



## Welcome to the Spring 2016 Melodious Accord E-Newsletter!

*This print version was adapted from the e-newsletter distributed on March 31, 2016.*

### 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!

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 upcoming significant birthday with a unique, online birthday celebration: [#Alicels90](#). 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

It's been a crazy winter. Almost no snow at all – my front steps and walk were impassable for a couple of weeks in January, but since have been totally clear. My neighbor plowed the driveway twice, hardly necessary at that. There was one lovely afternoon when I could see crowds



of snowflakes spiraling down – but even that didn't last. The one time it got really cold – twenty below zero! – I was on a Caribbean cruise with much of my family, reveling in the blue of sky and sea, the swell of the waves, the tropic air, shipboard amenities including hot tubs and rum drinks, and a complete change from life in Hawley. It was beautiful, relaxing family time – and then strange to return to spring-like temperatures in Hawley.

Right now, through my windows I see lots of tree trunks with bare branches. I see ground striped with snow where the mowing last Fall left furrows on the hill. I see the stream running clear and cold, with white tops on some of the rocks, and an edging of snow on both sides a good foot above the current water level. That was caused by tumultuous rains that came complete with thunder and lightning, and



would have caused a great flood except that we're on high enough ground to escape it. Salmon Falls in Shelburne Falls looked and felt like Niagara: the water was pouring over with enough force to make the ground tremble, and cold spray high in the air glittering in the sunlight.

We seemed to have April in February. Now I'm predicting three snowstorms in April, to balance the books, with no certainty whatsoever that Nature will heed my words. Who knows when the crocuses will show up, or the birds return? Actually, they've never left. Robins have been spotted in each month, giving talk of global warming a bit of local endorsement. But I am sure that one morning I will awake to the birds singing their praises in the early dawn, and I will know that Spring has indeed come, no matter what the calendar says.

- Alice Parker

Admiring the view from the cruise ship

## Board Notes

### What Happens at Board Meetings?

The Board of Melodious Accord meets three times a year in New York City. We are the grateful guests of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine when we gather in September, January and May. While most of our nineteen members live in the greater New York area, some travel from far-flung places to attend the meetings. (Our two current co-chairs, for example, live in the Washington, D.C. area.)

At our meetings we consider our finances, ever grateful for the contributions that many of you send--funds that allow us to record and perform Alice's work and educate future leaders. We try to be wise with the money you've entrusted us with, so that it will reach its maximum potential. We report to each other on our activities since the last board meeting and make decisions about future projects.

The last item on the agenda is the Artistic Director's report, when Alice comments on her travels and composing. Then we get to sing--the dessert at the end of a full, two-hour meal. Alice brings along interesting music for us to share around the table, instructing us how to get the sound she intended. This is everybody's favorite time of the meeting, singing together, which is what Melodious Accord is all about.  
- Bill Roberts, Co-Chair

### Meet the Board

Marilyn L. Haskel, BME, MM, MA is co-chair of Melodious Accord. She became involved with Melodious Accord after being a composer Fellow in 2010 studying with Alice at her studio in Massachusetts in the height of a beautiful fall season.

Marilyn is a church music professional having served large and small parishes in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Texas, California, and New York. She recently retired as Program Manager for Liturgical Arts and New Initiatives at Trinity Episcopal Church, Wall Street in New York where she was the musician at historic St. Paul's Chapel. She helped develop the creative liturgy there and composed hymns, service music, and choral anthems that have an American sound and style. She also led community sings for several years in the chapel.



Marilyn was consulting editor for music at Church Publishing Incorporated where she produced all music, books and recordings for ten years. She also helped develop the "paperless" music program and its teaching method as a clinician with *Music That Makes Community*. [www.musicthatmakescommunity.org](http://www.musicthatmakescommunity.org)

She is enjoying retirement at her new home near Washington, DC.

### A Fond Farewell

Paula Talayco, the beloved and much respected Office Manager of Melodious Accord, will conclude her service with us in May. For 20 years Paula has kept our books and served our organization in ways far beyond what anyone could have asked. We are grateful for her long years of service, her efficiency and her dedication to Melodious Accord. She loves us, too, but the call of her new role as grandmother beckons enticingly, and she must answer. Many thanks, Paula, and best blessings to you as you take on new challenges.

