

How our patrons have made a difference in Reading Choral Society?

As the Reading Choral Society begins its 145th year, we want to thank the community for your continued support! Reading Choral Society (RCS) is an organization of approximately 95 singers with a wide variety of music backgrounds from throughout Berks county. Even though we have an old-fashioned name like "Reading Choral Society", and may have a formal look, RCS is not stuck in the past. Each year has been a new concert season in which we present a variety of music to the community. Through the work of our Board and staff, RCS has creatively used many fresh and progressive ideas to maintain its founding mission of performing, fostering and advancing choral music throughout the community.

2019-20 CONCERT SEASON:



Our first concert was presented in December at the Muhlenberg High School Auditorium. We were joined in the performance of *Messiah* by the talented Muhlenberg High School Camerata Choir, four soloists and orchestra. The concert was held on December 2, at the beginning of the Advent season and a wonderful way to

bring the community together for the beginning of the holiday season.

- Numbers involved: Audience of over 500; 85 RCS singers; 20 MHS Camerata singers; 4 soloists & orchestra
- Quote from Audience member: *What a wonderful to begin the holiday season! This is a memory that I shared with my Dad when he sang with RCS!*



A very special concert was presented in March at the Abe Lincoln Ballroom featuring the Hillbillies of Cohesion in *Roots of Americana* – an afternoon of Bluegrass music. This collaboration between the musicians and singers resulted in a concert experience that pleased and surprised our audience members. RCS was able to show their diversity in singing a variety of music.

- Number Involved: Audience of over 350; 85 RCS singers & Band
- Quote from Audience Member: *What a fun concert and great collaboration!*

Our third concert performance was to be with Reading Symphony Orchestra on May 2 in the performance of Verdi's Requiem. This concert was cancelled due to COVID 19. We are prepared to be able to sing the Requiem when we are able to collaborate with RSO in the coming years.

MEET OUR STAFF: (Photos & Bios on RCS website)

Executive Director – Susan Coughlin
 Music Director – Graham Bier
 Section leaders –
 Elizabeth Bromley, Soprano Section Leader
 Marcelyn Lebovitz, Alto Section Leader

Jarrod Miller, Tenor Section Leader
 Rod Nevin, Bass Section Leader
 Conducting Scholar – Kevin Vondrak
 Chamber Choir Director – Rod Nevin
 Accompanist – Mary Bishop

REHEARSALS:

RCS continued their weekly rehearsals through the end of April, but not in the regular rehearsal space at Christ Church. Instead, our Music Director, Section Leaders, Conducting Scholar and Accompanist combined their talents in creating YouTube videos for each weekly rehearsal which included: vocal warm-ups, sectionals and singing. With the help of our staff, we were able to continue with weekly rehearsals and even begin to sing music for the upcoming November concert.

GLORIA SINGERS:



The Gloria Singers program was set to celebrate its 10th Anniversary at Berks Catholic High School at the end of March, but was cancelled due to closures. This program helps to continue to build a strong foundation in music for this group of students, through a one-day workshop and then presenting a joint concert – with the youth and adults singing separately and later together as one large group. Our celebration will be held in 2021, featuring music commissioned for the 10th Anniversary. Over 150 students have been busy learning the music, so it will be a wonderful concert when we are able to be together again to sing.

SINGING WORKSHOPS:

- RCS Summer has continued its tradition of holding Summer and Winter singing workshops. In 2019, the workshops were held in rural Berks County. The guest directors were Michael Smith, Philadelphia; Truman Bullard, Carlisle; & Christopher Jackson, Allentown. Music covered was Gospel & Spirituals; Russian Folk Songs; Benjamin Britten
- Numbers involved: Between 25-50 singers per workshop
- Quote from many participants: *Love the opportunity to be able to sing throughout the summer and learn a variety of music! There is something new to be learned at each workshop!*

SCHOLARSHIPS: This year RCS was able to award \$5,000 in four college scholarships to students that are either pursuing a career in vocal performance or studying music and participating in choral programs in college. Each year RCS holds a GALA when funds are raised for scholarships for the following year. A recital and award reception had been scheduled for early April but needed to be cancelled.



Rachael Heater
Award: \$2,000

Student at Kutztown University

Major: Music Performance



Jocelyn Shank
Award: \$1,000

Student at Penn State University

Major: Music Education



Elise Eggleston
Award: \$1,000

Student at Millersville University

Major: Vocal Performance &
Music Education



Kristen Suruskie
Award: \$1,000

Student at Lebanon Valley College

Major: Music Education &
Vocal Performance

Reading Choral Society is supported by grants (Reading Musical Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and Berks County Community Foundation); community-wide donors, individuals and businesses: and our singing members. All are essential to ensure the success of concerts, programs and services. If you are one of our current patrons, we cannot thank you enough for your investment that you have in Reading Choral Society. Thank you again for your support and we hope to see you at our 2020-21 concerts and events! Please consider making a tax deductible contribution this year to help RCS fulfill their mission of performing, fostering and advancing choral music in Reading and Berks County