

A NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR THE LA JOLLA SYMPHONY AND CHORUS ASSOCIATION

February 6th, 2017

## Conductor's Note



Steven Schick, Music Director  
Photo: courtesy of San Diego UT

The rains of winter have arrived, but it's the inclemency of our current political and cultural situation that has me down.

Somewhere between the ascension of science in the late Renaissance (where facts came to mean everything) and the political landscape of the early 21st century (where they seem to mean nearly nothing) we've lost track of the role of music as a divining rod for the truth. Yet at critical times—many of which took place within our lifetimes—music has played just this role, of revelation and illumination.

Think of the importance of European modernism after World War II, in which the cool logic of serial composition was a balm to the unhinged excesses of the Third Reich. Or think of the founding

in the mid-1960's of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and what it meant for those extraordinary African-American musicians whose voices had been suppressed in the mainstream. Pauline Oliveros's Deep Listening Institute embraced silence and patience and helped make an increasingly chaotic and impatient world more bearable. (God, how losing Pauline at the end of November was the final punch in the guts of just an awful month!) Finally, in what for me was the greatest musical moment of the recent past, my president fought back tears and sang a mournful Amazing Grace to the memories of nine slain members of a Charleston church.

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All of these artists show us music as the language of resistance, as the vessel of loss, of hope, of rage. This is music at its richest and most complex, grappling with life's insults and perplexities.

We'll hear that richness again in this weekend's concert. Rossini's Overture to the Barber of Seville and the Beethoven Violin Concerto were just two among many products of the acute political and social discomfort in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Pierre Beaumarchais, the librettist of "Il Barbiere," (along with *The Marriage of Figaro*), fomented democratic revolution in Paris and encouraged French support of the American colonists in the Revolutionary War, and, in 1777, organized a shipment of military equipment, which aided the decisive victory at Saratoga. Though Beethoven was a true child of French revolutionary fervor, by the time he wrote his Violin Concerto he was looking beyond the strictures of classicism toward a more individual and expressive musical language. The concerto is expansive—running a quarter of an hour longer than the classical norm—and demands an extraordinary, very personal, kind of virtuosity from the soloist. It was neither the first nor the last time that the collective sacrifice of one generation paved the way for the delicate, subjective musings of the subsequent one.

Luciano Berio's magnificent, hallucinogenic *Sinfonia*—part musical masterpiece, part post-modern cross-examination of the modern psyche—was created in the immediate aftermath of the 1968 assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. In the second movement of *Sinfonia*, "O King," the eight solo voices gradually assemble the phonemes of "Martin Luther King." The moment when the great name is sung, complete and unmasked, is one of the most powerful musical phrases of the 20th century. *Sinfonia*'s psychedelic third movement, a pastiche of musical quotations from Mahler, Berg, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Beethoven, along with textual quotations from the anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, is diverting and energizing. But unlike Ives, whose quilt of quotations always feels childlike and antic-

ipatory—a musical version of the circus coming to town—Berio's fractured view of the past carries the sting of longing and loss. As the tangible and comforting past recedes, two questions hang in the air: How did we get here? What do we do now?

They're good questions, and I am not the only one who has asked them again recently. For a musician the answer can feel maddeningly simple. We will continue—doing our best to create powerful, complex musical experiences that illuminate and interrogate our current lives. But is that enough in this frightening time?

Don't underestimate music. The language of music alone is cause for hope. There are musical terms for passion, action, sadness, and a long list of phrases for togetherness: ensemble, tutti, and even the word concert itself. But nowhere in the musical lexicon will you find the hateful language we have heard recently. No musical phrase is marked with the slurs of predatory sexism and you'll never find an Italian formulation that means "Muslims stay out." Search any library of musical scores and you'll come up empty when it comes to terminology for condescension, homophobia, and bigotry.

This is a moment to lean on music—for its language of inclusion, passion, and resistance and for its power to illuminate life.

I have related the following story in this space before, but please indulge me again. It continues to be relevant.

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*Conductor's Note continued*

In June of 1988, I was on a concert tour of Eastern Europe, having just arrived in Poland from Moscow (where I saw Reagan and Gorbachev together on Red Square.) I found myself sitting down with the American composer Kenneth Gaburo to a post-concert midnight meal in the small Warsaw apartment of Józef Patkowski. Patkowski had been chairman of the Polish Composers' Union through the darkest days of the Soviet occupation of his country and, more than any single individual, was responsible for his country's lively contemporary music scene, in spite of repeated attempts by the government to thwart it.

The enormous storm clouds of political upheaval that were just beginning to gather on horizons all over Eastern Europe that summer were ominously mirrored by flashes of real lightning clearly visible through Patkowski's window. I sat quietly as Józef and Kenneth talked about contemporary music in Poland and how an uncompromising Polish avant-garde gave Poles a real voice even when all other freedoms of expression had been strangled. I was stunned, and still am when I think about it, by the way music—yes, thorny and complex contemporary music—was being used in Poland to promote freedom and to argue for the common good.

There was a pause in the conversation as the storm approached and the thunder rolled. It was an extraordinary moment for me, the first time I realized that my job as a musician was not to enshrine the past but to lend a hand in the creation of a common good.

Patkowski suddenly slapped his hand on the table. The food was ready he said. Let's talk about life now, not art! Then he threw his head back and laughed as though such distinctions were absurd. And the rains came.

