeing you at "Sweet Rivers," our celebratory 50th Anniversary Concerts on May 4 at the Colonial Theatre in Laconia, presented by the Laconia Putnam Fund, and May 5 at the Plymouth University Silver Center in Plymouth. Music includes Schubert's Mass in G and the premier of "Flying," an anniversary composition by Moira Smiley.

We welcome singers to join us for rehearsals beginning January 22, 2024.





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The Pemigewasset Choral Society

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Sopranos

Suzanne Adams, Laconia Rosa Bailey, Plymouth Virginia Barunas, Belmont Ericka Beaudet, Woodsville Joanne Bickford, Center Sandwich Kim Bossey, Meredith Alice Bowen, Rumney Elizabeth Burow, Rumney Frances Chevalier-Smith, Thornton Deborah Corr, New Hampton Kim Cranshaw, Campton Eileen Curran-Kondrad, New Hampton Melanie Dixon, *Plymouth* Gisela Behrendt Estes, Plymouth Josianne Fitzgerald, Meredith Nancy Frost, Gilford Roberta Gatehouse, New Hampton Grace Gleich, Thornton Gina Healy, Laconia Cindy Hess, Waterville Valley Lucille Keegan, Bristol Francine King, Meredith Barbara McCahan, Plymouth Christine McMillian, Meredith Nancy Nesheim, Meredith Colleen O'Loughlin, Campton Christine Ronan, Gilford Merrith Sabo-Jones, Bristol Valerie Sargent, Northfield Susan Scrimshaw, Thornton Carol Stewart, Thornton Lois Wagner, Campton Kathy West, Hebron

Altos

Robbin Adams, Campton Lourdes Avilés, Campton Heather Baldwin, Thornton Ianis Bass, Holderness Michelle Bui, Ashland Barbara Carpenter, Bridgewater Susan Chadwick, Bristol Phyllis Corrigan, Gilford Rosemary D'Arcy, Bristol Deborah Doe, Bristol Heather Doherty, Campton Lin Everett, Hebron Sally Filteau, Hebron Kim Hamel, Wolfeboro Kay Hanson, Holderness Mary Hazelton, Hebron Katherine Hillier, Plymouth Denise Hutchins, Campton Elsie Ivester, Gilford Susan Jacobs, Bridgewater Sally Linfield, Bridgewater Carol Lowden, Woodstock Victoria Merriman, Ellsworth Molly Milner, *Rumney* Bev Newton, Plymouth Ann Nichols, Gilford Holly Oliver, Bridgewater Janet Panagoulis, Holderness Anita Ross, Thornton Lea A. Stewart, Campton Thanida Thomas, Thornton Freda Weinbrecht, Laconia Jennifer Whalen, Melvin Village

THE PEMIGEWASSET CHORAL SOCIETY SINGING MEMBERSHIP

Altos (cont.)

Priscilla Carr Whitney, *Campton* Sara Willingham, *Concord*

Tenors

Michael Avilés Bramer, Campton Lorraine Barrows, Laconia Sarah Bunkley, Plymouth Jane Clay, Plymouth AJ Coppola, Thornton Gabrielle Crandall, Center Harbor Donavon Freeman, Andover Jay Frost, Meredith Joel Funk, Rumney Jim Goodwin, Belmont Mary Edith Kovach-Heise, Campton Woodie Laverack, Holderness Ginny Lovett, Meredith Gary McCool, *Rumney* Marilyn Pomerantz, Thornton Allan Stern, Thornton Patricia Timbury, Woodstock John Whitney, Campton

Basses

Steve Anglea, *Rumney* Granville Barrows, *Laconia* Frederick Bickford, *Center Sandwich* Raymond DeRaymond Jr, *Bridgewater* Dan Hale, *Plymouth* Robert Harrington, *Laconia* John Kreitler, *Laconia* Franz Kuder, *Groton* Ted McCahan, *Plymouth* Craig McMillian, *Meredith* Thomas Perkins, *Holderness* Logan Ross, *Thornton* Ken Wells, *Andover*



light beyond darkness

PROGRAM

Ring Out, Ye Bells!

