



The Voice of Orpheus

The Newsletter of Sons of Orpheus, the Male Choir of Tucson

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 2 • SPRING 2012

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Spring Concert Program—High Brow to Low Brow

Sons of Orpheus will begin our twenty-first spring season with two pieces from Russian sacred literature: Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Bogoroditsa Dyevo* and Alexander Gretchaninoff's *Otche Nash*—both sung in the Russian Orthodox Church Slavonic dialect.

Two poems by Rudyard Kipling will follow: *The Seal Lullaby*, set to music by the popular contemporary composer Eric Whitacre, followed by *Danny Deever*, as composed by Walter Damrosch.

The third section is the red meat for us: three famous selections from the opera world. First, an *Ave Maria* adapted for Sons of Orpheus by our fellow singer Michael Fraser from the symphonic intermezzo in Pietro Mascagni's best-known opera, *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Our violinist Nicole Skaggs will pitch in. Then you'll hear *Vedi! Le fosche notturne spoglie*, (popularly known as the Anvil Chorus), from Giuseppe Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. Be forewarned. No pots and wooden spoons for us. We're using real anvils, real hammers.

We'll close the first half of the concert with a rendition of Giacomo Puccini's famous aria *Nessun Dorma* as arranged for Sons of Orpheus by Vern Williamsen, one of the choir's founding members. After the intermission Nicole Skaggs will accompany us in *Cantique de Jean Racine* by Gabriel Fauré, and we'll accompany her in *Flight of the Bumble Bee* by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov. We play the latter on kazoos, watching carefully in case Nicole's violin catches on fire.

Three Italian pieces will comprise the next section: *Tiritomba*, a lively Neopolitan folk song; *Mamma Son Tanto Felice*, a popular song from the 1920s, sung by practically every singer with an Italian name right up to Andrea Boccelli today; and *Musical Risotto*, a delicious serving of musical terminology by Jonathan Willcox, arranged for Orpheus by choir member Jim Filipek.

SONS OF ORPHEUS
THE MALE CHOIR OF TUCSON
GRAYSON HIRST, FOUNDER/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

21st Anniversary
GALA SPRING CONCERTS

SUNDAY APRIL 15 2012 3PM
DESERTVIEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
39900 S. Clubhouse Drive, SaddleBrooke

SUNDAY APRIL 22 2012 3PM
VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
2800 S. Camino del Sol, Green Valley
A benefit for the Greater GV Community Foundation

SUNDAY APRIL 29 2012 3PM
CENTER FOR THE ARTS, PROSCENIUM THEATRE
Pima Community College West Campus
2202 W. Anklam Road, Tucson

Will Houshlin, Blind Eye Designs www.blind-eye-designs.com

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Continued on page 2, "Arizona's Centennial Celebration,"

Arizona's Centennial Celebration (continued from page 1)



PHOTO: BOB COUCH

At this point we'll go backstage to change into our vests and Stetsons, but you won't be left alone. We'll send out soprano Christi Amonson and pianist Steve Abramson to

perform *The Soprano, or Hands Off!*—applesauce made famous by Victor Borge and Marilyn Mulvey from the aria *Caro Nome* in Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

The final five songs on the program will come at you right out of a Sonoran desert sunset: *Ghost Riders in the Sky*, *Cool Water*, *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*, *26 Men*, and *The 3:10 to Yuma*. While we sing, you'll see photographs of historic Arizona on a screen overhead. The authenticity of the first three songs on this list is certain, for they were written by two of the greatest of the cowboy song writers: Stan Jones and Bob Nolan, both of whom

had strong ties to southeastern Arizona. Jones was born in Douglas in the newly minted state in 1914 and laid to rest there in 1963. Nolan moved to Tucson at age 13 and graduated from Tucson High School in 1928.

Although the final two numbers on the cowboy list were not written by Arizonans, as you listen you may get a whiff of *Larrea tridentata* (creosote bush) after a rain, for the songs were arranged by denizens of the desert: former members of Sons of Orpheus, Maurice Hill and Vern Williamsen. We'll sing you out the door with Dale Evans's iconic song for Roy Rogers, *Happy Trails*.

