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SPRING 2003

America's Finest Singing Machine

BGSU Men's Chorus NEWSLETTER

Director William Skoog discusses the eternal appeal of America's Finest Singing Machine

In rehearsal the other day, I posed questions to the men: "What is special about men's music? Why do people clamor for a Men's Chorus concert? What do they (the audience) expect when they come out to hear us?"

The first thing that strikes people about men's chorus is the sound itself. Male music has verve, commitment, virility; a tinsel tonal strength that is indigenous only to male voices. There is a sheer vocal strength and timbre about it, and a presence as well. The sound itself is inspiring; and human beings long to be inspired. We are all looking for something that will uplift us - raise us above the mundane. We all experience difficulties in daily life, difficulties which pull us down, and make us "tired." Men's music, well performed, is an almost guaranteed tonic for such woes. And it's not just the loud, full, opulent tones that inspire- men's voices combined in astonishing sensitivity on soft passages with delicate texts move us deeply as well!

There is a social-psychological element about it also. We love to see and hear men making music- there is a collective statement made when a number of men unify their energies in one cause- be it in sporting events, the military, or music. The collective energy is almost overwhelming- it creates a mass psyche. Men's music is also special in that we do not see it often in our culture. Men are not encouraged to be involved in the arts in our society- it is a constant struggle. It is considered "unmanly," "effeminate," "wimpy," and such, from early on in their development. Boys disappear from choirs early on in school, and by the junior high level, are almost nonexistent, unless someone persuades them that singing is manly indeed. That is where we come in.

This strikes at a critical role for the University Men's Chorus, and a primary reason that we tour. The number one reason that high school and junior high school choir directors request the men's chorus on tour, is that the BGSU Men's Chorus is renowned for its high quality of performance, for backing up the slogan "America's Finest Singing Machine." In the same breath, directors state that young men in their school are MIA, and they hope our singing will encourage them to participate in their ensembles. We give their program a "shot in the arm," and make recruitment of men easier. When they hear our men sing, it gives their young men permission to sing. We make it "manly" to sing in chorus!

There is also a vital element of social interaction that Men's Chorus brings about. "Male bonding," has been a buzz phrase since the 80's, and there is something to it. Men may not be as comfortable sharing distinctly male issues when in mixed com-



The Chorus sings for a local Washington news station on the Senate Lawn near the Capitol Building. We appeared later that night on the evening news, which was very exciting.



Dr. Skoog directs the Chorus on the Ground Zero platform. The misty morning made this 20 minute experience all the more breath-taking and emotional.

pany, as they are when the company is exclusively male. Men need and crave the company of men, to justify each other; to affirm each other; to strengthen each other. Men need each other even to share vulnerabilities with each other, and to be vulnerable together. Ironically, this is an attribute of strength, not weakness. Men's Chorus creates a safe environment, especially on tour, which gives us all permission to be real with one another, as men. It is a critical element in male development and growth; and Men's Chorus provides one such setting for this.

Men's music has played a significant role in my life, my past, my training, and now, is a mainstay of my position at BGSU. I believe that as a choral director you either have the passion, heart, and pride for a men's chorus, (a true love of it) or you don't- there is little in-between. I greatly enjoy my association with and directorship of the BGSU Men's Chorus. I am proud of the heritage of this chorus, the men who constitute its current and past memberships, and I link arms with the alumni of this chorus, with R.D. Mathey, in a continuing cycle of great legacy. I appreciate inheriting a program where deep traditions of men's music have already been established- traditions and expectations of excellence, strength, stamina, pride, quality, musicianship and healthy singing were all in place, thanks to the hard work, dedication, and passion of R.D. Mathey. My mission is to build upon those traditions and expectations, maintaining a chorus of great integrity and musicianship; a men's chorus of pride, which continues to inspire people for decades to come.

-- Dr. William Skoog

i n s i d e . . .

... a letter from the (Chorus) President ... one alum's views ... photos from the New York/DC tour ... R.D. Mathey and the Alumni Chorus... and much more!

