



Noteworthy

**Opus 45, No. 5
October 2023**

**Inspiring, Educating,
and Connecting
Through Song**

This digital newsletter is best viewed on a desktop device.

Beginnings and Endings

As the Hickory Choral Society begins a new year of rehearsing and preparing for another season in August of each year, we actually must first close out our 45th season with our Fall Concert, Love and Music Endure. Ryan shares much more about this final concert of our 45th season, but we hope you all will plan to join us for this special event on Sunday, October 22.

The musical programs our community and contributors enjoy wouldn't be possible without the support so many of you provide. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to making choral music an ever-present part of the Catawba Valley area. As we close out each season, we bring in a new Board of Directors who are dedicated to assuring Ryan's artistic vision is given room to grow and flourish. We completed a comprehensive strategic planning process, Together in Harmony, during the 21-22 year, and began in earnest to implement that plan last year. Together in Harmony stands tall upon four pillars of work, the most important of which is Artistic Vision. The tasks and future direction for HCS are rooted in Ryan's artistic vision, supported by the new Artistic Planning Committee, a think tank Ryan will create to work with as he imagines possibilities.

As a nonprofit organization, another essential pillar of our plan is directed at growing and diversifying our singing membership and our contributing membership. We are invested in being inclusive and want to see a growing number of singers and contributors whose perspectives and expectations will stretch us as we explore new opportunities together. We want to invite new businesses in our area to advertise with us in our annual program, and residents new and old to consider auditioning to sing with us! As Ryan says, let's get everyone singing!

The HCS Board will also be hard at work on our increasing revenue pillar, which is foundational for everything we do. Last year, we added a new level of giving, the Sustainer, starting at a contribution level of \$1000. As our membership drive begins in about a month, we hope many of you might consider choosing a new giving level and become a Sustainer--and that's exactly what giving at that level does for HCS--sustain us into the future!

Our final pillar of work is rarely seen by outsiders, but infrastructure must be strong behind it all to sustain an organization. We are excited this year to be implementing a robust organizational structure that will engage singers in important roles in the work of HCS. Committees will be intentionally populated by a balance of newcomers and long-timers to help us all benefit from each other and help us grow future leaders for HCS. Our 50th year will be here before we know it, and we want to make sure we are positioned for the next fifty years as we hit our half-century mark. '

The work behind the scenes isn't very "sexy" as the saying goes, but it is essential, and we are grateful to be part of a community that values the arts and supports the Hickory Choral Society as we prepare each season with care and dedication. Thank you for all your support as we end a remarkable 45th season with our Love and Music Endure afternoon of music on October 22. And then, it's suddenly Christmas, and we joyfully begin our 46th season. Come join us--whether as an underwriter, contributor, business advertiser, singer, or audience member....we need everyone of you!

Gail Summer
2023-24 Board President



*45th Season
Remaining Concert*

FALL CONCERT
Love and Music Endure
Sunday, October 22, 2023 3:00 pm
P.E. Monroe Auditorium,
Lenoir-Rhyne University

visit hickorychoralsociety.org/events/
for more information

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Introducing our *Publicity Director*

When I was asked to write an article introducing our new Publicity Director, I began reflecting on how publicity has made such radical changes since I served in this capacity for 6 years (too many years ago to count). Publicity has transformed - from typing up an article, rounding up pictures to bring attention to the information, physically walking into the newsroom at Hickory Daily Record, the Hickory News, and the Observer News Enterprise and handing everything over to the reporters - to sitting at the computer, creating the HCS news, attaching images and sending digital copies to news outlets and social media. In my days as Publicity Director, there was no such thing as a website, the internet, etc. Oh, how times have changed.



I am elated to introduce to you a young, vibrant, and multi-talented individual whose interests span from songwriting to guitar and piano playing, church worship leading, ensemble singing, leadership development, cosmetology, investing in the lives of at-risk children and youth, caring for children in the foster care system, spending time with nieces and nephews and all of her family, communications, and much more.

Becca Easterling grew up in the Hickory area—the Catawba Valley is her home. She became involved in music, theatre, and art at a young age. Currently, she is working as the Content and Communications Strategist at a local church.

Becca comes with an enthusiasm to work creatively with our Artistic Director, Ryan Luhrs, to have the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with our new Board, and to help further the HCS mission and vision. Her creativity, ability to be a team player, and exceptionally apparent joy will certainly prove to be assets to planning, assuring a professional face of HCS to the Greater Hickory area, and a healthy collaboration with fellow Board members. We welcome her and wish her all success!

