Spring New England choral highlights

New Englanders have plenty of choral music to choose from! To date, over 600 events between September 2013 and June 2014 have been posted to the Choral Arts New England events calendar. (The busiest month, of course, is December, with 199 events, followed by November and May, with 78 and 73 events, respectively.) Here, we list a few of the highlights of the season. There are far more than will fit on these pages—see the online newsletter for a more complete list of highlights (with links), and see the online calendar (www.choralarts-newengland.org/Calendar) for the complete and up-to-date set.

Premieres and choral commissions (by composer)

Delmar Dustin Small: As it began to dawn, “an oratorio about the awe and mystery of the Resurrection.” Down East Singers [ME], 5/26/14.
Gwyneth Walker: To Love This Earth. Chorale Connecticut [CT], 5/3/14.

Major or especially interesting works


(continued inside)
E. Wayne Abercrombie (cont’d)

Massachusetts chapter, and as President of the Eastern Division from 2004 to 2006. In 2007 he was named Massachusetts ACDA Conductor of the Year. He is chair of the Steering Committee for the Conducting Master Class at the ACDA Eastern Division 2014 Conference with Simon Carrington.

Dr. Abercrombie is a co-founder (in 2007) and current Artistic Director of the Children’s Chorus of Springfield (Mass.), and helped establish the International Federation of Choral Music’s program, Conductors Without Borders. Since retirement, he has been guest conductor or lecturer at Amherst College, Boston University, Northeastern University, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (where he was made an Honorary Member of the Men’s Glee Club), and Western New England University. He continues to research new approaches in teaching conducting and in discovering how conductors learn their craft, and was an observer at the Eric Ericson MasterClass 2011 in Haarlem, The Netherlands.

Dr. Abercrombie holds degrees from Westminster Choir College, (B.M. in Voice and M.M. in Conducting), and Indiana University (D. Mus. in Choral Conducting with Highest Honors). He has been Assistant Conductor and Chorus Director of the Johnstown (Pa.), Elkhart (Ind.) and Springfield (Mass.) Symphony Orchestra Choruses. He taught and conducted at West Georgia College and Indiana University at South Bend, has taught voice and sung recitals and solos with orchestra, and was a member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chamber Chorus under Robert Shaw.

2013 Alfred Nash Patterson Grants

Choral Arts New England held its 29th annual awards ceremony on October 27, 2013, at the Amherst Women’s Club in Amherst, Massachusetts, where nine New England choruses received grants. (Concert dates listed are subject to change within the current season.)

Blue Heron Renaissance Choir, Auburndale, Mass., to support recording the Peterhouse Partbooks (second year of a four-year grant).

Cantemus Chamber Chorus, Ipswich, Mass., for performances in April 2013 celebrating composers and poets from the North Shore, including poets Robert Frost, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Anne Bradstreet, and John Greenleaf Whittier, and composers Randall Thompson, Daniel Pinkham, and Gwyneth Walker.

Concord Women’s Chorus, Concord, Mass., for a concert in May 2013 featuring works by historical and contemporary women composers, with the participation of the Concord-Carlisle High School Women’s Chorus.

Danbury Music Centre, Danbury, Conn., to support a commissioned work by Carson Cooman for the Danbury Concert Chorus to texts by Lord Byron and Lancelot Andrews, tentatively called Children of the Light, to be performed in May 2014.

Manchester Choral Society, Manchester, NH, for performances in May 2013 of The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass by Carol Barnett, in collaboration with the bluegrass band Chasing Blue.


Mount Desert Summer Chorale, Mount Desert, Maine, for rehearsals and performance of Verdi’s Requiem in early August 2013.

Mystic River Chorale, Mystic, Conn., to support the regional premiere on January 19, 2014 of a Te Deum by Carl Czerny, together with Franz Schubert’s Mass No. 3 in B-flat, with participation of students from two area high schools.

The Spectrum Singers, Cambridge, Mass., to engage a professional marketing and fundraising consultant to do a comprehensive analysis of the organization and its membership over two years that will lead to a plan to increase awareness of the chorus in the greater Boston area and evaluate potential income opportunities.

Online choral calendar

The Choral Arts New England events calendar, at www.choralarts-newengland.org/Calendar lists concerts and other events in all the New England states. It’s easy to use, and easy to make custom links, to, for example, show events in certain states, in a given metropolitan area, or within some distance of any town. There is now a search box, and the display can be compressed for easier viewing. Full directions are there.

Anyone can add an event to the calendar (subject to review), using the form on the page.
Spring choral highlights (cont’d)

J.S. Bach: Mass in B Minor. CONCORA, with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra [CT], 3/30/14.
Leonard Bernstein: Chichester Psalms; Kaddish Symphony (narrated by his daughter, Jamie); “Simple Song” from Mass. The Choral Art Society [ME], 3/16/14, 3/18/14.
Georges Bizet: Carmen. The Mendelssohn Choir of Connecticut, with the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra [CT], 5/17/14.
Francis Poulenc: Glória; Gioachino Rossini: Stabat Mater. Fairfield County Chorale [CT], 5/10/14.

Special programs (a few of many)—Chronological.

A musical valentine: 16th-century madrigals setting the poetry of Petrarch, by Arcadelt, Willaert, Rore, Wert, Marenzio and others. Blue Heron [MA], 2/15/14.
J.S. Bach: Jesu, meine Freude; Gustav Holst: St. Paul’s Suite; Anton Bruckner: Requiem; soloists are winners of the 6th Annual Collegiate Vocal Competition. Rhode Island Civic Chorale [RI], 3/15/14.
Igor Stravinsky: Mass; Four Russian Peasant Songs; Claude Debussy: Trois Chansons; Arnold Schönberg: No. 6 from Pieces for Male Chorus. Orpheus Singers [MA], 5/17/14.
Songs of the Sea by Edvard Grieg, Amy Cheney Beach, Eric Whitacre, Peter Schickele, and others. Saengerfest Men’s Chorus with the Boston City Singers [MA], 5/31/14.
Encouraging Choral Excellence through Alfred Nash Patterson Grants
www.choralarts-newengland.org

Grants Available for Next Year!

Application deadline: February 28, 2014
Forms and info: www.choralarts-newengland.org

Every year Choral Arts New England gives special grants to support choral music. Most grants have been in the $1,000-2,000 range, but requests for larger (or smaller) amounts will be considered. The money can be used to commission new music, hire instrumentalists, rent or purchase scores, pay travel expenses, or carry out a special project, either performing or non-performing. Grants are not generally given for regular operating expenses.

Applicant organizations must be non-profit and certified tax-exempt by the IRS. Choruses or any organizations that provide support to choral music are eligible, including church choirs and school or college choruses.

See the website for more details and a list of past projects. Grant decisions are made by mid-April.

A New England Composers Performance Register

Music has a special relationship to its own time and place, and the music of our time helps define us as a community. However, choral music by contemporary composers can be hard to find on the radio or other media. Whose works are New England choruses performing?

Choral Arts New England is compiling a list of contemporary compositions performed by New England choruses. We’re particularly interested in “local” New England composers.

Have you performed or, better yet, commissioned a choral work by a living New England composer? Please tell us about it, using the website form. Are you interested in programming music by contemporary New England composers? See our directory web page:

www.choralarts-newengland.org/Composers

which has a growing list of compositions that have been performed, with descriptions and links to the performing group and to the composer.