America's Finest Singing Machine ... visit us on the web at <http://www.harmonize.com/bgmc/>

Thoughts from the President...

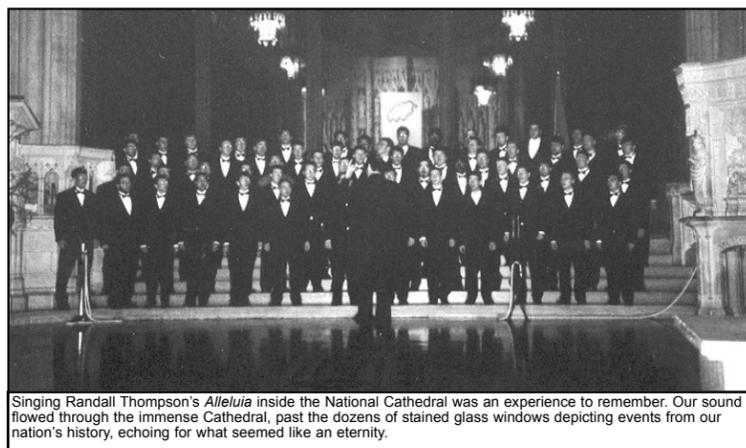
Nathan Hearn, President 2002-2003

In the fall of 1998 I walked into the choral room of the Moore Musical Arts Center as a freshman at BGSU. I had no idea what I was about to experience. For the next half an hour I sat in utter amazement at what I saw and heard. The returning members of the Chorus sang a few selections for the new guys under the direction of R.D. Mathey. What I heard was a level of choral perfection that I had never experienced before. The Chorus sang all the traditional pieces, but one caught my attention in particular. As the men sang Joseph Martin's *The Awakening* I began to notice something. Not only was every chord beautifully in tune and every line sung with motion... there was something more. I couldn't put my finger on it at first, but I knew that this group had something special. I knew that this was something I needed to be a part of. What I had seen and heard that set this group apart was an incredible sense of unity. Almost one hundred singers were coming together to form one sound, to express one emotion, and to be one "Machine." I had been introduced to "America's Finest Singing Machine." As I sat in that room that day, I never thought that five years later (yes I know you are supposed to go to college for four years), I would be the President of the BGSU Men's Chorus.

The Chorus has undergone many changes in my time here at Bowling Green. I thank R.D. for being the first to instill in me a love of choral music, tuning, blend and balance. After R.D.'s retirement the Chorus underwent a transitional year under the direction of Dr. Graeme Cowen. I am now serving as President under the excellent direction of Dr. William Skoog. I consider it a great honor to have been put in this position and it is with pride that I report that "The Machine" is alive and well.

Today's BGSU Men's Chorus has a membership of 85 men. The group is being lead by Dr. William Skoog in his second year at the university. Dr Skoog recently received the honor of being promoted to Head of Choral

Activities at BGSU, and continues to carry on the tradition of quality choral music in the Men's Chorus. I thank Dr. Skoog for his dedication to this tradition and for his excellent leadership. Dr. Skoog is not only preserving the traditions of the BGMC, but is also taking the group in some exciting new directions... more on this later. I would be remiss if I did not mention this year's group of officers: Vice President Donald Cain,



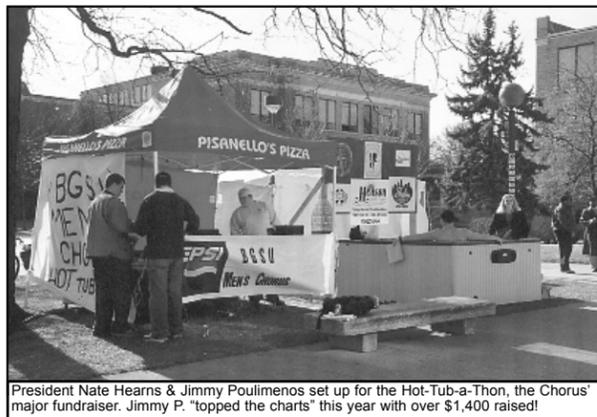
Singing Randall Thompson's *Alleluia* inside the National Cathedral was an experience to remember. Our sound flowed through the immense Cathedral, past the dozens of stained glass windows depicting events from our nation's history, echoing for what seemed like an eternity.