- Alice Parker

## Editorial

### Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal

This must be the most-performed of all the Shaw/Parker arrangements. Everyone loves it, and audiences all over the world respond to it with fervor. Shaw's recording on the Sing to the Lord album takes it at a quick, joyous tempo, with rhythmic, rejoicing Hallelujahs.

But I look at it very differently now, fifty years later. I certainly can't remember my initial tempo as I wrote the arrangement, but I do know that Mr. Shaw always took faster tempos than I. So perhaps I am reverting to my first idea when I slow down -- but really, what I am doing now is responding to the text. If we truly reflect on the meaning of the words it's not just happy hallelujah all the way through. And the slower tempo gives us much more resonance: there is time for each voice to flower.

In this 'spiritual', the speaker is standing at the bank of the river that separates our lives from Paradise. It is in full flood: "swollen waters, with [its] deep and solemn roar". The singer wants to be with friends on the far side, but is too frightened to step in. Verse 2 is much lighter: the sorrowful soul longs to be transported to the holy city. Verse 3 is more confident: I hear my friends singing "in the mansions of the blest." And as the song becomes more confident, it is as if the song itself carries the singer across the river.

Each verse ends with Hallelujah -- but this is not a mindless cry of joy. Rather, the Hallelujah reflects each verse: timid, pleading, firmer, and finally triumphant. This should be the model for the dynamics of the whole piece: each refrain is louder and more confident than the one before. The song should build to the final shout of joy.

Now the tune: this comes from the shape-note tradition of 19th century American hymnody. This is pioneer, back-woods music, with sturdy tempo and strong rhythms. It should not be shouted all the way through: the verses should convey their text, and the repetitious refrains set up their own responses. The tune itself is pentatonic: there are only five tones heard, and the whole arrangement is built on these. The verse is sung on low pitches, with the Hallelujah soaring up, then descending over almost an octave and a half. Make sure that you can always hear this melody.

And the arrangement: Everyone sings the first verse, in a simple harmonization. The women take the next one, with the men echoing their words. The third verse is sung by the baritones: this should be much firmer, so it is clearly audible. And the 'solo soprano' is being heard from the other side: she should begin very softly, only getting louder in the final phrase.

The Hallelujahs have their own structure. In verse 1, sopranos and tenors sing the unison melody, with the lower voices strongly accented (but not loud) below. (These are like the rhythm section in a jazz band: the word Hallelujah is the jumping off point for syncopated figures.) After verse 2, the soprano and tenor are in a canon at one beat, while the lower voices are much more active, with an accented 'jah' in each bar. Hummed pedals accompany verse 3, with its contrasting baritone verse paired with a soprano refrain, leading into the final choruses. Tenors lead the refrain, with the soprano canon coming a bar later. Basses and altos are also answering back and forth, with more and more complicated rhythms.

The final statement of the refrain reverts to the voicing of verse one, but with the heavy beat of reiterated syllables in the lower voices. The sopranos break free of the melody, climbing up to an A, while the baritones get the final melodic phrase. Don't slow down until the next-to-last measure, and accentuate the 't' of 'great' so that 'I AM' sounds forth in two great chords.

The choirs with whom I have performed this version have all preferred it. The slow building up of sonority



allows not only for a thoughtful meditation on death, but also for a spectacular cry of joy on beholding 'the great I AM'.

- Alice Parker

## Shop Window



### My Love and I

A bit late for Valentine's Day and a bit early for Mothers' Day, this disc of love songs for men's voices may soothe the heart and lighten the mood as we watch for Spring. Among the early arrangements Alice worked on for Robert Shaw was an album of love songs from many countries. Many of these are reinterpreted here by the Musicians of Melodious Accord under Alice's direction. From *Seeing Nellie Home* to *Vive L'Amour*, the voices ring out with tender or vigorous tones, carrying a bouquet of melodies to anyone who loves or is loved. Order a copy from the Melodious Accord Bookstore, and brighten your -- or someone else's -- day!

