



PRESENTS

AN AFTERNOON AT THE THEATER

Directed by
Alex Ager

Saturday, May 25, 2024, 3 pm
Kearsarge Regional High School

DEDICATION

Charles William (Chuck) Thompson

June 14, 1943 – February 20, 2024



This program is dedicated to Charles William (Chuck) Thompson, who was a founding member of Kearsarge Chorale and who passed away quite suddenly February 20th from heart complications. Chuck sang in the Chorale's bass section from its inception and served as Vice Chair and liaison with Colby-Sawyer College for six years. Born and raised in Wilmot, NH, Chuck attended two one-room schoolhouses (now the site of the library and town offices). Chuck enjoyed choral music all his life. As a college student at UNH, he sang in the Glee Club. Later, he sang in the St. Paul's (Concord), St. Andrew's (New London) and Pembroke Congregational Church choirs. He participated in a number of Messiah Sings with his very good friends, who were all basses, all around the state, including Franklin Pierce University and St. Paul's School and St. Paul's Church in Concord. They all especially enjoyed singing at Christmas Eve services at the Pembroke Congregational Church. Chuck participated in many New Hampshire Summer Music Festivals in Plymouth. Those of us who sang with Chuck remember fondly his kindness, steadiness, good humor and dedication. Those who served on the Chorale Board with him remember his amazing diplomacy and problem-solving ability. He always smoothed the waters and got the job done. He is now and will be missed.

AN AFTERNOON AT THE THEATER

Sondheim! A Choral Celebration

Godspell Choral Highlights

“‘S Wonderful with It’s Delovely”

“On the Street Where You Live”

“They Can’t Take That Away from Me”

“Answer Me”

INTERMISSION

The Phantom of the Opera Choral Highlights

Mary Poppins Choral Selections

“Somewhere”

“Finale from the Gondoliers (Dance a Cachucha)”

“Dancing Queen”

Kearsarge Chorale Directed by Alex Ager

David Almond on piano

John Leland on clarinet

Jeff Gill on percussion

_____ on guitar

Joe Conti on bass

SONDHEIM! A Choral Celebration

Words and Music by Stephen Sondheim

Arr. Mac Huff

Regarded as one of the most important figures in 20th-century musical theater, Stephen Sondheim is credited with reinventing the American musical. Sondheim's Broadway musicals tackled unexpected themes that ranged beyond the genre's traditional subjects, while addressing darker elements of the human experience. His music and lyrics were tinged with complexity, sophistication, and ambivalence about various aspects of life. Sondheim's interest in musical theater began at a young age, when he was mentored by Oscar Hammerstein II. He began his career by writing the lyrics for *West Side Story* (1957) and *Gypsy* (1959). He transitioned to writing both music and lyrics for the theater, with his best-known works including *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962), *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), *Into the Woods* (1987), and *Passion* (1994).

"Comedy Tonight"

Soloists – Rick Marsh, Andrea Jennison, Greg Johnson,
Jane Brewer, Nick Ourusoff and Linda Barnes

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, based on several farces by the Roman playwright Plautus, was the first production for which Sondheim wrote the music and lyrics. This opening number makes it clear that nothing serious will be happening until after the final curtain falls.

"Into the Woods"

Soloists – Nina Rogers, Brad Brewer,
Jody Cooper-Rubin and Greg Johnson

Into the Woods, a musical based on Grimm's fairy tales, introduces us to Red Ridinghood and the other storybook characters, and we hear why each of them is daring to go into the woods.

"Putting it Together"

Soloist – Gene Weber

Sunday in the Park with George, with music and lyrics by Sondheim and book by James Lapine, was inspired by the French pointillist painter Georges Seurat's painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. The plot revolves around George, a fictionalized version of Seurat, who immerses himself deeply in painting his masterpiece, and his great-grandson (also named George), a conflicted and cynical contemporary artist. In "Putting it Together," the contemporary George flits among patrons and curators, commenting on the difficulties of producing modern art.

"Not While I'm Around"

Soloist – Nick Ourusoff

In *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, the ghoulish Mrs. Lovett, with the aid of Sweeney Todd's homicidal razor, sees to it that she has sufficient meat for the pies in her shop. In "Not While I'm Around," Tobias, Mrs. Lovett's young assistant, tells her of his skepticism about Todd and his own desire to protect her.

