



# The Voice of Orpheus

Volume 13, Winter 2011

A Newsletter of Sons of Orpheus - The Male Choir of Tucson

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Grayson Hirst, Founder/Artistic Director

## Inside This Issue:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Excerpts from Grayson Hirst's Eulogy to Raymond Lee Tess | 2 |
| Our Annual Food Bank Fundraiser                          | 3 |
| Three in a Row in November                               | 3 |
| A Second Tenor to the Rescue                             | 3 |
| The Editor's Coast Guard Service                         | 4 |
| The Envelope, Please                                     | 4 |
| Adiós Iván and Patricia Berger                           | 5 |
| Our Aspiring Student Travelers                           | 6 |
| Our Line-up of CDs                                       | 7 |
| The Choristers   | 7 |

## Orpheus Will Sing at The Vatican

We're headed to Italy! Want to come with us?

(The following information is from Larry Ross, President of the Board of Directors of Sons of Orpheus, the Male Choir of Tucson.)

We're delighted to announce our forthcoming 6th international concert tour, to travel and perform in Italy, June 14th through June 24th, 2012. We'll travel by bus to Phoenix where we board a British Airways flight to London, and then on to Rome. Ground travel in Italy will be by private motor coach.

The performance highlight of our tour takes place in The Eternal City where we spend 3 nights and become full participants in the celebration of the 4 PM Sun-

day Mass in the Basilica of St. Peter. St. Peter's is considered "the greatest of all churches of Christendom." One of the holiest Catholic sites, it has the largest interior of any Christian church in the world. Michelangelo, then in his 70s, is regarded as the principal designer of a large part of the building as it stands today.

After performing and sightseeing in Rome, we will travel to Tuscany and the medieval cities of Florence and Sienna, the historic centers of which are designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites. We will give a concert performance in the Sienna Duomo, the historic Gothic Cathedral filled with ornate and irreplaceable treasures, and then proceed a short distance to Florence.

Continues on p. 2 - **Italy**

## Remembering Ray Tess



Photo by Iván Berger

Our newsletter profiled Ray in the January 2006 edition. You can find it on our website. (You'll see Tom Wentzel's excellent drawing of Ray in his tuxedo, or as Ray called it, his penguin suit. He always addressed e-mail messages to us, "Dear Fellow Penguins.")

Continues on p. 2 - **Ray**

## OUR HOLIDAY CONCERT SCHEDULE

**Wednesday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.** Fourteenth Annual Holiday Benefit Concert for the Community Food Bank, with elementary students from the Arizona School for the Deaf and the Blind, Lindsey McHugh, soprano, and Mariachi Sonido de México. Berger Center for the Performing Arts, ASDB campus, 1200 W. Speedway.

**Sunday, December 11, 3:00 p.m.**, Holiday Concert with the Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus, and violinist Nicole Skaggs at Desert View Performing Arts Center, 39900 S. Clubhouse Drive, SaddleBrooke, AZ. Ticket Information 520-818-1000.

**Monday, December 12, 4:00 p.m.** Final rehearsal for "Christmas at San Xavier." With the Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus, organist Janet Tolman and various soloists. 1950 W. San Xavier Road. Open to the public.

**Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, December 13—15, 6:00 p.m. and 8 p.m.** Fifteenth annual "Christmas at San Xavier" in collaboration with the Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus at Mission San Xavier del Bac, 1950 W. San Xavier Road. The concert benefits the restoration and preservation of Mission San Xavier. Sponsored by Patronato San Xavier. Contact Vern Lamplot, 520-407-6130. For ticket information.

**Sunday, December 18, 3:00 p.m.** Madera Clubhouse, Quail Creek Resort Community, 2055 E. Quail Crossing Blvd., Green Valley. Call 520 393-5822 for more information.

## Italy - from page 1

We expect to spend three glorious days there and to give a concert in one of its major cathedrals, or perhaps in the Roman Amphitheater in Fiesole, an ancient Etruscan and Roman town overlooking central Florence. We expect to arrange a "No two-hour-waiting-line" rapid admission to the Uffizi gallery in Florence, one of the oldest and most famous art museums of the Western World.

We then proceed to the city of Lucca where we plan to perform, and then northwest to the Liguria region of Italy and its Cinque Terre, five towns on a rugged portion of coast on the Italian Riviera, designated a national park and a UNESCO protected territory. We will perform in a small community church in one of the towns on the sea.

