



The University Choral Society outside the Rudolfinum, which houses Dvorak Hall, in Prague in July.

From the Editor

Shock and Awe in Vienna

So hot was the afternoon that we girls mostly waited just on the lawn outside the Orangerie Hall at Schonbrunn Palace. The orchestra beginning to warm up was stirred with humid air thrumming from rotating fans. Our floating black gowns and jackets brooked no air; we laughingly called them our 'petroleum' gowns, never a wrinkle, but never a breath either. The men strode in their tuxes restlessly around and through the several open doors to the terrace and lawn. The air seemed electrically charged with the anticipation of performing Mozart in the exact same hall where the "Master" himself presided some 230 years before.

The call came to line up and process onstage just behind the orchestra. Looking out at the audience, we were surprised to see a nearly full hall. Maestro William Skoog, conductor and choral director, strode to the podium and spoke briefly to the audience and orchestra. Baton held high, he began with a determined flourish. The *Mozart Requiem* is comprised of 12 sections. The first begins with the bass followed by tenor, alto and soprano. The work is full of difficult fugues and ends with a somewhat slower pace (we sang the entire *Requiem* in German Latin!).

I stood downstage and slightly left, allowing me full view of the audience. Sometime during the solos of the third section, I chanced to spot a friend of mine, Associate Professor at the Medical University of Ohio in Toledo, Carlos Baptista, M.D., Ph.D., wandering in with his friend and colleague Susan Batten, Ph.D., R.N. and associate dean of Nursing at MUO. They sat down toward the back of the hall. I was in awe.

When intermission came, I rushed out and sat down beside them in my concert gown. They were in shock! "Nancy! Was that you up there on the stage? We can't believe it!"

"How did you two happen to come to our concert?" I asked.

"Remember," said Dr. Baptista. "I told you during a concert last March at the Toledo

Museum of Art's Peristyle I thought we would be in Vienna at a medical meeting when the University Choral Society would be performing there. But then I forgot about it. We came out to Schonbrunn just to walk around a little before tonight's meeting and then we heard, accidentally, this wonderful singing of the *Mozart Requiem* and came in and here you all are! It's fantastic, it is absolutely unbelievable."

"It's so unbelievable that you simply must join Pro Musica right now because many of our students are here because of money grants from our organization. Say you will! I'll send you the information."

"We will! This is phenomenal work, wonderful for the students."

"Come with me after the concert and I'll introduce you to Dr. William Skoog and his wife, Elaine. She's also the president of the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce."

Addendum: They both joined. If anyone wants more Pro Musica members, I could always go to Paris.

2006 University Choral Society Summer European Tour

Dr. William Skoog: The European trip in summer 2006 was extraordinary for these students. It gave them opportunities to see many parts of the world, experience directly other cultures and languages, sing with a European orchestra in major European concert halls such as Prague and Vienna, and to sing in Salzburg for Mozart's 250th birthday. Such an education extends beyond books and lectures, and brings them to life. I would define this as a life-changing, eye-opening experience and one that they will value for the rest of their lives. They grew personally and professionally; one could see it happen.

Timothy J. Bruno: The Moravian Symphony Orchestra was amazing. They were talented musicians who knew how to unify sections of

string or bass. Performing with them taught me not only how to project, but how to deal with nerves.

Christopher Bruck: I learned that Europeans like challenges. One I decided to try for myself. I climbed up a 6,000 ft. mountain at the edge of Salzburg. It took me four hours. One older Austrian passed me on the way up and on the way down!

Jeshua Franklin: Perhaps the highlight of the tour for me was the opportunity to conduct the orchestra and choir. I learned a great deal through conducting a full orchestra and it helped me to grow in my understanding of conducting.

Ellen Gartner: Through this trip I learned how to be a part of a "professional" group. A collective group of musicians, speaking different languages, was still able to create beautiful music that moves the soul.

Elizabeth Hanson: Memories of such events and moments on stage were ones I shall never forget. My appetite for performance has increased and my desire to return to Europe is stronger than ever.

Amanda Lovitt: Thanks to Pro Musica, I was able to experience the Czech and Austrian cultures, histories and life through the international language of music

Jacqueline Nemeth: On our bus travel to Salzburg we stopped at two abbeys. The first was the Mondsee, where the wedding scene was filmed for *The Sound of Music*. Second was the giant monastery of Melk, where we were able to sing a short recital under the grand organ that Mozart played as a child.

Dawn Wagner: I had an incredible time in Europe with the group of wonderful musicians and good people with us. Traveling to Europe with the UCS was an incredible experience. I will never forget!



Front row (left to right): Jacqueline Nemeth, Amanda Lovitt, Elizabeth Hanson, Ellen Gartner and Dawn Wagner

Back row (left to right): Jeshua Franklin, Christopher Bruck and Timothy J. Bruno

BGSU



Promoting Musical Excellence

Pro Musica supports the College of Musical Arts by inviting the participation of alumni, friends, parents and the Bowling Green community in a wide variety of musical events and by providing financial support for projects that are often beyond the reach of state funding.

