

## NEWSLETTER

MELODIOUS ACCORD



WINTER 2018, VOL. 33, NO. 1

## WELCOME TO THE WINTER 2018 MELODIOUS ACCORD E-NEWSLETTER!

*This print version was adapted from the e-newsletter distributed on March 3, 2018.*

### 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.**

### HEARTFELT THANKS



*We wish to thank the many generous contributors to our Fall Campaign. Each one of you is dear to us. We depend on contributions to sustain our organization, and prepare us for the opportunities ahead. Many of you have given each year since our beginnings in 1985: may you be blessed with showers of choral notes!*

### THE VIEW FROM HERE

#### WINTER WHITE

In the last issue we had a lovely photo of our hills at full summer. Now they are just the opposite, clad in their winter white, every tree outlined clear and black. We can see things that were hidden behind the summer leaves: the white of birches and black shadows of evergreens; the brook tracing its path down the folds of the hills, the sun rolling along the southern horizon, skimming over the treetops.

We've all shared the unseemly cold of the Christmas and New Year's season. No one here can remember a whole week of sub-zero temperatures. Blizzards, yes, with whirling winds and face-biting ice -- but only for a couple of days. And ice storms that arrive overnight with our usual winter levels of under-and-above freezing, working incredible damage on trees (still visible from 2011!) But not this bone-chilling, flesh-insulting cold that makes mockery of heating systems in old farmhouses. I rejoice in the friendly glow of the wood stove, but one does have continually to feed it. It rewards with companionship for eye, ear and nose, creating an oasis of warmth that invites one to linger near. Tea or cocoa, a good book and a lap robe (over two or three layers of wool clothing) spell mid-winter comfort for an old body.

I forget how wide the roads seem when the plows have pushed the snow back from the verge, leaving a broad white expanse. I forget how the brook changes every day, alternating between being totally hidden under ice topped with new snow, to totally exposed and roaring with new melt. Mostly, odd pockets of white-over-dark expose the flow beneath, jamming together in ragged profusion at any obstacle. Or even, in the quieter pools along the Deerfield (larger and slower than my Singing Brook), disclosing ice-in-creation: a transparent skin of crystals floating above the cold water. I wonder how each molecule makes the decision: do I change right now? Or wait for others around me? It's like watching clouds dissolve in the sky (the same molecule asking: do I dissolve right now, while she's watching?)

We had a gorgeous snowstorm in mid-December. It fell quietly all night and all day. I went out and shoveled after each accumulation of three inches or so. It was like having a cocoon woven around the house: incredible quiet (there was no wind. Just ceaseless falling, falling; familiar shapes of branches, bushes and stones covered in white pillows. No traffic, no planes, no people. One wanted to hibernate: snuggle into it, and sleep.

Fortunately, the phone rings, the plow comes by with cheerful roar and clank, and eventually the sun comes out on a world transformed, stunning the eye with glitter. Snow gets refreshed every few days until the sun gains enough authority to turn everything to slush. But that's another story. For the moment I'll stay in hibernation, surrendering to the winter white.



-- Alice Parker

## BOARD NOTES

The January 13, 2018 Board meeting was the first meeting where I was privileged to serve as the newly-elected Chair. At that meeting we welcomed four new Board Members; two New Yorkers, Tami Petty and Sarah Griffiths, Victoria Shields from Connecticut, and Larry Brandts, a Minnesotan. All four are accomplished and dedicated singers; they fill the void left by several long-time board members whose resignations we regretfully accepted – with many thanks for their service – as they moved on to other pursuits: Dan Bergfeld, Ellen Sisson and Marilyn Haskel. A change of officers also occurred as Michèle Eaton passed the torch of the Treasurer position to Larry Brandts. Michèle's work over the past two years has brought our bookkeeping into the 21st century, for which we are exceedingly grateful! We also feel fortunate to welcome Larry, an experienced financial manager and accountant, to this position.

