

DURANGO CHORAL SOCIETY NEWS

WINTER/SPRING 2024

A NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, RHONDA MUCKERMAN



Dear DCS Family,

I am honored and thrilled to be the new Artistic Director of the Durango Choral Society! I have enjoyed learning and serving under my mentor, Linda Mack Berven, these last two years as Assistant/Associate Conductor, and have seen from the inside what a fine organization DCS truly is. My objective is to continue the long-standing tradition of vocal excellence and high-quality repertoire, along with performances that will energize, inspire, and uplift our audiences right here in the Four Corners area and around the world. There is no limit to what we can do!

With these thoughts in mind, I am setting the tone for this new chapter with our Saturday, March 16th concert, entitled "To the Stars!" We bring you an expansive and illuminating program featuring composers Z. Randall Stroope, Randall Thompson, Irving Berlin, the Beatles and more, sung by the rich voices of our 60-plus member mixed voices choir and the heavenly sounds of the

Durango Women's Choir. As has become our spring tradition, we welcome back to the stage the Telluride Choral Society under the direction of Hal Adler. This program is guaranteed to leave you feeling inspired, energized, and "floating on air."

In this new moment DCS is welcoming many new members, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with other musical organizations near and far. The Wellesley College Choir, under the direction of Lisa Graham, will be passing through Durango on their spring-break tour of the Southwest. They are the featured choir at our Sunday, March 17th concert, with DCS performing the opening set, and the combined voices of the Wellesley College Women's Choir and our own DWC topping off the concert with "Astra"—to the stars!

The Durango Women's Choir will continue their long-standing collaboration with the Santa Fe Women's Choir, under the direction of Linda Raney, with concerts here in Durango on Sunday, June 2nd and in Santa Fe on Sunday, June 9th.

And remember to mark your calendars for our annual "Cabaret" fundraiser on Sunday, May 19th, as we welcome to the stage for the first time,

local pianist-extraordinaire, Adam Swanson, our Durango Choral Society members, and selected soloists, performing the best of Broadway and more, accompanied by dinner, drinks, and a silent auction.

Of course, none of what we do would be possible without the generous support of our donors, sponsors, and audience members. Your generosity is fundamental towards fulfilling our mission of bringing high-quality concerts and music education to our region. The opportunity to thank you, through song, is our greatest joy! We look forward to taking you with us as we head "To the Stars!"

See you this spring!

Rhonda L Muckerman
Artistic Director,
Durango Choral Society



**Thank you to our
season sponsor:**

TBK  BANK

To the Stars!



Saturday, March 16th, 2:00 pm
Christ the King Lutheran Church • 495 Florida Road, Durango
Tickets \$20/\$5

Children 12 and under are FREE

www.durangochoralsociety.org

*J*oin the Durango Choral Society as we head "To the Stars!", under the direction of new Artistic Director, Rhonda Muckerman. This concert will feature an expansive program of contemporary music by Z. Randall Stroope, Irving Berlin, Elaine Hagenberg, the Beatles, and more! The Durango Women's Choir, the Durango Choral Society, and special guests, the Telluride Choral Society, will take you to the heights in this inspiring concert guaranteed to leave you energized, uplifted and "floating on air".

*Special thanks to our
Season Sponsor!*

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Linda Mack Berven, DCS Director Emerita



After 25 years of musical leadership and more than 120 concerts, our beloved Artistic Director, Linda Mack Berven, retired at the end of 2023. She finished out the year with a well-attended Christmas Concert at the Fort, which highlighted all four choirs singing the finale together, joined by alumni of the Durango Choral Society.

She also managed to fit in directing Christmas carols at TBK Bank.



The Chorus was able to keep a secret and we surprised Linda after the Christmas Concert with a retirement/birthday party, complete with good-natured roasts, singing, food, laughter, and tears. Andrew and Terri Cooley came from Tacoma, WA for the event.

Retired doesn't mean gone or forgotten! Linda is an irresistible force and mover and shaker in Durango, so plan on seeing her around town at music and theatrical events. She may be seated right next to you in the DCS Chorus! And if so, don't let her catch you with a vibrato!

2024 will see the creation of the Linda Mack Berven Choral Conducting Endowment Fund!

Who's on The DCS Board?

President: Abby Bowen
Vice President: Bill Thurman
Treasurer: Lynn Eustance
Assistant Treasurer: Dianne Pratt
Recording Secretary: Jan Patton
Corresponding Secretary: Julia Dodd
Librarian & Archivist: Ellie Cline

Members-at-Large
Jeanie Child
Charlie Hakes
Lars Hansen
Don Hassemer
Melody Post oak
Becca Robison
Nancy Shock



Board members Jeanie Child, Nancy Shock, and Jan Patton at the final rehearsal of the 2023 Christmas Concert.