“Losing My Mind”

Soloist – Patti Bourassa

In *Follies*, the plot centers around a reunion, in a crumbling Broadway theater scheduled for demolition, of performers in *Weismann’s Follies* (a musical revue based on *Zeigfeld Follies*). In “Losing my Mind,” Sally Durant Plummer, a former Weismann girl, sings of her passion for her old lover, Ben.

“Send in the Clowns,”

From *A Little Night Music*, “Send in the Clowns” has become Sondheim’s best-known song. In it, Desiree Armfeldt, a glamorous but aging actress, reflects on the nature of her life and the unfortunate timing of her relationship with Fredrik, an old love.

“Company,” “The Little Things You Do Together” and “Being Alive”

Soloist – Jody Cooper-Rubin

Soloist – Nina Rogers

Company lacks a straightforward plot, instead focusing on themes such as marriage and the difficulty of making an emotional connection with another person. *Company* follows bachelor Bobby’s interactions with his married friends, who throw a party for his 35th birthday. In the song, “Company,” he voices his satisfaction with the status of his life and his love for his married friends. This scene is followed by a series of disconnected vignettes. In the first of these, Joanne, the oldest, most cynical, and most-often divorced of Bobby’s friends, sarcastically comments to the audience that it is the little things that make a marriage work (“The Little Things You Do Together”). In the final act, Bobby sings of his newly recognized desire for intimacy, even with all its problems, and his wish to meet someone with whom to face the challenge of living (“Being Alive”).

GODSPELL Choral Highlights

“Day by Day,” “All for the Best” and “Beautiful City”

Music by Stephen Schwartz

Arr. Roger Emerson

Godspell was composed by Stephen Schwartz, the prolific and popular musical theater composer (who, at the beginning of his career, interned at The New London Barn Playhouse) with book by John-Michael Tebelak. The show is structured as a series of parables, primarily based on the Gospel of Matthew, interspersed with music set to lyrics from traditional hymns. *Godspell* began as a project by drama students at Carnegie Mellon University and then moved to the off-off-Broadway theater La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in the East Village of Manhattan. The show was rescored for an off-Broadway production, which opened on May 17, 1971, and became a long-running success. Many productions have followed worldwide, including a 2011 Broadway revival.

“ ’S WONDERFUL”

Words and Music by George and Ira Gershwin

with “IT’S DELOVELY”

Words and Music by Cole Porter

Arr. Kirby Shaw

George Gershwin was one of the most significant and popular American composers of all time. He wrote primarily for the Broadway musical theatre, but his orchestral and piano compositions are also celebrated. In these he blended, in varying degrees, the techniques and forms of classical music with the stylistic nuances and techniques of popular music and jazz.

Cole Albert Porter was an American composer and songwriter. Many of his songs became standards noted for their witty, urbane lyrics, and many of his scores found success on Broadway and in Hollywood films. Born to a wealthy family in Indiana, Porter defied his grandfather's wishes for him to practice law and took up music as a profession. Classically trained, he was drawn to musical theatre. After a slow start, he began to achieve success in the 1920s, and by the 1930s he was one of the major songwriters for the Broadway musical stage. Unlike many successful Broadway composers, Porter wrote the lyrics as well as the music for his songs.

“ON THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE”

from *My Fair Lady*

Words by Alan Jay Lerner

Music by Frederick Loewe

Arr. Mark Hayes

The story of *My Fair Lady* is based on the 1938 film adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's 1913 play *Pygmalion*. It concerns Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl who takes speech lessons from professor Henry Higgins, a phonetician, so that she may pass as a lady. Despite his cynical nature and difficulty understanding women, Higgins grows attached to her. The musical's 1956 Broadway production was a notable critical and popular success, winning six Tony Awards, including Best Musical. It set a record for the longest run of any musical on Broadway up to that time and was followed by a hit London production. Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews starred in both productions. Many revivals have followed, and the 1964 film version won the Academy Award for Best Picture. In “On the Street where You Live,” the young socialite, Freddy Eynsford-Hill, expresses his devotion to Eliza, who has captured his heart.