Following our performance, much to our regret I'm certain, we'll leave the Italian Riviera and travel by bus to Milan, Italy's second largest city, located in the Province of Lombardy. We will celebrate the final evening of our tour with a beautiful banquet for our choristers and

our fellow travelers, overnight there, and depart the following noon to London, Phoenix, and home to Tucson, hoping against hope that it doesn't take us another four years to return to some of the greatest and most ancient cities of Western Civilization.

Our travel agent has indicated that our hotels are 3 or 4-star, and all include buffet breakfasts. Other meals are our own responsibilities.

We hope that our friends and admirers will accompany us on our well-planned journey as on Sons of Orpheus's prior international concert tours. We are well on our way to 50 travelers counting singers and roadies.

That figure puts the cost at \$4000 per traveler plus \$133 for trip insurance. (\$102 for those age 30 and under.) If we get 60 travelers the cost will be \$3,880. For those traveling "land only" the cost is \$1,400 less per person.

All checks should be written to Sons of Orpheus, and we will remit the money to Casterbridge, our travel agent. Payment deadline is March 1st.

For more information, please send questions in the envelope that comes in this newsletter, or e-mail <contact1@sonsoforpheus.com>

## Ray - from page 1

Naturally, much of the article dealt with Ray's extensive musical background, but we found enjoyment in another aspect of Ray's life—his stint in the US Navy, where he served on the *Canberra*, a light cruiser refitted to fire guided missiles. Ray was the voice of the captain over the ship's public address system. To quote a line from the article: "The captain could yell 'fire' as loud as he might, but nothing went boom until Ray had his say." Ray liked this way of describing his work, and he adopted it. He was always happy being busy for Grayson and the choir. He would say, "I have spent all day making things go boom."

We also liked the story Ray told about *Canberra's* sea trials at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He said, "We had gone out to test the Terrier missiles and gun mounts. The captain gave the order to fire both forward 8" turrets simultaneously. The resultant blast blew the hats off of everyone on the bridge."

Our hats are off to Ray. We are finding him irreplaceable. NM

## Excerpts From Grayson Hirst's Eulogy for Raymond Lee Tess

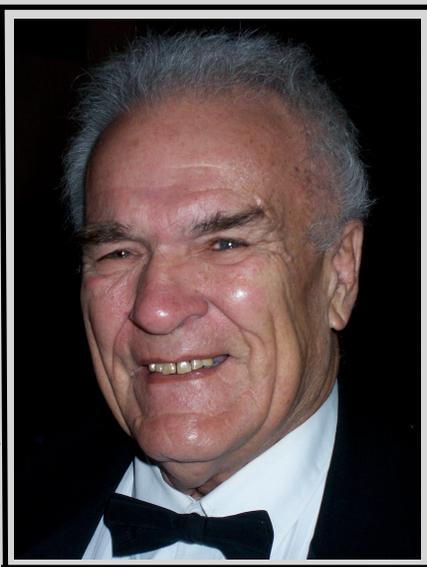


Photo by Ivan Berger

April 3, 1932 - July 14, 2011

Ray cherished his affiliation with Orpheus. His dedication to the choir was unwavering. He gave fifteen years of faithful service to Sons of Orpheus as a stalwart member of

the baritone section, and he played a pivotal role in the life of our choir, holding the office of corresponding secretary with distinction.

After several weeks in the hospital after he was hit by a car, Ray began attending rehearsals when he could, and when he probably should not have, so we all had distressing glimpses of Ray's hard-fought battle following his accident. There were many weeks before he died when he was in deep physical pain. We take comfort that he's not suffering any more.

Orpheus has a rich history that we must not forget. Choir members to come, as well as our own children and grandchildren need to know what the choir means to us. Our Orpheus banner is an elaborate expression of our choir's identity, a potent connection with the past. It serves as a reminder of our great musical and fraternal legacy. In an expression of thanks for everything he did for Orpheus and as a tribute to his memory, our banner will bear Ray's name.

So, Ray, we are grateful for your many years of service to Orpheus. We salute you and we bid you farewell. You will be remembered.

## Our Annual Food Bank Fundraiser

December 7th will find us singing our fourteenth annual holiday concert for the Community Food Bank. Once again the venue is the Berger Center on the campus of the Arizona School for the Deaf and the Blind, 1200 W. Speedway. One of the highlights of the show is Irving Berlin's "White Christmas," which we sign for the deaf students in the audience. Orpheus will be joined as always by ASDB kids, and, as last year, by the fabulous Mariachi Sonido de México.

