Fall Concert

Street Requiem
by Wendy Browder, choir member since 1994

We began our 71st season on October 21 with the Street Requiem, an emotional and inspiring program focused on homelessness in Philadelphia. In the concert program the words of director Jeff Brillhart perfectly illuminate how the choir continues to strive to be a force for change.

‘This is our message to you this day – we are singing in order to love more, and to open our eyes and our hearts to the social challenges that we confront as a community and as a nation. We offer this to you, because singing in community is one of the most empowering experiences human beings can have. This act of community strengthens each member of the choir to be emboldened to be a force for change and the face of love.’

Street Requiem was written in Australia by Kathleen McGuire, Andy Payne and Jonathan Welch. Using both traditional Latin liturgy language, as well as English, to represent the voices of the homeless, important questions are asked. “What is it that scares you when my hand’s stretched out this way? What is it that scares you that makes you turn away?”

It was gut wrenching to hear...“She could be your daughter; he could be your son. With footsteps beside her, an evil is done.” Ending with Lux Aeterna – “Remember them. May you find a resting place, safe in love’s embrace. May you come to rest in peace, you will be remembered. We remember them.” There was a time for remembrance within the work when individual cards were distributed to the audience. Each card had the name of one of the 227 homeless who died in 2017 in Philadelphia. A number of the cards read “Unknown” or just initials. On the back of each card was a message from a choir member. The audience was invited to participate in singing to honor and to remember these lost souls.

It was very fitting to hold this concert in this venue. Old First Reformed United Church of Christ was the first church in Philadelphia to open its doors to the homeless in 1984. The church is currently in partnership with Bethesda Project, a local organization that serves the homeless in Philadelphia, and provides shelter to 30 homeless residents from November through April. My own church provides breakfast there one Saturday each month.

A friend attended this concert—his first Singing City Concert. He said that while he loved the music the thing that stood out the most for him was the card with the name of a homeless person. He brought it home and still had it to look at and ponder.
The second half of the concert consisted of readings from the Torah, the Bible, and the Quran, as well as poems, and songs from the Justice Songbook. The audience joined in several of the songs, were drawn into the moment, and experienced with us the power of song. The concert concluded with *Flight Song* by Kim Andre Arnesen.

Starting with…

All we are we have found in song;  
You have drawn this song from us.  
Songs of lives unfolding  
Fly overhead, cry overhead;  
Longing, rising from the song within.

Ending with…

Like a feather falling from the wing,  
Fragile as a human voice,  
Afraid, uncertain, alive to love, we sing as love,  
Afraid, uncertain, yet our flight begins as song.

The concert concluded with a Q & A with Liz Hersh, the Director of Homeless Services in Philadelphia. She answered questions about how to respond to pleas from the homeless on the streets, as well as sharing the current situation in Philadelphia. Our audience was invited to bring donations of clothing and toiletries to benefit Bethesda Project. We are so grateful for the generous spirit of our guests who brought 650 items!

The work of *Shoot From Within Photography* was displayed at the concert venue *(above)*. This included selected photos from *Perseverance With Dignity*, a series of images depicting homeless people in Philadelphia. Of this series, photographer Chris Brown says, “I wanted to catch the soul of the person through their eyes. I don’t want someone to say, ‘I pity them.’ My photographs aren’t about pity. They’re about empathy.”

The theme reflected throughout was that we are all human, and we have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters. The message of love, forgiveness and remembrance surrounded and enfolded performers and audience alike and by communicating together in song, allowed each person present to fulfill Jeff’s expression of what Singing City is— to be emboldened to be a force for change and the face of love.
Singing City Walks the Talk!
by Ken Schoenholz, choir and board member

Singing City has a lofty mission: Through Performance, Arts Education and Fellowship, Singing City is a force for social impact, bringing people together and lifting the human spirit through the artistry of choral music. This mission has two essential elements: (1) to produce the artistry of choral music, the choir must be outstanding (which it is); and (2) to be a force for social impact, it must plan carefully to put its mission into action, with the choir, staff and the board all sharing the same focus. The outcome has the potential to be aspirational, a choir that makes beautiful music and makes a difference in peoples’ lives.

