



Statement of Purpose

Melodious Accord believes that melody is an unparalleled means of communication for human beings; that when we use our ears and voices we enrich our lives through creating communities of sound; and that singing together brings immediate benefits – physical, mental and spiritual – to those who join in this most participatory of all the arts.



Calling all Choirs!

There's still time to join the party!

What's better than 90 candles on your cake? 90 (or more) choirs from around the world singing your music and sharing it online! Join Melodious Accord as we celebrate Alice's significant birthday with a unique, online birthday celebration: [#AliceIs90](#). Amateur and professional ensembles of all ages and sizes are welcome.

[Visit the new page on our website to learn more and to register your choir.](#)

And for those on Facebook and Twitter, please 'like' and follow our new pages. Recent posts have featured Alice's new publications, photos and videos, and information about upcoming workshops and projects. Click on the buttons below – you'll also find them at the end of this and every newsletter!

The View from Here

A Drive in Spring

I wasn't going far – just a few miles from home – on a May day that couldn't decide if it were March or April. The sky was full of moving rain clouds, with glimpses of sun every now and then. Before I had gone four miles I'd driven through two separate heavy showers. As I started up the East Hawley hill, it came teeming down so that I could hardly see. At the top, by Elvira Scott's barn and pastures, I was suddenly pelted with hail – for about a minute. Then I became aware of a strange sort of sunshine – and realized that I was INSIDE a rainbow. For a minute, the colors were diffused around me in an amazing way: then the air was clear again, and to my left I could see the smallest rainbow I've ever seen (and I've seen a complete circle from an airplane). This started by Elvira's barn, hopped over the trees and ended in the next pasture. As I was marveling at all this, the hail returned – even bigger this time, and even briefer. I arrived at my destination amid such a heavy downpour that there was no sense in trying to get out of the car. It lasted for about five minutes -- and then, wonder of wonders, the sun returned. The remnants of the hail melted off the windshield wipers as I went in to my meeting.



-- Alice Parker

Board Notes

Meet the Board

Paul Vasile is a freelance church musician based in NYC and has served on the Melodious Accord Board for almost 7 years. Formerly the Minister of Music at Park Avenue Christian Church in Manhattan, he now works with congregations around the country as an interim/transitional musician, helping to facilitate conversations about music and worship, and providing musical/pastoral leadership in faith communities facing personnel challenges, anxiety, or conflict.



This July, Paul became the Executive Director of Music That Makes Community, a non-profit that offers songleading workshops and resources that enrich and encourage community singing. This fall he will also serve as the interim Seminary Musician at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO.

Paul's first experience of Alice's ear-focused approach to music making was at a Score Study Workshop he attended in the early 2000s.

'I specifically remember Alice asking the organists around the table why we were introducing new hymnody with the organ and not modeling it with our voices. The silence was deafening. I never even imagined that I could or should lead with my voice.

It took time and courage but I slowly began to use her teaching techniques, both with the choir and congregation, and it made a difference. I found congregants appreciated an invitation into the learning process, and we ultimately sang with better style and connection to the text.

Since then, I've tried to bring this element of ear-based teaching into each congregation I've served and in my ongoing consulting work. Alice remains an incredible inspiration and guide. Working with her has shifted my work as a church musician toward the beauty and power of singing (and learning) within community.'

To learn more about Paul's work, check his schedule and see videos of him in action, visit his website, paulvasile.com.

-- Paul Vasile

Editorial

Rhythmic Diction

I'm continually reminded about the pronunciation of words in my work. Recently I heard charming young folk singers performing their own work -- but I couldn't understand much of the text because of careless, mumbled speech patterns. On the other hand, today's trained singers tend to pass over the consonants as if they were a regrettable interruption to the vowels. I know that the vowels carry the singing voice, and that careful attention to the purity of each sound makes for beautiful singing. But consonants supply the color, the emotional content, and even the rhythm. Articulating a T or a K or an S exactly on the beat can propel the next entrance like a drum-beat. And the prolonging of M's and N's, with attention to how much time they may need before the following vowel, adds richness to the tone.

Singing is different from speaking, in that sung words have a measured length for each syllable. Just pronouncing the words carefully is not enough: one must hear exactly where each vowel begins (on the beat), and then whether the adjacent consonants come on, before or after that beat. There are a raft of contradictory rules governing this process, but here I want to work with the way that clear diction enhances the rhythms of the music itself.

Look at these two different notations of the phrase *Come, ye that love the Lord*. First, read aloud in rhythm the words as written under conventional notation. Now look at the second example. It's much harder to read, and still vastly over-simplified in trying to notate where consonants and diphthongs are actually placed. Technically, it is surprisingly difficult for a singer to project 'normal' speech that sounds 'natural' to the listener. (Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra are for me two great models for singing where every word can be understood, yet it sounds completely natural.)

