



IFD CHORAL SOCIETY

Bringing Choral Works to Life Since 1968



Fort Dodge Choral Society

Founded 1968



Since its beginning in 1968, Fort Dodge Choral Society has maintained its commitment to bring great choral music to life for the enjoyment and enrichment of the Fort Dodge, Iowa, community and the surrounding area.

Many singers, directors and leaders have come and gone, but the tradition remains. This history booklet is dedicated to the singers, pianists, conductors, and audience members of the past, present, and future.

This 50th Anniversary History is based on the 25th Anniversary history, interviews with current and former members, and personal memories of the editor, Bruce Perry. Special thanks to Gloria Zahrobsky for sharing her collection of photos and articles from the first 25 years of Choral Society History.

Cover photos: 1970 concert and 2014 concert.

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In the Beginning

Fort Dodge, Iowa, and the surrounding area have a long and storied history of supporting the arts. Early settlers of Scandinavian and southern European descent prized music and made it a vital part of their churches. The community and its citizens united efforts to promote aesthetic endeavors and provided financial support to create an environment where visual and performing arts could flourish. There was a local band as early as 1882; the first community band formed in 1901. In 1904, *The Western Musician* wrote, "Fort Dodge can claim the honor of having among her residents some of the distinguished musical talent of the United States, and beside one or more institutions for the training of those who desire musical or vocal instruction. The 56th Regiment band, stationed in Fort Dodge, is a hummer, and gives a street concert each Friday evening."

By the 1960's, Fort Dodge served as a cultural hub for the area. The town is home of the Blanden Museum, the oldest permanent art museum west of the Mississippi. The Karl King Band (founded/named 1921), Civic Glee Club (founded 1925), Harmony Brigade Barbershop Chorus (founded 1947), Fort Dodge Symphony (founded 1949) and Hawkeye Community Theater (founded 1957) provided residents the opportunity to both participate in and enjoy performances. Fort Dodge Senior High had a long-standing tradition of both choral training and fully-staged musical productions.

Even with the numerous performing groups, some residents longed for greater variety among the arts offerings. 1968 was a banner year. Larry Mitchell founded *Comedia Musica Players* to address the need of quality community musical theater performances. Those interested in performing challenging choral works founded Fort Dodge Choral Society. During the spring of 1968, individuals interested in the opportunity to study and perform sacred and secular choral masterworks capitalized on the area's rich cultural environment and organized Fort Dodge Choral Society. Dr. Sara Sutton, D.O., who had attended Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, prior to entering medical school, came to Fort Dodge in 1964 and became actively involved in promoting culture in the community. Dr. Sutton organized an executive board which consisted of the following people:

President - Sara Sutton, D.O.

Vice President - Leona Heckmann

Secretary - Diane Logan

Treasurer - Karen Patterson

Ex officio - Eugene McKinley, Director

Joanne Astor, Veva Jones, B. Patricia Metheny, Jo Schneider, Marge White, Dorothy Zehr,
Gerald Christianson, Rev. Dale Kronquist, William Verbrugge

The board hired J. Eugene McKinley, head of the Iowa Central Community College music department, as conductor. He held auditions in the fall in the Iowa Central Community College vocal music room, which became home to the Choral Society rehearsals for many years. A number of people auditioned and the following were selected to sing in the premiere concert, accompanied by Mrs. Leonard Schneider:

Joanne Astor
Gloria Conner Zahrobsky
Gerald Christianson, Humboldt
Marianne Glesne Lang
Freeman Groat
Larry Harris
Pat Hill
Doug Hill
Nancy Howard
Rev. Alden Johnson
Veva Jones, Badger

Diane Logan
Karen Patterson
Martha Petrak, Renwick
Yvonne Riesen
Linda Steburg
Sara Sutton
William Verbrugge, Humboldt
Kenneth Vorland, Hardy
Betty Whittemore
John Zuerrer



The Music Begins



Choral Society's premiere concert was held in the Fort Dodge Senior High Little Theater at 8:00 pm, December 19, 1968. Guest soloist, Marian Krajewska, from the Drake University faculty, drove to Fort Dodge from Des Moines on icy roads to perform Poulenc's *Gloria* with the Choral Society. The program also included Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata*. The men appeared in tuxedos and the women in silver-grey dresses with silver and crystal trim and accessories.

New singing members were added as word spread about Fort Dodge's newest singing group. In its March 18, 1969, concert the Society's program included Mozart's *Vesperae Solemnes de Confessore*, Handel's *O Sing Unto the Lord*, and *Americana* by Randall Thompson. For the next few years, concerts were held in the Phillips Middle School Auditorium. On April 27, 1969, the choir joined forces with the Fort Dodge Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Frantisek Smetena, to present the Verdi *Te Deum*.