Secretary/Tour Coordinator Adam Scheetz, Treasurer Dave Anderson, Coordinator Dave Ayling, Fundraising Coordinator Brandon Miller and Historian/Alumni Representative James Poulimenos. It is these guys and their amazing dedication that really keep the machine running. I must also mention one man that has given a great deal of his life to the Men's Chorus: Brother Shaun Moorman, who stepped down as Advisor to the Men's Chorus in the fall of 2001. He served this Chorus for many years in this role as well



A long-standing Chorus tradition is cheering our own Fighting Falcons to victory at football games. We cheered especially hard this year - the Falcons were nationally ranked for the better part of the season!

certs or tour stops as we strive to be "America's Finest Singing Machine."



President Nate Hearn & Jimmy Poulimenos set up for the Hot-Tub-a-Thon, the Chorus' major fundraiser. Jimmy P. "topped the charts" this year with over \$1,400 raised!

our neighbors north of the border in Canada. The spring of 2003 tour will include stops in Buffalo N.Y., Toronto, several stops in Michigan, and the Cleveland area. A full itinerary will be available soon on the BGMC web site.

I encourage all alumni to continue to support the current Men's Chorus as we carry on the tradition of "America's Finest Singing Machine." It means so much to our membership to see you at any Men's Chorus events. Be sure to attend our spring show on Sunday, April 13 at 3:00 P.M. We will also be holding a spring Fund-raising dinner on Friday, February 7 from 6:00-11:00 P.M. I would challenge all that can attend this event to come out and support your Brothers in Song. Check the web site for updates and ticket information.

The spirit of Brotherhood is alive and well here in Bowling Green. Thank you to you who have gone before us, for passing on these traditions and expectations of musical excellence. I hope to see all of you at one of the home con-



The Chorus stands on the steps of the Capitol Building. The security on this day was incredibly tight (it was the six month anniversary of 9/11). We were quite fortunate to obtain a permit from Marcy Kaptur's office allowing us to walk these grounds.

as President in 1995. Thank you, Shaun, for your many years of service and your continued support of the BGMC. This year's Chorus will be making a trip in a not so familiar direction: North. We will be visiting

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Chorus Founder R.D. Mathey speaks...

On Thursday, October 3, I found myself in a strange environment -- the College of Musical Art's main office. Upon entering the office I was instantly struck by the orange and brown decorations that covered the entire office from ceiling to floor. Passing by the front desk, I triggered a magic eye that began playing music of the mighty Falcon Marching Band, the BGSU Fight Song. All in the spirit of Homecoming and to show that the CMA is doing their share in creating a positive campus spirit and morale.

It may sound a bit strange, but I have always felt that the BGSU Men's Chorus has continually displayed what campus spirit and community is all about. The current version of "Americas Finest Singing Machine" is busy preparing for this academic years' activities. Campus sings, tours, fund raisers, parties, benefits, and fellowship will certainly be part of the usual fare that all of our men's choruses have experienced. The thing that makes the "machine" really work is the enthusiasm of its members. We who direct the mighty men can only go as far and as fast as the membership will allow. This means that each participating member must grab hold of the thrill in being part of this organization, proudly recruit, and stay positive.

I'm glad to report that the chorus alumni association is rapidly gaining momentum due to the efforts of a former chorus president and current chair of the Men's Chorus Alumni Society, Shaun Moorman. Through Shaun's efforts we were able to entice 75 former mem-

bers to Lancaster, Ohio for our first alumni concert (May). The event featured two quartets, a myriad of soloists, and former members who traveled from as far as Oklahoma and New York to celebrate a super weekend of fellowship and singing. I must admit, the sound was overwhelming and far beyond what I was expecting. Maturity has a way of adding tremendous depth, which in turn creates a massive array of undertones. But more on this at a later time.

