



**HICKORY  
CHORAL  
SOCIETY**

# 45 Years of HCS Made Possible by...Love

PBS television programs often begin and end with the announcement that, "This program was made possible by (financial supporters) and viewers like you." This anniversary season of the Hickory Choral Society provides an opportunity for us to reflect on 45 years of singing and ask the question: What and who have made HCS possible? Clearly, a founding conductor's vision, committed singers, contributing members, a talented board and staff, enthusiastic volunteers — and, of course, viewers and listeners like you — have made this all possible. Yet, underlying all those contributions is a love for singing. The word "amateur" or "amateur-ish" often has negative connotations related to ability. But when defined literally, "amateur" means to participate in an activity out of love for the endeavor (Latin for "love" is "*amare*"). This love for singing and love for an artform helps express ideas not possible through words alone. It's an exciting endeavor, and I am confident most people reading this article have had transformational, goosebumps moments while attending live music performances. We keep coming back for more, waiting to experience again feelings of acknowledgement and wholeness made possible by the choral art.

We hope our upcoming Under the Sails Concert, underwritten by the City of Hickory, will provide even more of those transformational moments for you. The program titled "45 Years of Love (Songs)"

will feature music from all six decades of the choir's existence -- from Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water" (1970s) to "Just Sing" from the 2020 movie *The Trolls World Tour*. Additional music made famous by Louis Armstrong, Doris Day, Journey, Whitney Houston, Carly Simon, Rascal Flatts, Celine Dion, Bette Midler, Idina Menzel, Adele, and more will round out the program. Lyrics focusing on love and perseverance are present in all the songs, and those themes will also be present as select choir members share brief nuggets of the choir's history as we journey chronologically, decade-by-decade, from 1978 to the present.

As with the PBS television program announcement, the Under the Sails concert will serve to acknowledge all in our community who have loved singing, loved the choral art, and helped make the first 45 years of the Hickory Choral Society possible. We invite you to join us Sunday, May 21, 5:00 pm, at Union Square in Downtown Hickory.



**Ryan Luhrs**  
Artistic Director and Conductor

# 45th Season Remaining Concerts

## **SINGING UNDER THE SAILS 45 Years of Love (Songs)**

Sunday, May 21, 2023 5:00 pm  
Union Square,  
Downtown Hickory

## **FALL CONCERT Love and Music Endure**

Sunday, October 22, 2023 3:00 pm  
P.E. Monroe Auditorium,  
Lenoir-Rhyne University

Hickory Choral Society concerts are free and open to the public.

For more information visit:  
[HickoryChoralSociety.org](http://HickoryChoralSociety.org)  
or contact  
[Noteworthy@hickorychoralsociety.org](mailto:Noteworthy@hickorychoralsociety.org)  
(828) 322-2210.

# Noteworthy

**Opus 45, No 3.  
May 2023**

Inspiring, Educating, and  
Connecting  
*Through Song*

This digital newsletter is best viewed on a desktop computer. If viewing on your mobile phone please rotate your screen.