DCS GETTING TO KNOW YOU...HELEN BENDALL-HUGHES

Choral members see each other every week and say hi, but sometimes we don't get to know the person sitting next to us very well. In this newsletter, you're going to meet a very remarkable member of the DCS Chorus: **Helen Bendall-Hughes**. Here's her story, or at least part of it. Make a point of introducing yourself at the next rehearsal. She sits with the altos. That's Helen in the middle of those beautiful children in the picture below.



I finally was able to move to Durango and join the DCS choir, meeting a wonderful new group of talented and interesting people. I truly feel like I have found a home here.

I retired from teaching music at the International School of Arizona in Scottsdale, just before the Covid lock-down. When our lives were finally unlocked, my quest was to find out what it meant to live in the USA after being gone for 45 years.

Music has been a big part of my life from church choirs, playing oboe in the Bay County Youth Symphony in Bay City, Michigan, to becoming an International Music Educator. Music is a beautiful gift that was also given to me by my parents.

I attended Alma College to become an elementary classroom teacher. Along with an education degree, I had a music certification but never dreamed I would use it. It wasn't until I was in the deserts of Saudi Arabia and discovered a world beyond the edges of Western classical music that the bug to delve deeper into the world of music, and actually teach it, finally bit me. I was able to attend the University of Michigan's Department of Ethnomusicology for post-graduate work and became an Ethnomusicologist, posing as a Music Teacher.

This allowed me to use knowledge of school curriculums and integrate it with world musical systems. Using content from classes like Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science, we could reach an entire school population where everyone's culture and religion could be recognized and included. It was the most amazing career and one I never dreamed I would ever create or encounter. One of the highlights of my career:

In Indonesia we had 60 nationalities represented in the International School of Jakarta. The school agreed to purchase an Indonesian Gamelan* and include local culture and musical systems into the music program, breaking the traditional diatonic major scale tradition. The goal was to honor local culture by making it visible through sharing at special school events like Peace Day, Earth Day, and International Day. We included musical traditions of the Hindu Deepavali Festival of Lights in our unit on 'Celebrations of Light' around the time of Christmas and Hanukkah.

Our program included authentic voices, scales, and traditional music from around the Indonesian Archipelago and around the world. The students could learn their traditional dances in after-school activities and perform at school functions and assemblies. Traditional Indonesian puppets and a shadow puppet screen were included in the curriculum, for students to create stories and characters and present drama productions to classmates and parents.



**Gamelan is the traditional musical ensemble of the Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese peoples of Indonesia, made up predominantly of percussion instruments. The most common instruments used are metallophones, gongs, and a set of hand-drums called kendang, which keep the beat.*

Article continues on next page....



...DCS GETTING TO KNOW YOU



So, what can happen when a music program becomes embedded in school curriculum and students become empowered to use learning as a creative tool? An afterschool Roots and Shoots activity reached out and wanted to write a story. Students were passionate about the idea of a baby bird seen trapped in plastic on the beach. They created a mother character who would free the trapped baby. Together, a story line became a script, and a drama became a production with the story-line built around units of learning. Each grade level would contribute a location and song for the mother bird's journey. Roots and Shoots authors became lead actors. The impact of the production on the local community caught the attention of Jane Goodall and the authors were invited to the Bali Green School, to meet her personally, and share their creative learning process. It was an amazing experience for all of us!

My family, including "the grandies" numbers 16 people. My sons and nephew met their wives at Ft. Lewis. They all became International Educators. Between them, they have lived in China, Ecuador, The Dominican Republic, Mozambique, Pakistan, Singapore, Bulgaria, Utah, AND Colorado! Although they live and work abroad, they consider Durango home in summers and sometimes visit for the holidays. This is where "THE POD" gathers and where I get to call home now. I feel like I won the lottery moving here!



Mark your Calendar

- March 16: "To The Stars," with the Durango Women's Choir, the Durango Choral Society, and special guests, the Telluride Choral Society
- March 17: Wellesley College Choir joined by the Durango Choral Society and Durango Women's Choir
- April 14: Durango Children's Chorale/Durango Youth Choir Spring Concert, with the Albuquerque Girl's Choir
- May 19: Cabaret and Gala
- June 2: Durango Women's Choir and the Santa Fe Women's Choir

For tickets and more information visit www.durangochoralsociety.org



KID'S CORNER

DCC/DYC had a great time at the Christmas program singing with DCS/DWC. It looks like Miss Amy had a good time too! The kids also sang in the 2023 Nutcracker at Fort Lewis.