Pat Rice
Singer

Sounds of the Summer

When I reflect back on my years in school, I distinctly remember the unique feeling of dread that would creep in each June as the final bell rang to let us know that school was officially out for summer. Now, it's not because I was a particularly passionate student that I felt this angst. It was because I knew that I'd spend the next two months not singing with my friends in chorus. Admittedly, my first summer break since joining the Hickory Choral Society last August felt exactly like that. I know that I'm not alone in this feeling - capable of acknowledging the gift of a break and a time of rest, but missing the fun of making music with friends. Still, it seems that we all found ways of engaging with music in new and exciting ways.

This past summer, I made note of the ways that I saw my fellow HCS singers engaging in music - at concerts, through singing engagements, and in new career endeavors. Take a look!



Chandler Smith - Tenor, enjoyed a summer of live music at stadium and arena concerts, including Brooks & Dunn and Darrius Rucker. It's a good thing we weren't preparing for a concert, because Chandler's voice was definitely spent after these nights of 'hootin' and hollerin'!

Sounds of the Summer

(continued)



Alexandria McNeely - Soprano, took part in a week-long intensive aimed at "cultivating excellence in Art Song for artists and audiences," called Source Song Festival.



Allie and Grammy award-winning composer, Libby Larsen.

In this program, Allie got to collaborate with other singers, pianists, and composers through masterclasses, lectures, and concerts.



"It's been a long time coming..." After months of anticipation, a few of our singers got to sing their hearts out with Taylor Swift at her ERAS Tour in Atlanta, Georgia.

Becca Easterling - Alto, Kate Lawhorn - Soprano, Alexandria McNeely - Soprano, and Olivia Higdon - Soprano, sport their Taylor Swift Era-inspired costumes outside of Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Sounds of the Summer (continued)

New singer, Jonathan Greer - Bass, took his passion for music to his new position at Salem United Methodist Church in Morganton. Jonathan serves as the Director of Music.



Jonathan has enthusiastically shared the progress of making his new office a home away from home!



I'm sure there are at least a dozen more stories to be told by members of our choir - stories of how music played a significant role in our summer away from rehearsals. These are just a few. At the end of the day, I think I can speak for all of us in saying that we are grateful to be back at the SALT Block preparing for our final concert of the season, and we can't wait to share the joy of music with all of you again soon!

Becca Easterling
Publicity Director

It's (finally) Official! Introducing our *Associate Conductor*

Renee Shatley's passion for music has been evident from the very beginning as she, at her own request, began piano lessons at just five years old. The oldest of three siblings, Renee spent much of her childhood tending to the multiple gardens that her family kept at their home in Burke County. Renee admits that picking up potatoes each fall was not exactly her favorite activity. Her love of music grew as she spent her middle and high school years singing in choir and playing saxophone in both the concert and marching band.

It's (finally) Official! (continued)

After serving as both Drum Major and the President of her high school Choral Department, Renee went on to study music and pursue a career in Music Education where she worked as a high school choral director for almost thirty years. She also acquired a National Board Certification in Adolescent Vocal Singing.



Renee and Drew Shatley met in high school and married in December of 1990. They have two children - Zachery and Blair - as well as three dogs and one cat. (So, technically, they are parents to six.) Renee is fortunate to have most of her immediate family living nearby in the Piedmont of North Carolina. In addition to her teaching career and passion for music, Renee loves crafting; crocheting, pottery, and quilting are a few of her favorites. She also loves water activities like water skiing and white water rafting. Renee is also passionate about anti-bullying efforts and cancer research, having seen the negative effects of both in her family and career.

After retiring from teaching, Renee chose to join the Hickory Choral Society as a singer and soon after found herself serving as our interim Associate Conductor. She says that her favorite thing about the role was getting to know the singers and working alongside our Artistic Director, Dr. Ryan Luhrs. She loves having the ability to sing with the group, as well as conduct. Renee's passion for music and her love for others is evident in her work with the Choral Society, both in rehearsals and concerts, and behind-the-scenes in board meetings and day-to-day operations.

We are so fortunate and over-the-moon excited to announce that Renee has chosen to accept a more permanent position with the Hickory Choral Society, and is officially serving as our Associate Conductor. We welcome Renee to this new position, and look forward to another season of making music together!

Becca Easterling
Publicity Director



Oye, Are You Listening? Celebrating our 2023 Summer Children's Choral Camp

What do you get when you combine African drumming, a scavenger hunt, an exploration in the ocean, singing, sign-language, a visit from "Grandma", and ice cream? You get a fun week at the Hickory Choral Society's Children's Music Camp. Our annual music camp was a blast and the smiles on the campers' faces were proof.