The composer of vocal music also needs to think this way, feeling those sounds traveling through the throat. The best writing allows the text to sound in all its glory. But it's not enough to follow all the rules: the singing can then sound very mannered. The singer needs to want to make the listener understand. The tiniest shifts of vowel color oragogic accent can make a word come alive. Robert Shaw used to say 'Make the word sound like what it means'.

Now try speaking these in the rhythm and tempo of the song, listening for placement of the consonants.

- Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you.
- Swing Low, sweet chariot
- Hark, I hear the harps eternal
 - (I sometimes hear “hawkeye ear tha arpsee ternul”).
- Ride on, King Jesus, No man can–a hinder me
 - (I like to lightly flip the initial R, and emphasize the Ms and Ns throughout.)
- Same Train
 - SA M TRAI N (even 8ths, accenting the 2nd and 4th).

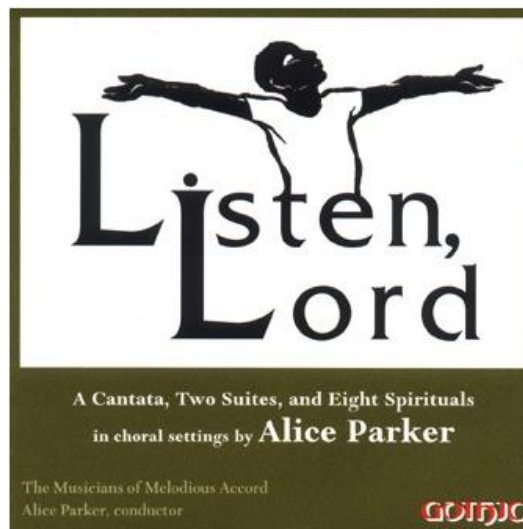
I think we don't realize how sloppy our everyday speech is until we begin to hear and love these distinctions made by tongues and lips and vocal cords. How 'sweet' is that chariot? (Like honey on the tongue? What an amazing adjective to place before that noun.) We are so surrounded by written words that we are dulled by their very profusion. We're mostly taught to read for 'meaning' and 'speed', not for tone of voice, or pauses, or to delight in an explosive final consonant. (In Mr. Shaw's marked score of the Brahms Requiem, he has added, in each voice part, on the precise beat, a large “sts” at the end of each iteration of the phrase “O Lord of Hosts.” We should all be so careful.) We tend to sing all the words in the Hymnal the same way, with no thought of who wrote them – where, and when -- not to mention the different way they would sound if spoken by a child, or a grandparent, or in the King's English or a broad Southern dialect. Like written music, the page gives us no hint of the sound of the 'live' performance. It's not enough to 'speak clearly': we must bring each word alive with loving care.

-- Alice Parker

Shop Window

Listen, Lord

These are not the familiar Spirituals many of us grew up with. Alice has drawn from the wealth of melodies springing from the Black tradition that celebrate the triumphs and tragedies of everyday life. They move from the future (*When Jesus comes*), to death (*Tell 'em I'm gone*), and then to the present (*You can tell the world about this*) -- and that is only the first three! The Cantata *Listen Lord* sets a wonderful poem by James Weldon Johnson based on the cadences of inspired Black preachers. The CD concludes with a group of *Street-Corner Spirituals* that will set your toes tapping. Order several copies from the Melodious Accord Bookstore – they make great gifts.



Click on the cover photo above to order your copy now, and visit the [Melodious Accord Store](#) to see all the recordings and publications that are available.

What's New

Quiet World

Quiet World was commissioned by the Pittsburgh Threshold Choir* and composed with their particular needs in mind. The members of Threshold Choirs sing by request at the bedsides of the seriously ill and dying, working often with Hospice, local hospitals and nursing homes. The choirs usually rehearse together, but then sing in small groups of two to four who can respond to an immediate need. Thus they cannot count on having a particular combination of voice parts on hand. They asked me to write a work that could be performed by one or more singers -- and this is the result.

The words, of my own devising, describe the natural processes of skies and seas in a world quietly fulfilling its own destiny. The music is eight brief pentatonic canons that can be combined in hundreds of ways. Each line is its own piece: when you come to the end, you go back to the beginning to finish, ending at the double bar. The odd marking in the middle shows where the canon begins for that line. Each performance should begin solo or unison, then split into canon with itself or any other line(s). There is no one performance model, and there is no compulsion to sing all the canons at the same time – although of course this is possible.