In addition to supporting Alice's unique programs of seminars and SING groups in the coming year, the Board is considering new efforts to expand Melodious Accord's outreach. In a recent note to the Board, Alice wrote: "We are a unique organization in our aims; we have a unified view of the whole process of music-making that can include concerts, recordings, SINGS, educational activities (workshops, seminars, residencies, lectures) at every level from school through post-professional, and the publication of our Newsletter." We have begun work to update our website and are re-examining our vision as we consider how to approach our next decade of spreading the joy of group singing and affirming the communicative power of melody.

We are planning now for our next Board meeting on April 28 in New York City, and I would like to encourage readers to please provide us with comments, questions, suggestions for future initiatives, or simply anecdotes from your own personal or professional interaction with Alice and/or Melodious Accord. Singing is fun, it's healing, it's inspirational and it needs all of us pulling together to spread its joys. Let us hear from you, please.

-- John Lundsten, Chair

## MEET THE BOARD



Charles S. Brown

Charles Samuel Brown, bass/baritone, graduated from the University of Michigan with a Master's degree in Voice Performance. Over the past forty years, he has combined a busy teaching career with solo and professional choral singing.

He sang the role of King Balthazar in the Polish premiere of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1980) in Warsaw, and he was a member of the highly acclaimed chorus of the first production of *Porgy and Bess* (1984) at the Metropolitan Opera. He has sung back-up vocals with Ray Charles, Quincy Jones, and with the digital image of Elvis Presley at Radio City Music Hall. His opera roles include Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Dr. Bartolo in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Frank in Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*. Most recently he sang the role of Judge Thomas Crain in the first performances of Leonard Lehrman's opera *The Triangle Fire* (2017).

He has taught at Lincoln University of Missouri, the Borough of Manhattan Community College and in the New York City Public Schools. He is also a composer and arranger with several solo and choral editions in publication.

Charles says: *I first met Alice at the time when Pamela Warrick-Smith was singing the solo part of Alice's cantata Listen, Lord (2004). I accompanied Pamela to the rehearsal before the performance, was introduced to Alice, and after the performance was invited with Pamela and some others to Alice's home for refreshments. Later on, Pamela asked me to*

arrange the spiritual "Hallelujah" for her voice with a cappella chorus. Apparently, Alice was looking for some new material in that genre and Pamela suggested me. I submitted five spiritual arrangements for Alice's examination and she chose all five for Melodious Accord to perform. Later on, her recommendations succeeded in finding publishers for them all.

Alice says: Charles's arrangements were wonderful, much more individual and zany than mine, and beautifully singable. I'm glad they all got published! Besides his continued contributions as a board member, Charles is the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King at all of our January SINGS. He chooses selections from Dr. King's writings, always finding words which feel as if they were written to respond to today's needs. The readings, in his resonant baritone voice, add immeasurably to the singing of Spirituals.

## EDITORIAL



Alice directs an impromptu bell choir with friends.

## TURNING POINTS

There are times in one's life when it's helpful to stop and look back, and then turn around to survey the future and see how the two are connected. I have certainly arrived at one of these points, and want to share my thoughts with you.

Melodious Accord has been a large focus of my life since its founding in 1985. The name itself reflects my realization that Melody, of all the facets of the musical arts, is where my passion lies. And 'Accord' is what happens when we sing well together: that wonderful feeling of losing one's self in the song, uniting with everyone else in the room in a way unique to choral singing. The name itself comes from a wonderful hymn by James Montgomery based on Psalm 100, with the line: "His praise with melodious accordance prolong". I used Melodious Accord first as the title for a cantata written in 1974, which includes a setting of Montgomery's hymn.

Starting an organization which is based on singing together but not primarily a chorus is a strange idea. It stemmed from my observation, in traveling around the country, that people were not singing 'for fun' as families and friends had done in my childhood. The common repertoire of folksongs, children's ditties and hymns that had formed a bond between the generations had been discarded in favor of widely promoted 'new' folksongs and 'popular' tunes. Music had been commercialized and people were divided by age and preference into 'markets'.