Interfaith Commemorative Service by Charles Dickson

"Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, Lord of love" rang throughout the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Augustine in downtown Tucson as the Sons of Orpheus concluded an interfaith service in the afternoon of January 8, 2012. Hundreds of people had packed the church to remember the bloody morning a year earlier when a gunman's deadly rampage shook our community and shocked our nation.

Girls in white dresses and red sashes danced down the aisle as a song called *Hero in the Dark* played, and a pastor called on everyone to celebrate the lives of the people lost and those who acted heroically

during the shooting that left six dead and thirteen wounded, including U.S. Representative Gabriele Giffords.

The names of those killed were read as a bell rang for each of them, and friends and family members walked down the aisle with red roses and placed them in a vase at the front of the church. "We remember, we remember, we remember with grateful hearts," those gathered chanted together, standing, many closing their eyes.

In the crowd were survivors, relatives of those who had not survived the shooting, and other mourners, including Arizona Governor Jan Brewer.

Leaders of Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh communities spoke, prayed, and read from sacred texts during the hour-long service, which ended with our leading the assembled people in a closing hymn of trust and joy and hope, adapted from the "Ode to Joy" in the final movement of Ludwig von Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Dressed in our black tuxedos, we sang the first two stanzas alone and then led everyone in the next two stanzas, ending with "Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life."

OUR POSSE

First Tenors:

Brandon Dale
Eugene Friesen
Martin Hall
David Hernandez
John Kamper
Tom McGorray
Bruce Mortensen
James Naughton
Jim Tomlinson
Jerry Villano
Dick Wroldsen

Second Tenors:

Dave Burns
Darwin Hall
Jim Hogan
Van Honeman
Bob Kurtz
Luciano Marazzo
Richard Miller
Mike Negrete
Doug Nordell
Chris Richied
Ken Rosenblatt
Larry Ross
Larry Sayre

Baritones:

Mike Bradley
Bob Couch
Terry DeGrenier
Chuck Dickson
John Evans
Jim Filipek
Cameron Fordyce
Michael Fraser
David Harrington
Frank Hartline
Jim Kitchak
Ned Mackey
Samson McCrady
Rick Sack

Basses:

Jeffrey Handt
Tom Kane
Jess Koehn
George Ledbetter
Gary Smyth
Eugene Stevick
Thomas Wentzel
Woon-Yin Wong



The Year of the Dragon

Sons of Orpheus joined three other choirs: the Southern Arizona Women’s Chorus, the Tucson Sino Choir, and the University of Arizona Faculty Choir; as well as the Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra to perform the final three numbers of the Chinese New Year celebration at Centennial Hall on Sunday, January 23. By all accounts it was a fabulous show, full of colorful costumes, dancers, a wonderful dragon carried by a dozen dancers, and two great lions. Waiting either outside or in the dark backstage, most of the singers missed everything except the amazing acrobat who started his act as we filed silently onto the unlit risers at the back of the stage.

*“WHAT
WOULD THESE
GUYS THINK
OF OUR
CHINESE?”*

After the acrobat drew the last gasp from the audience, and from us, director Linus Lerner raised his baton. We opened our folders to sing two songs in Chinese, "Sky Road" and "Flying Song," composed by Sino Choir director Larry Lang, then one in English, "God Bless America."

As the lights came up before we sang, some of us were disconcerted to find ourselves standing directly behind the men of the Tucson Sino Choir. What would these guys think of our Chinese! We had worked hard on it during our own rehearsals and in two rehearsals with the combined



choirs, but we had never been quite so close to native Mandarin speakers.

We must have done well enough because they turned to congratulate us and wish us a Happy New Year after the last "home sweet home" died away in the applause.

