

# THE VALLEY VOICE

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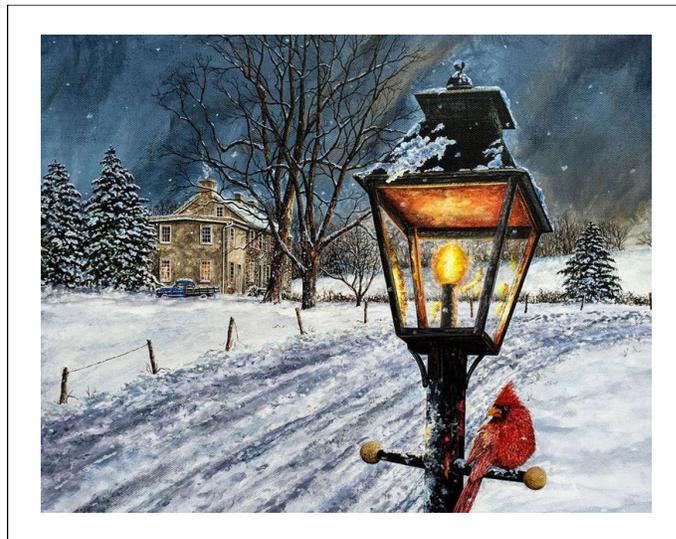
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Valley Choral Society will open their 36<sup>th</sup> season with *A Christmas Carol: Celebrating Christmas Past, Present, & Future*. This holiday concert will take a journey through music of varying genres that link us to generations, memories, and celebrations of this special time of year. VCS will present holiday classics the audience will find familiar, new arrangements on seasonal standards, and original compositions to surround the listener with the spirit of the season. Be sure to join VCS on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Pennsburg, or Sunday December 15<sup>th</sup> at Trinity Lutheran Church, Perkasio for an unforgettable holiday season celebration. From classics such as *Do you hear what I hear?* and *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* to a rhythmic arrangement of *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* and a show-stopping arrangement of *All is Well*, this concert is another not to be missed!

## VCS KICKS OFF 36TH SEASON!



VCS presents *A Christmas Carol: Celebrating Christmas Past, Present, & Future* on December 14th & 15th

Rehearsals will resume in January as Valley Choral Society invites other community and church choir members to join in presenting *Requiem* by Gabriel Fauré. This magnificent setting will be presented with full

orchestra and in combination with Morten Lauridsen's *Luz Aeterna*. As additional information becomes available, be sure to stay up-to-date with VCS on social media or online at [www.valchor.com](http://www.valchor.com).

## SPONSORSHIP DRIVE BEGINS

At the start of each season, Valley Choral Society begins their annual sponsorship



Consider becoming a patron today!

drive in efforts to raise funds to support the mission and offerings of the choir. It is through these sponsorships and advertisements that VCS continues to bring choral music opportunities to the Upper Perkiomen Valley and surrounding areas. Please consider supporting VCS as a corporate patron or program advertiser. All contributions to Valley Choral Society are tax-

deductible under the 501 (c)3 Federal guidelines as VCS is registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations. For opportunity information or to join in supporting Valley Choral Society for their 36th season, please contact [fundraising@valchor.com](mailto:fundraising@valchor.com).

## FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK...

**FALL HAS ARRIVED...and we are back to rehearsing for another excellent concert season!**



First rehearsal of the 36th season

Valley Choral is busy preparing for our 36<sup>th</sup> season; we are happy to see some “old” faces joining us as well as several new faces. And there is still room to join us, especially in the bass, tenor and baritone sections!

In his 2<sup>nd</sup> season as Artistic Director, Drew Lutz-Long has prepared a challenging program for us and we look forward to presenting concerts that will delight (and perhaps even stun) our audiences. You won’t want to miss the concerts - stay up to date with VCS via our website and follow us on Facebook.

Until our next edition of *The Valley Voice*, may your Autumn be filled with special moments filled with music, family and friends!

