

The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists

Matthew Culloton, Founding Artistic Director and Conductor



Founded in 2004, *The Singers* organization is dedicated to giving world-class performances of the finest choral literature. *The Singers* exists to serve as artists, educators, and ambassadors of the choral art. Choir members are drawn from the region and come from all walks of life. Some are music educators, computer programmers, composers, bankers, woodworkers, artists, and church musicians.

In 2006, *The Singers* sang for the National Federation of Music Clubs and the Minnesota chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. In 2008, *The Singers* performed at the North Central Division Convention of the American Choral Directors Association, the American Guild of Organists National Convention, and shared the stage with the world renowned Harvard Glee Club under the direction of Jameson Marvin.

Dedicated to the work of today's composers, *The Singers* has premiered and commissioned nearly forty new works since its founding. The ensemble has been honored to debut works by Stephen Paulus, Eleanor Daley, Craig Carnahan, as well as from three composers-in-residence, Abbie Betinis, Jocelyn Hagen, and Joshua Shank.

The Singers believes in the value of artistic collaborating, and they have shared the stage with many of the Midwest's most beloved performers including baritone Peter Halverson, guitarist Jeffrey Van, flutist Linda Chatterton, harpists Min Kim and Judith Kogan, and the Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester. Conductors René Clausen and Kathy Romey will share the podium with Artistic Director Matthew Culloton to kick-off the choir's 5th Anniversary season in October 2008.

The Singers has produced several recordings, most recently a collection of newer choral works of Stephen Paulus. Earlier recordings include *Shout the Glad Tidings* and *My Soul's Repose*, both of which have been heard on radio stations across the country.



Matthew Culloton

Founding Artistic Director and Conductor

Matthew Culloton is the Founding Artistic Director and Conductor of *The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists*. He holds degrees from Concordia College, Moorhead (B.M. in Music Education) and the University of Minnesota (M.M. in Choral Conducting). He is currently completing coursework towards a D.M.A. in Conducting at the University of Minnesota. Matthew has studied conducting with René Clausen, Kathy Romey, Paul Nesheim, Matthew Mehaffey, and Bruce Houglum.

From 1999-2004, Matthew was a member of The Dale Warland Singers, having served as Music Adviser to Dale Warland, Assistant Conductor, and Bass Section Leader. As Warland's Music Adviser, the two worked closely together on artistic programming and recording projects, including the editing preparation for that organization's final four recordings. Matthew also served as the Music Librarian, managing the

library of over 1,000 titles.

An experienced and celebrated music educator, Matthew began his teaching career in the Long Prairie - Grey Eagle School District. From 2000-2006, he was Director of Choral Activities at Hopkins High School, overseeing a choral program of six performing ensembles. His Hopkins Concert Choir performed at the 2002 and 2004 MN ACDA Fall Conventions and the 2005 MMEA Mid-Winter Clinic. In November 2004, Matthew was presented with the MN ACDA Outstanding Young Choral Conductor of the Year Award. In the fall of 2003, he was the recipient of the VocalEssence/ACDA of Minnesota Creative Programming Award for his work at Hopkins High School.

As a composer, Matthew has been commissioned by The Singers, the Dale Warland Singers, Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester (MN), Ames Chamber Artists, Chanson, the Minnesota MMEA All-State Choir, and numerous high school, collegiate, and church choirs. He is co-editor of the *Matthew and Michael Culloton Choral Series* with Santa Barbara Publishing Company. His music is published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing, Hinshaw Music, Mark Foster Music (Shawnee), Kjos Music, and Graphite Publishing.

Matthew is a contributing writer to *Teaching Music Performance through Literature, Vols. 2 & 3*, for which he writes repertoire resource guides in a collection alongside some of America's most respected choral conductors. He has also been published in the *Choral Journal*, co-authoring a collection of interviews with some of today's leading conductors.

Matthew is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Saint Thomas in St. Paul, teaching a graduate music course, *Choral Repertoire for Mature Adolescent Voices*. He is also Director of Music at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Minnetonka. Matthew resides in Minneapolis with his wife Melissa and Charlie the Beagle.