Spring 1970

(row 1, l to r) Nancy Howard, Judy Edwards, Diane Logan, Gerelyn Stewart, Pat Hill.

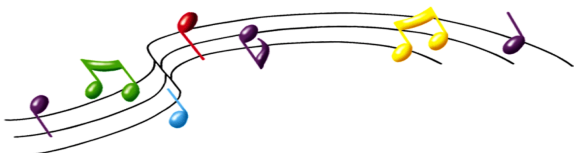
(row 2) Eleanor Bircher, Mark Ulrich, Joanne Astor, Garret Giesler, Doug Hill, Marianne Glesne, John Will, Carol Woodward.

(row 3) Rose Ramsey, Gladyce Hager, Mark McCauley, Carl Pemble, Veva Jones, Tom Kruse, Linda Steburg, Ralph Walker

(row 4) Gloria Zahrobsky, Kenneth Vorland, Marilyn Mohr, Sara Sutton, unknown, Jerry Ramsey, Mina Driscoll, Freeman Groat

Pianist Bill Mekemson

Four charter members who have sung with Choral Society for most of its years, (l. to r.) Gloria Zahrobsky, Pat Hill, Doug Hill, and Joanne Astor, continue to play vital roles with the group. Many other singers have sung for a majority of the group's concerts, demonstrating a commitment to helping the choral art thrive in the Fort Dodge area.



Singing Membership

The singing membership has mostly consisted of 20 to 40 vocalists. In early years, singers went through a formal audition process. Throughout the years, selected high school singers and students from Iowa Central Community College have sung with the group. Some singers have earned college credit by singing in FDCS. Even though the audition requirement is still present, auditions are usually based on the conductor's observation of new singers during rehearsal. During the first twenty years, weekly rehearsals typically were on Monday evenings between 7:30 and 10:00 with occasional extra rehearsals added as needed. The group rehearsed in the Iowa Central Community College choral room. Since 2005, FDCS has rehearsed on Monday evenings from 7:30-9:30 at Grace Lutheran Church. Although there have been quite a few music educators in the group, talented singers have come from all walks of life. Cuts in numbers of music staff for area schools has changed the group's makeup. In spite of the limited rehearsal time and demands of other occupations and activities, the singers remain committed to bringing great choral works to life.

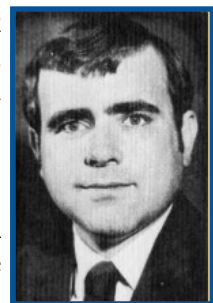
Leadership

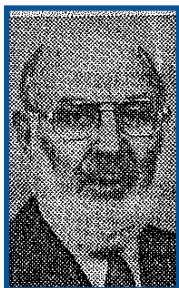
People who have accepted the challenge of serving as president of the Choral Society executive board through the years are listed below. Their enthusiasm and leadership have helped sustain the group through the years.

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Sara Sutton, D.O. — 1968 | Joanne Astor — 1986 |
| Leona Heckmann — 1969 | Rev. James Pohlhammer — 1987 |
| Doug Hill — 1970 | Rev. Brian Hagglund — 1988 |
| Tom Kruse — 1971 | Rev. Carroll Lang — 1989-1990 |
| John Glesne — 1972 | Tim Vermillion — 1991 |
| Allan F. Demorest — 1973 | Dixie Cassady — 1992 |
| Kris Knouf — 1974 | Doug Hill — 1993 |
| Marilyn Meiners — 1975 | DeAnne Dunsdon — 1994-1995 |
| Judy Gunderson — 1976 | Barbara Huisman — 1996-1997 |
| Sara Sutton — 1977 | Julie Larson — 1998 |
| Steve Brodersen — 1978 | Becky Warren — 1999-2000 |
| Don Loots — 1979 | Julie Larson — 2001 |
| Liz Johnson — 1980 | Karin Yungclas — 2002-2004 |
| Linda Lozis — 1981 | Diane Vavak — 2005-2007 |
| James Metzger — 1982 | Julie Larson — 2008-2010 |
| Don Loots — 1983 | Aaron Kulhman — 2011-2015 |
| Gloria Zahrobsky — 1984-1985 | Tim Hanneman — 2016-2017 |

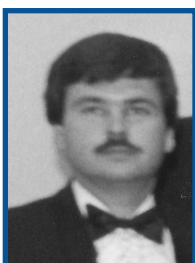
Eight people have served as Choral Society conductors: J. Eugene McKinley (nine seasons), Dr. Vernon Tarrell (one season), Richard Chitty (seven seasons), Ross Leeper (two seasons), Rev. James Pohlhammer (one season), Rev. Dick Shaper (one season), Earl Sides (four seasons), and Bruce Perry (twenty-five seasons).