Photo: Xiaobin Wu

RIP Art Dumes

*REQUIEM
AETERNAM
DONA EIS,
DOMINE, ET
LUX PERPETUA
LUCEAT EIS*

Our joyous Christmas season was interrupted by a sudden performance at a memorial service at the Adair Funeral Home’s Dodge Chapel. Art Dumes, a member of Orpheus from 2003 through 2008, was killed in a traffic accident on December 12th. Art was a jolly guy, a lightning-fast punster, always fun to be around. Among the speakers at the service was Joel Ireland, Art’s

teammate on the Rincon High School track and field team back in the early 70s. Joel told the story of a contest Art cooked up with another shot putter. The two turned on all the showers in the locker room, lathered up with soap, lay on their backs on the floor with their feet up on the wall, and pushed off to see who could slide the farthest. The story got a laugh and a tear or

two at the same time, for it reminded us that we are going to miss Art.

—N.M.



ART DUMES
PHOTO: IVÁN BERGER

The Dog Who Loved Music



XAVIER
PHOTO: BOB COUCH

One of the drop-ins at Monday's full rehearsal for the San Xavier concerts had four legs. He wandered through the audience, a full house, getting his ears scratched and his tummy rubbed.

We got a better look at him when he visited again after the six o'clock concert Tuesday evening. He found his way into the sacristy where some singers were stoking up for the eight o'clock performance. He was a handsome animal with a gold coat and gold eyes.

Iván Berger designed the last nine of our newsletters. At this very moment he is probably singing with the jungle birds in his new home in Costa Rica. Iván's leaving created a big hole in our on-stage and off-stage activities. We miss Iván and his wife Patricia, but all our lives go on.

Friendly too, especially with those who might have let their attention stray from their dinners. He may have loved food almost as much as music, for he seemed to enjoy everything from tacos to tuna fish.

John Vidal, the Mission's facilities manager, had noticed the stray hanging around for several days and had done his best to get some food into him, at one point serving up five tortillas. Still, the canine aficionado looked a bit hollow that night in the sacristy, a night that would give him a moniker. Grayson Hirst suggested a name that just happened to be on his mind right then: Xavier.

Tuesday night had been cold and rainy, as concert goers can attest. John was loath to shoo the dog out when he locked up for the night, so he accidentally forgot about him, hoping Xavier would stay still enough not to set off the mo-

tion detector and rouse the Franciscan brothers from their warm beds. Happy to be inside, Xavier apparently curled up and slept the night through with nary a twitch.

Better things were to come! Ken Yukl is the owner of Allen Organs Arizona. Each year Ken provides an excellent electronic organ and the sound system for the San Xavier concerts, and this year he played the preludes and postludes. Ken is a dog lover. He couldn't stand to think of Xavier amongst the coyotes and the pack of nearly feral village dogs, so he took him home after the Wednesday concerts.

Actually, not quite home. Ken installed Xavier at his shop. A dog's life? Xavier now roams a spacious, fenced compound, keeping company with a female blue merle Queensland heeler named Bindi, brought just for him from the animal shelter. They share a heated lean-to, and best of all, there's organ music to listen to all day long.

Hail and Farewell



PHOTO: LAURA RUBBO

Bob Couch is a new baritone who apparently can't say no. He self-describes as a "reasonably savvy technophile" who agreed both to de-

sign the newsletter (our long-time readers will notice a new look) and edit the Spring Program booklet, another of Iván's former tasks.

In 1650 Thomas Fuller wrote, "It is always darkest before the Day dawneth." A more contemporary way to express this notion is to say, "Sometimes you get lucky."

*"HE MAY HAVE
LOVED FOOD
ALMOST AS
MUCH AS MUSIC,
FOR HE SEEMED
TO ENJOY
EVERYTHING
FROM TACOS TO
TUNA."*

A CHANGING OF
THE GUARD



“SHE WAS A PETITE WOMAN WITH A BIG VOICE, DARK AND SMOKY, RICH AND EARTHY, GLORIOUS, A VOICE MORE LIKELY TO COME FROM A LINEBACKER THAN A FLAMENCO DANCER.”



APR 17, 1919 - OCT 13, 2005
ONCE AGAIN BESIDE HER BELOVED
HUSBAND CHARLES
(PHOTO IN PUBLIC DOMAIN)

Early in January Orpheus began work on the *Sanctus* from Charles Gounod’s *St. Cecilia Mass*. The piece begins with a tenor solo that tickled a synapse sleeping somewhere in the darkness inside my

An Awakening

skull. Within the first couple of bars after the choir joined the soloist, an alarm clock began to ring as in a distant room. When our soloist resumed “Pleni sunt coeli et terra, gloria tua,” Frances Boardman awoke and marched into my head, fully formed, singing!

