

# MUSIC

NEWSLETTER



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## Clark's Choral Program: Cultivating Art & Community

**A**NDY CLARK has a chalkboard in his office covered with notes and diagrams where he tries to keep track of all of the Holden Choruses's activities.

"It's an interesting situation," says Clark, "as each chorus is a separate charitable organization, a 501(c)3. Our students, many of them interested in marketing and business administration, end up managing these groups. We literally have students gaining experience as CEOs, CFOs, and board members of a bona fide nonprofit organization."

For over one-hundred-fifty years the choruses—the Harvard Glee Club, the Radcliffe Choral Society, Harvard-Radcliffe Chorus, and the Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum—have been drawn to chorus because they love to sing, because they thrive on a demanding artistic experience, and because they enjoy the community it brings. Whether the students come from the Metropolitan Opera Children's Chorus or have never sung in a choir before, they bond together quickly.

"It's part of Jim Marvin's legacy," says Clark. "You don't have to choose between high performance quality and a nurturing and supportive community. The students form some of their closest relationships through the choruses; this becomes part of their identity. One of the first things I tell new students during our first rehearsal is this: 'Your future spouse or the best friends you'll have for the rest of your life might be in this room.'"

Clark is interested in music, of course, in challenging his singers as artists, but he's also become interested in something else—their character, how they form their values, and what kind of people they'll be when they go out into the world. He'd like to see them become not just future patrons of music, but advocates.

"Harvard is overwhelming. It's an all-you-can-eat buffet of opportunity and activity. In music, the pursuit of excellence takes sacrifice, focus, and a significant amount of time. And craft—musician-ship—is a big part of what I teach. It's important to me that students know the music of our age, and that they graduate knowing more than twenty composers. But I also want to inspire them to be



Photo by Richard Boober

more thoughtful and to cultivate a sense of purpose as musicians. The experience can not be a mile wide and an inch deep. We have to continue to challenge our students, instill a lifelong passion for choral music and performance, and make the experience artistically and socially rewarding."

Clark has other ambitions as well.

"There exists a long tradition of the Holden Choruses commissioning new work. Our groups have premiered works by some of the most significant composers of the last century, and more than a few of them sang in our groups as students here. I'd like to do more commissioning and also provide opportunities for emerging composers. This year, for example, Kyle Randall, a senior music concentrator, has composed a setting of Yeats's 'When You Grow Old' to music that premiered at the January Glee Club performance at Carnegie Hall."

Clark collaborated with a seminar on John Adams taught by Professors Carol Oja and Anne Shreffler, performing the composer's *Transmigration of Souls* in Sanders Theatre in 2011, and works regularly with the Learning From Performers program of the Office for the Arts to bring in artists such as conductor Harry Christophers to engage students.

Clark continued

*Students have to have more places and spaces to leave the pressures of ambition and stress behind. I talk about it in rehearsal, that they can leave all that at the door of Holden Chapel. I want to provide space for wonder, creativity, even mysticism; to give our students nourishment they need.*

This February, Sweet Honey and the Rock will headline the festival of women's choruses, held every four years at Harvard.

One of Clark's newest endeavors involves community service.

"Last year the Harvard Glee Club launched a community partnership with the Ashmont Boys Chorus [a youth chorus based in nearby Dorchester]," recounts Clark. "It turns out that one of my predecessors, Archibald T. Davison, worked as the director of this choir before his long tenure at Harvard. One night, instead of rehearsal, we took the Glee Club on the subway to Ashmont to visit the kids. They played basketball, had pizza, sang for and with each other. Some of their singers and our Glee Club guys shared with each other and the audience about why they sang in a chorus. Since male participation in the choral arts is declining, we saw an opportunity to encourage more young people to keep singing. Before we left, we gave all the kids a hooded Harvard Glee Club sweatshirt.

"One month later, we were giving a concert in Sanders and I looked out at the audience



The RADCLIFFE CHORAL SOCIETY, conducted by Andrew Clark, won the Grand Prize at the 5th International Competition for Chamber Choirs at Petrinja, Croatia in June. RCS took first place (gold prize) in both classical and folklore categories and won a final round "sing-off" against Ženski mladinski hor, an acclaimed women's chorus from Skopje, Macedonia. Members of RCS are pictured here with the 5,000kn cash award (approx. \$1,000 USD) as well as a commemorative ceramic jug trophy, emblematic of the artisan traditions of Petrinja.

and saw twenty of those kids in their HGC hoodies, sitting there in the front row with their parents. It's important to me that chorus is not just a self-enrichment activity for the singer, but that it seeks to impact the community around us."

Other projects Clark has on tap: finishing several CDs, and thinking about producing more recordings under a Holden Choruses record label. Clark says that there is an archive full of recordings from the 1940s on, of performances by the HGC, RCS, and HRCM that could be historically important. He'd like to record and distribute them to academic libraries, as well as to other choruses in hopes they'll program certain neglected works more often. This dovetails with Clark's own scholarly interests in the area of mid-20th-century American composers, many of whom composed for the Glee Club and other Boston-area groups. Clark is currently completing a DMA at Boston University.

The recent restructuring of choral administration (adding a choral associate as well as resident conductors for each group) means that Clark will be able to sustain the program at its current high-energy level as well as seize the opportunity to do more of the things scrawled on the surface of that chalkboard.

*Andrew Clark was appointed Director of Choral Activities at Harvard in 2010. Clark also serves as Senior Lecturer on Music, where he teaches courses in conducting and music theory. He leads the Holden Choruses in performances throughout Europe and the United States, in studio recordings, and collaborations with distinguished conductors, composers, and ensembles.*

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## *Hearing Modernity:* Harvard Hosts the 2013–2014 Sawyer Seminar

Sound, fleeting and immaterial, has long proved resistant to academic inquiry. Faced with the impenetrable difficulty of pinning down sounds themselves, scholars have largely focused on written texts (instead of spoken words), while musicians have largely focused on notes (instead of sounds). In recent years, however, a number of very promising approaches from a variety of fields, which often bridge the arts and the sciences, have sprung up and have begun to capture this phenomenon in its wider context.

The 2013/14 John E. Sawyer seminar "Hearing Modernity," funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, explores the world of sound studies. As the humanities turn away from the predominance of the visual domain and start exploring other sensory modalities, as the arts turn away from their traditional preoccupation with the work concept and toward a heightened appreciation of ecologies and soundscapes, and as the self-imposed limitations of C. P. Snow's "Two Cultures" become ever more apparent, sound studies emerges as a new field that responds to multiple challenges at once.

The format of each seminar session amounts to a mini-symposium on a topic related to sound. Rather than two presentations of regular full-length papers, the speakers will pre-circulate their papers so that participants can read them in advance. Each session will begin with short statements by the two speakers summing up the key points of their papers. The discussion will be opened by a question or a short response from one of the graduate fellows, and is to be followed by an open discussion among all participants. Such a format seems particularly suited to the goals of the Sawyer Seminar, as it places primary importance on discussion, interchange, and exploration.

Seminars will take place in the Davison Room, 2nd floor, Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library, Harvard University. For details and schedule, <http://www.music.fas.harvard.edu/sawyer.html>

*"Hearing Modernity" is a John E. Sawyer Seminar on the Comparative Study of Cultures, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.*