The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists: Board Member Biographies

Bruce Gleason, Chairman of the Board, is in his eighth year as a professor of graduate music education at the University of St. Thomas, where his main work involves advising public and private school music teachers through their M.A. theses. He also teaches courses in the history and philosophy of music education. Bruce came to St. Thomas after teaching elementary and secondary classroom music, choir and band in Minnesota and Illinois, a three-year stint with the U.S. Army Band of the Berlin Brigade, and completing a Ph.D. in music education at the University of Iowa. In addition to his academic work, he serves as the senior choir director at Diamond Lake Lutheran Church in Minneapolis and sings with the a cappella quartet, The Fairlanes. Bruce has served on the board of *The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists* since October 2005. He is currently refurbishing a 1920's bungalow in St. Paul, and is building the mother of all garages.

Originally from Ottumwa, Iowa, **Teresa Elsbernd** received her Bachelors and Masters degrees in Vocal Performance from the University of Iowa and has since resided in Minneapolis, where she has been actively involved in the musical community. Teresa sang with the Minnesota Opera Chorus for two seasons, and for eight years she was on the board and sang with the Dale Warland Singers. There, she was involved in several recordings, commercials and national tours. In addition, she has appeared as a frequent soloist at area churches, various musical organizations and special events, and her voice has been heard on a TV and radio commercial for Land o' Lakes. She is currently the Music Leader at the West Campus of Mt. Olivet Church, as well as president and owner of Home Reflections, Inc., specializing in custom home construction and remodeling. Teresa lives in the western suburbs of Minneapolis with her vocalist/teacher husband Jerry and their three and a half year old daughter Maggie.

Brenda Barr graduated from Bethel University in St. Paul with a B.A. in Speech/Communications. She completed her Masters Degree in Counseling from the University of Wisconsin—River Falls. For over a decade, she worked as a Licensed Psychologist at Northwestern College in Roseville. Brenda counseled students on a variety of issues ranging from eating disorders and depression to relational struggles. For the past twenty years,

she has been a speaker to various groups on relevant issues facing adolescents and parents. Music has always been an integral part of her life since childhood. Performing in numerous singing groups began at a young age, continued throughout college and on into her adult life. She has passed on her love of music to her three children. Collin Jr., her oldest son, is an accomplished guitarist and an aspiring songwriter. Connor, her middle child, is a clarinet student at McPhail Center for Music and is in the Edina High School band program. Austin, her youngest son, is a Middle School percussionist. Currently, she is working as a model and an actress, appearing on national TV both in commercials as well as on live television. Her husband, Collin, is President of the Minnesota Region of Ryan Companies, a national development and construction firm. Collin and Brenda reside in Edina with their three sons.

A Washington state native, **Daniel Adolphson** graduated from Crown College with a Bachelor of Music Education degree and will complete the mini-MBA in Non-Profit Organizations at the University of St. Thomas in December 2007. He is the United Arts Workplace Campaign Director for COMPAS (Community Programs in the Arts) and is President of Tour Minnesota Association. Daniel spent 10 years teaching vocal and instrumental music in Minnesota and Nebraska (preschool to collegiate). From 1996-2002 he served as Editor and Public Relations Chair for the Nebraska Choral Directors Association, where he was recognized for having one of the most improved state newsletters in ACDA. From 2003-2006 he served as the Co-Chair, Public Relations for Celebrate The Process, the North Central ACDA convention. Daniel is very active as a singer and conductor, having sung in *Exultate* (Dr. Thomas Rossin); Dr. Z. Randall Stroope in the *Masterworks Chorus* of the Nebraska Choral Arts Society; the *Clarion Chamber Chorale*; and served as Associate Artistic Director for both *The Voices of Omaha* and *Grace University Community Chorus*. Daniel was also the founder and Artistic Director of *timbre*, a 12 voice men's ensemble in Saint Paul, and currently is the Music Director at Asbury UMC in Minneapolis. Daniel also brings to the board a wide background in sales, marketing and tourism. In his spare time, he enjoys biking, hiking, traveling, and collecting toy buses.