Frances wore her black hair pulled back in a bun like a flamenco dancer. She was a petite woman with a big voice, dark and smoky, rich and earthy, glorious, a voice more likely to come from a linebacker than a flamenco

dancer. Frances was the star of the Trinity Episcopal Church choir in Bend, Oregon back in the 50’s when she nailed that song into my brain.

Brandon Dale will sing the solo in the *Sanctus* in Rome at St. Peter’s Basilica. Brandon is a lyric tenor who looks like a linebacker. The sound that issues from his throat is glorious in its own way, clear as a mountain stream and smooth as honey.

I imagine that Frances will stay awake to hear it. —N.M.

Inside a Virtual Choir by Thomas Wentzel

SONS OF ORPHEUS BASS
THOMAS WENTZEL
PARTICIPATED IN THE
MOST RECENT OF ERIC
WHITACRE’S VIRTUAL
CHOIRS. THIS IS HIS
ACCOUNT OF THAT
EXPERIENCE.

YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT
GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING ERIC
WHITACRE, HEAR HIS MUSIC,
WATCH HIS PAST VIRTUAL
CHOIR VIDEOS, AND SIGN UP
FOR THE NEXT ONE AT
WWW.ERICWHITACRE.COM.

I first encountered the choral music of Eric Whitacre on a radio broadcast several years ago. I was struck by his ability to set poetic text to lush and lyrical music in a way that the two seemed to have been forever fused. In 2009 Whitacre created a “virtual choir” by posting a video to the Web of himself conducting one of his choral works, *Lux Arumque*. In response people submitted videos of themselves singing vocal parts. The experiment drew 245 videos from 185 singers in 12 countries. The final video received over one million Web viewings within two months.

The project was such a success that Whitacre took on a more difficult piece. In 2011 a second virtual choir performed Whitacre’s *Sleep* in a

starry space populated with the faces of 2052 singers from 58 countries. Mesmerized and moved by the video, I vowed to participate in the next project. Virtual Choir 3 was announced this past December.

Whitacre selected his *Water Night*, a 14-part *a cappella* setting of a poem by Octavio Paz. For several days I rehearsed this piece while watching Whitacre’s conducting video and listening on headphones to a synchronized audio track. I rapidly discovered that *Water Night* was not an easy piece. It was daunting to sing with supported voice, expressive dynamics, exact pitch, clear diction, accurate cutoffs and poise. It was quite unlike any other choral experience, since neither the conductor nor other live singers

were present. The beauty of Whitacre’s harmonies and Paz’s lyrics kept me going.

Several dozens of takes later, I submitted my best renditions of the four lowest parts. I had to have faith that even though I recorded alone, I would blend well with the other singers just as one would attempt to do in a live choir.

In the end, 3746 videos were submitted from 2945 people in 73 countries. The resulting video will be unveiled in April, and eventually released as an immersive audio-visual art exhibit in cities around the world. Listeners can literally walk through the virtual choir. I feel proud to have taken part in Whitacre’s goal to build a global musical community. I eagerly await future virtual choir projects.

Profiling Our Treasurer, John Kamper

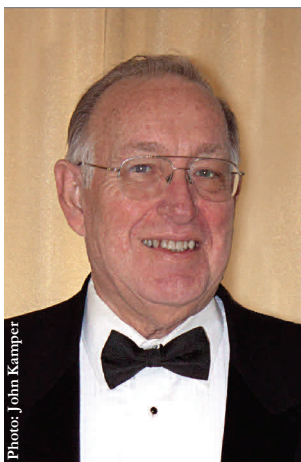


Photo: John Kamper

OUR FINANCE WIZARD

John Kamper, treasurer for the choir's executive committee, is a mover and shaker, not only in the ordinary sense of the term but especially if you take a mover to mean a person who has lived in many places, and a shaker to mean a person who has, for the past 19 years, settled down to shake the dust off his boots in Tucson.