Marques L.A. Garrett, Samuel Carlton, and Dan Forrest

Oh, Watch the Stars

O Magnum Mysterium

Till the Stars Fall from the Sky

What Child Is This?

Traditional

Tomás Luis de Victoria

Sally Albrecht arr. Jay Althouse

arr. Moira Smiley

Traditional English Melody Words by William C. Dix arr. Molly Ijames

Jule Styne and Sammy Cahn

*Let it Snow

Ad Astra

Jacob Narverud

INTERMISSION

Stars I Shall Find

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas Victor C. Johnson

Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane arr. Molly Ijames

PROGRAM (CONT.)

Earth Song

Frank Ticheli

Ave Maris Stella

Mark Thomas Sai-Ly Acosta, Violin

Solo Group: Ginny Barunas, Ericka Beaudet, Frances Chevalier-Smith, Melanie Dixon, Cindy Hess, Denise Hutchins, Merrith Sabo-Jones

Light of a Clear Blue Morning

Dolly Parton arr. Craig Hella Johnson Sai-Ly Acosta, Violin

Soloist: Michael Avilés Bramer

*O Come, All Ye Faithful

Traditional

True Light

Keith Hampton

Soloist: Molly Milner

*We invite you to sing along with us



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

In a world often shrouded in shadows, where challenges and adversity seem insurmountable, there exists a force that transcends the darkness and ushers in the promise of hope, transformation, and renewal. "Light Beyond Darkness" is an exploration of this timeless and universal theme, a journey through the human experience that reminds us that even in our darkest hours, there is always a glimmer of light to guide us forward.

This performance is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of art and creativity to illuminate our path. Through musical stories, we will navigate the intricate interplay of shadow and light, and the profound moments when light pierces through the veil of darkness.

As we come together for this experience, we invite you to contemplate the symbolism of light in your own life and around the world. How have you found or created light beyond personal darkness? Let this concert serve as a source of inspiration and a reminder that, no matter how bleak the circumstances may appear, there is always a path to a brighter tomorrow.

It is an honor to be standing as Pemi Choral Music Director as we celebrate fifty years of singing together. I am so thankful to my dear friend Leslie Mc-Donnell who asked me to be her assistant director ten years ago. Directing this choir has brought me such wonderful artistic opportunities and amazing friendships.

Will Gunn



LYRICS FOR SING-ALONGS

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem; Come, and behold him, born the King of Angels!

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above Glory to God, Glory in the highest

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning. Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n! Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Let it Snow

Oh, the weather outside is frightful But the fire is so delightful And since we've no place to go Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!

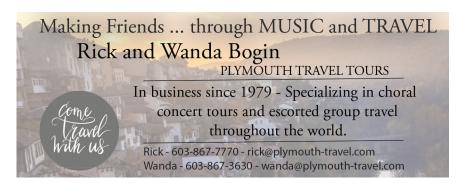
It doesn't show signs of stopping And I brought some corn for popping The lights are turned way down low Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow

When we finally kiss good-night How I'll hate going out in the storm But if you really hold me tight All the way home I'll be warm

The fire is slowly dying And, my dear, we're still good-bye-ing But as long as you love me so Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow

When we finally kiss good-night How I'll hate going out in the storm But if you really hold me tight All the way home I'll be warm

The fire is slowly dying And, my dear, we're still good-bye-ing But as long as you love me so Let it snow, let it snow!



THE PEMIGEWASSET CHORAL SOCIETY A Brief History



On May 12, 1974 a group of 29 nervous singers gathered in the College Union Building at Plymouth State College. An audience of 35 family members also gathered – not perhaps exactly by choice, but at least curious to hear the result of six months of weekly rehearsals. An hour later, as the last of five selections concluded, the enthusiasm of performers and audience alike was tangible. The Pemigewasset Choral Society had officially been launched.