Furthermore, music teachers were instructed that learning to read music was the most important thing they could teach. So they turned to instructional models that again ignored true folksongs for exercises that stressed fidelity to the page. So, if you couldn't read music, you were out of it. And, I discovered with my own grandchildren, there was little singing in the primary classroom at all: mostly learning to read with instruments. What a loss!

For the past thirty-two years, we have put our energies into concerts, recordings, Fellowships, seminars, sponsoring my teaching and performing engagements, publishing the Newsletter and nourishing our growing list of contributors and friends. The SINGS were an important part of this work: in some ways I think they are the most important part -- just so people can recapture that joy in singing that should be part of our musical inheritance. Many of these activities have depended on my presence: but my energies are declining and I won't be here forever. What can Melodious Accord do in my absence? Certainly, encouraging group singing 'for fun' is possible, as differentiated from reading through printed music. Surely, recovering the ability to learn 'by ear', and realizing the power of true folksong are both worthy objectives. Could we set up a registry where people report and describe these gatherings? And perhaps we might articulate some guidelines for SINGS, and recognize particularly interesting events? If you have thoughts, please share them with us - click on the blue bar below to send an email.

Melodious Accord will undoubtedly continue some of its ongoing programs, and perhaps find new ones that fulfill our mission to "draw composers, performers and listeners into a creative dialogue about music-making." Singing is for all of us, as human beings. How can we encourage its use to bring us together in these fractious times, to set up sounds of hope and joy, affirming all that is best in the human spirit? We surely need this, here and now.

-- Alice Parker

## SHOP WINDOW



## HEAVENLY HURT

A lifetime's love of Emily Dickinson's poems inspired this newest CD from Alice Parker and the Musicians of Melodious Accord. A cantata, two song cycles and five choral suites offer a varied yet intimate overview of both composer and poet.

Heavenly Hurt: Songs of Love and Loss is a miniature requiem, featuring cellist Eugene Friesen and our superb chamber chorus. Echoes from the Hills features soprano Lucy Shelton and chamber orchestra; Dickinson: On Recollecting is performed by soprano Sarah Griffiths and pianist Paul Vasile. The suites include two for women's voices: The Definition of Beauty and On Nature; and three for mixed voices: An Easter Triptych, An Exultation of Birds and Three Seas.

The recording was made in New York in the spring of 2017, and is released by Gothic Recordings (G-49310), with a running time of 66:20. The publicity materials include this paragraph: "In our time, there has been no greater advocate for singing than Alice Parker. Recipient of six honorary doctorates and the Smith College Medal, Parker has widely influenced choral music in America as a composer, conductor and teacher."

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

### NEW PUBLICATIONS

#### ***The Composer of the World - an anthem for mixed chorus setting a poem by Gracia Grindal.***

Grindal's sonnet is dedicated to Norwegian composer Nils Henrik Asheim, but draws a larger parallel: "He makes music out of air then things, And time. . ." The quiet music, framed by Alleluias, is a meditation on creative power, the wonders inside everything "ordinary". Our "stone deaf ears" should be awakened as we sing and listen.

Composer of the World SATB a cappella Text: Gracia Grindal 4'35" 2015 E. C. Schirmer 8172

#### ***Trust and Kindness - an anthem to a Biblical text drawn from Psalm 31.***

The prayerful opening and closing sections ("In you, O Lord, we put our trust") enclose a lively, almost jazzy central dance ("We will be glad and rejoice.")

Trust and Kindness SATB, organ Text: Psalm 31 adapt. A.P. 4'53" 2015 Morningstar 50-8925

#### ***Singing at Dawn - a song cycle for Soprano to poems of Carol Purington.***

The evocative haiku poems are in the voice of a Native American woman living long ago in the hills of western Massachusetts. Her life cycle goes from childhood to the dedication of a grandchild, the voice and flute interweaving melodies over the soft woodland sounds of rattles and hand drums. The audience was spellbound at the first performance.

