



DURANGO CHORAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY, 2021

A Message from Artistic Director, Linda Mack Berven

As I gaze out the window on a brilliantly sunny January morning, I find myself reflecting on the events of the past year and on the theme for our winter and spring 2021 concerts. It seems inconceivable that our entire way of life has been turned upside down, but today I am filled with hope. Life is indeed **bright and beautiful**, and I am pleased to offer you the gift of uplifting and inspiring music to bring you joy and peace.

We WILL defeat this virus! We WILL sing together again! Although I have no idea what the new “normal” will look like, I do know that the arts will survive and thrive.

You, our devoted friends, have sustained us, encouraged us, and supported our musical efforts in spite of not being able to physically attend a live concert. I promise that you will see us together in person as soon as it is safe for all of us. We continue to follow the science and choose facts over fear.

In the meantime, I hope that our three musical offerings in the next few months will lift your spirits and refresh your feelings of gratitude, hope, and anticipation of good times to come.

The Durango Choral Society’s four multigenerational choirs will open our winter/spring season on March 5 with titles including *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, *Ain’a That Good News*, *Make Our Garden Grow*, *The Eyes of All Wait Upon Thee*, and *When the Saints Go Marching In*. Yes, the entire program is designed to bring you hope and joy!

Everything on the program is sure to delight and inspire you. The program highlight will be a brand new virtual performance of *How Can I Keep From Singing*, recorded individually by our adult singers and skillfully mixed together by our technical guru Gordon Thomas.

Did you know that the Choral Society has travelled all around the world? On April 23 we will release *Around the World with the Durango Choral Society*, with never before seen or heard audio and video performance and rehearsal footage from our concert tours to far flung places including Salzburg, Prague, Greece, Budapest, Hawaii, Innsbruck, and even Carnegie Hall! As an added bonus, the Durango Women’s Choir will present music from Australia, Brazil, South and West Africa, Ireland, and Israel.

When is Mother’s Day this year? Beginning on Mom’s special day, May 9, you are in for a very special treat. Since we cannot host our annual *Cabaret* this year, we will bring a rousing, joyous performance to your living rooms with soloists, choirs, and jazz combo taking a wild romp through Broadway, Opera, and the Great American Songbook. I might even sing a few selections from the police blotter to spice up the evening. Watch for it.

Thank you so much for your continued support and encouragement. You have kept up our spirits, kept us singing, and filled us with hope for a **bright and beautiful** future.

With love, hope, and joy,

Linda



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KID'S CORNER

My name is Agatha Dos Santos and I always loved to sing. I started choir when I was 5 years old. In the choir we sing in a group with piano or *a cappella**. My favorite thing in choir is singing in the Nutcracker show because I like to sing while the performers are dancing ballet. I missed the choir camp this year, I always enjoyed playing capture the flag, fun board games and outside in the hot tubs. Some of my hobbies are: hockey, horseback riding, and swimming.

*Editor's note:

From Wikipedia:

"A *cappella* is Italian for "in the manner of the chapel." This music is group or solo performance without instrumental accompaniment, or a piece intended to be performed in this way.

A cappella could be as old as humankind. Research suggests that singing and vocables may have been what early humans used to communicate before the invention of language. The earliest piece of sheet music is thought to have originated from times as early as 2000 B.C."



Parents:

Here are two websites designed to engage your kids by providing free and printable music quizzes. Have a Zoom music trivia party!

www.musicfun.net.au

www.knowalot.org

DCS Online Concert Release Dates

March 5	Bright and Beautiful
April 23	Around The World with the Durango Choral Society
May 9	Cabaret

Mark your calendar and visit our website durangochoralsociety.org for more information.

DCS Member Profile: Jan Patton

The Gift of Music

How did we become the “musical family?” I asked myself this question when asked to write an article about our family from this perspective. I think it all started with John’s and my upbringing.

John was raised as a P.K. (preacher’s kid). His dad started his career as an itinerant Montana prairie preacher who traveled from church to church (or campfire to campfire) with guitar in hand, preached, and sang camp songs. Jim, John’s dad, also dabbled on the piano and trumpet. Many of John’s family gatherings ended up at the piano with the whole crew singing hymns or carols! So, it is no wonder John ended up graduating as a music (trumpet) major.

It was my mother who provided the musical backdrop to my life. She had the gift of a beautiful, powerful (for her 5 ft. 3 in. stature) mezzosoprano voice. At 4 years of age, she could be found performing in front of friends, family, or on stage with her older sister accompanying her. It was just expected that my siblings and I would sing in church junior choir, take instrument lessons when they were provided at school, or fall asleep to a stack of classical LPs turning on the record player. I ended up as a Biology/Education major, but always was a member of university bands and choirs, and secured my first teaching job in Alaska as a K-12 music teacher! And I told them I was a biology major!



John starting Katie early with lessons, 1992

I met John when I took a sabbatical leave from teaching in the interior of Alaska and moved to Juneau, to teach science. The local Big Band heard a trumpet player had arrived in town and in short order I was asked to join the group. With great trepidation I joined this community group and sitting in the 1st trumpet position was John! I may have taught music using my voice with my trumpet in hand, but

had not played in a group since college.

But I was graciously accepted as a part of the group, and that’s how I met my husband!