In the world of business ethics (and elsewhere), the expression “walk the talk” is used. People and organizations expressing lofty goals and ideals need to do more than talk their aspirations; they need to follow with visible action that demonstrates that these ideals are genuine, funded with human and monetary capital, and inspire others in the organization.

On October 21 we kicked off the choir’s 71st season in historic Old City with the performance of Street Requiem, a remarkable composition that puts a human face on homelessness, and focuses not only on the plight of the homeless, but also on how we, as human beings, respond when confronted by this social problem.

On December 9, before a packed audience, we performed our holiday concert. The choir is establishing a tradition of performing unique holiday concerts that marry the highest quality of choral singing to the season. Last year, we performed Benjamin Britten’s Ceremony of Carols at Christ Church in Old City. This year, Bill Carter and the Presybop Quartet, and other vocal soloists and instrumental accompanists, joined together in a performance of Dave Brubeck’s La Fiesta de la Posada, a jazz cantata reflecting Mexican musical themes (below).

The packed church was rapt in the joy of the season, as well as the jazz vibe and an enthusiastic choir. The Singing City Children’s Choir, under the direction of Emily Sung, added their voices to the performance, echoing Brubeck’s themes of community, innocence, sharing and love. After intermission, the choir joined the audience to sing some holiday favorites and enjoy the jazz group’s performance, which included Brubeck’s iconic Take Five. As one member of the audience told me, “Where else can you get this type and quality of entertainment for this price in Philadelphia?”
In addition to our formal concerts, which provide audiences meaningful and moving content, Singing City also continued our active outreach program. Led by Cody Müller, our Community Concert Coordinator, we organized small group performances at important locations where our music can bring a moment of joy and beauty to those in need, including at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House, Penn Presbyterian Hospital (photo at left), and the VA Medical Center. The VA staff and residents were so moved they have set a goal to organize their own internal singing experience.

We also participated in a concert at Main Line Reform Temple with ARTolerance, an organization that seeks to create common ground between potentially conflicting social groups using artistic tools and processes.

Finally, Singing City delivered on its commitment to support youth choral education. The Singing City Children’s Choir is in residence at two elementary schools in Philadelphia—James Rhoads in West Philadelphia and Wissahickon Charter School in Germantown. We are excited about the continuing development of T-VOCE (Teen Voices of the City Ensemble), which gave its own holiday concert on December 17 at Friends Center under the direction of Rosemary Schneider (photo below). T-VOCE’s members come from across the City. It is a collaboration between Singing City, Opera Philadelphia, Art Sanctuary, and Play On, Philly! Both ensembles will participate in our February 24 performance of The Children’s March, a work that brings to life the story of the 1963 Birmingham Crusade, a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights movement that led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Those who have attended our concerts know that we sing a broad repertoire with passion. Other choirs can do this. What makes our choir unique and proud is our mission. We truly seek to make a small difference in the world we share, not only though singing, but more broadly through our programming and community engagement.

As a choir and board member, I am proud that the choir has this mission (a legacy since its founding in 1948), produces its transformative sound under the direction of Jeffrey Brillhart, our artistic and music director, and “walks the talk” through Jeff, its staff and its committed choir and board members.
Fall Fiesta

Silent & Live Auction at the Historical Society of PA, November 10, 2018

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania provided a perfect backdrop to this year’s fiesta-themed fundraiser. Over 100 people attended the auction, bidding on a wonderful array of items, from concert tickets to vacation getaways and hand-crafted works. The auction raised over $12,000 for Singing City. Our thanks to all those who donated items and attended. Plans for next year’s event are already underway.

Music Director Jeff Brillhart with soprano Elizabeth Weigle, above, at the holiday concert at the Church of St. Luke & The Epiphany in downtown Philadelphia on December 9, where Singing City performed Dave Brubeck’s La Fiesta de la Posada. Members of the SC Children’s Choir, right, also performed. Singing City last performed this work in 2005 with Brubeck himself. The second half featured jazz renditions of holiday songs and carols, led by Bill Carter and the Presbybop Quartet with the audience joining in. Thanks to all who were there, ringing in the season! Photos by Pete Checchia.
TRAVEL WITH SINGING CITY

Singing City has a rich history of domestic and international touring that dates back to the 1950s. We traveled to the south during the Civil Rights struggles in the 1950s, to Israel and Egypt, Russia, Northern Ireland, Cuba, Brazil, the Balkans, and South Africa. This summer we will sing in Mexico. We invite you to share the experience with us.