Carolyn Collins (bio forthcoming)

Sharon Engel is in her fifteenth year as principal of Eisenhower Elementary School with the Anoka-Hennepin district. She also serves as a curriculum facilitator for the elementary music staff of the district. Prior to her administrative responsibilities, Sharon taught both elementary and secondary classroom music and choir in Minnesota, New York, New Jersey, and Scotland. She completed her undergraduate work in music education at St. Cloud State University and her graduate work at the University of Minnesota in music and in administration. Sharon has been a performer with and director of several youth and adult choirs. She has written musicals as well as articles, and has found music making and the learning to work with a wide variety of people to create harmony quite relevant to the leadership process in education. She lives in the Bryn Mawr area of Minneapolis and enjoys biking the many trails around the lakes.

Geneva Eschweiler is a graduate of St. Olaf College, and holds a Masters Degree in Voice Performance from Moorhead State University. Her teaching career, prior to moving to the Twin Cities in 1993, included four years in the elementary/junior high music departments in the Fergus Falls Public Schools, and thirty-one years as Director of Choral Activities and voice instructor at Fergus Falls Community College. In 1990, the Minnesota American Choral Directors Association named Eschweiler the recipient of their highest honor - the F. Melius Christiansen Memorial Award - for her contributions to choral art in the state of Minnesota. In 2003, she was named one of three outstanding Minnesota Community College educators to be honored by the Minnesota State Legislature. A member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, she has coached many finalists in MN-NATS Auditions, as well as high school winners in the Thursday Musical Scholarship Contests. At the Winner's Recital in March, 2003, Thursday Musical recognized Eschweiler as Teacher of Distinction 2003 for her excellence in preparation of and inspiration to young singers. Eschweiler served as Executive Secretary of the MN-ACDA Board of Directors for several years. She was on the Board of Thursday Musical from 1994 - 2001, first as membership chairman for four years, followed by Student Section Committee involvement for three years. She is currently a member of the MN-ACDA F. Melius Christiansen Endowment Committee. Retired, she continues to teach approximately forty students in her Music Loft Voice Studio. Eschweiler was elected to the board of The Singers in October of 2005.

Susan Laine was born, raised and schooled in St. Paul Minnesota. Susan started singing at an early age with the St. Paul Opera Workshop under Max Metzger. Her voice teacher was Mady Metzger-Ziegler until college. She participated in the Schubert Club high school events and the music program at Our Lady of Peace High School. She graduated from Macalester College with a B.A. in music and education. While at Macalester, she sang in Dale Warland's Concert Choir for three years, took choral conducting classes from Dr. Warland, and attended the music institute at the Meadow Brook Summer Festival. After three years of teaching general music and directing the choruses/musicals in a small town school in Iowa, she decided to change careers and become an attorney. She graduated from William Mitchell College of Law (1979 *Cum Laude*); worked as an attorney in the Office of General Counsel at 3M and in the Office of Legal Affairs at Imation Corp. for the majority of her law career. After leaving Imation in 1998, she set up a law office in downtown Minneapolis and after three years, moved her practice to its current location in St. Paul. Susan has served on several boards over the years including Stepping Stone Theatre; Citizen League; and currently The Gregorian Singers. Susan joined *The Singers* Board of Directors in November, 2006.

Choral music has been an important part of **Nancy Rotenberry's** life for over 58 years. She has sung in the Bach Society, the Macalester Festival Chorale and other choirs under conductors David LaBerge, Kathy Romey, Robert Shaw and Dale Warland. Nancy received a B.A. from Macalester College in German, Journalism and Music and holds a Masters Degree from the University of Minnesota in English as a Second Language. She worked as Manager of Choirs at Macalester College for Dale Warland and later taught ESL at Macalester College, the University of Minnesota and the International Institute. Her poetry has appeared in several publications and two anthologies have been set to music by Cary John Franklin. A long-time volunteer, Nancy has served on a number of community boards. Nancy worked on 27 benefit galas for the Dale Warland Singers and was a proud member of its last Board of Directors. Nancy is serving on the first community board of The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists.