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

### Festival in Minneapolis

The choirs of The Basilica of Saint Mary, Central Lutheran church, Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, Plymouth Congregational Church and Westminster Presbyterian Church joined together in a Festival Concert honoring Alice Parker on March 5, 2016. Each choir sang one of her works conducted by their own leader, and then sang together three favorite anthems under Alice's direction: *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship, Wondrous Love*, and *Sing to the Lord*. The singing was of a high order, indeed, and the large audience enjoyed the whole program. Alice was particularly pleased to hear sensitive performances of two of her newer compositions: *Beauty and Blessing* (2009) and *Wilbur: Psalm* (2010), as well as *Were You There, That Bright Shining World*, and *Come and Taste*.

## Melodious Accord Fellows Programs

### Report - January in New York



More birthday fun in January!

Sixteen Fellows gathered at St Ignatius Church in New York City for this year's score study. Eight had attended previous sessions, four enough to be called 'regulars'! One came from Canada, four from Texas, and others scattered over the Midwest and the Northeast.

"Can we reconstruct the composer's process in writing this work?" is the question we often begin with in our discussions. Of course with long-dead composers we can only speculate, but with my own works, I'm happy to respond to any questions. This year, we looked

at two related Bach works, *Cantata 187*, and the *Missa Brevis in G minor*, which use much of the same musical materials. We could see how the text of this lovely 'green' cantata is derived from Biblical verses about the bounties of nature, and how amazingly the same music could accommodate the words of the Mass.

We also read through and discussed eight of my recent works, so that I could go into detail about my methods of working, and in what seeming order the notes accumulate on the page. 'Mining' the text gives me ideas for musical phrases and sounds: that should do the same for the re-creator. In our final session we concentrated on the *Melodious Accord Hymnal*, and found that very meaningful discussions of text and tune, form and color, dance and song could arise from these brief examples.



The 2016 January in NY Fellows

## **Summer and Fall programs**

We regret to announce that the Melody Studies and Composers Fellows programs will not be offered this year, due to Alice's commitments away from Hawley.

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

## **Correspondence**

### **From an article celebrating one of our co-chairs:**

In this winter's edition of Trinity News, the magazine of Trinity Wall Street, there is a full page article about Marilyn Haskel (co-chair of the Board of Melodious Accord) on her retirement from almost ten years of serving there as Program Manager, Editor, Worship Leader and Song Leader. She listed what she had learned: "Singing together, especially in church, shapes faith, heals brokenness, transforms lives, and renews peace. . . Over the years I've learned that many different kinds of music can be church music: jazz, spirituals, laments, cantatas, praying songs, private songs and group songs, clapping songs, stomping songs, organ and instrumental music. . . When we hear someone make a mistake or sing off-key, we can forgive and carry on because the song belongs to all of us. Alice Parker said: 'If we're arguing with our rational minds, we're talking about that which divides us. If we're singing with our intuitive minds, we're concentrating on what unites us.' . . . The sound of a roomful of people singing enthusiastically in praise of God is just about the best there is." Thank you, Marilyn, and we wish you the best in this new phase of your life!

## **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 through PayPal on our website or mail it to:

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

## Calendar

### Follow Alice Parker on the Move

#### 2016

March	4-6	Alice Parker Festival	Minneapolis, MN
April	4-7	MA Recording Session - Emily Dickinson Songs	New York, NY
	15-17	WomenSing	Orinda, CA
	30 -		
May	1	Episcopal Church of St. Andrew	New London, NH
May	7	Melodious Accord Board Meeting	New York, NY
	23-26	Threshold Singers Conference	Sonoma, CA
June	5	Shape-Note Sing	Hawley, MA
	13	Choral Consortium, Kent Tritle	New York, NY
	15-18	Chorus America Conference	Cincinnati, OH
July	15-16	John Feierabend Conference	Wenham, MA
	17-23	MCDA Conference, Arranging, SING	Jefferson City, MO
Aug	17-22	Conference, SING	Chautauqua, NY

For information about any of these events, write to [kay@melodiousaccord.org](mailto:kay@melodiousaccord.org), or call 413-536-1753.

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