J. Eugene McKinley, a native of Chariton, Iowa, completed his undergraduate work at St. Ambrose College and received his Masters degree at the University of Northern Iowa. He served as state chairman of the American Choral Directors Association in 1971. McKinley studied under several noted choral conductors (Paul Salamunovich, Roger Wagner, Norman Luboff, Douglas McEwen, Robert Shaw, Robert Fountain, Gregg Smith, Howard Swan, and Julius Hereford). While at Iowa Central he conducted the Concert Choir and the Iowa Central Singers. McKinley served as Choral Society conductor until 1977, when he resigned to accept a position at Ohio State University.

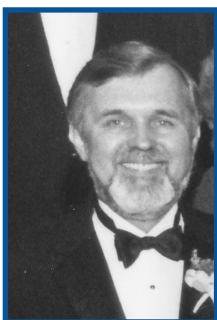




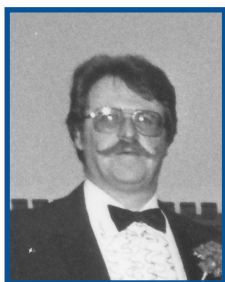
Dr. Vernon Tarrell completed his undergraduate work at Yankton College, South Dakota, received his Master of Music Education at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, and his Doctor of Philosophy in Music at the University of Iowa. He had 26 years of teaching experience and he directed concert tours in Europe. Dr. Tarrell earned silver medals in competition at the International Choral Festival in Washington, DC. He had also been festival director, adjudicator, author of numerous articles in music publications, composer, arranger, tenor soloist and director of many chamber operas at the college level. One of the Choral Society concerts he directed was a stage presentation of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in the Saint Edmond Auditorium during the Christmas season.



Richard Chitty, who succeeded McKinley as head of the ICCC vocal music department, joined Choral Society as its conductor in the fall of 1978. In addition to the usual three-concert schedule, he combined the Society and the Iowa Central Concert Choir for *Messiah* presentations in alternate years with the Fort Dodge Area Symphony Orchestra until 1985. Although the Society had presented Handel's *Messiah* once under McKinley's direction, this marked the first time it had been done with the Orchestra. In 1979, the choir and orchestra joined forces for a Christmas concert which included Bach's Cantata No. 142, *For Unto Us a Child Is Born*. A native of Indiana, he completed his undergraduate and graduate work at Ohio State University, where he studied with Maurice Casey. While at Ohio State he formed and directed the "Scarlet and Gray" pop group, and directed the Ohio State Women's Glee Club. Chitty taught music from elementary to university levels; he left the Fort Dodge area in 1985.



Ross Leeper, of Eagle Grove, became the new conductor of Choral Society after several successful years as conductor of Fort Dodge Area Symphony Orchestra. He received his Bachelor of Music Education and Master of Music Education degrees from Drake University, Des Moines. He was director of bands at Eagle Grove Middle School. Leeper was a Past National President of the American School Band Directors Association and Past National President of the Iowa Bandmasters Association. In 1985 he was a recipient of the R. Paul Brimm Award as outstanding Middle School/Junior High educator in Iowa. From 1977 until 1985 he served as the orchestra director. In 1978, 1982, and 1986 he conducted joint choral/orchestral performances of Handel's *Messiah*. During his two years with the Society, Leeper presented a variety of music including Fauré's *Requiem* with pipe organ, harp, violin, and two French horns, as accompaniment. Leeper later moved to Indianola, Iowa, where he accepted a position on the faculty of Simpson College.

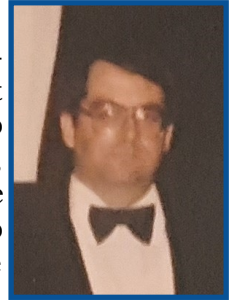


The **Rev. James Pohlhammer** began his association with Choral Society in 1981 as a singing member. He performed many solos and was a baritone soloist in Handel's *Messiah*. After graduating from high school in Beloit, Kansas, he attended Hastings College and Indiana University School of Music, graduating in 1971. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Rev. Pohlhammer became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Lytton, Iowa, in 1980. During his six years with Choral Society, he appeared in Opera Workshop performances in Emporia, Kansas, and in Fine Arts productions in Sac City, Iowa. He also presented numerous workshops in churches on the musical resources found in their hymnals. In addition to the three regular concerts, which included a concert version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*, during his year as conductor (in the 1987-88 season), Choral Society did a Christmas concert with Fort Dodge Area Symphony Orchestra. Rev. Pohlhammer moved to Texas in 1988.