Join Singing City on its tour to Mexico this summer where we will perform in Mexico City, Queretaro, and Guanajuato. Singers and non-singers welcome!
June 28-July 8, 2019

The $3,460 cost of the trip includes:

Airfare from Philadelphia to Mexico City and ground and air transportation within Mexico; 4 performances, including concerts, informal recitals and service participations; 10 nights accommodation in tourist class hotels, sharing twin-bedded rooms with private facilities; Continental breakfast daily plus 1 group lunch and 4 group dinners; land transportation by private deluxe motor coach; guided sightseeing tours of Guanajuato, Queretaro, San Miguel de Allende, and Mexico City. Paid entrance to Teotihuacan Pyramids. Download the itinerary.

If you are interested in participating and would like to receive more information, please contact Executive Director Lauren Anderson, lauren@singingcity.org or 267-519-5321 or visit our website:

New Year’s Eve in Novgorod 1990

The Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, 2016

Northern Ireland 2004

Brazil 2009
Each year at this time we come to you to ask for your support through our Friends Drive. Since our founding in 1948, we have been committed to the idea that our music matters because we know that hearts and minds can be changed through its power.

Now in our 71st season, Singing City will continue to move forward, bringing you outstanding concerts that reflect the human condition, offering creative opportunities for young people through the Singing City Children’s Choir and T-VOCE and embracing under-served audiences with our community concerts. Our work depends on the generosity of others in our community. Your gift to the Friends Drive helps lay the foundation for the future of Singing City.

If you are a business looking to make a difference you can do so through our Partner Program. Visit our website to see how you can help.

Please consider a gift this year and thank you for your support!

The Legacy Fund

We would like to recognize the following supporters who have included Singing City in their wills or estate plans. A bequest or deferred gift to Singing City supports the Choir’s endowment which helps sustain the choir’s work for decades to come.

Peter J. Boyer
Jeffrey Brillhart & Joacy Mendonca
Mark & Peggy Curchack
Douglas & Deborah Faulkner
Julie Friedman
Sue Anne Grier
Elizabeth L. Haslam
Carolyn Lowery
Judith R. Neilson
Rosalyn Ominsky
Barbara Rittenhouse
M’Annette Ruddell
Mary Ann Sullivan
Jean S. Weiss
John H. Wood

We hope that you will consider including Singing City in your estate plans. To learn more, please contact Executive Director Lauren Anderson at 267-519-5321 or by e-mail at lauren@singingcity.org.

Choir members began the season in September with a retreat at Pendle Hill, a Quaker retreat center in Wallingford, PA.
Foundation, Corporate, and Government Support

Grants from foundations, businesses, along with government support, touch every aspect of the mission of Singing City from our annual performance series, education programs like the Singing City Children’s Choir, T-VOCE, and no-cost community concerts throughout the city.

The Archie W. and Grace Berry Foundation
The Armstrong Foundation
The Connelly Foundation
Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation
John K. and Elizabeth W. Knorr Charitable Foundation
PA Council on the Arts
The Philadelphia Cultural Fund
The Presser Foundation
The Henrietta Tower Wurts Memorial

Singing City Partners
Founder’s Circle
The Baldwin School
Bryn Mawr Film Institute
Philadelphia VA Medical Center
Choral Patrons
Hyland Levin, LLP

Philharmonic of Southern NJ—Bernstein as Composer Advocate
Sunday, May 5 at 3:00 pm
Eastern Center for the Performing Arts
Eastern Regional High School, 1401 Laurel Oak Road, Voorhees, NJ
Pre-Concert Talk at 2:00 pm

Mahler: Symphony No. 2 “Resurrection”
Paula DiGiovannitio, soprano
Barbara Dever, mezzo-soprano
Singing City—Jeffrey Brillhart, director

Spring Concert—Choral Kaleidoscope: Music of North America
Saturday, June 8, 7:30 p.m.
The Church of the Holy Trinity,
1904 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA

Featuring works by Samuel Barber, Norman Luboff, Charles Ives, Vicente Chavarria, Moses Hogan and more!

Tickets available through our online box office, www.singingcity.org, or by calling 267-519-5322.