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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: #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.

THE VIEW FROM HERE



THIS HAS BEEN SOME WINTER. We've had unbroken snow cover for four months, with no discernable January thaw, and an unrelenting February series of storms. Now, at the end of March, the temperature is still in the low teens, and the sap just began to rise in the maples, three weeks late.

Out the window, I see diminishing ridges of snow left by the plows, and bare trees silhouetted against a brilliant blue sky. Big footprints through the snow in the yard track the passage of syrupers and deliverymen. The road itself is clear, though full of odd patches of ice and much gravel. Even in the cold, the sun on the roof succeeds in melting away the snow that has lasted -- and the huge icicles that hung from the eaves are now entirely gone. (Everyone had icicles this winter.) There's no sign of anything green or even of swelling buds on the trees -- the rhododendron in the yard looks as if someone had attacked it with a curling iron. Is there any chance that March will go out like a lamb? It will have to change its behavior soon!

And to end on a sweet note -- the new syrup is particularly delicious. Maybe it tastes special because we need it right now, as comfort food spanning winter's retreat and spring's first tentative showing. -- Alice Parker

BOARD NOTES



RAISING THE SONG: CREATING COMMUNITIES THAT SING!

“Raising the Song: Creating Communities that Sing!” exclaims the name of an upcoming symposium on the leadership of informal song. Participants will gather in Alexandria, VA in October of this year to work with Alice Parker, Ysaÿe Barnwell (Sweet Honey in the Rock, emerita) and Marilyn Haskel (Trinity, Wall Street; Music that Makes Community). Each of these leaders is well-known for her ability to inspire and instruct people of all ages and all levels of musical ability to make music spontaneously, enthusiastically, and fearlessly.

The symposium began as a passion of the Board of Melodious Accord, who asked Alice to teach the genius of her SINGS! so that other people can step into similar leadership. In the planning stages, the symposium expanded to include two other leaders of informal song. The three leaders share a common philosophy, and yet each has her own particular style of engaging people in song.

In December 2014 the three women met on the campus of Virginia Theological Seminary (Episcopal) in Alexandria to plan the symposium. They were assisted by facilitators Bill Roberts, professor of church music at the seminary, and Ellen Johnston, coordinating consultant of the Center for Liturgy and Music. These planning sessions were filled with a joyful mixture of laughter, serious discussion, and impromptu singing.

Twelve participants will be invited to come to Alexandria to be taught by Alice, Ysaÿe, and Marilyn. The three symposium leaders suggested names of educators, community chorus directors, and church musicians. From a very long list, a diverse population of twelve people will be brought to Alexandria, all expenses paid, to refine their skills at leadership of song. Though matriculation in the symposium is limited to the twelve invitees, there will also be an evening community sing that includes anyone who wishes to attend. The three symposium leaders will engage with participants in the community sing, which promises to be an enthusiastic, engaging experience.

Melodious Accord trustee John Lundsten pledged a generous grant to help get the symposium mounted. Another grant application is pending. Monies from these benefactors will make possible the participants' coming to the symposium at no expense. Those who are trained are expected to begin a new initiative, based on their learning, and to report a year later how they implemented the new-found techniques on their own home turf.

Facilitators are grateful to the Board for imagining this symposium, providing funding through a trustee's grant, and especially to Alice, Ysaÿe, and Marilyn for making these dates available in their calendars.

The song goes on, generation after generation, as new people learn the art of “Raising the Song: Creating Communities that Sing!” – *William Bradley Roberts, Co-Chair, Melodious Accord Board*

EDITORIAL

HOW TO JUDGE COMPOSITIONS

I just received a new collection of hymn texts, carols and poems from Thomas Troeger, entitled Song that Blesses Earth (© Oxford University Press 2015). This professor-poet, this weaver of science and art, this flutist-singer, gives us meditations on Christmas and Easter, the recognition of Christ as the center of our physical as well as spiritual world – and love poems. I will be exploring these for years to come, finding rich stores of melody and meaning therein.

But he has given me another gift as well. In his lengthy and provocative Afterword, he describes the basic assumptions that guide both his own writing and his judgment of other texts. As a professor at the Yale School of Sacred Music he realizes that “writing and analyzing hymns is a way of doing theology that is different from academic theology but every bit as essential to the life blood of the church.” In Troeger’s exploration of his own process I found many principles common to my own practice, which I had never thought to examine in this light. What follows is an attempt to link his thoughts about texts to my thoughts about their musical settings.

His first requirement is surely mine: Euphony. Does it flow smoothly? Delight the ear? Bear repetition? Under this heading come some caveats: Does it avoid overused idioms? Use simple speech without descending to slang? Is it vivid and memorable? That’s a tall order, in both music and words. I interpret this as a balance between the rhythmic and tonal aspects of the tune that immediately attracts the ear.

Next he asks for a sensitive use of meter, avoiding filler words and finding natural stresses. Since I base my rhythmic design on that of the text, my structure depends on this stability, which must feel natural and unforced. The relationship of text and tune is paramount: both must arise from the same source and flower in their different designs.

“Does the hymn take us somewhere,” he asks, “gathering momentum from stanza to stanza?” That is another big requirement, which is easier to sense in the words than in the tune. The closest I can come in the music is that the tune so adroitly manages the flow of energy within its boundaries that we can delight in hearing it repeated (and subtly changed) in succeeding verses. The tune meets the needs of every verse, not just one.

His final thoughts are primarily theological, and therefore less applicable to a musical reading. But one opens an interesting window: are we aware of cultural and religious diversity? We are living in an age of world-wide melodic abundance. The tune writer who is unaware of African and Latino rhythms, or Oriental modes and tonal subtleties is using a limited palette indeed.