The **Rev. Dick Shaper** conducted FDCS during the 1988-89 season. In 1987 he had left musical and educational responsibilities in a Christian Church in Troy, Michigan, to become the pastor of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fort Dodge. He was a member of the American Guild of Organists and the Hymn Society of America. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary and the University of Rochester (Eastman School of Music), he identified three persons who helped shape

his aesthetic sensibilities: Catharine Crozier, his organ teacher; Paul Tillich; and Tatyana Grosman, founder of Universal Limited Art Editions. Some of the composers he featured during the season were Johannes Brahms, Randall Thompson, and several English composers.

Conductor **Earl Sides** of Des Moines lead Choral Society from the fall of 1989 to spring of 1993. He is a graduate of La Porte City High School and received a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Luther College in Decorah. Following graduation he taught junior and senior high school band and chorus in Madrid, Iowa. He left teaching to continue his studies at Drake University where he has received a Master of Music, specializing in choral conducting. Sides has conducted church choirs in La Porte City, Urbandale, and Des Moines. In addition to his conducting duties, he has also been a soloist on such works as Handel's *Messiah*, the Brahms' *Requiem*, and the Fauré *Requiem*.



Bruce Perry was named conductor of Fort Dodge Choral Society in 1993. His first concert with the group, featuring Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*, set the tone for his tenure with the group. Major works and community outreach are consistent programming choices. Perry's passion for music that addresses social concerns led to performances of *Sing for the Cure*, a work about breast cancer; Robert Cohen's touching *Alzheimer's Stories*; and concerts to address homelessness, bullying, and the AIDS pandemic, and increase awareness of Habitat for Humanity. Memorable concerts included marking the 100th anniversary of WWI, the 150th Anniversary of the end of the American Civil War (including Civil War re-enactors), and more than 200 years of U.S.

presidential campaign music. During his tenure, the group has reached out to many local arts organizations. Four major works with Fort Dodge Area Symphony, collaborations with choirs from local high schools and elementary schools, and concerts with Jive for Five! Brass Quintet, King Ringers, *Comedia Musica Players*, church bell choirs, and the symphony woodwind quintet have helped broadened the group's audiences. Choral Society's 50th Anniversary season marks his 25th season with the group. Bruce has conducted and prepared the group in more than 90 different concert programs. He has served on the board of Iowa Choral Directors Association.

Perry has served as Worship and Music Coordinator at Grace Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge throughout his tenure with FDCS and maintains an active musical schedule as a conductor, private teacher and pianist. As a teacher, he works with many of the area's finest singers; more than forty of his former students are pursuing careers in the musical world. As a pianist, Bruce has performed throughout the Midwest and in Brazil. In his spare time, he enjoys computers, deltiology, and collecting antiques. Perry lives in Sac City, Iowa, and holds degrees in piano and vocal performance from Luther College and the University of Iowa. He has taught on the faculties of Drake University and Buena Vista University.

Choral Society also engaged **guest conductors** for three festival concerts. In 1974 and 1975, **Paul Salamunovich**, of Los Angeles, directed a 100-voice festival choir for the fall concerts. A workshop for those singing was held the preceding day. Works performed were *Requiem* by Duruflé, *Missa Brevis* by Kodaly, and *Te Deum* by Persichetti. Choral Society also had the opportunity to work with Salamunovich at a community choir festival in Cedar Rapids in 2002.

Weston Noble, from Luther College in Decorah, served as guest conductor in the fall of 1976, at which time a festival chorus studied and performed Brahms' *German Requiem*. The festival concerts were well-received by both the singers and public and also gave the group recognition throughout the state. Weston's influence on Choral Society has continued, since both Earl Sides and Bruce Perry studied conducting with him.

The partnership of conductor, singers and pianist is vital for any choral group. FDACS has a rich history of fine collaborative pianists. **Mrs. Leonard Schneider** played for the group's first season. Because funds were tight, singers "passed the hat" to pay for her services.

Bill Mekemson, Humboldt, joined Choral Society in the fall of 1969. He served as accompanist for most of the concerts until he retired at the end of the 1998 concert season. Mekemson received his undergraduate degree from the University of Minnesota and his Master of Music at the University of Iowa as a piano major. He taught instrumental music in public schools and was a member of the faculty in the Humboldt School system, where he taught high school Spanish and sixth grade band for twenty-three years. He retired in June of 1987. Mekemson was also organist at Faith United Methodist Church in Humboldt.

Liz Johnson assisted with accompanist duties for several years and was the full-time accompanist during the 1982-83 and 1983-84 seasons. She received her degree in music education at the University of Northern Iowa, and was a member of the faculty of the Fort Dodge Public School System for many years. An accomplished pianist and educator, Mrs. Johnson studied piano with Dr. Joyce Gault at the University of Northern Iowa. Liz is currently a singing member of the group and serves on the Choral Society Board.