Juneau (much like Durango) offered lots of musical opportunities—church choir, large community choir, the Big Band, Juneau Symphony, and even the pit for high school musicals. Oh, yes, we did have day jobs! So, when our children, Katie and Jonathan, came along, we just brought them with us! This was their early indoctrination to life in the Patton family as involved musicians. When they became school age, we moved down to “the Lower 48” and settled in Durango. John connected with the Fort Lewis Jazz Band through Dr. Tim Farrell, and I showed up for a rehearsal of the Durango Choral Society and asked Dr. Linda Mack if I could sing with them. This was in 1999! We are still a part of these groups.

As for our children, I could write pages and pages but will stick with the highlights. When we moved here, we signed up both kids for Durango Children’s Chorale—Katie was 9 and Jonathan was 7. Part of our educational philosophy was that music was a language and, therefore, a necessary part of their education. They needed to learn how to read music, sing, and learn an instrument. Under Dr. Shelly Mann’s tutelage, both children learned much and became music critics. At concerts Katie would poke me and say, “Mom, they are not singing their vowels correctly!” By middle school Katie was a talented reed player, so one day John brought her to a jazz band



Katie in San Juan Symphony, 2017

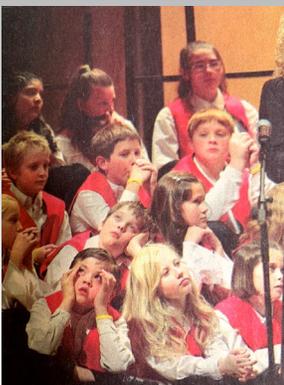
rehearsal and had her play for Dr. Mark Walters, who ended up taking her on as a student. She attended and graduated from Fort Lewis with a B.A. in Music Education and one of Dr. Walter’s prize saxophone players. Katie also student-taught her senior year for the Aztec School

District and was offered a job before her tenure was up. What was offered as a part-time choir position became full-time 6-12 choir and high school reed specialist. In the 4 years Katie held her position there,



Jan (with Katie) in Juneau Marching Band, 1996

she reorganized a broken program into competitive-worthy choral groups teaching them theory, how to sing and breathe correctly (oh yes, and how to sing their vowels!), discipline, and to love music. She has since taken a choir position at a middle school in Farmington. She has yet to meet any of her students.



Jonathan (mid-right),
Children's Chorale, 2006

Our son, Jonathan, has his own unique story. For months, he would go to the high school band room after we dropped him off and proceed to practice. We did not know exactly what he was practicing, but happy he was so dedicated. Come to find out it was All-State music. He was awarded 1st chair in the 1st section!

Amazing for a sophomore! But this told me something about our son. Yes, he was musically gifted, but he was also competitive, goal-oriented, and dedicated. So, where would this get him?

He was assigned 2nd trombone parts in the Fort Lewis Concert and Jazz Bands as a high school student, then attended FLC after high school graduation as a Music/Business major. But in the 3rd year things took a turn. He signed up for choir with Dr. Charissa Chiavriolotti and he loved it! That year he told us to make sure to come to their Christmas Concert (like we missed any of the kids' performances!!) because he had tried out for a solo and got it. John and I were there at the Community Concert Hall when he stepped forward from the group on stage, opened his mouth, and out came this pure, clear as a bell, in perfect pitch, high A! It was stunningly beautiful. After that, Jonathan kept singing, taking advantage of the opportunities coming his way. He ended up abandoning his business aspirations as well



Our Pirate King on stage at FLC, 2017

as his trombone and changed to Music Performance—vocal. During his 4th year, he auditioned for the part of the Pirate King in Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance" and the rest is history for this lyric

baritone. His vocal coach Kerry Ginger helped him apply to several universities for master's programs and he accepted the one offered by the University of New Mexico. The summer after his first year there, he auditioned and was awarded a scholarship to sing with Opera in the Ozarks. He walked away from this



Opera in the Ozarks:
Little Women, 2019

eye-opening experience with the award for Best Supporting Actor, but also an understanding of what life as a professional opera singer was going to be like—competitive, grueling, ... but rewarding!

Jonathan finished his Masters last May. But it was 2020, so NO graduation, NO singing with the New Mexico Symphony (his reward for winning a concerto competition), NO job opportunities, NO summer Opera in the Ozarks. Poor timing for a vocal performer. But as luck would have it, the University of Northern Texas called and asked Jonathan to apply to their Artists Diploma Program. They needed a strong baritone, had heard of Jonathan, and he needed a way to continue to sing and increase his repertoire. A perfect match—for the time being. However, he is tired of being dirt-poor, so has submitted 11 applications to opera companies throughout the country with his new audition material (which can be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/6MbbXQEICKQ>). So, now it is a waiting game. Jonathan is our wild card and it will be interesting to see where he ends up. It's been an exciting, albeit bumpy, ride so far!

So, yes, we are a musical family and this art form has played a significant and rewarding part in our family's life. Durango, as a community that appreciates the arts, has been a wonderful place to raise Katie and Jonathan. Our children have been blessed with the "gift of music," but perhaps the greatest gift is our children—their dedication and passion in pursuing their dreams and sharing those dreams with others.



From our family to yours, be happy, healthy, and safe in 2021!