The alumni chorus is now going to have a second concert Memorial Day weekend, May 23-25 in Warren, Ohio. Shaun Moorman and I will be working on the logistics and have information concerning the concert by the end of November.

I would be remiss if I did not extend heartiest congratulations to one of the Men's Choruses own, Catfish Bend. For the third time in its 10-year history, a BGSU Men's Chorus barbershop quartet has won the college division championship at the SPEB-SQSA International competition. To Noah Campbell (tenor), J.R. Muth (lead), Jim



Alumni Chorus sings in its first annual concert in Lancaster, OH. The weekend was a huge success and brought back a lot of stories and memories for those who participated.

Koenig (baritone), and Armando Linares (bass), thank you for your diligent work in bringing additional acclaim to the chorus. You have stepped into barbershop history with your victory.

To the current members of the chorus and the very new members, I congratulate you on your decision to sing in what I feel is the "best show in town." To Dr. William Skoog, I say hats off and accolades for putting the chorus back on track and doing so in grand fashion.

And especially to the Alumni: back the chorus with your physical presence at concerts and your financial presence through donations.

Sing on brothers.
- R.D. Mathey, chorus founder 1971-2000

One Alumnus Talks Back...

Insinuating that I am history! Humph! I realize that I am a "Charter Member" of the BGSU Men's Chorus. I am one of the original 12. I sang with RD first in 1971. I guess that does make me part of the history of "America's Finest Singing Machine!" Seriously...

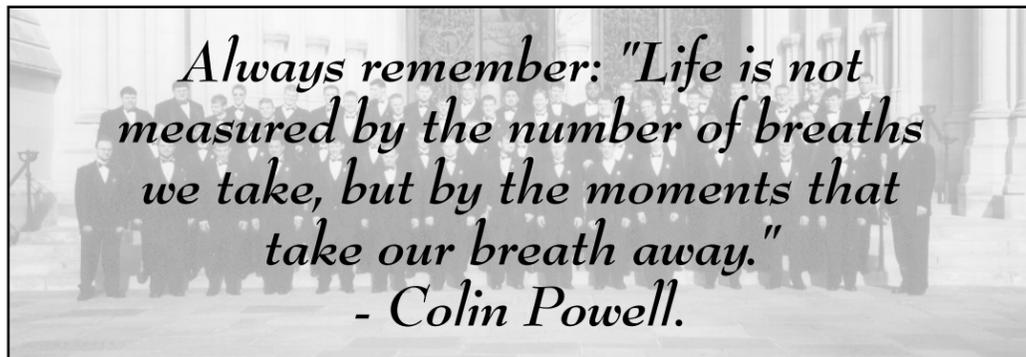
When asked to write an article on how it felt to sing in the BGSU Alumni Men's Chorus under RD's direction I realized the honor bestowed upon me. It fills me with pride to be part of such an amazing legacy.

My most enjoyable choral moment, since leaving the BGSUMC in 1975, occurred in the summer of 2002, when the BGSU Alumni Men's Chorus sang in Lancaster, Ohio. What a thrill it was to see so many brothers singing and to join in their camaraderie under the wonderful RD again. Being surrounded by so much musical talent and power was truly amazing and intimidating. It inspired me to take vocal lessons once again, and pursue an old dream of a career in vocal performance upon my retirement from teaching

in 3 and a half years. I figure it is never too late to fulfill a dream. Singing with the BGSU Alumni Chorus is part of that dream.

I look forward to our next concert Memorial Day weekend in Warren, Ohio at Christ Episcopal Church. Come on you old farts from the 70's and 80's! It's guaranteed to make you feel young again.

"Brothers Sing On!"
-Jeff Schmidt



The BGSU Men's Chorus Newsletter is brought to you by...

Editor – Jimmy Poulimenos
Graphics and Design – Michelle Smith
And the letters R and D.

Editor's Note: Special thanks to everyone who kindly wrote articles for this newsletter. Also, thanks to Shaun Moorman for all his assistance and resources in making this newsletter possible. Thanks to Michelle for her masterful work. You all made this process seem effortless!