Following Mekemson's retirement, **Michelle Havlik-Jergens** began her 19-year tenure as FDACS pianist. Aside from one completely *a' capella* concert, scheduled to coincide with the birth of her daughter, Michelle played for every concert until her resignation in the spring of 2017. Her technical expertise, sensitivity, and ability to collaborate with others aided the group's musical growth. Ironically, as a student, she had turned pages for Bill Mekemson. In addition to playing with FDACS, the Humboldt native remained active as a staff accompanist at Drake University. As a student of Chiu-Ling Lin, she earned a Bachelor of Music Degree in piano pedagogy from Drake. She has been a soloist with the Drake, Wartburg and Fort Dodge Symphonies and twice won the Top Keyboard Artist Award in Iowa. Michelle has entertained aboard Norwegian Cruise Lines and collaborated with the Des Moines Ballet, Palm Beach Symphonette, Center Stage Players and Poinciana Playhouse. She appears regionally and nationally with soprano Leanne Freeman-Miller and other Drake faculty and has collaborated with numerous local, regional and national NATS and MTNA competition winners. Michelle is in great demand as a collaborative pianist and clinician and resides in Webster City.

Jeanette Hinkeldey begins playing for FDACS as the group celebrates its 50th anniversary. A classically-trained pianist and organist, Jeanette performs throughout Iowa as an organ recitalist and piano accompanist for musical theater productions and vocal/instrumentalist soloists. When accompanying the Buena Vista University Choir on their European tour, Jeanette performed in Paris at the world-renowned Notre-Dame Cathedral, as well as The American Cathedral (The Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity). Currently, Jeanette accompanies the Storm Lake High School and Middle School Choirs and is the Director of Music at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Aurelia. She maintains a private piano and organ studio and is involved in the Iowa Music Teachers Association as the Theory Chair and in the Iowa Federation of Music Teachers as the Recording Secretary. Jeanette received her Master's degree in Music at Drake University and her Bachelor of Arts degree from The University of South Dakota. Throughout her years of study, she worked with Dr. Carl Staplin, Dr. Larry Scully, Dr. Jeannine Jordan, and Dr. Robert Delcamp.

She and her husband, Mark, reside on the Hinkeldey Family Farm south of Alta. They have two grown children, Renae and Marcus, who are involved in the agricultural business. When not in the music scene, Jeanette enjoys traveling, reading novels, and watching cooking shows, knowing full well she will never have time to make any of the recipes.

Others who have served as accompanists for varying lengths of time through the years have included **Dave Gaeth, Marsha Subbert, Vernon White, Maggie (Bice) Mowery, and Sue Feltman.**



Pianist-Conductor Bruce Perry and pianist Michelle Havlik-Jergens often played four-hand accompaniments with the choir. One of the highlights was Brahms' rarely-performed edition of his *German Requiem* for choir, soloists, and four-hand piano.



Supporting the Choral Art

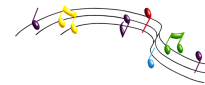


Fort Dodge Choral Society is incorporated as a non-profit organization in the State of Iowa. Although other methods of fund-raising have been used, the main source of financial support is the annual membership drive. In early years, singing members were assessed annual dues; for the past 25 years, singers have been encouraged but not required to purchase season memberships. Board members, singers, and FDCS volunteers sell season memberships to area businesses and individuals interested in supporting the group. Choral Society has been fortunate in having had faithful supporters through the years. The combination of individual and business supporters, coupled with frequent grant funding, has allowed the group to grow musically and present works that would be beyond the financial scope of many community choral organizations. Thanks to the largess of more than 200 individual supporters, many regional businesses, the Ann Smeltzer Charitable Trust and Catherine Vincent Deardorff Charitable Foundation, Choral Society has been able to flourish when many similar organizations in larger communities have struggled. The past 25 years' fundraising and marketing efforts have made the group fiscally sound.

Throughout its history, FDCS has benefitted from a cadre of volunteers. Many singing members work tirelessly selling memberships, providing treats, creating publicity, maintaining the music library, procuring instrumentalists, maintaining the website, and promoting the organization in various ways. Many have served on the board, helping guide the choir's future. Volunteer leaders have played an important role in bringing the group from a period of financial difficulty 25 years ago to its present relatively comfortable state. Community members have assisted the organization through countless volunteer hours, helping create an organization that has contributed to the well-being and cultural climate of the Fort Dodge Community and surrounding area.



Planning for the Future



Choral Society has always encouraged development of the singing art. Beginning early in its history, Choral Society invited students from Iowa Central Community College to sing in the choir and waived their membership fees. At times, arrangements have been made for singers to receive college credit for their participation in Choral Society. In later years, several area high school students also sang with the choir. Talented singers studying at various universities have had the opportunity to appear as soloists for major works. The group has collaborated with elementary, middle school, and high school singers to help share the joy of intergenerational music-making.

