



Behind the Scenes of Rise Up Chorus

Creating our Cornerstone Concert Series

by Matthew LaPine, Artistic Director

When the new year begins, so begins the process of creating the next Rise Up Chorus season! It's an exciting time in our Community; although we're working on our current repertoire, the thought of what's coming next is always intriguing to performers and audiences alike. As you may be aware, Rise Up Chorus works on a fiscal year and artistic season that begins July 1 and runs through June 30. This is in line with what most Performing Arts organizations do. Our season is broken down into three groups that we call "sessions," with each session leading up to a major Cornerstone Concert Series performance. Although the performances aren't at the heart of RUC's mission, it helps us to use these concerts as season benchmarks since they're already spaced relatively evenly throughout the season.



When January begins, Angela, Helen, and I start working to create the next season. Our season begins with summer camp (the last two full weeks of July), and then we work on our Cornerstone Concert Series – the concerts that typically take place the weekend before Thanksgiving in November, the second weekend of March, and the second weekend of June. Of course, these dates may need to move around a bit for various reasons, but those are our target dates when creating the season. Then, we work on the themes for the series.

I keep an extensive list of concert ideas that pop into my head. Some of these ideas are fully fleshed-out concerts, while others are merely abstract concepts that need to be realized. I look for three of these ideas that help us toward our mission, work for where we are as an organization, and would be fulfilling to rehearse for several months before presenting to an audience at our performances. Sometimes, each performance in the Cornerstone Concert Series fits an overarching theme (as they do this year), while in other seasons each performance stands on its own. (cont. on p. 7)

Board Member Spotlight:

Angela Dohl

Director of Operations

Angela Dohl is a talented and versatile woman whose aspirational vision helped to craft Rise Up Chorus after its inception seven years ago. Since Matthew LaPine, our Artistic Director, and the other founders began to shape the mission and goals of our Community-minded organization, Angela brought new ideas to expand the capabilities of the chorus to achieve our goals. Angela and Matt work as a team to bring each season to fruition.

One of Angela's most important functions is to serve as the hub of Rise Up Chorus, guiding and facilitating its operations in every facet. If there is a question regarding venues for concerts, rehearsals, chorus finances, or record keeping, the reply is always, "Ask Angela," because no member of the group knows more about our inner workings.

Angela is responsible for contracting St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Metuchen for scheduling rehearsals that are held there on a weekly basis. Arranging rehearsal schedules can become complicated when the chorus must share space with other organizations that use the church. Since we hold several other events at St. Luke's each year, including performances, Board of Directors meeting, workshops, and social gatherings, there is a lot of extra scheduling to be completed with the church. Angela also oversees that the chorus respects the space at St. Luke's in order to maintain a good working relationship with the welcoming church community. (cont. on p. 3)

In this edition of Phoenix Rising...

We take a "Behind the Scenes" look at Rise Up Chorus. Learn the creative process of how the repertoire is chosen for each Cornerstone Concert, the technology utilized to run the organization, plus find out how you can help us "behind the scenes." Read about what it entails to keep this organization running with our Board Member Spotlight on Angela Dohl! You will get to know two of our members, Carol Baldi and Jack Rettagliata, and be introduced to our Alto Section Coach, Elizabeth (Beth) Amory-Teutsch.



(cont. from p. 2) Tracking chorus attendance is an important task that Angela shares with Isabel Badillo, our Librarian & Membership Chair. In order to streamline operations, Angela has implemented a new computer/cell phone application by which members can report whether or not they plan to attend rehearsal. This new app also allows for more regular and immediate communication between chorus members, thus fostering the development of our Community. Her continual exploration into the latest technological advances for group communication is continual and helpful to all.

With Rise Up Chorus continuing to grow each year, the smaller venues that we performed in when we started out are no longer viable for the larger audiences that we must accommodate. Therefore, Angela is constantly on the lookout for new concert halls and subsequently contracting for those event spaces. She then serves as the liaison between the venue and the chorus to make sure that our needs are met prior to the nights of performance. She must ascertain if there are risers available at the venue, for instance, or what details are important about the arrangement of space in order to make seating charts when necessary. For each concert, Angela manages the ticketing system whereby concert attendees can purchase their seats prior to an event.