Our Choral Society had its genesis at a meeting of arts enthusiasts held in the spring of 1973. Gathering to discuss ways to enhance the limited arts offerings in the region, two participants took on the task of creating a choral group while the remaining five participants went on to develop visual fine arts programs, including artistic displays and stage performances. Thus, two organizations were born: Plymouth Friends of the Arts provided programs for several decades; the Pemigewasset Choral Society is still going strong, providing the opportunity for adults to sing under professional leadership. Three of the original singers -- Gisela Estes, Sally Filteau and Katherine Hillier -- are still performing with the chorus.

By October of 1973, the groundwork had been laid. Dr. Earl Norwood, chair of the Plymouth State College music department, had agreed to volunteer his services for one year. Catherine Dornin, a local pianist, would serve as accompanist. Dozens of phone calls, letters and meetings had encouraged singer participation; the Parks and Recreation Department had agreed to sponsor the society, allowing free use of the music room at the Plymouth High School.

On a Monday evening in October, over 80 singers gathered for the first time in the Plymouth High School music room. One of the pieces sung was by the

German composer Johannes Brahms; another was in Latin. The message was clear: this was to be a group willing to sing serious music. The next Monday brought fewer than half the singers from the week before. The remaining group met weekly for the following months, with a few more dropouts on the way. And on May 12, 1974, at our first performance, it was clear that months of rehearsing were worth all the effort.

The early years were characterized by high member involvement, and steady growth in membership and reputation. Funds needed to be raised to cover music costs and salaries, prompting some creative adventures. In 1974 and 1975 a "House of Horrors" was staged at the Grange Hall located on South Main Street, where Rite Aid is today. Choral society members became ghouls, witches, and corpses and for a small fee scared local youth on Halloween. Grants received from the State Arts Council resulted in concerts at many of the state's institutions, including the New Hampshire State Prison, Glencliff Home for the Elderly, and the Laconia State School.

At the end of our fifth season, in the spring of 1978, the Board regretfully accepted the resignation of Dr. Earl Norwood, who had accepted a prominent position at the University of Tennessee. At the same time, the demands of a growing family resulted in the resignation of Catherine Dornin, our excellent accompanist. Under their direction the Choral Society had become an established presence: membership had grown to fifty, audiences had steadily grown in size, and concerts were received with enthusiasm.

What to do? Choral Society members went to work, and by early fall had secured both a director and accompanist. Douglas Renfroe had a strong background in music performance, and became our second director; Robert Bates, an impressive pianist, became our second accompanist. The show could go on! But it was a brief reprieve. At the conclusion of the 1979 spring performances, we wished Douglas Renfroe well in his new full-time position in another state.

Dr. Robert Swift, his wife Margot and their two children had recently moved to this area; he had become Chairman of the Department of Music at Plymouth State College. A few of the members met to ask him to consider becoming the Choral Society's director. To our delight, he agreed. The following year, Robert Bates retired – and Margot, a wonderful pianist, became the accompanist.

A BRIEF HISTORY (CONT.)

For over thirty years, members of the Pemigewasset Choral Society had the pleasure of singing with the Swifts at the helm. Bob brought humor to every rehearsal, and introduced a wide range of music. Margot never missed a beat, and both were an inspiration. Under their leadership "The Pemi" became a solid and consistent presence. Three concerts were given in the fall and spring at various locations in the region; the final concert each season was held at Silver Hall, in Plymouth. The Pemi grew to 120+ singers, collectively traveling thousands of miles each week to attend rehearsals. Bringing its music to wider audiences included performances beyond our region, and in Canada and the British Isles.

In December of 2011, the Swifts gave their final performances. In gratitude for their service, chorus members established the Swift Scholarship for music students at Plymouth State University.

The following years brought many changes. In the fall of 2012 -- the end of our 40th season -- Leslie McDonnell, a talented life-long singer, music educator, performer and member of the chorus, became The Pemi's Director. She brought a wide range of music skills, honed from her years of leading several choruses in Pennsylvania. Her warmth and enthusiasm were contagious. William Gunn, the music director at Plymouth Regional High School, joined her as Assistant Director, and Catherine Dornin was welcomed back as accompanist. In the fall of 2014, Grace Templeton, a high school junior and gifted pianist, became our accompanist for her last two years at Plymouth High School. In the fall of 2016 Laura Belanger, a well-known pianist and organist, became our talented accompanist. While membership of the chorus had dropped in 2012, new leadership and young members brought new energy and enthusiasm.