In order to support students pursuing careers in vocal music, a committee was formed in 1997 to develop, in consultation with the board, a set of guidelines for awarding scholarships. Since that time, scholarships have been awarded to undergraduate college students majoring in a music field with vocal emphasis. Recipients must have college sophomore status by the award year and be attending an Iowa college/university or be from the Fort Dodge area attending any college or university. In 2003, a stipulation was added that a person can be awarded the scholarship a total of two times.

Beginning with the 1998-99 school year, 51 scholarships have been awarded to 40 students. Currently scholarships are \$1000, having increased from \$500 in 2015. A total of \$27,850 has been awarded to date. Funds for scholarships are derived from money budgeted each year and from a special scholarship fund to which anyone may contribute. Scholarship recipients are:

| | | | |
|---------|--|---------|---|
| 1998-99 | Nicholas Bromley, Simpson Kelly Holst, Luther | 2007-08 | Lauren Hartman, Simpson Jill Phillips, Luther |
| 1999-00 | Kevin Drew, UNI James Haase, Univ. of Iowa | | Matt Tschimperle, Luther Taja Will, Luther |
| 2000-01 | Justin Hill, Indian Hills Martin Fox, Simpson | 2008-09 | Anthony DiMeglio, Drake Aliese Hoesel, Simpson |
| 2001-02 | James Haase, Univ. of Iowa Martin Fox, Simpson | | Jill Phillips, Luther |
| 2002-03 | Nate Johnson, Cleveland Institute Angela Dencklau, Wartburg | 2009-10 | Brett Epperson, Luther Lauren Hackenmiller, Simpson |
| | Julia Ellerston, UNI Nate Johnson, Cleveland Institute | 2010-11 | Janet Stone, Coe Aliese Hoesel, Simpson |
| 2003-04 | Jonathan Wilke, Univ. of Iowa Kelly Flynn, Luther | | Jessica Mallow, Simpson Leah Podzimek, Wartburg |
| | Susan Hoesel, Simpson Nate Johnson, Cleveland Institute | 2011-12 | Marie Sorenson, Wartburg Sarah Draffen, UNI |
| 2004-05 | Mara Ostermeier, Wartburg Sarah Carlson, UNI | 2012-13 | Christopher Ellerston, Central Jessica Ann Faselt, Univ. of Iowa |
| | Mara Ostermeier, Wartburg | 2013-14 | Sophia Huang, Luther Cailee Jo Whitefield, Wartburg |
| 2005-06 | Sarah Carlson Burke, UNI Lisa DeVries, Dordt | 2014-15 | None awarded |
| | Jenna Ziems, Luther | 2015-16 | MacKenzie Walsh, Wartburg |
| 2006-07 | Lisa DeVries Zylstra, Dordt Daniel Laaveg, Northwestern | 2016-17 | Natalie Gordon, Simpson Mollie Lawler, Drake |
| | Matt Tschimperle, Luther Taja Will, Luther | 2017-18 | Hillary Erb, St. Ambrose Sarah Ganey, Drake Michael Richardson, Buena Vista |



Sharing the Gift of Music



Choral Society has a rich history of sharing the gift of music. Like all performing groups, concerts are the most obvious way the choir shares music. Initially, the group performed at least three concerts a year; the yearly concert season currently includes four unique concert programs. Season concerts have been presented in various locations. ICCC auditorium, Phillips Middle School auditorium, St. Edmond Auditorium, local churches, Friendship Haven, and Hawkeye Community Theater have been successful venues for concerts, which most often happen on Sunday afternoons. In addition to local venues, the group has presented concerts in Jefferson, Webster City, Humboldt, Eagle Grove, and Sac City, as well as traveling to Charles City a few times to participate in the Charles City Choral Fest and to Cedar Rapids to sing in the Chorale Mid-West Choral Festival.

In the mid-1970's, FDACS became more active in the community by serving as a core group in a large massed chorus directed by Richard Chitty that provided music for the first city-wide ecumenical church service in Fort Dodge. At that time, groups from the Society sang on the radio, at the mall, and at a number of area churches during the summer months.

In 1990, the Society again combined with the Iowa Central Concert Choir and the Eagle Grove Chorale for *Messiah* presentations in Fort Dodge and Eagle Grove. A string ensemble and Bill Mekemson on harpsichord accompanied the chorus as Earl Sides conducted.

The 2002 performance of *Sing for the Cure*, which resulted in more than \$1600 donated to the Holden Cancer Center at the University of Iowa, was the first of several concerts that used music to highlight special causes. Other concerts have helped raise awareness of the world-wide AIDS pandemic, Habitat for Humanity, homelessness, and bullying. The Midwest premiere of Robert Cohen's *Alzheimer's Stories* was a powerful collaboration with the local Alzheimer's organization.