“THEY CAN’T TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME”

Words and Music by George and Ira Gershwin

Arr. Mark Hayes

Ira Gershwin was an American lyricist who collaborated with his younger brother George to create some of the most memorable songs in the English language of the 20th century. With George, he wrote more than a dozen Broadway shows, featuring songs such as "I Got Rhythm," "Embraceable You," "The Man I Love" and "Someone to Watch Over Me." He was also responsible, along with DuBose Heyward, for the libretto to George's opera *Porgy and Bess*.

The success the Gershwin brothers enjoyed with their collaborative works has often overshadowed the creative role that Ira played. His mastery of songwriting continued after George's early death in 1937. Ira wrote additional hit songs with composers Jerome Kern, Kurt Weill, Harry Warren and Harold Arlen. His critically acclaimed 1959 book *Lyrics on Several Occasions*, an amalgam of autobiography and annotated anthology, is an important source for studying the art of the lyricist in the golden age of American popular song.

"ANSWER ME" from *The Band's Visit*

Words and Music by David Yazbek

Arr. Mark Brymer

Soloist – Andrea Jennison

The Band's Visit is a stage musical based on the 2007 Israeli film of the same name. The story involves an Egyptian band that, through miscommunication, arrives at a remote Israeli desert village instead of the Arab Cultural Center where they had expected to perform. "Answer Me" is sung by a character known only as "The Telephone Guy" as he waits at the lone pay phone for a call from his girlfriend. *The Band's Visit* is one of four musicals in Broadway history to win the unofficial "Big Six" Tony Awards, which include Best Musical, Best Book, Best Score, Best Actor in a Musical, Best Actress in a Musical, and Best Direction of a Musical. It won the 2019 Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album.

INTERMISSION

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Choral Highlights

"The Phantom of the Opera,"

"The Music of the Night," "Think of Me"

and "All I Ask of You"

Music by Andrew Lloyd Weber

Lyrics by Charles Hart and Richard Stilgoe

Arr. Audrey Snyder

The Phantom of the Opera is based on the 1910 French novel of the same name by Gaston Leroux. It tells the tragic story of a beautiful soprano, Christine Daaé, who becomes the obsession of a mysterious, masked musical genius living in the subterranean labyrinth beneath the Paris Opéra House. The musical opened in London's West End in 1986 and on Broadway in New York in 1988. It won the 1986 Olivier Award and the 1988 Tony Award for Best Musical, with Michael Crawford winning the Olivier and Tony for Best Actor in a Musical. A film adaptation, directed by Joel Schumacher, was released in 2004. *The Phantom of the Opera* was the longest running show in Broadway history, and celebrated its 10,000th performance on February 11, 2012, becoming the first Broadway production in history to do so. The original Broadway production played its final performance on April 16, 2023.

MARY POPPINS Choral Selections

“Chim Chim Cher-ee,” “A Spoonful of Sugar,”
“Let’s go Fly a Kite” and
“Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious”

Words and Music by Richard M. Sherman
and Robert B. Sherman
Arr. John Leavitt

The musical, *Mary Poppins*, is based on the similarly titled “Mary Poppins” children's books by P. L. Travers and the 1964 Disney film, and is a fusion of various elements from the two, including songs from the film. The original London production opened in December 2004 and won two Olivier Awards, one for Best Actress in a Musical and the other for Best Theatre Choreographer. A Broadway production opened in November 2006, with only minor changes from the London version. It received seven Tony nominations, including Best Musical, and won for Best Scenic Design in a Musical. The original Broadway production closed in March 2013, after 2,619 performances. Touring and international productions followed. This musical medley includes the signature song of the chimney sweeps as well as tunes with which the magical nanny mesmerized her little charges and audiences the world over.