A letter from the President

Greetings to you! Transitions are being made this fall. New members have been welcomed to the Pro Musica Board, bringing along unique talents, insights and skills.

This year's goal is to double Pro Musica's membership. Last year, 216 members funded 23 domestic and nine international grants.

Students traveled across the United States, and to Korea, Spain, Greece, Ghana, Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria and other nations. Pledges fund these travels.

Four scholarships were awarded this past spring to recognize two graduate and two undergraduate full-time music students.

Pro Musica makes possible extra-collegiate experiences by which students become better musicians and valuable ambassadors for the College of Musical Arts, and for the city of Bowling Green. In a tumultuous world, culturally enlightened students and future teachers are better positioned to more readily cope with differences.

This coming year Pro Musica will reach out to civic organizations so that students can reflect upon their travel experiences and share their enormous talents. A larger circle of friends will receive a benefit and create new discussions. The students and faculty of the College of Musical Arts sincerely appreciate your support.

Gratefully,
Karol H. Spencer
President



College of Musical Arts
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0290



Celebrate Excellence! 40th Annual Competitions in Music Performance Winners

Composition Division

Scramasax for saxophone quartet
by Andrés Carrizo

Graduate Division

Tatiana Shustova, piano
I-Chen Yeh, piano

Undergraduate Division

Jennifer Meggitt, soprano
Christopher Bartz, soprano saxophone

Audience Choice Award

I-Chen Yeh, piano
Anton Zotov, piano

**Virginia Marks
Collaborative Pianist Award**
Ruoxu Chen

Profiles In Pedagogy

Myra D. Merritt

Maestro James Levine, music director of the Metropolitan Opera, leaned forward in his chair, his face riveted to hers, and asked her to sing again. Having stood throughout the day, waiting with others to audition for the Met, tired and sorry to be the second from the last performer, she had just finished singing "Musetta's Waltz" from Puccini's *La Boheme*. Her eyes, fringed and beautiful, opened large. She decided to sing the difficult but theatrical "Fire Aria" from Maurice Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (The Child and the Enchantments). Levine was instantly charmed. Myra's Met debut was as the Shepherd Boy in Richard Wagner's *Tannhauser*. Thus began her 11-year love affair with the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.

Imagine having Placido Domingo pop in to your dressing room unannounced to sing in his tenor voice, *Musetta's Waltz*. "Ms. Merritt—Myra if I may—this is the vocal phrasing I want. Please? Okay." The occasion was Maestro Domingo's debut as a conductor.

Imagine walking through the halls at the Met and suddenly seeing the esteemed artist Leontyne Price. Myra screamed with delight. The sound so startled the singer that Price always recognized Myra with a referral to that Valkyrian event.

Think about how delightful to know opera stars such as Mirella Freni, Kathleen Battle, Renata Scotto and to be intimate friends with the great Marilyn Horne.

Fancy singing under the baton of notable conductors Sarah Caldwell, Julius Rudel, Placido Domingo and the musically brilliant James Levine (to name a few).

But how did this all come to be?

Myra was born in Washington, D.C., the youngest of three children. The beautiful little rose peeping out last in her family became a lover of dolls for which she invented plays, each doll included in the plot. Myra spent hours

Maestro James Levine and Myra Merritt



rehearsing every part, every character. Each was imbued with charm, wit, pretentiousness, willy-nilly and singing; costumed and ready, she herself performed all, changed all, wrote and invented all. Even at this early age she was combining voice with drama.

She grew up a devoted Christian and even to this day makes a strong point saying, "Faith in God is the fulcrum of my life, be it performing, teaching or living." She and her mother sang in the church choir.

In the ninth grade, Myra began voice lessons. She rode the bus with her friend to her teacher George Harshaw. He took her aside one day and told her with all seriousness that she had an operatic voice and should begin studying the songs in *The Twenty-four Italian Songs and Arias* collection. She took this advice, entered local vocal competitions and won awards.

Following high school, Myra was accepted to the Peabody Conservatory of Music where she studied under the tutelage of Madame Flora Wend, a Flemish teacher from Paris whose father, Otto Wend, was a renowned

music critic. Myra graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education, but the practical degree wasn't her mantra.

After teaching at the Georgetown School for the Arts for a year, she pursued further studies at Catholic

University in Washington, earning her master's in voice. Her vocal coach was Michael Cordovana, who later became her piano accompanist. She also worked in clothing at Lord & Taylor, furthering her knowledge of costume and design.

Myra became involved with a summer opera program affiliated with the Washington Opera. The director, Frank Rizzo, encouraged her to go to NYC for the Opera America Auditions. The casting director from the Met, Joan Ingpen, who was coordinating this, invited Myra to audition for the Met. The die was cast. The little flower bloomed full.

Myra has performed in many capitals and cities throughout Europe. In 1998, at

the Bregenz Music Festival in Austria, she performed the soprano solo in Mozart's *Mass in C Major* and the title role of Bess in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

In Washington, D.C., she has appeared as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra under Maestro Mstislav Rostropovich. Other notable engagements include Wolf Trap Farm, Ford's Theatre and the Smithsonian Museum Concert series. She was presented in her debut recital at the Terrace Theatre in the Kennedy Center under the auspices of the renowned Washington Performing Arts Society.