Singing at Dawn Soprano, Flute, Percussion Text: Carol Purington 21'22" 2016 E. C. Schirmer 8173

***Yerushalayim Shel Zahav - a song by Naomi Shemer, arranged for men's choir with Baritone solo.***

Shemer (1930-2004) wrote what feels like an old, minor folk song in praise of the city of "Jerusalem, of gold and bronze and light." The four verses in Hebrew trace its history from ancient days through turbulent history to a new flowering, and the melody evokes the passionate emotions which it inspires.

Yerushalayim Shel Zahav TTBB a cappella, Baritone solo Text: N Shemer 6'30" 2016 Galaxy 1.3428

**ALICE'S TRAVELS - FALL 2017**

September:

Boston, MA - A 9/11 Sing with AGO Boston: Hymns of Terror and Comfort.

New York City - A return to Juilliard after seventy years, invited by a student group interested in how graduates have made their living in music.

Singers Glen, VA - a trip to hear her opera Singers Glen well performed by an amateur group.

October:

Natick, MA - A service at Christ Lutheran Church encouraging congregational singing, hosted by Tom Berryman, .

November:

Brunswick, ME - A folksong lecture at Midcoast Senior College, hosted by Stuart Gillespie, and a SING at the Bowdoin College Chapel, hosted by Delmar Small.

Boston, MA - A visit to the Boston University School of Law, discussing musical copyrights with a class taught by Prof. Wendy Gordon. [She was thanked for 'enlivening a usually drab section of the law'.]

**TEACHING TEACHERS**

Early in December, Alice met with 80+ music educators at Carnegie Hall in New York City who participate in a year-long enrichment program there. We sat in a large circle in a window-walled space, where we could watch snow drifting down outside. She began with the briefest of introductions, simply singing the opening of O Shenandoah, inviting them to join her. They did, and in a very short time they were making wonderful music together. That was the pattern for the whole day: listen, sing, improvise, with a minimum of speaking. Alice taught them to have a point of view about the melody that was completely different from what the page seemed to demand: trust your ears to find a sound that frees the song to resonate. Folk songs are drastically limited within notation; one can't find the truth in a page of written notes. The class was deeply involved in releasing the song in this way -- only voices (no piano), expressive melody, and possibilities for vocal answers to that melody. A half-hour of discussion at the end brought many questions about teaching 'by ear', and appreciation for the ease of making music in this way.

-- Alice Parker

## MELODIOUS ACCORD FELLOWS PROGRAMS

### SEMINARS IN HAWLEY

If you want to participate in intensive study for three days at Alice's home, write and tell us what you have in mind. Send your contact information, educational and professional experience, focus for this Seminar (melody studies, song leading, composing, teaching. etc.), and possible dates that would work for you.

For more information, or to arrange a seminar, email Kay Holt at [kay@melodiousaccord.org](mailto:kay@melodiousaccord.org), or call 413-536-1753.

### REPORT - SINGING AND SCORE STUDY IN NEW YORK

St James's Chapel at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine rang with the sound of Spirituals on Sunday, January 14th. More than 100 people gathered to sing in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., uniting their voices in memory of the leader slain fifty years ago. His words as read by Charles S. Brown spoke directly to us, fueling our courage for the days ahead. For the next three days a smaller group studied scores by Schütz, Britten and Parker, attempting to conjure appropriate sound from the written pages. What had the composer heard? What exactly does the page transmit? We spent much time singing from the Melodious Accord Hymnal, searching for answers to these and other questions. We are grateful to Kent Tritle and the Cathedral for opening these beautiful spaces to us.



Seven of the ten participants in the Score Study Seminar in January were on hand for this picture with Alice.



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Cleaning out her Fellowship files, Alice found this inspired response to a workshop in 2001 from Kate Sullivan:

Miss Parker learned from Robert Shaw  
to write a song without a flaw,  
No extra notes to cause "ba-dumps"  
No homeless tones in silly clumps.  
Alice says "Now here's the thing.  
Just write what's beautiful to sing.  
Play it straight, no curlicues.  
Choose simple when you have to choose."  
So simple, straight, my song will rise  
if I can keep it Alice-ized.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FROM OUR READERS:

Notes from Jim in Wisconsin:

I remember your writing my 3rd grade class in December 1983 that "the song itself seems to gather energy like a bicycle going downhill." I've been quoting that ever since.