*Vickie*

Vickie Long  
Board President

## VCS WELCOMES NEW ACCOMPANIST

*“...but impressive nonetheless.”*

**Sue Ellen Echard, MM, BS, BMus**, is Choir Master and Organist at Church of the Holy Spirit, Episcopal, Harleysville, PA serving there for 17 years. Over her career she has worked as choral director, workshop leader, Kindermusik® teacher, recitalist and teacher of organ and piano. She has been a member of the Philadelphia



Sue Ellen Echard,  
VCS Accompanist

AGO for over 30 years and was recently elected to the executive committee of the Philadelphia Chapter. She specializes in choir and community building and was recruited early in the founding of Church of Holy Spirit to build music, arts and youth programs. The intention of growing this new parish was focused on well done music and liturgy through use of the Royal School of Church Music resources. Under her leadership, the choirs have grown to over 60 youth and adult participants in singing, instrumental and handbell choirs. The church continues to grow and thrive. In recent years, Sue Ellen led choral residencies at Bristol Winchester and Lincoln Cathedrals in England and is currently preparing for a residency at Exeter in 2022. Sue Ellen has served on the music staff of Bel Canto Children’s Chorus and the

Royal School of Church Music at the King’s College Course in Wilkes-Barre.

Sue Ellen’s career has been broad and comprehensive serving churches in the Episcopal, Catholic, Presbyterian, Reformed and Evangelical traditions. She holds a Bachelor of Science in theology and Bachelor of Music in Church Music from Cairn University and a Master of Sacred Music Degree from Westminster Choir College where she studied organ with Eugene Roan and choral conducting with Allen Crowell and Andrew Megill. She completed further studies in choral conducting at the Choral Institute at Oxford in 2017 and 2019.

## 5 BENEFITS OF JOINING A CHOIR BACKED BY SCIENCE

If you ask someone what comes to mind when they think about singing in a choir, is it going to be the numerous health benefits? Probably not. As a choir director, I have no doubt that choral singing has a transformative effect on health, both mentally and physically. Singing in a choir will do amazing things for you. It will:

**1. MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD WITH ENDORPHINS AND BETTER CIRCULATION**  
*Feel-good hormones are released when you perform as part of a choir*

It is widely known that the body's "feel-good" hormones (endorphins) are released during exercise, laughing or even eating chocolate. It is less well-known, however, that the same hormones are released when someone performs as part of a choir. The deep breaths taken during singing equates to that of aerobic exercise, which increases blood flow and releases endorphins.

**2. ENHANCE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM, HELP YOU FIGHT CANCER**  
 A study found that just one hour of group singing significantly lowers the stress hormone Cortisol, and boosts a person's immune system, which, it has been suggested, can even help fight cancer.

Research conducted alongside a choir in Frankfurt found that the group

produced antibodies in the blood that are known to enhance the immune system and fight off excess bad bacteria.

**3. REDUCE YOUR STRESS**

The stress-relieving benefits of choir singing have been widely recognized, and have been verified by the lowered Cortisol levels found in the study mentioned above. Reduced stress, endorphins and the positive emotions felt during group singing contribute to a "high" singers often experience after rehearsals.

**4. INCREASE SOCIAL FULFILMENT**

Studies have found that after just one group singing class, participants feel closer to each other than when participating in other group classes. Oxytocin, the hormone associated with love, trust and bonding has been associated with collective singing, which may be related to the close bonds of friendship among choirs and singing groups. Other social benefits include meeting people with similar passions and combatting loneliness, and, I have seen firsthand how choirs can even help with grieving and healing after a loss.

**5. BOOST YOUR SELF-ESTEEM**

*Singing is known to tone the throat muscles which might reduce snoring!*



Kathy Alexander, VoiceCouncil Magazine

A further social benefit of singing in a choir is the educational side, as participants broaden their understanding of music. Learning something new boosts self-esteem and confidence whilst stimulating the mind and memory of older singers...and maybe even stop snoring? Singing is known to tone the throat muscles, with a past study suggesting that this can reduce snoring – excellent news if you are the long-suffering partner of a snorer!

**GO FOR IT**

Group singing creates a true escape from the real world, giving participants something on which to focus 100% of their mind. In my work with choirs, I have seen how singing as part of an organized group helped many people with their struggles, including work stress and relationship issues.

