

masterworks @ Matters

MASTERWORKS CHORALE • TOLEDO, OHIO • MARCH 2021



Shepherdess with Lute, Christophe Huet II, French, 1700–1759

Fair Phyllis

*when her lover found her,
oh! then they fell a-kissing!*

Phyllis was quite a girl, that is clear. Members of the Chorale will sing three Renaissance madrigals about her: John Farmer's "Fair Phyllis I Saw," Francis Pilkington's "Amyntas with his Phyllis Fair," and Thomas Bateson's "Phyllis Farewell." For a change of pace, members will also perform several sacred Renaissance motets, including "If Ye Love Me," by Thomas Tallis and William Byrd's "Ave Verum Corpus."

mixed octets and a women's sextet in online program sunday april 11
renaissance, romantic, modern music

new date!

Chorale Artistic Director Tim Cloeter will host a program of recordings made during the fall by six groups of Chorale singers: five mixed octets and one women's sextet.

The program includes Renaissance madrigals and motets, music by masters of the Romantic era, Robert and Clara Schumann, and one piece by a contemporary composer.

Tim will provide commentary during the program, which should last less than an hour.

Because of the pandemic, singers made the

recordings in the most extraordinary of ways. Each group of singers met once a week for an hour in the parking lot at Perrysburg First United Methodist Church, where Tim also serves as Music Director. Sitting alone in their cars, they sang into wireless microphones. Tim, on the church porch or inside the building, ran an instrument panel to mix the signals coming from the singers and to send them back out to the singers' car radios via short-range FM radio. In this way, amazingly, singers were able to sing together, but safely apart. Tim made recordings

of each piece. ([Click here](#) to see a report on this by 13abc's Tony Geftos.)

Audience members will be able to connect with the Chorale safely from home on Sunday, April 11 at 3 p.m. Search YouTube.com for "Masterworks Toledo." The event will be free, but audience members who would like to donate will be able to do so online.

Note: This program was originally scheduled for March 28, but it had to be rescheduled because of a COVID safety concern.

*women's sextet performs
songs by robert & clara schumann*

The women's sextet sings Clara Schumann's beautiful ode to love "Liebst du um Schönheit," and Clara's husband Robert Schumann's lovely description of a quiet night, the refuge of love, in "Triolett."

These pieces are true Romantic masterpieces, so different in sound and character from the Renaissance pieces the Chorale's mixed octets sing. Both are sung in German. Clara set verse by Friedrich Rückert to music: "If you love beauty / Don't love me! / Love the sun / She has golden hair ... If you love for love, / Oh yes, love me! / Always love me / I love you forever." Robert's "Triolett," a setting of poetry by Carl Julius Grüel, captures the essence of a quiet summer evening. "Beautiful night, love's refuge. / The zither sounds a whispering chord."

The women's sextet also sings "Kyrie" by Lithuanian composer Kristina Vasiliauskaitė (b. 1956) and a Renaissance motet by Giovanni Matteo Asola.

Robert & Clara Schumann





*drive-in rehearsals:
those real-time musical experiences were
a boon to this conductor's soul*

Tim
Tim Cloeter,
Artistic Director

*from the artistic director
gratitude in the midst of the pandemic*

In December's issue of this newsletter I wrote, "now is a tough time to be a choir." Well, it's still a tough time to be a choir, but as we approach the midpoint of our season, what I'm struck by is the gratitude I feel. Some of the reasons I feel gratitude may be obvious; for instance, I'm especially thankful that I've retained my pre-pandemic jobs so that I'm still sufficiently employed actually doing music. Also, I'm very grateful for the substantial grant funding that supported us in our successful attempts to fulfill our mission in new ways.

But other reasons for my gratitude may not be so obvious. Consider: I'm thankful for the opportunity to do Renaissance repertoire with ensembles of an appropriately small size that fits the musical style. I'm also quite thankful for the opportunity to sing this Renaissance repertoire myself in a few of these small ensembles—it's an expressive and musical outlet I had been missing. The drive-in rehearsals and recordings have also been a boon for me because they gave me the opportunity to lead synchronous rehearsals and performances; those real-time musical experiences were a balm for this conductor's soul!