Her rewards are many: grants from the Ohio Arts Council, the National Opera Institute and Sullivan Foundation and the D.C. Commission of the Arts and Humanities. She was awarded the Catholic University of America's outstanding Alumni Achievement Award in the Field of Music.

Myra has been featured in magazines such as *Glamour* (an article on outstanding women in classical music) and the *Washington Review* (focusing on Outstanding African American Women in the Arts). Additionally, she is listed in the *Metropolitan Opera Encyclopedia*, *Famous African Americans Encyclopedia* and in a reference book for teachers titled *Educators Sourcebook of African American Heritage*.

Blessed not only with talent, beauty and integrity, Myra is modest, caring, and devoted to her work with fledgling vocal students. She has served as an adjudicator for the Paul Robeson ("Old Man River," *Showboat*) Vocal Competition in Washington, D.C. and is a board member of the Hines/Lee Opera Ensemble, which nurtures and promotes young singers.

After 11 years Myra decided to try teaching at the college level. She taught voice at George Mason University from 1991 until coming to Bowling Green State University in 1995. Here she reigns beautiful, in dignity and with faith, hope and charity. And incidentally, she just received this missive from the Metropolitan Opera Guild:

"Please join us. On Sunday, 4 March 2007, at 6:30 p.m. at Alice Tully Hall, the Guild will celebrate "30 Years of the Met on TV." Our program will feature clips chosen from among the entire archive of Met telecasts, which include your appearances on the Centennial Gala and as Elvira and Frasquita. After the program, we will host a champagne reception in Juilliard's marble lobby, where fans will have an opportunity to greet our artists and other dignitaries."

Res Ipsa Loquitur!

Student Essays Student Essays Student Essays



David Babich: Carnegie Hall trip

I arrived in New York City on May 25, 2006. That evening I auditioned for chair placement within the National Wind Ensemble. Before the first rehearsal I found I had placed first chair in the saxophone section. This enabled me to play all alto and soprano saxophone solos, including the lengthy solo in *Redline Tango* by John Mackey.

Rehearsals on Friday, Saturday and Sunday lasted approximately six hours each day. Dress rehearsal was Monday morning and the performance was in the evening. Carnegie Hall is famous for its beauty and acoustics; the multiple tiers, lighting, stage and grandeur facilitated the reverberation of my instrument. The music simply soared.

Rehearsing with H. Robert Reynolds opened my ears. After our second rehearsal (which I deemed 'concert ready'), he began to refine the sound. His ideal was to compare the actual sound with his 'what ought to be' sound. Reynolds pushed the ensemble past written music. This idea really struck me. I hope to use it with my students some day.

Thank you very much for supporting my trip to NYC and Carnegie Hall. The experience was unforgettable.

Pro Musica Officers

Karol Spencer,
president

Andrew Housholder,
vice president

Virginia Marks,
secretary

Douglas Wayland,
treasurer

Joan Callecod,
member-at-large

Deborah Fleitz, Richard Kennell
& Nancy Lenhart,
ex-officio members



Stewart Blatt: Tubonium Conference Competition

I would like to thank Pro Musica for their financial support. My experience at the 2006 Tubonium Conference in Minnesota was astonishing. During the convention I attended two master classes, competed in the solo euphonium division and attended many fine concerts.

The first master class was with Jim Self. He talked about self-improvisation and being a solo tuba player in Hollywood. It was great to hear him play some movie scores.

Mark Jenkins, of the President's Own Marching Band, taught the second master class. He stressed the basics of technique, sound production, breathing and mental attitude on euphonium. I tried some of the things that he suggested; for example using a different articulation. Instead of a 'ta-ta-ta', I'm using a 'da-da-da' articulation to smooth passages in solos.

In solo competition I placed fourth overall. The piece of music we had to play was *Beautiful Colorado* by Deluca. Even though I did not advance to the final round, I was very pleased with my placement.

During the conference we heard many great performances by tuba and euphonium ensembles. We also heard recitals by Jim Self and Mark Jenkins.

Another great experience was networking with other college students for music ideas, jobs, and competition ideas.

Thank you Pro Musica.

Pro Musica... Promoting Musical Excellence

Special thanks to
Nancy Lenhart,
editor of *Pro Musica News*



Courtney Michelle Cleveland: NATS Regional Competition

I wish to thank Pro Musica for the money grant of \$100 that enabled me to attend the National Association of Teachers of Singing in Ashland, held on April 1, 2006.

I received an "honorable mention" in Graduate Division X. I was proud to represent Bowling Green State University and the College of Musical Arts. The competition was invigorating; students came from other schools such as Miami University of Ohio and Ashland University.

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks for this is the will of Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Once again, thank you for your support.

2006-2007 Pro Musica Membership Campaign

220 – Current Membership



432 – Membership Goal