Finally, Angela is deeply immersed with the workings of the Rise Up Chorus Youth Chorus, an integral part of our greater body. This necessitates communication with parents and working to integrate the children with the Adult Chorus so that we grow together as one cohesive family. Amazingly, she is also the Administrator of the Rise Up Chorus Summer Musical Theatre Camp, which continues to grow each summer, allowing for the talented children in our area to experience the musical theater process and perform on stage.

Despite all that she does for the good of the Rise Up Chorus, somehow Angela also manages to keep a full-time job, sing with her church choir, volunteer as Treasurer on the Board of Directors of Playhouse 22, and is a member of the alto section of Rise Up Chorus!

Tech that keeps RUC Running

- **Ticket Leap** - Ticketing software
- **Aplos** - Accounting, budgeting, and donation software, plus much, much more!
- **TeamSnap** - Attendance App and organization text alerts
- **Sign Up Genius** - Volunteer sign-up sheets
- **Google Suite** - Email, team drive, archives, digital storage... etc
- **HootSuite** - Social Media posting platform
- **Canva** - Creating graphics for Social Media, email blasts, and newsletters!
- **MailChimp** - Email blasts and advertising
- **Learning Tracks** - Help to practice our music
- **Wix** - Web Hosting



What is required of a 501(c)(3) to run?

- Annual tax return
- New Jersey Charities Registration
- New Jersey Business Registration
- Regular Board Meetings
- Accountability to public at large

Did you know...

Rise Up Chorus has a Platinum Seal of Transparency rating from Candid?





Adult Chorus Member Spotlight: Carol Baldi

1. When did you join Rise Up Chorus? **The third session of the first year, Spring of 2018. My first concert was "Building a Musical Community" that June.**

2. How did you hear about Rise Up Chorus? **A friend of mine was looking for a new chorus to join and I believe she found it online. She didn't want to go by herself, so she dragged me along for moral support. I hadn't done anything like this since college, so I was a little reluctant at first. She stayed for exactly one session but Rise Up has been stuck with me ever since.**

3. What have been your favorite concerts or performances so far? **There's something to love about all of them, but I'd have to go with the fan favorite, "A Haunted Evening," our Halloween**

concert in 2019, as my favorite as well. Our virtual concerts, "Winter's Cold" and "Healing, Beauty and Hope" are both very special as well because they represent Matt, Angela, and everyone else's commitment to keeping us going strong throughout the pandemic, when personal connection was so difficult for everyone.

4. What do you do in your spare time? **I enjoy baking and all kinds of miscellaneous arts and crafts, especially knitting. I also listen to audiodramas, read, and take photos of cemeteries.**

5. Is there anything special that Rise Up Chorus provides you? **Rise Up is, first and foremost, a place of acceptance. Everywhere you go, it seems like drama and backbiting are par for the course, but I've never heard anyone in Rise Up say so much as a single mean thing about anyone else, and in a group this size, that's probably unprecedented. Maybe we're the type of group that attracts people who want to leave a world of contention and hostility outside the door, or maybe there's something about singing together that makes it that way, putting aside conflicts for the sake of a common goal. Either way, even though we sing about serious topics, Rise Up has always provided me with a respite from the unkindness and cynicism we all constantly negotiate in our day-to-day lives.**

6. Thank you for recruiting so many volunteers for the last Tricky Tray. Is there anything you can share from that experience? What would you say to someone who has never volunteered? **I found out very quickly that the best way to get people to sign up is to speak to them in person directly and say, "So what can I put you down to do?" People like to get involved but think that surely someone else has already stepped up when that's not always the case. Also there's probably a spot where you're needed even if you don't have a lot of special skills. Monetary donations are always important, but in Rise Up, there's still plenty to contribute if, like me, you have more time to spare than money.**

7. Is there anything else you would like me to include? **I came without an extensive musical background, or, frankly, very much skill. At first I was mostly just singing along, listening to the people around me and trying to imitate them, hoping not to make waves, and knowing everything would be fine if I wasn't there. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has ever joined who felt that way. Gradually, though, I've come to realize that little by little, I'm actually starting to contribute my own unique voice to the group as a whole and maybe, without me there, it would be a little bit diminished. And honestly, I'm not even referring only to singing. Even one voice is still important. So don't be afraid to jump in to volunteer when the need arises – you're more important than you know.**



“Unsung Heroes” of our inaugural Phoenix Cabaret

“It takes a village!”