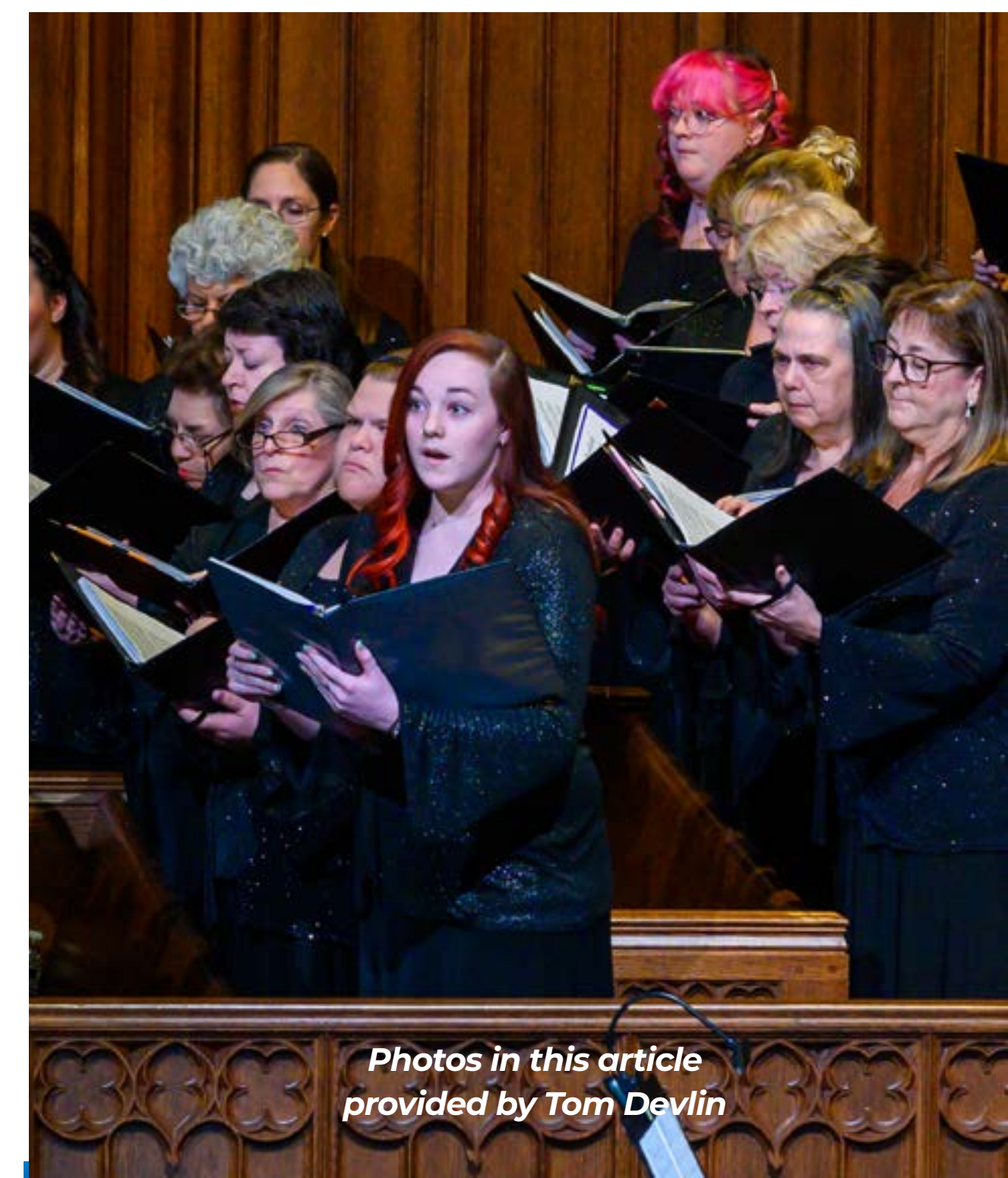




## What an Anniversary Party!

At the end of our 2023 Spring Concert, held on March 18 & 19, the one word heard repeatedly throughout Corinth Reformed Church was “Wow!” That seemed to sum it up perfectly. The sentiment came from singers and audience members alike...and even the composer himself! In a note to singers from HCS Artistic Director Dr. Ryan Luhrs, he stated *“The concert as a whole clearly impacted many people, including Dan Forrest. For those of you who didn’t talk to him afterwards or follow him on social media, he was especially complimentary of the dancers and your movement to the stage at the end. His first words to me on stage were, “Wow. Just wow.”*

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of Dan Forrest’s Requiem for the Living was a true highlight of our 45th season, especially for those of us who were privileged to be part of that commissioning and premiere in 2013. I want to thank Corinth Reformed Church for their flexibility and partnership to allow us to hold this performance in their magnificent facility, with all the special requests and requirements that went along with including not only singers and instrumentalists but ballet dancers as well. The addition of the ballet, which was a suggestion from Dan when asked what we could “do differently this time, to make the anniversary special”, was simply magical. A HUGE thank you to Hickory Ballet and Performing



Photos in this article provided by Tom Devlin



Arts for such a wonderful collaboration, and to the four young women who danced it so beautifully!

Our soloists for the *Requiem for the Living* were outstanding as well. Bravo to all three – Brody Aiken, Alexandria McNeely, and Dr. Tyler Young. It was a pleasure to have Brody, an 8th grader at Mill Creek Middle School, sing the boy soprano part. He was truly composed and professional beyond his years!