Also featured will be Lindsey McHugh, a young blind woman with a wonderful voice. She's a freshman in music education in the University of Arizona School of Music. This concert will be especially close to her heart because she was an

elementary school student at ASDB.



Photo by Rick Sack

Lindsey McHugh

**The Hogan challenge:** For the last four years, second tenor Jim Hogan has challenged the choir to raise more money for the Community Food Bank than he can manage by himself. If Jim loses, he promises to buy the rest of the choir beer and pizza after the final rehearsal for our spring concert. Jim lost in his first three tries, although he came very close last

year. If he wins, the losers have to buy him pizza and beer. (He wants us to sit and watch while he chows down, which we would be unlikely to do.)

Of course nobody is a loser in this game. We honor Jim for his effort; it boosts the enthusiasm for fundraising for all of us. During the past three years, Jim's challenge has helped to raise nearly \$25,000 in conjunction with the ASDB Holiday Concert. There will be other winners on December 7th: performers and audience alike.

We'll need to do our best ever this year, for the Community Food Bank reports that it is far short of what they're going to need in these hard times. We hope our readers will help by bringing a check to the concert or by using the envelope we have provided in this newsletter. The CFB can buy \$10 worth of food for every dollar they receive in donations.

## Three in a Row in November

We sang our annual Veterans Day set on the program at the VA Hospital. Choir members are always moved singing in this setting, but this time we performed three numbers with the Del Pueblo Brass Quintet whose brilliant sound cranked the emotion up a notch or two. We knew this would be the case when we rehearsed with them

for the first time a week earlier. What a thrill!

The following day we recorded a session at KGUN 9 for use on their "Morning Blend" show. If you are a "Morning Blend" addict, you'll notice our costume changes: Tuxes throughout, red pocket squares and red music folders for "The Christmas Song" ("Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire"), and "The First Noel" (an arrangement from "Pachelbel's Canon"); black folders and Stetsons for "The 3:10 to Yuma," featuring soloist Jim Hogan; and hats off for "Here's to the Heroes," featuring soloist Brandon Dale.

We repeated the Veterans Day numbers with the Del Pueblo Brass Quintet on the as part of a program at Tucson Estates, southwest of Tucson, on November 13th, finishing the eclectic show with "Here's to the Heroes," "The Mansions of the Lord," and "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

Also on that program we mixed in some Christmas tunes and "A Salute to the Armed Forces," a medley of the five songs that represent our service men and women. Our vets sing them with special gusto.

## A Second Tenor to the Rescue

by Mike Negrete

If you were able to attend the 2010 Veterans Day celebration at the VA Hospital in Tucson, you remember that stage and screen star Ben Vereen made a surprise appearance at the affair. Ben was visiting a brother who lives in Tucson.

Before the Sons of Orpheus sang that day, Ben came on stage and stood in front of us at a microphone

that put me just over his right shoulder. He gave a rip-roaring, speech in praise of veterans, and was heartily cheered and applauded by everyone in the audience. Then he broke into a mighty rendition of "The Impossible Dream" from *Man of La Mancha*.

Continues on p. 4 - Ben Vereen

Page 3

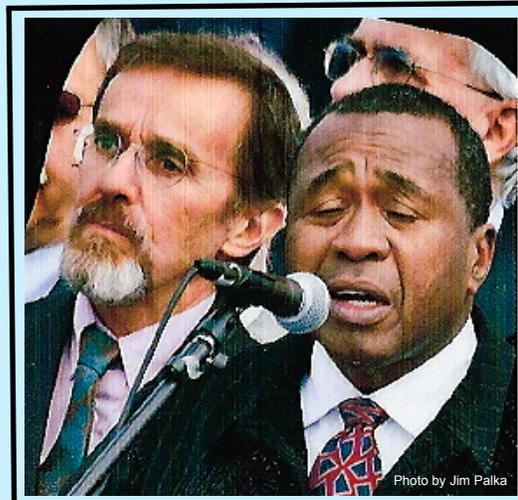
**Ben Vereen** - from page 3

Well, here's my little secret. He sang the lines, "To right the unrightable wrong, To beat the unbeatable foe." Suddenly the crescendo died away and there was a pause of several seconds. He glanced left and right as if for help. I was pretty certain he'd forgotten the next words. So I whispered out of the corner of my mouth, "To bear with unbearable sorrow."