The basic challenge for the artist is the same in every age: can you create something new out of the materials available? It can’t result from following rules, or from retreading timeworn paths, or from ignoring history. It comes only from an immersion in the sounds, practices and forms of your own medium, blessed with the inspiration that comes from some – well, let’s call it ‘theological’ – source. There. I’ve ended up, as I should, in the place where Tom Troeger lives.

- Alice Parker

SHOP WINDOW



Where Heart and Heaven Meet

Hymns of
Alice Parker
from the
Melodious Accord
Hymnal

WHERE HEART AND HEAVEN MEET

Poet Thomas Troeger invites us to the place “where all directions merge, where heart and heaven meet”. This collection of hymns exists to honor the poets who bring us by varied routes to this center. Alice directed the Musicians of Melodious Accord in this recording of her settings of texts by Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts and contemporary poets Susan Cherwien, Carl P. Daw, Fred Pratt Green, Jean Janzen, Jeffery Rowthorn, Amy Jo Schoonover, John Thornburg, Thomas Troeger and Brian Wren. This CD is the perfect companion to The Melodious Accord Hymnal.

Visit the Melodious Accord Store online at <http://shop.melodiousaccord.org/index.php> to order this CD and to see all the recordings and publications that are available.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

DICKINSON: THE DEFINITION OF BEAUTY

These four brief settings of Emily Dickinson poems will challenge and delight choirs looking for unusual repertoire. Composed by Alice Parker for women's voices, SSAA, a cappella. Published by Walton Music (HL00144510, WW1547)

HARD TIMES COME AGAIN NO MORE

This gentle setting brings to life one of the sweetest of Stephen Foster's 19th century melodies. Arranged by Alice Parker for men's voices TTBB with piano or guitar accompaniment. Published by Walton Music (HL00144509, WW1546)

COO-COO BIRD

This blues-y lament was premiered by 27 youth choruses through a Chorus America program. Arranged by Alice Parker for women's voices SSAA with piano accompaniment. Published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing, Inc. (SBMP 1222)

CALENDAR

Follow Alice Parker on the Move

2015

April	12	SING!	Amherst, MA
May	2	Melodious Accord Board Meeting	New York, NY
	28	Premiere! Heavenly Hurt: Songs of Love and Loss	Charlemont, MA
	29	Performed by the Da Camera Singers	Greenfield, MA
	30		Northampton, MA
June	7	Shape Note SING!	East Hawley, MA
	17	Chorus America Conference	Boston, MA
July	12-16	Hymn Society Conference	New Orleans, LA
	26-31	MA Fellows: Melody Studies	Hawley, MA
August	11-13	Threshold Choirs Retreat	Plainfield, MA
September	19	Melodious Accord Board Meeting	New York, NY
	27-	MA Fellows: Composers Workshop	Hawley, MA
October	1		
	25-28	RAISING THE SONG! Symposium on Song Leading	Alexandria, VA
	31	Workshop at Westminster Choir College	Princeton, NJ

MELODIOUS ACCORD FELLOWS PROGRAMS

January in New York - Report

This year we gathered in St James Chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City for our 29th Annual Spirituals SING in tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The SINGS began at the Cathedral in 1986, and it was a great pleasure to return. Director of Cathedral Music and Organist Kent Tritle joined a reverent and enthusiastic group in singing these great melodies, which soared into the echoing spaces. Pamela Warrick Smith alternated with Alice in leading familiar and unfamiliar tunes, while Charles Brown read inspiring words from Dr. King.

The next day we moved across town to St. Ignatius Loyola Church for three days of intensive Score Study. The Mendelssohn St. Paul was unfamiliar to most of us, and a worthy object of our study, full of wonderful music. In exploring Arvo Pärt's music we found a superb musical intelligence at work in a less-familiar idiom. And to bring the study home, we looked at several of the Parker-Shaw arrangements and Alice explained how they came into being.

Melody Studies: July 26-Aug. 1, 2015

Join Alice at her home in Hawley, Massachusetts for a week of intensive singing and analysis of many genres of melody. There is time for much individual interchange as well as perfecting skills as performers and improvisers. Reconnect with your own sound, which is the foundation of music-making. Refresh your own enjoyment of choral sound, and listen with new ears.

CORRESPONDENCE

Fellow Todd Jolly, on Alice's teaching Methods

During the eight years since my first class with Alice, I have very gradually incorporated her methods with my students. Now I wonder why I went so slowly. It has been like magic. This winter, each of my fourth grade classes composed a poem about units they studied, starting with a brainstorming session consisting of vibrant images about the various subjects. We worked out the rhythms, pitches, and stresses of the phrases, and finally become proficient readers of the poems by speaking them out loud. Once we could read the verses well, the melodies came almost instantaneously. After singing our poetry and choosing one of the melodies, I entered it into Sibelius and projected it for everyone to see. We looked for rests, where we might put in an echo. What instrument should sing or play the echo? What note might work as a drone? You three, grab your alto recorders. You two, get down here and play the metallophone part. Having written it, the students understand the song, and the musical goals to be met by singing and playing it. The written score serves as a reminder. No more tedium. No more frantic race against the calendar to get it ready for Grandparents Day. They are ready two months early!

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 online (go to <http://melodiousaccord.org/contribute> and click on the Donate button), or you can mail a check to our office in New York.

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Please visit Melodious Accord online to stay current with Alice's new publications, photos and videos, and information about upcoming workshops and projects. For those on Facebook and Twitter, please 'like' and follow our new pages.

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