I'm also grateful for the interested and thoughtful "students" (Chorale members) in my skill-building sessions. I have always thoroughly enjoyed teaching aural skills and music theory, so I'm having a blast just getting to

teach subjects I like so much. In addition, however, the Chorale members have been especially engaged, which is a bonus: they've been willing to step outside their comfort zones in order to grow a little, and they've come up with insightful questions that have helped me think more deeply and grow a bit myself.

Lastly, I'm deeply thankful for our board members. Despite the fact that we had difficult challenges to address at the many meetings we held last summer, I always left those meetings feeling more hopeful and supported. These volunteers have been hard-working, generous with their time, undaunted by the unusual challenges of this pandemic-affected season, willing to prioritize our mission, determined to retain our staff, and unified in our commitment to health safety.

Make no mistake: I'm not grateful for the pandemic. It has been an awful thing that I unequivocally wish had not happened. But even in the midst of this awful thing, I feel gratitude for all of these other good things, and I hope that what the Chorale and I offer you this season is something for which you, too, can be grateful: the beauty of singing, a reminder of joy, and the well-founded hope that eventually we'll gather again to celebrate the music that connects us.

*news briefs from the premier chamber choir of northwest ohio
success of christmas cd, singer's playlist, and golden anniversary*



next season: the chorale's 50th!

Planning is underway for Masterworks Chorale's 50th season, so stay tuned for details!

christmas cd both an artistic and a financial success

The Chorale's latest CD, entitled *Rejoice and Sing!*, has been a great success. It is a beautiful compilation of highlights from Christmas concerts from 2013 to 2019. As one donor stated, "When I hear the 'Donkey

Carol,' I smile, when I hear 'Go Where I Send Thee,' I dance, and when I hear 'Rejoice and Sing,' I think, what beautiful music, what happy people, how joyous is this!"

The disc was also a fund-raising success. "We did a great job estimating our expenses when we applied for a CARES Act grant," Artistic Director Tim Cloeter reports. "All of the \$5000 it cost us to produce the CDs was covered by grant money." Fans who donated \$25 or more received a CD as a thank-you, and the Chorale collected over \$7200 in donations, Tim said.

The disc will be available for sale next season.





*one singer's playlist
inspired by the
chorale's motto for
covid times*

MWC
Winter 2021
Playlist
Stay Tuned

"stay tuned"

Click [here](#) to enjoy a playlist inspired by the Chorale's motto for Covid Times: "Stay Tuned." The list was curated by the Chorale's President, Soprano Meghan Schmidbauer.

Listen straight through or put the playlist on shuffle. Enjoy! Don't have a Spotify account? It's easy to sign-up, and there's a free version. Just go to spotify.com. Problems? Try a different browser.

a great musical experiment during the pandemic being nimble and offering great musical experiences

It was early March, 2020. Masterworks Chorale members were putting the final touches on what promised to be an outstanding Classics Concert later in the month.

And then, seemingly overnight, the world changed.

The COVID pandemic essentially shut down the state, hitting singing groups hard because of how the disease was transmitted.

For Meghan Schmidbauer, incoming President of the Chorale's board, the first moments were chaotic. "How do you even prepare for something like this? Emails were flying. Brian Tittl, our outgoing President, was posting

"it was about our patrons and our members all the time"

updates to the website as new details became available. We were in crisis mode."

The immediate consideration was what to do about the March concert. Says Tim Cloeter, Artistic Director, "We had to come to grips with the fact that the concert was just not tenable. Our audience was high risk. We knew we just couldn't gather. Then we went into damage control, releasing paid performers from the concert, cancelling our contract for the performance. Everyone was very gracious."

The hope of the board was that the Classics Concert would just be postponed until June. Says Tim, "Then it became clear that couldn't happen. We even contemplated the possibility of performing the Classics Concert at the start of the 2020-2021 season in September, but that fell by the wayside in the wake of the pandemic."

The first couple of months were particularly challenging. Meghan says, "We were in a constant state of contingency planning. Things were so fluid."

Many music organizations across the country began laying off staff. That didn't happen with the Chorale. Says Tim, "The board was unified that that would be the last thing to happen."

"We never worried about our viability, because our patrons and sponsors have made Masterworks part of their lives," says Meghan.

From the earliest meetings as the pandemic took hold, Tim always kept the board focused on the Chorale's mission, connecting lives through choral music. Says Meghan, "It was about the patrons and our members all the time."