Performing new works has been an important mission for the group. The first concert in 1968 featured Pinkham's 1957 *Christmas Cantata* and Poulenc's 1959 *Gloria*. Programming two barely ten-year-old works on an inaugural concert set the tone for the group's innovative programming. The Society commissioned a major sacred choral work entitled *The Crown of Peace*. The work was composed by John Carter, and his wife, Mary Kay Beall, of Columbus, Ohio. A large chorus consisting of the Society and ICCA Concert Choir presented the premiere of this work on Saturday, May 12, 1984, under the direction of Richard Chitty. Accompaniment was provided by a brass quartet and Dave Gaeth on organ. A few high school singers also participated in this concert. Throughout its history, the group has sung regional premieres of works by Robert Cohen, Ben Allaway, Kevin Memley, and John Rutter, as well as world premieres of pieces by John Carter, Robert Cohen and Philip King. The group has also premiered several arrangements by Bruce Perry. In celebration of the group's 50th Anniversary, Minnesota composer Daniel Kallman has been commissioned to write a new work to be performed at the April 22, 2018, concert.

In addition to numerous performances with Fort Dodge Area Symphony, FDACS has partnered with other local arts groups. A 1999 partnership with *Comedia Music Players* resulted in a fully-staged production of Maury Yestlin's *Phantom*. Jive for Five! Brass Quintet and FDACS have created many memorable performances. King Ringers Handbell Choir, Fort Dodge Area Symphony Woodwind Quintet, and choirs from local schools and churches have appeared as guest performers in several season concerts. Since 2010, the group has performed at least one concert each season with chamber orchestra. Over the years outstanding area soloists, and also guest soloists from Drake University, Buena Vista College, Iowa State University, Luther College, University of Northern Iowa, and Iowa Central Community College, have appeared with Choral Society. Individuals and small groups entertained at the Vincent House during Choral Society "membership teas." The Society has always been a member of the Fort Dodge Fine Arts Association and has participated in various Fine Arts Festivals.

One of the hallmarks of FDACS has been performances of major choral works. Guest soloists and instrumental ensembles have enriched the community and allowed local singers to work with some amazing talent. Notable works that have highlighted five decades of performances include:

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Messiah</i> —G. F. Handel | <i>A Ceremony of Carols</i> —Benjamin Britten |
| <i>Requiem</i> —W. A. Mozart | <i>Cantata 142</i> —J. S. Bach |
| <i>German Requiem</i> —Johannes Brahms | <i>Missa Solemnis</i> —Franz Liszt |
| <i>Requiem</i> —Andrew Lloyd Webber | <i>Petite Messe Solennelle</i> —Gioacchino Rossini |
| <i>Requiem</i> —John Rutter | <i>Dona Nobis Pacem</i> —Ralph Vaughan Williams |
| <i>Mass of the Children</i> —John Rutter | <i>Gloria</i> —Francis Poulenc |
| <i>Sing for the Cure</i> —various composers | <i>Mass in C Major</i> —Ludwig van Beethoven |
| <i>Alzheimer's Stories</i> —Robert Cohen | <i>Bandari</i> —Ben Allaway |
| <i>All Night Vigil</i> —Sergei Rachmaninov | <i>Five Mystical Songs</i> —Ralph Vaughan Williams |

Elijah—Felix Mendelssohn
Requiem—Gabriel Fauré
The Creation—Franz Joseph Haydn
Requiem—Luigi Cherubini
A New Creation—René Clausen
Liebeslieder Waltzer—Johannes Brahms
Carmina Burana—Carl Orff

African Sanctus—David Fanshawe
Requiem—Mark Hayes
Gloria—Antonio Vivaldi
Christmas Cantata—Daniel Pinkham
Magnificat and Gloria—Kevin Memley
Rejoice in the Lamb—Benjamin Britten
Mass in C Minor—Imant Raminsk

The group has made some excursions into music written for the stage. In addition to joining forces with *Comedia Musica Players* to present *Phantom*, the group presented Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*. The choir sang concert performances of Bizet's *Carmen* and John Rutter's *The Reluctant Dragon*, as well as the first act of Verdi's *La Traviata*. Hawkeye Community Theater and Webster City Community Theater were ideal venues to showcase a concert of musical theater music.

Over the decades, the group has established an impressive library of choral music. Although music has been borrowed through the years in order to hold down expenses, money has always been budgeted for purchase of quality music. Numerous area schools and churches have benefitted from using Choral Society's library, which includes more than 500 works.