“SOMEWHERE”

From *West Side Story*

Words by Stephen Sondheim
Music by Leonard Bernstein

Inspired by William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story* is set in the mid-1950s in the Upper West Side of Manhattan in New York City, then a multiracial, blue-collar neighborhood. The musical explores the rivalry between the Jets and the Sharks, two teenage street gangs of different ethnic backgrounds. The Sharks, who are recent migrants from Puerto Rico, and the Jets vie for dominance of the neighborhood as the police try to keep order. The young protagonist, Tony, a former member of the Jets and best friend of the gang's leader, Riff, falls in love with Maria, the sister of Bernardo, the leader of the Sharks. The dark theme, sophisticated music, extended dance scenes, tragic love story, and focus on social problems marked a turning point in musical theatre. In “Somewhere,” Tony and Maria share their longing for a better world.

“FINALE” from *The Gondoliers*
 (“Dance a Cachucha”)

Words and Music by William S. Gilbert
and Sir Arthur Sullivan
Arr. John Leavitt

The Gondoliers is a Savoy Opera, a style of comic opera that developed in Victorian England in the late 19th century with W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan as the original and most successful practitioners. The name is derived from the Savoy Theatre, which impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte built to house the Gilbert and Sullivan pieces. It premiered at the Savoy Theatre on December 7, 1889 and ran for a very successful 554 performances (at that time the fifth longest-running piece of musical theatre in history) closing on June 30, 1891. This was the twelfth of fourteen comic opera collaborations between Gilbert and Sullivan. In the “Finale,” the entire company dances “the cachucha,” reprising its appearance in Act I.

"DANCING QUEEN" from *Mamma Mia!*

Words and Music by Benny Andersson,
Björn Ulvaeus and Stig Anderson
Arr. Roger Emerson

Mamma Mia! is a jukebox musical written by British playwright Catherine Johnson based on songs recorded by the Swedish group ABBA and composed by members Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus. Over 65 million people have seen the show, which has grossed \$4 billion worldwide since its 1999 debut. A film adaptation starring Meryl Streep, Colin Firth, Pierce Brosnan, Amanda Seyfried, Christine Baranski, Stellan Skarsgård and Julie Walters was released in 2008. Its Broadway incarnation closed on September 12, 2015 after running for nearly 14 years, making it the ninth longest-running show in Broadway history.

KEARSARGE CHORALE Spring 2024



Artistic Director Alex Ager is the K-12 music teacher for the Sunapee School District where he teaches elementary general music, and middle and high school band and choir. He was previously the K-8 Music Teacher at Andover Elementary/Middle School for 5 years. Ager holds the degrees of Master of Music in Music Education from Boston University, and Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Plymouth State University. He joined the Kearsarge Chorale in the fall of 2017 as a singer in the bass section and has been Artistic Director since 2019.



Collaborative Pianist David Almond has spent a lifetime in music as an organist, choir director, conductor, composer and arranger. In 2008, while serving as organist/choir director at First Baptist Church in New London, NH, he assembled a group of singers to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Ralph Vaughan Williams in a performance of *A Pilgrim's Journey*. The singers enjoyed the experience so much that they decided to continue singing, and Kearsarge Chorale was born. David served as the Chorale's Artistic Director for the next six years. We are delighted to have him back as our pianist.

Soprano

Linda Barnes
Jane Brewer, Section Dean
Patti Bourassa
Mary Kay Button
Jody Cooper-Rubin
Joyce Kellogg
Nancee Leach
Jaclyn Pageau
Nonie Reynders
Carole Robinson
Sue Venable

Alto

Patsy Catsos
Maggie Devine-Sullivan
Sarah Foley
Hannah Hernick
Andrea Jennison, Section Dean
Alice Perry
Nina Rogers
Karen Zurheide

Tenor

Paul Currier
Carol Foss, Section Dean
Greg Johnson
Nick Ourusoff

Bass

Brad Brewer, Section Dean
Charles Kellogg
Rick Marsh
Dave Munn
Ralph Parsons
Gene Weber

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OUT TODAY.**

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(during the strawberry festival)

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AND ALL VOICES**

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First Baptist Church of New London for providing rehearsal space,

Kearsarge Regional School District for making the High School Auditorium available for our performance,

M. J. Harrington Jewelers for donating their ad space to the Chorale,

Rick Marsh for serving as Production Manager for this performance,

our ushers and ticket sellers,

the individuals and businesses whose names appear on these pages,

and you, our audience, for being here today and sharing the music with us.

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