In the spring of 2017 William Gunn and Leslie McDonnell changed roles, with Will becoming the Director. Will was well prepared to lead the chorus. In his duties as director of music at Plymouth Regional High School, he conducts the High School Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, Concert Choir, Chamber Singers, and teaches a year-long guitar elective.

All was going well -- and then, unexpectedly, our lives were turned upside down. In March of 2020, New Hampshire had its first confirmed COVID case; soon a state of emergency banned gatherings of 50 or more. For the first and only year, we were unable to sing with each other in person, but in the fall, Will had us singing on Zoom.

In the early spring of 2021, Will came up with a new approach. With hats, coats, mittens and face masks, we gathered in the small outdoor amphitheater in Plymouth by the Pemigewasset River, and rehearsed there for the next few months. What a joy to be together again! In June we joined forces with the New Hampshire Master Chorale, and presented two outdoor concerts at the Plymouth Riverside amphitheater. "Gather at the River" will long be remembered. In the fall of 2021, we returned to Silver Hall, masks and all, and sang in December to spirited audiences.

We have so much to appreciate. Laura is welcoming, and a talented pianist and organist. Will brings considerable skills to Pemi. He has received many accolades and awards, including the 2023 Choral Director of the year in New Hampshire. His enthusiasm, energy, sense of humor and excellent music choices keep us all engaged.

Throughout the years, many dedicated individuals have served the chorus on its board of directors. A list of the board presidents from 1974 on can be found on the choir's website, as well as posters from a variety of past concerts.

This year, in 2023-2024, the Pemigewasset Choral Society celebrates over fifty years of song, and continues its purpose of bringing a variety of significant music to enthusiastic audiences.

We look forward to the years ahead! 50th Anniversary Committee Katherine Hillier and Dan Hale, Co-Chairs

Ginny Barunas, Phyllis Corrigan, Mary Hazelton, Woodie Laverack, Lea A. Stewart, Susan C. Scrimshaw, *ex officio*





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Special thanks to Peter Adams of EVP Marketing for the design of this program.

The Tenors and the Basses hope you enjoy experiencing the concert as much as they do.

Musica Humana

Tonight, at the back of the paddock, I stand straight and tall as I can

to stare into the sky, the stars winking and burning overhead.

How can I see them, I wonder, so many epochs away, how can I

see them, witness their radiance, and not hear them

at all? There must be a rhythm to guide the celestial dance,

to help Orion whirl, and the big and little bears twirl, through

the heavens. Pythagoras thought so, and Kepler knew it too, the music

of the spheres: The planets – a soprano, two altos, a tenor, and a couple of basses,

backed by the brilliant orchestra of stars, each blinking light

flaring and sparking, flashing its own note over and again

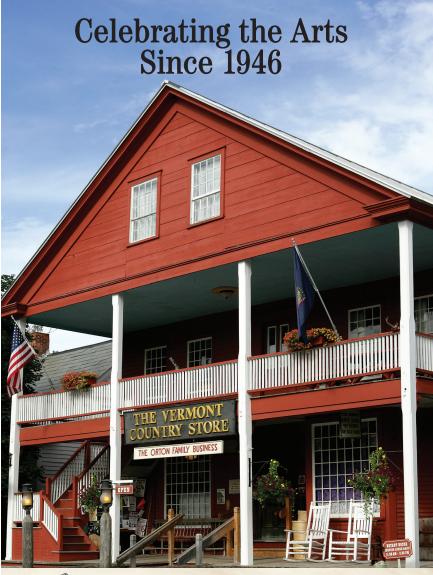
for millennia, for eternity, the harmony of heaven.

And now, in my paddock, standing in wet earth and cold air,

turned toward darkness and light, I hear it, in my bones,

in my soul, the music.

Richard W. Smith



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