

# The Lyre



News Letter

THE ORPHEUS CLUB, INC.

Organized 1909

Fall 1990

Jerome Wyckoff, Editor

## A New Orpheus Conductor: Welcome!

Over a career of nearly 82 years, the Orpheus Club has been blessed with a series of superior conductors - men devoted to music, professionally expert, with a personality for leadership. Doubtless the ability of Orpheus to continue as a vigorous group offering music-loving men an opportunity to sing good music and music-loving audiences an opportunity to hear it live - in a time when male chorus singing has been widely replaced by TV viewing - is due not only to the quality of our singing but to the excellence of our conductors.

When Dr. Jim Bender, our beloved conductor for 11 years, had to leave last spring because of career demands, Orpheus looked ahead with concern. Our search committee lost no time in getting on the job. They interviewed six or seven applicants for the conductor position and soon settled on John Palatucci. Now, after two months of brisk rehearsing with John and watching our progress, we can heartily congratulate the committee on its judgment and ourselves for being on track again under just the right leadership.

A resident of Bloomfield, John comes to Orpheus with

a huge bundle of credentials. As a teacher of music in the public schools of Madison, N.J., he leads the high-school orchestra and chorus. Ensembles under his leadership in various communities have won nine Division I/Superior ratings and six first-place finishes in regional and national competitions. Individuals in his choruses have garnered dozens of awards at regional, state, national, and international levels. As soloist and as a musical clinician and judge, John has appeared with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, the Ridgewood Concert Band, and the American Chamber Orchestra, and he has been heard in performance at Carnegie Hall, Carnegie Recital Hall and the William Carlos Williams Center. John has worked also with distinguished conductors Lukas Foss, Morton Gould, Alan Hovhaness, and Karel Husa.

There's still more in John's resume, but let's turn to conducting. John has a very broad understanding and intense appreciation of music. He communicates his vigor to singers, at the same time insisting on sensitivity and accuracy. He coaches us on voice production. Although constantly urging excellence, he knows the singers are there for enjoyment, and that's the



John Palatucci



keynote of the rehearsals. To John Palatucci all Orpheans say: "More power to you, and may you be our leader for many a year!"

### Our Christmas Program - with a "Special"

As always, our fall concert (Friday evening, December 7, at 8:30, in Ben Franklin Middle School) will include music for many different tastes. This will be our 163d performance since the founding year, 1909. And we'll be offering a "special": soprano soloist Kathleen Horner Palatucci.

Kathleen, John's wife, is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music and Montclair State College. For many years she has been soloist at Grace Presbyterian Church in Montclair. She has taught music privately and in public schools, worked with several opera workshops, competed in international vocal contests, and performed as soloist under many conductors, among them Warren Grim, Jack Sacher, and David Randolph. We shall be delighted to have Kathleen with us on December 7.

### A Musical Menu for All

Fittingly, the coming concert will offer some classics that simply cannot be heard too often. "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," from a cantata by J.S. Bach, with its graceful vocal line and rippling accompaniment, is timeless. Mozart's "Gloria in Excelsis," from the Twelfth Mass, climbs to exultant heights in phrases that remind us of our conductor's remark - "Mozart never wrote a wrong note!" Next, the ringing "Hallelujah, Amen!", from G.F. Handel's oratorio Judas Maccabaeus, celebrating the Israelites' triumph under

a great leader, tells us once more that Handel never was outdone by any other composer in the imagining of majestic choral sounds.

The mood changes with "Sweet Little Jesus Boy," by Robert MacGimsey, in the black spiritual tradition. This simple but poignant song, with unusually poetic words ("They made you be bawn in a manguh/We didn't know who you wuz") deserves more frequent performance. Another sensitive song, in the same spirit, is "Some Children See Him," by Wihla Hutson and Albert Burt, telling how children of different races can see Jesus as a member of their own.



Most familiar of the group of carols is "O Tannenbaum," the traditional German song, here arranged by Alice Parker and Robert Shaw. "The Boar's Head Carol," a muscular piece with an old English flavor, is an Oxford University song from the 15th century, exhorting all to be merry at Christmas with feasting and singing.

In the modern "Carol of the Christmas Chimes," by Richard Kountz, bells ring out the message of Jesus' birth and a new hope for mankind. Adolphe Adams' "O Holy Night" is another modern carol, from England, one of the most popular of all.

Hardly a choral concert seems complete without a work by Franz Schubert, master of melody. In "The Omnipotence" Jehovah is heard in the fierce raging storm, the torrent's loud thundering roar, the lightning's quivering flash - but also



in the waving of golden fields, the loveliest flowers, and the myriad stars of the heavens, This choral classic, with Kathleen Horner as soloist, will offer an experience to remember.