I think you are onto something with "The closer the creator of the work is to the laws of nature, the more permanent the structure will be." How often we choral directors turn to nature analogies to get the sound from the choir: waves, tornados, clear sky.

From Sarah in Tennessee:

I'd like to know how to provide SING opportunities in my own community. . . We have so little singing that isn't directly connected to academic or church performance. [I'd like to start] family events in the evening, to connect the parents and children in the same songs. . .

From Andy, after a Seminar:

[What you teach] is more of an approach to music, than a formula. I remember: Chanting the text, separating the rhythm from the notes. The importance of TEXT: everything streams from that. Simplicity. Tuning. Our responsibility to the SOUL of the piece. Sharing it with others and each other. The importance of listening.

## PLEASE SEND PROGRAMS!

We actively collect programs from performances of Alice's work, so if you are presenting an Alice Parker arrangement or composition, please put a program in the mail to us at our New York address (see below) – or scan it and send via email to [kay@melodiousaccord.org](mailto:kay@melodiousaccord.org).

Why do we do this? It's not just a feel-good exercise on our part (though we do love to hear about all these performances). The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers ([ASCAP](http://www.ascap.com)) pays royalties to composers based on performances of their work each year. ASCAP monitors concerts at major venues, but many performances of Alice's works take place at churches, schools, colleges, and concert halls that are not monitored; thus, the only way that Alice can get credit for those performances is if we send ASCAP the programs.

A printed program is best, but if that's not available, please send us written notification, including the following details on the performance:

Date of the performance

Venue (concert hall, place of worship, auditorium, etc.), City and State

Name of performing group

Title(s) of the piece(s) performed

## THOUGHTS? QUESTIONS? WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Let us know how Alice's work has influenced you. Send a question, or suggest a topic you'd like Alice to address in her editorial. And let us know if you are searching for copies of Alice's music; we'll be glad to hunt them down for you.

## 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.

Remember that your contributions are always appreciated and put to good use at Melodious Accord. For the long term, gifts of stocks or bonds are welcome.

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

### 2018

Mar	13-15	Seminar 1 - Choral Conducting	Hawley, MA
Apr	3-5	Seminar 2 - Composition and Teaching	Hawley, MA
	28	Melodious Accord Board Meeting	New York, NY
May	1-3	Seminar 3 - Song Leading	Philadelphia, PA
June	20-24	Granddaughter wedding	Cancun, Mexico
	29-30	Alison Seaton -- dissertation conference	Hawley, MA
Aug	4	Emily Dickinson International Society - Lecture	Amherst, MA
Sep	15	Melodious Accord Board Meeting	New York, NY
	22	Granddaughter wedding	Richmond, VA
Oct	24-27	Song Leading Conference at Eden Seminary, with Paul Vasile	St. Louis, MO
Nov	17-18	Goshen Community Chorus - Melodious Accord perf.	Goshen, IN

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

Copyright © 2018 Melodious Accord, Inc, All rights reserved.

You are receiving this E-Newsletter from Melodious Accord because you opted in at our website.

Our mailing address is:

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



## CONTENTS

Welcome to the Winter 2018 Melodious Accord E-Newsletter! .....	1
Statement of Purpose .....	1
Heartfelt Thanks.....	1
The View from Here .....	1
Winter White .....	1
Board Notes .....	2
Meet the Board.....	3
Editorial .....	4
Turning Points .....	4
Shop Window .....	5
Heavenly Hurt .....	6
What's New.....	6
New Publications.....	6
Alice's Travels - Fall 2017 .....	7
Teaching Teachers.....	7
Melodious Accord Fellows Programs.....	8
Seminars in Hawley.....	8
Report - Singing and Score Study in New York .....	8
From the archives .....	9
Correspondence .....	9
From Our Readers:.....	9
Please Send Programs!.....	10
Thoughts? Questions? We would love to hear from you!.....	10
Help Support Our Programs.....	10
Calendar .....	11
Follow Alice Parker on the Move .....	11