I encourage people from all backgrounds to experience the benefits of group singing in a relaxed and informative way by joining a local choir or signing up for a local choir festival.

*“Group singing creates a true escape...”*

## CELEBRATING OUR MUSIC HISTORY

Did you know that sixteen years ago, Valley Choral Society celebrated Christmas in past, present, and future? The music selection was slightly different than that of 2019, but impressive nonetheless. VCS explored classics like *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* and *Infant Holy*, *Infant Lowly* but also celebrated masterful

arrangements of *Shout the Glad Tidings* and *Master in the Hall*. The concert, under the direction of Mark Thomas, was presented on December 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> with the choirs' previous name, the Choral Arts Society of the Upper Perkiomen Valley. A full list of the choirs' musical history can be found online at [www.valchor.com/about/musical-history](http://www.valchor.com/about/musical-history).



Valley Choral Society in 2019



Valley Choral Society

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We're on the web!  
www.valchor.com

Upcoming 2019 Events:

December 14 – 7PM  
*A Christmas Carol*  
St. Mark's Pennsburg

December 15 – 4PM  
*A Christmas Carol*  
Trinity Lutheran Perkasi

May 16 – 7PM  
*Requiem*

May 17—4PM  
*Requiem*

Connect with us...



## ABOUT THE CHOIR

The choir performs music of all styles and genres in at least two major concerts a year in the late fall and in the spring. It has been accompanied by the Choral Arts Society Chamber Orchestra, and in collaborative efforts, by the Upper Perkiomen High School Choirs, the Red Hill Band, and the Bel Canto Children's Chorus. In addition to the full choir, the Ensemble is a select auditioned group of choir members that performs at concerts and is available to sing for various functions upon request.

The choir has performed at Longwood Gardens and the Pennsylvania State Capital Building, as well as for the Reading Express, Lehigh Valley Iron Pigs, and the Philadelphia Phillies. As part of its community outreach, the choir regularly performs at retirement homes throughout the area and at "Make Music Upon Perk."

In the summer of 2007, members of the choir went on a successful goodwill concert tour of Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic. With renewed enthusiasm and dedication, Valley Choral Society has increased its performances in the Upper Perkiomen community and hopes to expand to surrounding counties and to continue to represent the United States internationally.

Valley Choral Society (formerly The Choral Arts Society of the Upper Perkiomen Valley) was founded by Richard F. Lampe in 1983. Prospective members are asked to sing a range test for placing in the volunteer choir. Ensemble members are asked to audition for the artistic director, singing sight reading examples.

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

HOW can it already be October?! The weeks are flying by, and VCS singers already have five weeks of rehearsal under their belt. I'm really excited by the ways our 2019-2020 season will allow us to celebrate and build relationships with others through our music making.

As we gear up for our winter concert, I'm reminded of the many sights, sounds, and feelings that flood our senses this time of year. Our winter concert, *Christmas: Past, Present and Future* will particularly help us journey through the "sounds" part of those thoughts. Aside from the beloved carols and seasonal songs we hear (now seemingly for well over a month, but that's another story) and love, there are musicians and ensembles out there today still shaping new music around the selections we hold dear. This concert will feature both arrangements that are nearly the piece



*A Christmas Carol* presented December 14th & 15th

we've heard for generations, as well as arrangements that take songs we love to a whole new level! We look forward to welcoming you in December!

Speaking of welcome, you are welcome to join us in our concerts slated for May 16 and 17 this coming spring! Valley Choral has contracted an orchestra and will present Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* and Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna*. These selections connect listeners and singer with aspects of life beyond

just an earthly plane - connect us to things before and after ourselves. Likewise, with this set of "all-call" concerts, we hope to connect with singers and groups beyond just our own! There are no strings or requirements other than "let us know you are coming." We will publish our rehearsal schedule and supply music if you do not have personal copies. I hope you will join us, as well as invite other singers you know. It's all about coming together to do what we love to do -- and having the chance to sing two beloved works! Please keep in touch with VCS so you can be a part of this opportunity!

*Drew*

Andrew Lutz-Long  
Artistic Director