The music is copyright ©2016, Alice Parker, and may be used by anyone with this printed attribution. The one-page score can be downloaded from our website – [click here!](#) I would appreciate hearing about your experiences with it. Please send your comments to aliceparker@melodiousaccord.org.

*A CD is available from Pittsburgh Threshold Choir at <http://bridgeofvoices.org>; Threshold Choirs can be linked to <http://thresholdchoir.org>.

Composer of the World

Alice conducted a reading of her composition **Composer of the World** at a June meeting of the Choral Director's Consortium of New York City at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The work is an a cappella setting of a sonnet by Gracia Grindal dedicated to the Norwegian composer Nils Henrik Asheim. The image of music being created "out of air and things" is a compelling one, and the music with its framing *Alleluias* soared in the vast spaces of the Cathedral.

-- Alice Parker

Quiet World

Eight Canons to Mix and Match
for Threshold Singing

Alice Parker

A.P.

Slow, steady ♩ = 50

1. **1 Sun**
sun as - cends the sky then sinks down to rest. The

2. **2 Moon**
The moon shows her full face and slow - ly turns a - way.

3. **3 Stars**
Twink - ling, shim - mer - ing, shin - ing, bright con - stel - la - tions of stars pierce the night sky.

4. **4 Springs**
turn as rain. Springs rise from the earth, form trans - par - ent clouds, re -

5. **5 Seeds**
then fade a - way. Seeds hid - den in soil split and grow o - pen in bloom.

6. **6 Winds**
Winds and tides ebb and flow, rock - ing, rock - ing, rock - ing us to sleep.

7. **7 Waters**
shore. Wat - ers move 'round the globe, gath - er - ing, sub - sid - ing, wash - ing up on

8. **8 Woodthrush**
song, call - ing, call - ing. Wood - - thrush sings a plain - tive

Melodious Accord Fellows Programs

Report - Four by Four Summer Seminar



Four hours a day for four days –four adventurous women joined Alice for a long weekend in July, to study the Melodious Accord Hymnal and related music. They met on Thursday night for dinner at Alice’s, then each day for singing and analyzing. The voices combined in a lovely sound, and we never tired of trying songs in differing combinations -- even singing in Church on Sunday morning. It was hard to say goodbye at the end.

For more information on Melodious Accord Fellows programs, click [here](#).

Coming up - Chautauqua in August

While this is not a Melodious Accord Fellows program, this seemed the most appropriate place to give notice of this opportunity to study with Alice, attend a concert of her music, and participate in a SING! Click on the underlined links below to go to the corresponding information page on the Chautauqua Institute's website.



Alice will be at the Chautauqua Institution August 18–21, 2016. She will be lecturing on Composing and Hymnology, and conducting a Concert of her arrangements. She will also comment on the documentary about Robert Shaw that will be shown on Friday and Saturday, and lead a SING at the Sunday evening Sacred Song Service.

Help Support Our Programs

We welcome your interest and your support. Melodious Accord, Inc. is incorporated in the State of New York as a non-profit organization under IRS code 501(c)(3). Contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law.

If you wish to make a contribution you may do so here through PayPal or mail it to:

Melodious Accord, Inc.
P. O. Box 20801
Park West Station
New York, NY 10025-1516

Correspondence

From a participant in the spring workshop in New London, NH:

During one of the hymns, a Spiritual, you somehow gave us the freedom to lift our spirits and voices from the page and sing what we felt in our hearts. It was a moment I won't forget. You said if it doesn't sound right, stop-- and try something else. I felt so alive. I hope in the future I can be that free with my music and feel that same excitement! Thank you for that permission to let out and do something I knew I could do, but never dared -- beyond the shower!

Calendar

Follow Alice Parker on the Move

2016

Aug	17-22	Conference, SING	Chautauqua, NY
Sept	17	Melodious Accord Board Meeting	New York, NY
Oct	14-16	Quilt Project, Concert and SING	Minneapolis, MN
Oct	22	Cantate Chamber Singers, premiere	Bethesda, MD
Oct	24-26	Raising the Song Project	Alexandria, VA
Nov	6-7	College of DuPage, SING, Chorale	Chicago, IL
Nov	20	Mohawk Trail Concerts, SING	Charlemont, MA
Dec	1-4	Lafayette College, commission and performance	Easton, PA

Inquiries and comments are welcome! For information about Fellows Programs, SINGS, Workshops, and all Melodious Accord activities, or to add your name to our mailing list, make address changes, name changes, deletions, etc. contact Kay Holt:

by e-mail at kay@melodiousaccord.org

by telephone or fax at 413-536-1753

or write to her at 34 Ashfield Lane, South Hadley, MA 01075

Go to <http://melodiousaccord.org/contact> to find more contact information.



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