Kaija Shaffer (bio forthcoming)

Jacqueline Steele, past Board Chair, received a degree in Theatre Arts, with a minor emphasis in music, from Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri. Jackie has been a working actor/singer for almost 40 years. She lived and worked in several major markets before returning to the Twin Cities to play the ingénue lead in Sandy Wilson's "The Boyfriend." Using Minneapolis as a home base, Jackie has performed in musical theater, night club revues, industrial shows, commercials, radio, television and film across the country and beyond. She has sung with several church choirs and professional choruses, including the Grammy nominated Dale Warland Singers, as an extra, and with the Warland Symphonic Chorus. Currently, she sings with the Edgewater Eight and the High Performance Quartet produced by Goodshow Productions. Jackie has juggled two career paths for most of her working life. She held several positions in Higher Education Administration over a 23-year span. She was an Associate Director of Admission at Stephens College, Director of Graduate Admission at The College of St. Catherine and an Associate Director at the University of Minnesota Law School. Jackie recently served two consecutive terms on the Board of Stephens College. Besides volunteering with many arts organizations, Jackie volunteers annually at a summer children's camp in Northern Minnesota, is active with Family Council at Presbyterian Homes of Arden Hills as well as serving on a legislative committee advocating for long-term care residents and their caregivers. As an advanced, certified grief facilitator since 1996, Jackie has been recognized for her work in the areas of grief, loss and transition. Jackie recently stepped down as Chair of the Board of Directors for The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists. She was one of the six founding Board members that launched the 44-voice ensemble into its inaugural 2004-2005 season. Jackie lives in an 1886 Victorian home restored by her historic restoration and preservationist husband, Brian, who is in the bass section of The Singers.

Philip Steen started and completed his college years in the state of Michigan. He received both his B.A., in Public School Music, and his Masters, from Western Michigan University followed by a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Phil has been a choral singer and a choral director for over 40 years. Phil studied voice with Elwyn Carter (WMU) and Harold Haugh (U of Mich.). He assisted David Strickler with the Albion College Choir and sang under Thomas Hillbish at the University of Michigan. He has been a tenor soloist at three Michigan universities and a church soloist in Ann Arbor and Minneapolis. Phil sang with the first Dale Warland Ensemble with the Minnesota Opera, in 1970, and later with the Warland Symphonic Chorus. He currently sings with the

Hennepin Chamber Choir. A choral highlight was performing the Verdi Requiem with Robert Shaw. As a choral director in academia, Phil was Director of Vocal Music in the Albion, MI, school system, Choral Director at Eastern Michigan University and the University of Minnesota and Director of the Hamline University A Cappella Choir. Phil has served as Organist-Choirmaster at St. Paul's on the Hill, Music Director at Fridley United Methodist Church and Assistant Conductor of the Masterworks Chorus. Phil joined The Singers Board of Directors in October of 2005.

Cynthia Tambornino has been a choral singer and soloist from an early age. She attended the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, MN and earned a B.A. in Vocal Performance and English from the University of Minnesota. Cynthia sang with the Plymouth Festival Chorus for six years and with the Bach Society of Minnesota for 15 years. Community Board positions include MacPhail Center for the Arts, 1989-1998; Board Chair - Minnesota Dance Theatre; Junior League of Minneapolis; League of Catholic Women; GCTYS; YPSCA; emphasis of charity events and fundraising. Mother of eight, grandmother of sixteen, Cynthia has co-authored a book on the challenges and joys of grand parenting. Cynthia joined the Board of The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists in October of 2005.

Matthew Culloton, ex-officio, is Founding Artistic Director and Conductor. His full biography is printed above.

Bryan Blessing, ex-officio, is the vocal music teacher at Oak Grove Middle School in Bloomington. A native of Staples, MN, Bryan has sung with many choirs throughout Minnesota. Bryan received his Bachelor Degree in Music Education from Saint John's University, where he studied under Axel Theimer. Additionally, Bryan is an amateur composer and guitarist who has instructed classical guitar at Crown College.

Dr. Thomas W. Shaffer, ex officio, is a retired music educator, school administrator, and university instructor. He has been the conductor of the Onan Male Chorus, The Lutheran Deaconess School of Nursing Choir, and was the Minister of Music at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. In addition to solo work in North America and Europe, he was a singer with and founding member of The Dale Warland Singers; a singer with and the stage manager for The Norman Luboff Choir; a chorister with The Minnesota Bach Society Chamber Chorale, The Plymouth Music Series, The Sateren Choir; and a soloist, dancer, and chorister with The Minnesota Opera. He was a founding board member of The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists and currently serves as an advisor to the board. Prior board memberships include The Minnesota Music Educator's Association, The North Star Opera Company, The Minnesota Opera Company, and The Minneapolis Principals' Forum.