He instantly belted out the line and went on to finish the song, again to the hearty applause of the attendees.

So Ben, man, you owe me your eternal gratitude. Or perhaps a cold beer.

(Writer's note: Since writing this article, I've read that the Rev. Dr. Ben Vereen has shared his talents at many veterans' affairs in the last several years. May God bless you, Ben Vereen. May God bless us all.)



Mike and Ben in sort of a duet

## The Editor's Coast Guard Service



Last summer while my wife and I were vacationing in Oregon, we visited the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria. Attached to the museum is the lightship *Columbia*, retired in 1979. I had seen that ship during its working days when my parents took my sister and me on a deep-sea fishing trip across the bar where the Columbia River meets the mighty Pacific Ocean—one of the roughest and most dangerous crossings on the planet. I say I had seen *Columbia*, but it was upside

down from my perspective. I was hanging over the rail wondering if falling in would make the nausea go away.

*Columbia* was permanently moored by the time I saw it again, but still I felt a bit queasy as I stepped on board. During our exploration of the relic, we happened upon a young man, a Coast Guardsman as it turned out, stationed in Alaska and on leave with his family. He was explaining various details of the ship to his young daughter, so we tagged along for a guided tour.

As we parted, I thanked him and said, "Semper Paratus." He looked at me with surprise, thinking I must have served in the Coast Guard in the dim past to know its motto. Perhaps he wondered what barque I might have sailed in. He recovered quickly, snapped a smart salute, and returned the "Semper Paratus." I admitted that I had never served in the Coast Guard and that I only knew the motto because I had sung the Coast Guard's official march several times with a men's choir. "Oh, God, no!" my wife thought. "He's going to sing it." But it was actually our guide who conducted the duet.

Semper Paratus means "Always Prepared." In my case, just once was good enough.

NM

## The Envelope, Please

The envelope you find herein is important to us. It's a multiple use mailer. You may choose to use it as follows:

1. The men and our roadies pay their own way when we travel,

but we do make a plea for funds to help our young singers get to Italy with us. John Kamper, our treasurer, has set up an account dedicated strictly for their travel expenses, and they have scheduled fundraisers in January and February to add to that account. If you would like to help them, please write "student Italy trip" on the memo line of your check. You will

receive a thank-you note for your contribution.

2. If you'd like to support us by donating to our general fund, please write "general fund" on the memo line. We are a 501(c)(3) organization, so your gift is

Envelope - from page 4



tax deductible. You will receive a formal note of thanks on our letter-

head for your records.

3. You may wish to write a check to the Community Food Bank, an organization that Orpheus has supported for nearly the whole of our existence. We have raised several thousand dollars for them from our own pockets, through the readers of our newsletter, and especially by means of our annual Christmas concert at the Berger Auditorium, to be held this year at 7:00 p.m. on December 7th. Please make your check out to the Community Food Bank.

A can of food will get you into the concert, but money works better. The food bank can buy

\$10 worth of food for every dollar they receive in donations. Tell the ushers at the door that you have given through the newsletter appeal and you're in!

4. Order CDs (See page7)

5. Drop us a line. Tell us what you liked or didn't like about Orpheus in 2011. Let us know if there is something or some place you'd like to hear us sing in 2012. You could also let us know if you are interested in joining the choir or in traveling with us next summer. We'll get right back to you.

## ADIÓS IVÁN AND PATRICIA BERGER



Iván joined the choir in 1999. He and Patricia moved to Phoenix in December, 2003, but for the next 7 years, Iván stayed with Orpheus and commuted for concerts and Saturday morning rehearsals. The Bergers returned to Tucson in July of 2010, thus significantly reducing the traffic on I-10.

Now a new world beckons them. The intrepid couple are off to start life in a mountain paradise in Costa Rica. Iván will not be able to make those Saturday rehearsals anymore, so we'll have to do without him. He's a hard act to follow. He was a good singer, our percussionist, the designer of the newsletter for the past five years, the designer and graphic artist of the Spring Concert Program for the past 8 years, the arranger of the Hungarian portion of our 1st International Concert Tour to Europe in 2000, and one of the main organizers of the 2002 and 2004 tours to the British Isles and to Italy. He also organized our mini tour to Mexico in 2001.



He has been our Santa Claus in a riotous Spanglish version of "Twas the Night before Christmas." He has also created innumerable posters and fliers for the choir.