John grew up in Chicago, where he went to Catholic grade school. His dad wanted him to enroll in a technical school after eighth grade, but John chose to leave home to go to seminary at Society of the Divine Word in East Troy, Wisconsin. He was a seminarian for 11 years through high school, novitiate, college, and a year of post graduate work in theology, after which he chose to leave his studies and go out into the world to find a job. One of his teachers helped him secure a position teaching religion at a high school in Chicago. Although it was a long road, many jobs, and many years back to the front of a classroom, it seems that teaching was what John was meant to do.

While working for the First National Bank of Chicago in 1971, John earned an MBA with a major in finance from Loyola University. The bank-

ing business took him from Chicago to Anchorage, Tucson, Las Vegas, Reno, and Sacramento.

John and his wife Donna decided to settle down in Tucson and turn to teaching and writing about finance, accounting, and computers. Orpheus is happy to have a man of such experience keeping our finances on the straight and narrow.

John's musical acumen is important to us too. During his high school and college years, John, a first tenor, was a member of the scola, or school choir, rising to the positions of cantor, assistant director, and director through the years. He also played clarinet, tenor sax, and guitar. He credits his love for music and singing to his early years when his family sang together while his mom played the piano, and to Fr. Murnane, his seminary choir master.

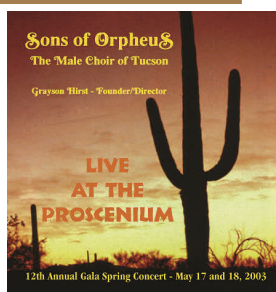
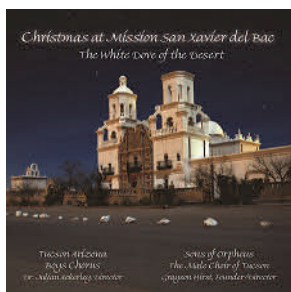
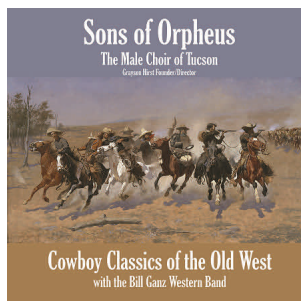
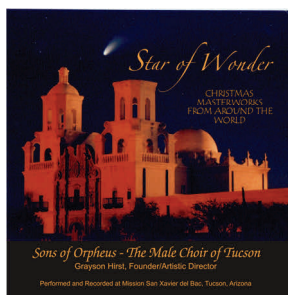
HE COULD PLAY WITH HIS RIGHT OR LEFT HAND BUT NOT TOGETHER.

Another musical aspect of John's upbringing took place in his junior year in college. John took a piano course at DePaul University. He found that although he could play with his right and his left hand separately, he couldn't do both at the same time. He was given a gentleman's C with the proviso that he wouldn't tell anyone his teacher's name. That suited John just fine. As a tenor, he only needs to play the treble clef to practice his part.

Sons of Orpheus CDs For Sale

We proudly present our most Current Line-Up of CDs, which features our newest album, *Star of Wonder*, Christmas Masterpieces from Around the World, performed and recorded live at Mission San Xavier del Bac, as guests of the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Our CD repertoire includes sacred music from around the world (sung in English, Latin, Italian, French, Ladino, Church Slavonic and even Nigerian), classical choral favorites, popular passages from many operas, and of course the best cowboy songs from the Western music genre.



CD PRICES

\$10 EACH FOR THE FIRST
\$5 EACH THEREAFTER

YOU CAN ALSO ORDER YOUR FAVORITE CDs ON OUR WEB SITE:
SONSOFORPHEUS.ORG



Orpheus Supports Arts Groups Nationwide



PEOPLE ARE
USUALLY SURPRISED
TO LEARN THAT THE
OUTREACH MISSION
OF SONS OF
ORPHEUS IS
FINANCIAL SUPPORT
TO NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATIONS AND
CHARITIES.

As a member of Spirit of the Gulf, the Sweet Adelines group in Fort Myers (Florida), Ann M. Beers is required to sell at least \$100 worth of advertising for her choir's program booklet. She hates to ask for money, so this year she paid the \$100 herself and created the ad you see above. To tell the truth, Sons of Orpheus supported Spirit of the Gulf only with our best wishes.

