

## **NCS State of the Union - 2016**

### **Highlights of this year:**

- New space!
- New members! 20 in total this year
- New music! Well... new to us music!
- For me:
  - “Climb to the top of the highest mountain” with GNCC
  - “Have yourself a merry little Christmas”
  - The opening measures of the Hallelujah!
  - Kirsten in the “Choral Fantasy”!
  - The fact that I can continue to grow with you. That I can sit in front of you and discuss what I believe about choral music making - about communal music making - and that you will come along with me because you trust that I am taking us somewhere. The fact that our audiences have responded and come with us on this journey, as well.

### **Last year we identified a list of achievements we had in mind for this season. We wanted:**

- To be even more musical, confident, and expressive! And to grow vocally and in our musicianship and musicality
  - The Winter season was a challenge because of how many small pieces were on the program. It required a lot of focus and concentration to be able to change styles and repertoire so quickly. This was an adjustment for us, but we handled it successfully.
  - The Spring was a challenge because of Beethoven! But he did not prevail! A program of entirely new music for the choral society. Beethoven was challenging from not only this perspective, but from a perspective of: fast tempos, long fugues (the man didn't know when to shut up), great stamina, and tons of energy! I can't help feeling like this was a watershed moment for us - that it will launch us into great things next year!
- To expand our concept of what communal music-making can be
  - This season, I believe we continued along the path to make our music beyond notes and rhythms and to imbue it with the collective spirit of this organization made up of extraordinary individuals.
- To engage and expand our audiences
  - Winter Concert '15: 1025 tickets distributed with a house count of 833, and a total of \$17,612.50
  - Spring Concert '16: 837 tickets distributed with a house count of 662, and total of \$14,500 in ticket sales
  - Approx. Total Ticket Sales '14-'15: \$29,000
  - Approx. Total Ticket Sales '15-'16: \$32,000

**We also identified areas of growth would allow us to achieve these successes:**

- Confidence and trust in our abilities, in our process, and in our product

This remains an area of growth for us. It is a long journey; yet, I feel we made great strides in the Beethoven program, specifically. I saw many more eyes during the concert; I felt much more able to shape in the moment. Your commitment to the music was high and more palpable by the audience. I'm sure you received as many comments as I did from audience members.

- Musicianship: we have planned three musicianship classes for any who wish to attend each concert sequence.

These will continue and be expanded upon. We hope many of you will continue to join us for these exciting sessions.

- Outreach: we wish to continue to be vital and important in our community; to continue working with the Molin Children's Chorus and other local music organizations.

Our success with new members and our continued collaborations are in no small part due to the tireless work of our own Lori Coppen, among many others.

We will partner with GNCC again during the Winter Concert '16.

We will have an exciting new collaboration with the Newburyport Chamber Music Festival in Summer of '17. More on this later...

**What we still need to work on:**

- Consistency in rehearsal: what is learned in one rehearsal, STAYS learned for the next one

We continue to work on this. It gets better! More and more of us realize that we can grow faster and get farther, if we review our music in between rehearsals. I would add to this that requiring of yourselves to be responsible for the mundane things about music - notes, rhythms, CUTOFFS, entrances, etc. - will allow us to shape and grow and get after all the things we desperately care about in this organization: our music, our audiences, and our experiences.

- Increased community and community engagement: we want more of you involved however you wish to be! We want to know you, for you to know each other, and for this to be a community family, not just a musical family.

Our new space helps with this!

The Yard Sale will be a great opportunity for this.

You are here tonight and that is fantastic.

The board is currently embarking upon a long range planning process that will begin tomorrow night. After the first phase, many of you will be encouraged to participate in this plan as we look to the future of NCS. If you are interested be sure to let people on the board know, so that we can engage you and you can be a voice that shapes the future of this organization. We are only as strong as our membership. There are exciting potentials on the horizon for NCS, and I cannot wait to see what we come up with!

- Membership: share the joy of NCS with those around you. Bring in people to rehearsals, invite singers to join us, don't keep all the fun to yourselves!

Our new singers this semester were fantastic! We brought in singers from more diverse backgrounds, with greater skills, and they were a great contribution to this season. As you begin to think about next season, see who you could bring in. I don't want Ralph to get bored with how to situate people in the community center.

### **What are the highlights of next year?**

Summer 2016:

Faure Requiem. Come join your friends and bring friends to our annual summer sing, August 22nd at 7 pm right here at the Greek Orthodox Church!

Winter 2016:

We continue with our panoply concert – something for everyone! – this winter. Entitled Sounds of the Season, we will explore our serious side with Vivaldi's immaculate and transcendent *Gloria* with our NCS full orchestra returning. We will flirt with our playful side with fun works such as The Twelve Days of Christmas AND The Twelve Days AFTER Christmas – what could be better than a musical setting describing the aftermath of the holiday season ;)? GNCC joins us again with some works of their own, as well as joining us in Bob Chilcott's beautiful *For Him All Stars Have Shone*. In addition, we'll explore current choral superstar Ola Gjeilo's beautiful *Ubi Caritas III* with string orchestra. It wouldn't be a Winter Concert without the audience sings – this time with full orchestra! – and a new NCS Winter tradition: We will end the concert with *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas*. I hope to make this an NCS audience favorite – which it was – and for it to be a holiday anthem for us for years to come.

Spring 2017:

The spring will be a departure for us. It will be an exciting and invigorating new journey. Not only will we perform another concert filled with music, which NCS has never before performed from a composer never before performed by NCS, we will endeavor to have a concert experience that is not only the typical concert experience. NCS will feature British composer James Whitbourn's *Annelies* with amplified violin, cello, clarinet, and piano and soprano soloist. Whitbourn's oratorio is the only musical setting based on the story of Anne Frank and her ubiquitous story during the Holocaust. Commissioned and premiered in 2005 by the Jewish Music Institute librettist Melanie Challenger has crafted Anne Frank's story into a dramatic and emotional journey for the performers and the audience, alike. The music features styles that are classical and challenging as well as a cabaret influence, depicting the musical interests of the time period. This work was premiered to huge acclaim, and we look forward to bringing it to Newburyport in 2017. The concert will also feature a lecture/discussion by leading experts in the fields of music and history. I look forward to this piece being a joyful celebration of the glory of

the human spirit and a solemn reminder of the hazards of political, social, and religious division. We end the concert with Whitbourn's healing *All Shall Be Amen and Alleluia* so as to transcend the horrors of history and underline our belief in the power of the human spirit to triumph.

Summer 2017:

NCS will embark upon a collaboration with the Newburyport Chamber Music Festival. A reduced group of NCS singers will sing in concerts with the Chamber Music Festival on August 19th in Portsmouth, NH and August 20th in Newburyport. The concert will feature a newly commissioned work by Philadelphia composer, Kile Smith. Mr. Smith has been commissioned by some of the most important new music ensembles in the country including The Crossing, Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble, and the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia. This commission for string quartet, organ, children's chorus, and chorus will further expand our reach in the Newburyport area and partner us with one of the most dynamic and interesting composers writing today.