All State Choir Update

For the second year in a row, Durango was represented at the Colorado Music Educators Association (CMEA) All State Festival. I don't know about you but I just love seeing the faces of these kids when they sing,

Elementary Choir

This event exists to provide an opportunity for singers to join voices in a large ensemble and sing fine choral literature under the baton of nationally recognized clinicians. Students join together to demonstrate their ability to meet the performance requirements of the Colorado Department of Education and to encourage each other in the unique art of choral singing.



Ten (!) DCC students traveled to Colorado Springs to the CMEA All-State Elementary Choir festival in January. Friday evening several singers had fun together at a trampoline park and then were up early Saturday morning for a full day of rehearsal with Dr. Ryan Sullivan of Arkansas State University. The event culminated in a concert at the Broadmoor Hotel on January 27th for a sold-out audience of 1,500 people.



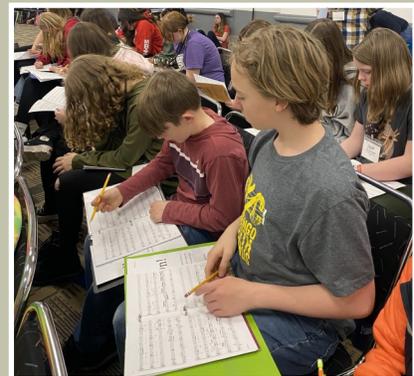
All State Choir Update, Continued

Middle School



Colorado Middle All State Choir (CMASC) offers 7th and 8th grade students in Colorado a chance to audition for one of three elite ensembles. CMASC requires students to submit a rigorous audition including singing Aura Lee, melodic sight-reading, aural recall, and major and minor scales and triads. Approximately 2,000 students across the state auditioned with 450 students selected to sing across three choirs.

Four of our middle school students qualified for All-State in Denver, February 7-10.



High School



Ash Acevedo auditioned for both Adams State Honor Choir in Alamosa and Western Slope Honor Choir in Gunnison—and aced both auditions, but decided to attend only Adams State in late February.

Congratulations to all our talented participants. We are also very grateful for the dedicated and involved parents who recognize how important and life-changing a musical education is for their children.



Rest in peace, dear **Alice Parker**, December 16, 1925–December 24, 2023.



Portrait of Alice Parker by Eduardo Montes-Bradley

Alice Parker was an American composer, arranger, conductor, and teacher. She authored five operas, eleven song-cycles, thirty-three cantatas, eleven works for chorus and orchestra, forty-seven choral suites, and more than forty hymns, all original compositions. Parker found early prominence as protégé of conductor Robert Shaw, with whom she collaborated as a researcher and arranger of folk songs, hymns, and spirituals for the Robert Shaw Chorale. (*From Wikipedia*)

Take a moment to recall and celebrate that the Durango Choral Society won her award a few years back, and Linda Mack, Dawn Spaeder, and Jeanne Bandy received it from her in person. This award was for COLLABORATION and centered around the joint flight of “*Requiem for Eagles*” with the Telluride singers and composer Dalen Stevens (post David Lingle).

Requiem for Eagles: An Elegy of Seasons

The Lone Wild Bird in lofty flight doth come to me this sacred night...where you fly I will follow...follow...follow.
Dalen Stevens/David Lingle

An excerpt:

Spring begins with gray:
the trees
a morgue of tangled limbs,
leaves like skeletons drift
into adagio light of water.

SWCO Gives Day 2023!

We are grateful for the individuals who so generously donated to the DCS in December through the SWCO Gives Day Campaign. Thank you for keeping the music alive, providing the highest quality music education and performances, and ensuring that the DCS will remain vibrant as we plan our 55th season of singing for you!

Thank you for your dedication to us and to our fellow SWCO organizations.

Courtney Ashmore	Gisela Lott
Abby Bowen and Rhys Schrock	Linda Mack
Karla Brown	Rochelle Mann
Susan and Wayne Caplan	Melanie McLean
Jeanie Child	Rhonda Muckerman
Andrew Currie	Timothy Pankowski
Alison Dance	Jan and John Patton
Paul and Cathy Duggan	Dianne and Richard Pratt
Jana Goldstein	Katherine Reynolds
Gail and Dick Grossman	Nancy Shock
Charles Hakes	David Smith
Martha Hall	Dawn Spaeder
Gerald and Linda Harris	Bill and Carol Thurman
Elsa Horowitz	Robert Winslow
Steve and Marti Kiely	