But during our 2011 and 2012 season we have given serious support to such organizations as the Community Food Bank (please see article on the back page), the Southern Arizona Veterans Association, the Patronato San Xavier, "Tucson Meet Yourself," and the Chinese Cultural Center.

Like all not-for-profit arts organizations, we apply for grants and solicit funds to keep our heads above water. We pay dues and sell concert

tickets, CDs, and raffle tickets. (See below.) Now we come to you with hat in hand and suggestions in mind.

- **Our General Fund** helps us pay our director, our accompanist, our sheet music and printing bills, outside soloists (no sopranos in the choir), and charges for rehearsal and performance space.

- **Our Scholarship Fund** helps our student singers pay their way for this summer's concert tour. Our young singers are not just waiting for a handout. They are giving recitals on their own to raise money for the trip.

Please let us know where you want your donation to go by indicating "General" or "Scholarship" on the memo line. We are a 501(c)(3) organization. We will send you a formal acknowledgment of your gift.

- **Our CDs.**

We are offering a special! The first one is just \$10, after that they're \$5 apiece. See page 6 for the descriptions. CD mailers hold one or two CDs. Please add \$4 shipping and handling for each CD mailer. Be sure your address is on your check and write CD on the memo line.

- **Our Annual Fleming's Raffle: This one prize is for our readers only!**

Use the envelope to buy raffle tickets for a \$100 gift certificate from Fleming's Prime Steakhouse and Wine Bar, 6360 N. Campbell Ave. You'll get one chance for each \$10 you donate. Winners will be notified at our Proscenium Theatre concert on April 29. but you don't have to be present to win. Write the word *raffle* on the memo line of your check.

Want to get in touch with us?

- By e-mail: contact1@sonsoforpheus.org
- By mail: Sons of Orpheus, P.O. Box 31552 Tucson, AZ 85751
- By phone: Grayson Hirst, 520 621-1649
- Our website: www.sonsoforpheus.org

Name That Tune (Or at Least the Composer)

Our front page has a musical banner arranged vertically along the left margin that is an excerpt from a real piece of music. Can you name it? Who was the com-

poser? Hint: The composer wrote over 600 pieces in this musical form. Email us the correct answer and win an Orpheus CD of your choice. Page 6 shows

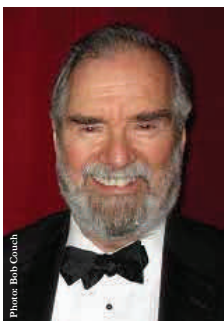
the CD lineup. No choir members are eligible for the prizes (but can submit their answers for recognition). The answer will appear in the next issue.

Sons of Orpheus
The Male Choir of Tucson
PO Box 31552
Tucson AZ 85751

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"TUCSON'S AMBASSADORS OF SONG"



**GRAYSON HIRST,
DIRECTOR**

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Tucson AZ 85751
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contact1@sonsoforpheus.org

Our Sponsors

Sons of Orpheus is supported in part by grants from the Tucson Pima Arts Council and the Arizona Commission on the Arts, with funding from the State of Arizona and the National Endowment for the Arts.



***We're on the web at
www.sonsoforpheus.org***

Orpheus & The Food Bank

The final numbers are in. In 2011 Orpheus put a check for \$9,020 in the Christmas stocking of the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona. The addition of nearly three hundred pounds of food meant it had to be a big stocking!

Some of our contribution came from ticket sales for the Christmas concert at the Berger Center for Performing Arts where we participated with kids from the Arizona School for the Deaf and the Blind, and the wonderful mariachi group Sonido de Mexico. Other donations came in from our friends, our newsletter readers, and our pockets. A good deal of the credit for this success goes to fellow singer Jim Hogan who spurs our Food Bank endeavors on relentlessly, year after year.

**WE HOPE YOU LIKE THE NEW "LOOK AND FEEL" OF *THE VOICE OF ORPHEUS*.
IF YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, PLEASE EMAIL US.**