*Steven Schick*

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# *News from the Executive Director*

I'm writing this note fresh off of the success of the **Young Artists Competition** weekend. Once again, the talent was phenomenal! Twenty-five contestants performed in Instrumental and Vocal categories. The first-place winners in their categories were pianist Anne Liu (age 15) and soprano Tasha Koontz (age 29). A complete list of the winners can be found at: [http://www.lajollasympphony.com/education/young\\_artist\\_competition.php](http://www.lajollasympphony.com/education/young_artist_competition.php). This year's instrumental judges were Dr. Rebecca Rivera and Jeanne Skrocki. Vocal judges were Dr. Peter Atherton and Dr. Fiona Chatwin. A big thank-you to our co-chairs, who helped put this event together: Jeanne Saier, Dr. Elena Yarritu, Laurinda K. Nikkel, and Carol Plantamura. To hear all of the winners perform their award-winning pieces, come to the **Young Artists Winners Recital** on Sunday, February 26. Ticket information can be found on our website.

The fall quarter has been a good one for the organization, financially. Ticket sales were better than budgeted for the first two concerts, the Gala exceeded its fundraising goal, and the year-end Annual Fund did very well. All in all, operating income is about \$15,000 higher than budgeted for this time of year. Let's keep the trend going!

## ***Endowment Report:***

We continue to make gains on the \$1.5 million endowment effort. Since making the campaign more public at our October concert, about \$80,000 in gifts and pledges have been received. We have \$360,000 to go to conclude our 5-year campaign by this June - no small feat. We will continue to give the endowment a high profile at our concerts and have some mini-events and campaigns in the works over the next 5 months.

*Diane Salisbury*

## *Save These Dates:*

**Annual Wine Tasting**, Saturday, April 22 at a private home in Rancho Santa Fe. This year's blind-tasting theme is "Life is a Cabernet!"  
**2017 Gala**, Saturday, October 14, "Magical Mystery Tour"



# *La Jolla Strings- Congratulations on your performance at the San Diego State of the City Address at the Balboa Theatre!*



*La Jolla Strings - Wendy Patrick,  
David Cooksley, Judy Gaukel and  
Carol Tolbert.*



# Meet Alto Melissa Troyer

Melissa Troyer has been singing for most of her young life.

She grew up in Indiana, where she sang in children's choirs. She didn't stop when she moved to Boston to get a Master's Degree at MIT, joining community choirs there.

Melissa is a PhD candidate in her fifth year of grad school in the Cognitive Science department at UCSD studying how the brain makes sense of written language. For her dissertation, she is investigating the role of expertise in language processing.

This exacting work no doubt makes the act and art of singing very important to Melissa. She says she enjoys the creative and technical enterprise of making music and has been thrilled to have the privilege of singing with the LJS&C during her graduate studies.

Melissa was particularly grateful for the chance to join the LJS&C Chorus on its 2015 tour in Spain along with her sister Mandy, also a singer.

**Other highlights:** "...singing Stravinsky's *Perséphone* while accompanying the talented Lux Boreal Dance Company and experiencing new music through commissioned pieces composed by UCSD music grads."

She is especially grateful for having had the opportunity to work with David Chase over the past four years. "David's vision for the chorus always seems to move us farther forward than our own imaginations could take us. His passion for creating something beautiful in a world of chaos is an inspiration," she says.

When not doing academic work or singing, Melissa enjoys practicing science communication by writing for NeuWriteSD.org and also works with education outreach groups in San Diego. Melissa also loves spending time with close friends, family, and her partner Kevin, as well as dogs and cats who have affiliations with any of the above.



## A Few Questions for Melissa:

1. *What is the most thrilling piece of music you have ever sung?*

One of my favorite pieces is Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, which I've had the pleasure of singing with both the LJS&C and with the Mercury Orchestra in Cambridge, MA. It has no words, but it's got verve.

2. *What types of music -- including pop music -- do you like?*

All kinds. I'm a big fan of Broadway, from Cole Porter's *Anything Goes* to Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton*. I also like rock (Simon & Garfunkel, Rolling Stones, Everly Brothers, Fleetwood Mac); pop (Sara Bareilles, Adele); indie (Magnetic Fields, Arcade Fire, Neutral Milk Hotel); bluegrass/folk (Run Boy Run, Devil Makes Three); some country (John Prine, Alison Krauss); classical (Schubert is a current favorite). Other less classifiable favorites include Cake, Ben Sollee, Rufus Wainwright, Fiona Apple, Neil Young.

3. *What's the last non-academic book you read?*

*The Goldfinch*, by Donna Tartt

4. *Where would you most like to travel?*

Right now, I'd like to spend more time in my home state of Indiana.

*Pat Finn*

# Article Watch

From Walt Desmond

**See Robert Shaw's inimitable genius in his Verdi workshop at Carnegie Hall.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRpcmXL0vr4>

Mr. Shaw rehearses 3 Verdi pieces with his 'students' (Several parts of the Requiem, including the finale, as well as Ave Maria and Stabat Mater.

## Skid Row Messiah

Distinct takes on Handel's "Messiah": Skid-row talent joins local singers and musicians in a moving work that's the flip side of Trinity Church Wall Street's version.

'The Messiah' from opposite ends of the economic spectrum

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-rich-and-poor-messiahs-20161204-story.html>



## Need to contact the LJS&C?

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If you find an interesting, music-related article or web site, please send the information about it to Danbi at [yoahn@ucsd.edu](mailto:yoahn@ucsd.edu)