The week was filled with singing each day with Mrs. Wendy Hardin. Clinicians for the choral camp are selected for their vast experience of teaching music to youngsters and Mrs. Hardin definitely surpassed that expectation. For five (5) days, the campers had the incredible opportunity to learn selections of choral music, specifically composed for young voices.

Wendy Hardin is an elementary music specialist from Burke County. She has 25 years experience in public education, teaching at Icard, WA Young, Glen Alpine, Forest Hill, Mt. View and currently at Ray Childers Elementary School. Mrs. Hardin is passionate about music as an art as well as sharing that passion with children through singing, listening, dancing, and playing.

Oye, Are You Listening? (continued)

Music has been a part of Mrs. Hardin's life as long as she can remember. She began singing in church at a young age and started piano lessons in kindergarten. While at Freedom High School, Mrs. Hardin was a member of both chamber singers and the marching band. After graduating from Appalachian State University with a major in music education with voice concentration, teaching children music has been the focus of her career. Mrs. Hardin's choral groups have performed at the CoMMA with nationally recognized groups such as The Three Tenors, Pat Boone, and Handel's Messiah Rocks. Her groups have been the guest children's choir at the annual Morganton's Combine Choirs' Christmas Concert, under the direction of Jim Williams and Jim Gossler. In 2010, Mrs. Hardin was one of the co-founders of the Burke County Elementary Honors Chorus Clinic, for which she was the very first clinician.



Mrs. Hardin is a National Board Certified Teacher and an active member of the North Carolina Music Educators Association. Along with teaching, Mrs. Hardin has worked as the interim choir director and accompanist at area churches. She lives in Valdese with her husband, three children and their goldendoodle puppy.

Our camp would not be complete without the assistance of Hickory Choral Society' collaborative pianist, Mary Texler. Mary continues to share her piano skills each year during the camp. She takes sincere interest in the campers' daily progress as she works closely with the clinician. Mary is a true gem for the HCS Children's Choral Camp.



Oye, Are You Listening? (continued)

The week not only included singing, but additional fun activities. Upon arrival each day, as campers were greeted by our HCS group leaders, many campers eagerly asked, "What is our activity today?" On day one (1), Rick Cline brought a djembe drum for each student and they experienced an African drumming circle. Throughout the rest of the week, campers had a great time visiting the Science Center Planetarium, creating an art project, and completing a scavenger hunt at the Hickory Museum of Art.



Oye, Are You Listening? (continued)

Finally, the highlight of the week was the culmination of the final concert. The excitement in the room was so apparent. Our campers entertained family and friends while using flashlights during the song "Firefly Lane." Also, the singers brought comedy to the audience while singing "Grandma's Featherbed," as well as touching the audience emotionally when incorporating sign language in "Land That We Love." The concert included a total of five (5) songs the campers learned and memorized that week. Imagine the happiness our campers experienced as the audience gave a standing ovation at the end of the concert. As everyone moved to the reception, the room was buzzing with amazing energy and excitement. Fun was had by all. Pure joy!!!!



The HCS Children's Choral Camp will take place again June, 2024 for rising 4th - 6th grade children. The camp day is 8:45 am - noon daily. If you are the parent or grandparent of a child in the 4th, 5th, or 6th grade, please allow your youngster to experience this great week of music making. Nothing is more amazing than listening to the pure sound of children singing. Every child needs to experience the benefits of participation in music. Stay tuned for announcements about registration coming the spring of 2024! Don't miss the fun!

Renee Shatley
Associate Conductor

Counting On!

Introducing our *Treasurer*

Todd Dickerson serves as the Treasurer for the HCS Board of Directors, which comes from a desire "for greater involvement in a such a wonderful community of musicians." He sang in the children's choir in his church, but his love of music blossomed when he discovered the Maria Callas albums belonging to his father. A soprano voice at the time, he found it easier to whistle along before becoming a bass 2 as his voice changed with age.

Todd grew up in a family of four, Dad (born in England), mother, and brother - the three all born at Rex Hospital in Raleigh. He spent his high school years at St. Stephens High School, graduating in 2005. He went on to earn a Bachelors degree in Arts Management and a Masters of Business Administration degree from Lenoir Rhyne University in 2009 and 2012 respectively. He works at Carrabbas Italian Grill and handling accounts payable for Camfil.



We can thank current President-Elect Marty Light for telling Todd to sing with HCS. Along with the chorus, he like to take long (whole-opera-length) walks, exercise/workouts, movies, and is passionate about the promotion of the Arts. When asked what else he is passionate about, Todd responded, "Whatever the question, the answer is love."

Kyle Canerday
Singer

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Please remember the
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Contact the HCS office for more
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