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our concert underwriters again – the George Foundation and the Kenneth K. and Suzanne G. Millholland Endowment Fund. Without the generous and ongoing support of wonderful community members and organizations like these two, we would not be able to provide the performances we do much less commission such beautiful music.

Although celebrating the 10th anniversary of the *Requiem* was clearly the focus of the spring concert, I would be remiss if I did not mention the rest of the concert as well. The four pieces on the first half all tied into the concert theme of “By Love RESTored” as Dr. Luhrs explained during his concert commentary. Olivia Higdon provided a beautiful soprano solo in *Listen to the Lambs* by R. Nathaniel Dett. We were honored to have members of composer Greg Knight’s family in attendance on Sunday as we performed one of his works, *A Red, Red Rose*, in his memory. His death in 2022 was a true loss to our community as well as the larger artistic community.

To echo the statement above from Dr. Luhrs, this concert clearly impacted many people...in many ways. I’m proud to be part of a choral group with such a long and celebrated history, and equally proud to be part of a community with such a love for and support of the arts!

**Sharon Foster Milligan**  
**HCS Board President**





# Hundred-Plus Harmony

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What happens when 100 voices come together to perform a single piece of music? Magic. Founded 45 years ago as an ad hoc group of singers with one signature performance, the Hickory Choral Society (HCS) now features four concert weekends with a diverse array of singers and performances from classical to jazz, holiday to gospel. We asked Dr. Ryan Luhrs, HCS's artistic director and conductor (and associate professor at Lenoir-Rhyne University), to tell us more.

## **What is the Hickory Choral Society, and when was it founded?**

The Hickory Choral Society was founded in 1978 by J. Don Coleman. What began as an ad hoc group of singers organized by Coleman to perform Handel's Messiah soon after evolved into a choir that met weekly to rehearse and offer multiple concerts each year.

## **Who sings with the Hickory Choral Society, and how are they selected?**

HCS draws singers of a variety of backgrounds and ages from the Catawba Valley region. To enter the choir, prospective singers are required to audition and demonstrate the musical skills necessary to perform challenging choral repertoire at a high level.

## **What types of music does HCS perform?**

HCS performs a wide variety of music, including sacred and secular repertoire. Some performances feature extended multi-movement choral works, and others focus on shorter compositions. Recent performances included seasonal holiday music, gospel, music from Argentina, Franz Schubert's Mass in G Major, and a newly commissioned setting of Ubi caritas written by Dan Forrest. Speaking of commissions, the choir has a long-standing commitment to inviting composers to write new music. In addition to Dan Forrest, the choir has commissioned new works from English composer Jonathan Willcocks and American jazz pianist Dave Brubeck.

Upcoming concerts will include a 10th anniversary performance of Dan Forrest's Requiem for the Living this March, an outdoor pops concert in May, and a performance of Alzheimer's Stories by Robert Cohen in October.

## **What are some of your more notable annual events?**

HCS's annual Christmas concerts help ring in the holiday season for many in our community. In addition to annual fall, spring, and May concerts, the choir offers a Cookies & Carols concert for children in December and youth music camp in late June. The primary fundraising events are the annual membership drive in October-November and the May golf tournament.

## **Are the singers accompanied by instrumentalists, and if so, why?**

Performances are sometimes accompanied by full orchestra, piano, a combination of instruments, or sung without any instrumental accompaniment whatsoever. Why? HCS is committed to singing a wide variety of music, and in doing so, will sing many different types of accompaniment.



Photo of 2022 Christmas Concert  
provided by Tara Bland

## **What role do you play as conductor?**

As artistic director and conductor, it's my role to set the artistic vision for the ensemble, select the repertoire, contract instrumentalists and soloists, and prepare the choir for performances by leading rehearsals.

## **What are rehearsals like, and how much rehearsal time is needed to prepare for an event?**

During the choir's August-May rehearsal season, weekly Monday night rehearsals last two hours. Additional rehearsals occur the week preceding each of the four concert weekends. The choir typically rehearses six to eight weeks for each performance. A typical Monday night rehearsal will begin with a 10-minute vocal and physical warm-up. The remainder of the time is spent rehearsing repertoire for the upcoming concert. Some of that time is spent in sectional rehearsals where a sub-section of the whole choir will work on their part separately. Interim associate conductor Reneé Shatley and piano accompanist Mary Texer play a crucial role in facilitating our weekly rehearsals.