We have all heard that saying before, and our Rise Up Chorus Community is no different. Our Board of Directors are all VOLUNTEERS! Our members help with different things when needed, such as putting chairs away after rehearsal or helping carry extra music to our storage area. This is just an example of the things we need help with. Here are a few opportunities where we can use YOUR help:

- Working front of house at concerts
- Event Committee
- Fundraising Committee
- Setting up for Potluck Socials
- Soliciting Donations for Tricky Trays/Fundraisers
- Baking for Events
- Helping the day of events (don't worry, ask and we'll put you to work!)
- Posting Concert Flyers in Our Community

If you would like to volunteer at any of our events, reach out to admin@riseupchorus.org, and we will put you in contact with the person running the event.

On January 27th, Rise Up Chorus held its inaugural Phoenix Cabaret! While the singers are under the spotlight the night of the event (everyone who performed was marvelous!) we need to say a MASSIVE THANK YOU to the unsung heroes of that night: our VOLUNTEERS!

There were 25 singers, 2 accompanists, 1 stage manager, and countless volunteers who helped make the Cabaret a HUGE success! Volunteers helped set up the tables and chairs, decorate the stage, set up the baked goods, and make coffee and hot water for tea. We needed 2 people to sell tickets at the door, 3 ushers, and 6 people to help clean up afterward! Did I mention that there were about 15 bakers to provide intermission snacks? Without our volunteers we could not function as we do!

Thank you to our wonderful Community!



Youth Chorus Member Spotlight: Jack Rettagliata



1. How long has Jack been singing with Rise Up Chorus?

Jack joined Rise Up Chorus when he entered third grade in September 2021.

2. Does he have a favorite song or concert? One of the things Jack loves the most about Rise Up Chorus is that each performance is entirely different from the last – which has made it really hard to choose a favorite. Jack really enjoyed performing with special guests, like comedian Helene Angley at “Comedy Tonight” and Marco Kandilis who was featured at “The Great American Songbook”. Considering it was so hard to choose, he said his favorite performance overall was “Celebrate”, which included music from Rise Up’s first five seasons. One of his favorite songs, which was performed at “Hear My Voice”, is the song “Be the Change” by Laura Farnell.

In addition to the song’s uplifting message, Jack chose this song because he learned lyrics in Swahili – “Basi mwanga wako uangaze” which translates to “let your light shine”. The music was arranged by Ms. Kernizan in a way that sounded amazing with different members of the chorus coming in at different parts of the song.

3. Did he ask any friends to join Rise Up Chorus? Jack has been fortunate to make lots of new friends through Rise Up Chorus. He was thrilled to have a classmate, Rayna, join the chorus. For years Jack has been asking his circle of friends to join Rise Up, but, so far they have only come out to watch him perform. So they will take some more convincing.

4. Did he sing at Carnegie Hall? If so, what impact did the performance have on Jack? Yes. Performing on-stage at Carnegie Hall was a milestone achievement. Jack was thrilled to perform at Carnegie Hall. He also enjoyed visiting New York City in the days leading up to the performance and meeting performers from other youth choruses from across the country. And, he loved watching the singing waiters and waitresses at Ellen’s Stardust Diner during our pre-rehearsal breakfasts.