Several songs bring a taste of folk music. "The Sleigh," another piece by Richard Kountz, takes us flying over the snow through the night with a "Ho ho, hah hah - Merrily on we go!" Cecil Forsyth's male chorus classic "Old King Cole" spoofs the familiar nursery rhyme, alleging that the king was really a wretched old soul who, though he loved his pipe and loved his bowl, hated his fiddlers three and buried them all.

"Hi Ho, Nobody Home," composed and sung by the popular Ray Charles and paraphrased from an old English round, expresses the sad optimism of a drifter who, without money, home, friend, or kin, yet has sky and earth, and goes merrily along.



Christmas is a time for giving and a time for children, and so Orpheus must recognize Santa. Our conductor has voiced the hope that the audience on December 7 will include more children than usual. "Not only because of Christmas," says John, "but because we want children to see and hear people singing, to see the joy of making one's own music, and to think, 'Some day I want to be up on a stage having all that fun.!'"

So - Orpheus will be presenting two rollicking Christmas songs for the kids. One is Darby and Simeone's musical version of Clement Moore's immortal "'Twas the Night Before

Christmas," in which dynamic musical phrases bring to life the time-worn words, describing every wonderful detail of Santa's visit. Then, for those children who may be a little too much in awe of Santa (or perhaps those who consider him a bit old-fashioned and stuffy) there is the encouraging "Santa Claus Is Just a Good Ol' Boy." This song, with "moderate Country feel," by Wilde and Chappell, tells how Santa got fed up "livin' like an Eskimo," then sold his North Pole bungalow and reindeer, moved south of the Mason and Dixon, and bought a soybean farm and a pickup Chevrolet. Lest this news cause alarm, we are then reassured that Santa is still a good ol' boy, makin' toys.



### Help! - More Singers Needed!

During the past year or two the roster of Orpheus singers has been growing. New singers have enlisted, and a couple of old ones have come back. The word has been getting around that Orpheus offers not only the fun of singing under an expert conductor but evenings of good humor and fellowship - unusual treats in this age of the spectator.

This fall our new members are Bernard McGill of North Haledon, Fred Kozlosky of Prospect Park, and Steve Knight of New Milford. To these men (and all others) we say, "Welcome - and bring your friends!"

### Those Extra Tickets . . . !

We have said it before, and now we must say it again - to all Orpheus singers and to our subscribing members - Please be sure that all



your tickets are used. A ticket used means an evening of enjoyment for someone who likes music, popular or classical. A ticket used may mean that some man who likes to sing is introduced to Orpheus and will decide to join us. A ticket used may mean that someone out there will become a subscribing member. Every ticket counts.

One way to spread the word about Orpheus is to give a membership for Christmas. Subscribing memberships, with two tickets for each concert, are \$27.50. Associate memberships, with four tickets, are \$40. A lot of entertainment for the price!



Incidentally, may we urge members of our audience (as well as our singing members) to recommend us to men who might like to sing with Orpheus? All who can carry a tune are welcome. We now have members from about 15 towns in the area; why not an even wider representation? Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings at eight in George Washington Middle School (south entrance), Monroe Street, Ridgewood. Dues are \$40; all music is provided. Concerts are in December and April. Further information is available by calling 652-0816.

#### Thanks to Our Patrons!

The Orpheus Club is an organization whose objective is the joy of singing and listening, but it does have costs. An expert conductor and an equally expert accompanist, rehearsal space and concert hall, professional soloists, a huge library of

music to store, and printing and mailing - these are among the indispensables which do not come free.

Most costs are covered by member dues; but these are kept modest to encourage wider membership, and thus there is an annual gap between income and outgo. In the past, this gap has been filled by our patrons - both active members and subscribers who believe in the worth of male chorus singing and have chosen to donate \$40 or more yearly to help keep us afloat. This year the financial stringency is more acute than ever, and we trust that not only our former patrons but some new ones also will help. Please use the form below!

P.S. We like to keep track of the musical activities of Dick Lane, our accompanist and composer-in-residence. Dick's Flute Sonata No. 6, premiered in Ridgewood last Oct. 19, will be played again in a concert at the Equinox Hotel in Manchester, Vt., Nov. 17. Meanwhile Dick is working on new compositions commissioned for performances in Ithaca, N.Y., and Philadelphia early in 1991.

To: Orpheus Club, Inc.

P.O. Box 114, Ridgewood, NJ 07451

I wish to become a subscribing member (\$27.50) / associate member (\$40) of Orpheus. My check is enclosed.

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