The Music Continues



An anniversary celebration is a milestone, but it certainly is not an endpoint. 50 years of bringing great choral music to life is a wonderful achievement. As one of the oldest Iowa organizations of its type, the group is to be congratulated. The group has done many things to prepare for the future. FDChS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and is governed by a board of directors consisting of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, three at-large members and the conductor who serves as an *ex-officio* member. All who purchase season memberships are voting members at the group's annual meeting, which is usually held in May. Choral Society communicates regularly with its membership through a website (www.FDChoralSociety.org) and a newsletter mailed regularly to nearly 700 members and interested parties. Establishing a fund with the Fort Dodge Community Foundation has helped secure the group's financial future.

A commitment to quality performances has helped the group acquire a reputation as a cultural asset for the Fort Dodge area. Investments in the future of young singers and music educators have helped assure that all community groups will continue to have voices and leadership. Partnering with school choirs has helped demonstrate the importance of singing as a life-long activity. That being said, no performing organization is any better than its next performance. The group has prepared for the future by investing time, energy, and money to prepare the next generation of choral singers. May the investment pay off with many memorable performances that continue to reach out to the community, sharing the gift of music.

Song go on, touch the part of me
That's closed to all, save music,
Find the voice that's silent, yet can sing.
Make of me a vessel, holding melody's reward,
Savoring the sounds that unlock hearts.
Strike my soul with tones to lift men's minds.
Song go on -- and make me whole.

—Sandra Chapman, Fort Madison, Iowa



First Row: Jan Ottmar, Linda Lozis, Leslie Anne Mitchell, Lynda Lines, Nancy Bolton, Carol Martin, Ginny Molgaard, Barb Kondrath. **Second Row:** Lonna Voss, Pat Hill, Ruth Consier, Anna Mallaro, Margaret Blanchfield, Linda Mertz, Bev McCartney, Kathleen Kelleher, Joanne Astor. **Third Row:** Director Richard Chitty, James Metzger, John McCartney, Roi Anne Gearhart, Liz Johnson, Gloria Zahrobsky, Marilyn Meiners, James Stinehart, Doug Hill, pianist Bill Mekemson. **Top Row:** Roger Anderson, Don Loots, Kevin Lind, Noel Duffy, Dave Gaeth, Curt Johnson, Ron Oppedahl, Dean Fevold, Steve Brodersen.



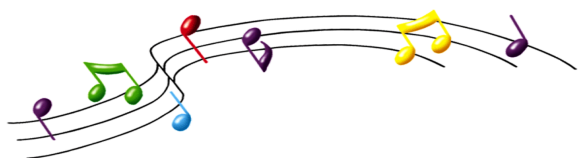
First row: Director Ross Leeper, Pat Hill, Denise Naeve, Dixie Cassady, Lynda Lines, Gloria Zahrobsky, Barb Kondrath, Joanne Astor. **Second Row:** Ruth Consier, Laurie Lashbrook, Nancy Bolton, Cindy Villebro, JoAnn Peters, Paulette Harris, Billie Jean Streit, Kat Beeghly. **Third Row:** Pianist Vernon White, Tim Anderson, Carl Warrington, Doug Hill, James Metzger, John Zuerrer, Kerry Amonson, Waldemar Gies. **Top Row:** James Pohlhammer, Dave Johnston, Dean Fevold, Glen Flanigan, Dave Gaeth, Jim Engstrom, Ashley Nedian-Owen, Tony Anderson.



Dr. Sara Sutton, D. O.



Soloists for May 6,
1973, Mozart
Requiem.
(l. to r.) Larry Mitchell,
Leslie Anne Mitchell,
Craig Knouf,
Gloria Zahrobsky
Handel's *Messiah* and
Mozart's *Requiem* are
the most frequently-
performed FDCS
works.



Jim Metzger, Donald Loots, Anna Mallaro, and
Stephen Kelleher practice for the May 7, 1978.
presentation of Gilbert and Sullivan's
Trial by Jury.



The November 24, 1974, performance of Durufle's
Requiem, featured guest organist Robert Delcamp (Des
Moines), guest conductor Paul Salamunovich (Los
Angeles) and FDCS conductor J. Eugene McKinley, as
well as an enlarged choir for the performance in Philips
Middle School Auditorium.



Brahms' *Requiem* featured guest soloists Sean Galligan and Aliese Hoesel (FDCS scholarship winner) in Brahms' rarely-performed arrangement for four-hand piano, soloists, and choir.



Jeanette Hinkeldey (organ), Aliese Hoesel (soprano), Michelle Havlik-Jergens (piano), Jessica Mallow (mezzo), Janece Valentine (piano), Joshua Strief (tenor), Bruce Perry (conductor), and Philip King (bass) joined forces with FDCS for the February 28, 2010, performance of Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*.



Bruce Perry, Director, 1994 Photo



After 50 years, the song goes on, using music to enrich lives, change hearts, and share joy with the community.