## **Is there anything you would like to add about the Hickory Choral Society?**

The mission of the Hickory Choral Society is to transform lives through performance, support of music education, and the advancement of social harmony in the North Carolina foothills and beyond. There's a lot of teamwork in the organization working to make the choir's mission a reality, including our board of directors, interim business manager Denise Filip, and of course, the 100+ singers who give their time, talent, and spirit to make it all happen!

Thank you to Catawba County, NC for including us on their blog!  
[View the original post here.](#)



# HCS Connections: Family

Having grown up in a family of musicians and singers, I feel I have a special relationship with those in our chorus who joined as family members.

Some of the dearest memories I have as a child are those when my father, brother, and I would gather at the piano, and my mother accompanied us as we harmonized singing hymns and old standards. That planted the seed in my soul to sing for the rest of my life.

Over the years, Hickory Choral Society has been gifted with the voices of family members who sang either side by side or across the room. In my mind's eye, I can see them walking into the rehearsal hall laughing and talking—making their way to their respective sections. Likewise, when we glance around the rehearsal hall today, we can see that tradition continues! There's no better blend than the voices of family members. It is the combination of DNA and growing up together in the same household singing as a family that creates that wonderful natural blend. HCS is the beneficiary of several families who have been and are now singers. Their natural blend enhances each section in the choir. What a gift! Their voices blending with those of their fellow singers creates beautiful harmonies.

## Pat Rice



*Marty Light, husband  
Kellie Light, wife and mother  
Katie Sheets, daughter*



*Rocky Reid, father  
Hannah Jones, daughter*



*Hannah Strack, cousin in-law  
Ryan Luhrs, cousin in-law*



*Crystal Sargent, mother  
Alexandria McNelly, daughter*



*Andrew Parker, brother  
Grace Parker, sister*



*Ken Beaty, husband  
Nancy Beaty, wife*





## *Children's Summer Choral Camp*

JUNE 19-23, 2023

For more information contact the  
Hickory Choral Society at [Noteworthy@HickoryChoralSociety.org](mailto:Noteworthy@HickoryChoralSociety.org)  
[HickoryChoralSociety.org](http://HickoryChoralSociety.org) | 828-322-2210.



## FALL CONCERT

### Love and Music Endure

Sunday, October 22, 2023 3:00 pm  
P.E. Monroe Auditorium,  
Lenoir-Rhyne University

## *Leave a Legacy!*

Please remember the  
Hickory Choral Society with a gift  
in your will, trust, retirement account,  
or life insurance policy.  
Contact the HCS office for more information.





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HICKORY  
CHORAL  
SOCIETY

*Singing*

*Under the Sails*

*Inspiring, Educating, and Connecting through Song*

**45 Years of Love (songs)**

Sunday, May 21, 2023 5:00 pm

Rain Date June 4

Union Square, Downtown Hickory

Concert Underwriter



Life Well Crafted

Hickory Choral Society is a funded affiliate of the United Arts Council of Catawba County





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Artistic Director & Conductor

Denise Filip  
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Mary Texer  
Accompanist

Renee Shatley  
Interim Associate Conductor

### HCS Music Available All Year Long!

We have many of your favorite Hickory Choral Society performances available on CD and/or DVD for purchase at the Choral Society office located at 243 3rd Ave NE, Suite 2-N, Hickory, NC, 28601.

Prices start at \$16.00. What a wonderful gift for a special occasion - the gift of music from HCS! If you are looking for that certain concert recording, give us a call at 828-322-2210. Many of our CD's are also available at the Hickory Museum of Art Gift Shop.

### Sing With Us!

Openings in all parts  
Monday, June 5th  
or by appointment

Make an appointment by  
contacting our office:  
828-322-2210  
[noteworthy@hickorychoralsociety.org](mailto:noteworthy@hickorychoralsociety.org)



Hickory Choral Society Office 243  
3rd Ave NE, Suite 2-N, Hickory,  
NC, 28601.

Office Hours M - F 10 AM - 2 PM

Contact Us  
[HickoryChoralSociety.org](http://HickoryChoralSociety.org)  
828-322-2210  
[noteworthy@hickorychoralsociety.org](mailto:noteworthy@hickorychoralsociety.org)

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