During the spring and into the summer of 2020, the board brainstormed ways to ensure that

the Chorale could find ways to connect to their audiences during the 2020-2021 season.

"There was a lot of open dialogue about what to do, how we could pull it off. We wanted to be true to our mission and we wanted to be realistic with the budget," says Meghan.

During the summer, Tim connected with choral, barbershop, and other music associations, researching what was happening nationally. The general mood was dire. Tim says, "A former classmate of mine would not accept the premise that there were only two options: either risk your life singing in a choral group, or don't do anything. He published an article about how you could safely practice and perform by using a drive-in practice approach, and I modeled what we did on that process."

Using this drive-in approach, Chorale members were able to rehearse safely together from their cars using wireless microphones, a short-range FM radio transmitter, and their car radios. While there were technical challenges to this approach, there were many benefits. ([Click here](#) to see a report on this by 13abc's Tony Geftos.)

"Because we sang in octets, it drew out and challenged singers," says Tim. "Singers had to listen in a different way. Visual cues were constrained. But we learned that we could sing well in smaller groups in a very unique environment."

The social component of these unique practices was important, Meghan adds, "It was like a field trip out of my house. Knowing that I was able to do something that was a passion, but could do it safely, provided a sense of normalcy in the middle of the pandemic."

In addition to the drive-in sessions, recordings of which can be heard at our March 28 online program, Tim conducted skill-building sessions on Zoom every other week for interested singers.

Says Meghan, "The skill-building sessions took me back to my music theory classes in college. It was a unique way for us to polish our skills while continuing to connect with one another."

In lieu of the December concert, the Chorale was able to stay connected to the music-loving public by publishing a CD, a compilation of performances over the last several years.

The upcoming 2021-2022 season is particularly important because it marks the 50th anniversary season for Masterworks Chorale. Says Meghan, "In some ways, the timing of the celebration couldn't be better. What a time to bring things back! It brings even more meaning to the season."



These are the Chorale board members who, with Artistic Director Tim Cloeter, came up with plans for our 2020-2021 season. Top: President Meghan Schmidbauer, Vice President Jim Witter. Bottom: Secretary Michael Docis, Treasurer Colleen Geftos. They had many meetings on Zoom!

"this last year has been one great experiment, and in many ways was a great success"

Understanding what has happened over the last year, Tim and Meghan appreciate that there is still a need to be flexible in light of what the future might bring. And that's okay.

"What the pandemic showed us is that we are more nimble than we thought," says Meghan. "We pivoted on a dime. We made tough decisions fast. And we showed we have the foundation and the dedication to continue our singing mission for generations to come."

"This last year has been one great experiment, and in many ways was a great success," says Tim. "We learned lessons during this hard experience. Yet, our collective experience will make the Chorale better and stronger for the future." — Tim Langhorst, Bass



P. O. Box 114
Toledo, Ohio 43697

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Toledo, Ohio
Permit No. 935

Masterworks Chorale is grateful for
generous support from:



Block Communications, Inc.



Masterworks Chorale

connecting lives through choral music

masterworks *Matters*

Go Ahead! Slit the Seal! Here's What's Inside!

A preview of our April 11 streaming program • An article about the four volunteer members of the Chorale's board and how they made decisions about this challenging season • A report on the success of the Chorale's recent Christmas CD • The latest Singer's Choice playlist on Spotify • An inspiring message from our Artistic Director, Tim Cloeter

Mark Your Calendar & Join Us!

Virtual Chamber Concert

Sunday, April 11 at 3 p.m.
(new date)

Free! Donations gratefully accepted!
Search youtube.com for
"Masterworks Toledo"

Virtual Trivia Night

Friday, April 23, 7 to 9 p.m.
See details at right!

Fresh on Air

Sunday, June 13
Stay tuned for details!

Contact the Chorale!

PO Box 114, Toledo, OH 43697
(419) 742-2775
masterworkstoledo@gmail.com

MASTERWORKS CHORALE PRESENTS
VIRTUAL TRIVIA NIGHT
FRIDAY
APRIL 23
7:00 - 9:00 PM
\$30 per household
No more than 10 per team

Join us in a virtual evening of trivia, prizes, and live-streamed fun... all from home! Pajamas encouraged! All proceeds benefit Masterworks Chorale of Toledo.

Register at masterworkstoledo.com



www.masterworkstoledo.com