5. Has he participated in Caroling, the Metuchen Tree Lighting Ceremony or Memorial Day parade? Yes. Every year Jack looks forward to the community performances in Metuchen – the Memorial Day Parade, the Tree & Menorah Lighting, and Downtown Caroling. He also enjoyed singing the national anthem with Rise Up at the Somerset Patriots baseball games. He is particularly proud of marching in the 2023 Memorial Day Parade and performing in the service for Sgt. Michael Uhrin, the 21-year-old airman from Metuchen whose remains were identified nearly 80 years after his death and brought back to Metuchen to be laid to rest. At the time, Jack was in fourth grade and had recently learned about Sgt. Uhrin shortly before Memorial Day. He was very proud of the connection to our community and how Sgt. Uhrin’s sacrifice was honored.

6. What other activities does Jack participate in? Jack enjoys sports including basketball, tennis, and swimming. Since first grade, Jack has taken dance classes, learning hip hop, lyrical, tap, and now musical theater. For the last two years he also performed in an annual production of The Nutcracker with another local dance school. He also participates in the Edgar Middle School chorus.

7. Please include anything else that seems relevant. Jack loves meeting people and making friends – which are also the things that he loves most about Rise Up Chorus.

Meet Elizabeth (Beth) Amory-Teutsch

Alto Coach

Rise Up Chorus is thrilled to welcome Beth to our alto section as its coach. Beth explained that music has always been part of her life. Her mom was a church organist, and her dad was a singer. She started her musical career with piano lessons and singing in school choirs. When she attended Westminster Choir College, she knew that she had found her career in music education. She said that she wanted to be a teacher because she always had the best teachers.



Beth had completed student teaching at Woodbridge High School when the Music Director position became vacant. She landed the job and taught there for 33 years until her retirement in 2019. Once retired, she just wanted to sing. She joined the Woodbridge Community Choir, and when the Director left, Beth stepped up to that role. Her goal is to keep music fun. She said that if there is something you want to do, like singing, don't let fear get in the way. When asked how we can become better singers, Beth stated that we are all life learners, and we should find people who know more than we do and listen to them. Everyone has something to teach.

(cont. from p. 1) After I select the concert themes from this list, I let it sit for a while. To be honest, I sometimes have the themes selected a couple of seasons in advance (for example, I'm currently working to plan 2026 concert themes), so I get to sit with them for a very long time. This gives me an opportunity to refine my ideas to ensure I'm selecting the exact right themes at the exact right time.

Once I'm comfortable with the themes for the season, Angela and I look at the calendar for feasibility and ask the following questions: How many rehearsals are there in that particular session? Is that a sufficient number of rehearsals for that particular theme? If not, can we move things around a bit to make it work? Where should this performance be held? After we answer all of these questions, I reach out to Helen Kernizan, Flo Simmons, and Hannah Han for their input as it is important that we are all collaborators in this process. After this step, we've confirmed the themes.

The next step in the process is to develop a budget for each performance. This is usually the most difficult step in the process because the repertoire isn't often finalized at this point (that happens much, much later) so I won't know if we need to hire any special instrumentalists, soloists, etc. However, Angela and I create the budget based on past performances and using our best guesses. Then, this budget goes to our Board of Directors for tentative approval so that we can begin the marketing of the season. Lastly, I design the general artwork for the concerts that will later be used on announcements, flyers, and marketing materials. Then, we put the announcement together and voila! We reveal the next season to you at our final potluck social of the season and anticipate your excitement at what is yet to come.

Which theme in our first 7 seasons has been your favorite? You can see a full listing of our concert themes here: www.riseupchorus.org/past-programs.





THE UNARMED CHILD

by Michael Bussewitz-Quarm
In collaboration with Metuchen Dance Centre

One night only!
Saturday, March 9, 2024
7:00pm

Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church
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\$20/adults | \$18/seniors
children and students are free

***We are collecting donations at the door in support of Sandy Hook Promise whose mission is to protect more children from school shootings, violence and other harmful acts. We appreciate your generosity.



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RiseUpChorus.org

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July 15 - 26, 2024
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CAMP EXPERIENCE WILL CULMINATE IN A FULL PERFORMANCE OF MATILDA THE MUSICAL JR.!

Matilda THE MUSICAL JR.

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Tuition is \$550 -- the same rate as it has been for the last two years -- for TWO WEEKS of full day camp and a camp t-shirt. Early bird discounts available!

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