He served on the Executive Committee and was one of the choir's most active champions, always at hand for anything that needed to get done. Iván's natural ebullience made him one of our best showmen and the very spirit of Orpheus onstage.

We'll miss Patricia too. She was a faithful roadie and the choir's librarian before they moved to the Phoenix area. It was always so nice to look out at the audience and see her sitting there, sending us good vibes.

The following is a great "Believe it or Not" story first told in our fall, 2002 newsletter: When Iván was nine years old, he flew from his birthplace, Medellin, Colombia, to Missouri to visit his older brother. As he journeyed he wanted people to think he could speak English, so he spouted phrases memorized from his English primer. "My cat is good," he would announce. "My house is around the corner." A newspaper reporter in Columbia, Missouri did a human interest piece on Iván who had traveled all that long way alone, entertaining everyone he could capture. The story had legs and eventually made it into the Chicago Tribune.

A certain seven-year-old Chicago girl named Patricia, working on her reading skills, saw the piece in the Tribune and chose it for her daily exercise. Perhaps Iván's picture attracted her, or the single-syllable words in the headline: Boy Wants To See Zoo, Snow on Trip. Whatever the case, many years later, after Iván had moved to the United States and was living in Portland, Oregon (where they have a nice zoo and occasional snow), he showed a new girlfriend his clippings album. (How Iván!) As she perused the article about young Iván's odyssey, she exclaimed, "I know this story!"

Ivan and Patricia married soon after, proving once and for all the power of the press.

## Our Aspiring Student Travelers



Jess Koehn



Brandon Dale



Luciano Marazzo



Samson McCready

### Italy trip recipients . . .

It is essential that gifted young musicians who aspire to a career in music have a platform on which to test their powers and sharpen their skills. Sons of Orpheus is dedicated to providing an ongoing showcase for outstanding student musicians. At this juncture we are also dedicated to helping four of our young singers get to Italy with the choir this summer. We have seen at first hand the benefits that have accrued to other youngsters who have sung with us on past tours.

### Sons of Orpheus at Tucson Estates with the Del Pueblo Brass Quintet and Percussionist Extraordinaire, Tamara Williams

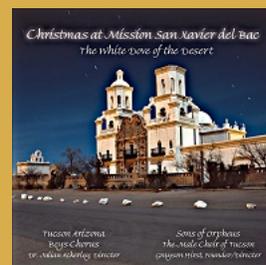
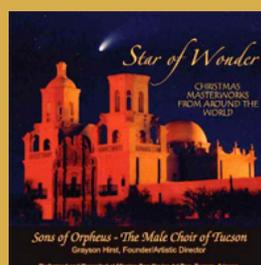
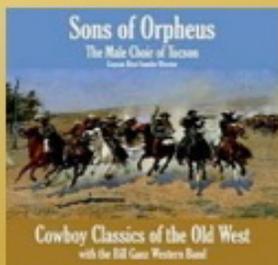
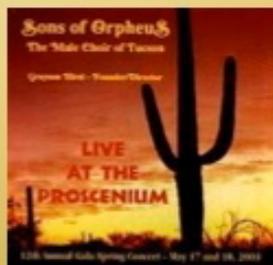


Photos by Alan McDonald



# The Voice of Orpheus

## Our line-up of CDs



## THEY MAKE GREAT STOCKING STUFFERS

**\$10 for the first CD and \$5 for each additional CD**

Please add \$4 for shipping and handling for up to two CDs

## The Choristers

### First Tenors:

Brandon Dale  
Eugene Friesen  
John Kamper  
Tom McGorray  
Bruce Mortensen  
James Naughton  
Jim Tomlinson  
Jerry Villano  
Daniel Westcott  
Dick Wroldsen

### Seconds Tenors:

Dave Burns  
Jim Hogan  
Van Honeman  
Bob Kurtz  
Luciano Marazzo  
Richard Miller  
Mike Negrete  
Ken Rosenblatt  
Larry Ross  
Larry Sayre

### Baritones:

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

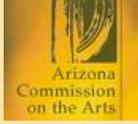
### Basses:

Ronald Bailey  
José Coca  
Jeffrey Handt  
Frank Hartline  
Tom Kane  
Jess Koehn  
George Ledbetter  
Gary Smyth  
Eugene Stevic  
Melvin Swingler  
Thomas Wentzel  
Woon-Yin Wong



# The Voice of Orpheus

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.



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