



# Downers Grove Choral Society

## #17 DR. ROBERT HOLST'S RETIREMENT CHILDREN'S MUSIC AWARD WINNERS



May 1, 2011 was a sad day for the DGCS. It was also a joyous day.

It was a sad day that we performed in concert for the last time under the direction of Dr. Robert Holst. Dr. Holst led the chorus for the last 19 years, and his dedication to making beautiful music challenged the chorus, which is now known to the community as a cultural gem.

It was a joyous day that we honored Dr. Holst for all his accomplishments in a concert that included the glorious *Requiem* of Mozart, the joyous *Choral Fantasy* of Beethoven, and a haunting work commissioned in Dr. Holst's honor, *As Rivers Seek the Sea*, by Robert Convery. Chorus, orchestra, and audience were all smiles after the outstanding performance! It was one of those exceptional days.

The event was also a reunion of sorts, as former singers returned to sing one last time under Bob's direction. Some came, even from great distances, to join the audience. Others honored Bob by contributing to the commission of the work by Robert Convery, and to hear its premier performance. The piano soloist, Jeff Panko, has accompanied the chorus for the past 9 years, and has worked closely with Bob. Not only Bob's chorus family, but his personal family joined the event: wife Gwen sang in the chorus, niece Martha Guth was the soprano soloist, Bob's daughter and other family members were in the audience. The feeling of "family" prevailed through the concert and the dinner that followed, including the youngest member, Sebastian, Martha Guth's 8-month old son, who charmed all present.

At the dinner, the chorus and family gathered to sing a version of "Thanks for the Memories", with personalized text by alto Alison Bleick, and gifts included a scrapbook of memories and an engraved clock to add to the maestro's collection. It was a time for sharing many memories. Memories like the time the lights went out during the program, and Bob had to continue to conduct the movement in the dark. Somehow we never missed a beat! And when the lights were restored, and the next movement was sung, ironically it was "Lux Aeterna" – eternal light!





During his tenure with the chorus, Dr. Holst's artistic vision led to the introduction of many works by great classical composers that had not previously been performed by the DGCS, as well as new works and works of contemporary composers. Among these was Robert Convery, the composer commissioned to write *As Rivers Seek the Sea* in Bob's honor. Since 1998 with the performance of his *Songs of Children* in 1998, the DGCS performed six other works by the composer, who was present at all of the concerts. This has been a very special relationship.

Robert Holst and Robert Convery

In addition to the outstanding classical programs Dr. Holst brought to the western suburbs, he also established the DGCS Outreach Program that takes music to people in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and to perform at community events, as well as presenting an occasional concert focused on music for children, and an Artist Recital Series, which provides experience opportunities for talented singers and musicians.

In his own words, Dr. Holst says: "There's a tremendous amount of emotional satisfaction in performing many of the master works and to have an opportunity to do that is phenomenal. There is always a need to adapt to changing times; we constantly review how to serve our community and how to serve our members and try to do the best possible job that we can so that we are not only performing music that people are interested in hearing, but so that we can also remain true to our cultural heritage"

Through his articulate communication, profound knowledge of music, exceptional musicianship, and encouraging direction, Robert Holst leaves the Downers Grove Choral Society with a strong foundation and heartfelt legacy upon which to build.

It need not be said, but it will be said: We will miss you, Bob. We cannot thank you fully all you have done for the DGCS and for us individually. We wish you a wonderful and healthy retirement, and opportunity to enjoy all the good things in life. Thank you, Maestro!



# The DGCS Dimis Wyman Music Education Award

Many of you reading this newsletter will be personally acquainted with Dimis (Dee) Wyman. Dee is a lifelong resident of Downers Grove, and has been an active member of the DGCS for more years than she will want to count! During those years, she has been very active with the organization, as its president for many years, as music librarian, outreach director, program writer . . . the list can go on and on, as whenever there was something to be done, Dee somehow found time to do it. For outstanding efforts and devotion to the DGCS, it was only fitting that at the May 1 concert recognition be given to Dee in a permanent way. Therefore, from this date the award which is given annually to outstanding Junior High Students to allow them to pursue education as singers, will now be known as the DGCS Dimis Wyman Music Education Award.



## Welcome Dr. Amy Weller

On July 1 Dr. Amy Weller will be joining the DGCS as its new music director. We are very excited to welcome Dr. Weller, and looking forward to continued excellence under her leadership. Among credits too extensive to mention here, Dr. Weller holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Stanford University, has sung with premier Chicago choruses including the Chicago Symphony Chorus, is an instructor of Choral Literature at Northwestern University, and previously Director of Choral Organizations and Associate Professor of Music at DePaul University. Dr. Weller is presently completing plans for the DGCS 2011-2012 season, which will include some wonderful music that has not previously been performed by the chorus. We look forward to a great season, and hope you will watch the newsletters for more information.

## Sing With DGCS!

DGCS is always ready to welcome new singers! Our members have a wide range of musical experience, from high school and university choral programs to church choirs to professional engagements. If you share our love for making choral music together, discovering new repertoire, and making new friends, we would love to have you join us! Auditions will be held in August for our 2011-2012 season. Call us at 630-243-8287 for more information.

## And the Winners Are . . .

**Cecelia Kinane – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student at St. Joseph’s School**

**Aly Pyburn – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Student at O’Neill Middle School**

**Megan Younddahl – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student at Herrick Middle School**

Junior High Music Education Awards were presented at the May 1 concert by Award Coordinator Justin Sisul. Cecelia Kinane was unable to be present; the award was accepted on her behalf by Justin Sisul.



**Aly Pyburn with Justin Sisul**



**Megan Youngdahl with Justin Sisul**

Award recipients receive \$200 to apply towards musical education activities. All three award winners will be invited to sing in a program presented by DGCS in the following season. Last year’s award winners, Anna Burton and Elyse Warnecke, sang in the DGCS *Love’s Sweet Songs* concert on February 13, singing in duet “Where is Love” from *Oliver*.

The DGCS Music Education Award – now the DGCS Dimis Wyman Music Education Award—was created to help talented 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade singers pursue musical education activities outside of school music classes, such as singing lessons or summer camp. Winners are selected based on written applications and recommendations. In addition to donations by DGCS members, the chorus relies on donations from patrons to make the awards possible. One hundred percent of all donor contributions go directly to award winners and the number of winners and amount of the award is determined based on the amount of donations received. Anyone wishing to support the DGCS Dimis Wyman Music Education Award should send donations made out to the DGCS at P. O. Box 655, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Please specify that the donation is to be applied to the Music Award. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

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*The Downers Grove Choral Society is a nonprofit organization, and receives support from the Illinois Arts Council, the DuPage Community Foundation, the Hinsdale Center for the Arts, and the generosity of our friends and patrons. The Downers Grove Choral Society welcomes patrons and members with disabilities.*

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