The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists: Composer-in-Residence Biographies



Reviewed as "most audacious... edgy and thrilling," the music of **Abbie Betinis** is being performed increasingly in the United States and abroad. Born in Stevens Point, Wisconsin in 1980, Betinis has been commissioned by more than 40 music organizations including the Alchemy Project, American Suzuki Foundation, Cantus, Cornell University Chorus, Dale Warland Singers, and the Young New Yorkers' Chorus. Betinis holds a BA from St. Olaf College, and MA in music composition from the University of Minnesota. She has also attended the European American Musical Alliance summer sessions in Paris, France, where she studied harmony and counterpoint in the tradition of Nadia Boulanger.

Betinis has received grants and awards from the American Composers Forum, ASCAP, the Jerome Foundation, and the Minnesota Music Educators Association. Her music is published by Augsburg Fortress, Graphite Publishing, Kjos, Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and, most recently, in G. Schirmer's "Dale Warland Series." Since 2005, Betinis has served as Composer-in-Residence for The Schubert Club in St. Paul, Minnesota, and,

since 2004, with The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists. She has also been a composer-in-residence with The Rose Ensemble.

Read more about Abbie on her website: www.abbiebetinis.com



Jocelyn Hagen (b.1980), a native of Valley City, North Dakota, composes music that has been described as “dramatic and deeply moving” (Star Tribune, Minneapolis/St. Paul). Her first forays into composition were via songwriting, and this is very evident in her work. Her music is melodically driven, boldly beautiful, and intricately crafted. Since her graduation from St. Olaf College in 2003, Jocelyn has received over 20 commissions, 30 premieres, and 80 performances.

Jocelyn has received grants and awards from ASCAP, the American Composers Forum, Minnesota Music Educators Association, VocalEssence, the Yale Glee Club, the Lotte Lehman Foundation, the University of Minnesota, and the San Francisco Song Festival. Her commissions include the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota, the North Dakota Music Teacher’s Association, Cantus, the St. Olaf Band, NDSU Gold Star Band, and the Copper Street Brass. She is currently Composer-in-Residence for Valley City State University, Shorter College in Rome, Georgia, as well as the group she sings in: *The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists*. She founded Graphite Publishing, an online publishing company, in 2004 along with fellow composer Timothy C. Takach, and is also published by Boosey and Hawkes. Former teachers include Judith Lang Zaimont, Peter Hamlin, David Maslanka, Mary Ellen Childs, and Timothy Mahr. She completed her Masters in Composition at the University of Minnesota in 2006.

Read more about Jocelyn on her website: www.jocelynhagen.com



Born in 1980, **Joshua Shank** is quickly becoming recognized as a talented and innovative young composer whose music has been widely performed internationally by high school and professional ensembles alike. He received his undergraduate degree in Vocal Music Education from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa where he studied composition with John Morrison and Neil Flory and conducting with Weston Noble. In 2002, Joshua became the youngest composer ever awarded the Raymond W. Brock Student Composition Award by the American Choral Directors Association. The winning piece, *Musica animam tangens* (written at the age of 20), was premiered at the 2003 ACDA National Convention in New York City in Avery Fisher Hall at the Lincoln Center and has since been performed from Los Angeles to South Africa.

His published works have sold over 40,000 copies world-wide and are available through Santa Barbara Music Publishing, Hal Leonard and Daehn Publications. Joshua's work was featured in *Choral Charisma: Singing with Expression* by Tom Carter and he was a contributor to *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir, Volume 2*. He has been commissioned by organizations such as Kantorei (Denver), Choral Arts Ensemble of Rochester (MN), Young New Yorkers' Chorus, Northern Arizona University, Nebraska Children's Chorus, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and has served as composer-in-residence for *The Singers—Minnesota Choral Artists* since the ensemble was founded in 2004.

Read more about Josh on his website: www.joshuashank.com