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Fall 2018 Edition Newsletter of the Alumni of the Philadelphia Boys Choir & Chorale

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## A Year of Celebrating PBCC.....A Message from Jeff Smith, Artistic Director

Hello PBCC alumni and family!

It's the middle of another busy season, after another busy summer. I'm not quite sure why I'm surprised every year how quickly the summer went and how busy it was! Besides the tour, most of the time was spent auditioning new boys and preparing for the new season. We have a good group of new boys coming in and I think it's going to be a great year.

But before we talk about this coming season, I just want to thank you all for coming out to the Kimmel Center concert in June. What an awesome weekend! It was such a joy to catch up with you guys. Although I wish I had more time, because I know I didn't get to personally talk with all of you – I would have stayed here talking with you guys all through the night if I had the chance!

Hopefully you can come out again next June so even more of us can connect - the concert is on June 22nd so add it to your calendar today! I do hope that you each got to meet with some of your old PBCC family and maybe meet some new people too. I know that Dr. Hamilton was overwhelmed by all the faces and the love you guys showed. It was truly a special moment.

After the concert, we had to quickly prepare for our tour to Vietnam and Singapore. In this issue you'll see an excerpt from an update that I wrote during the tour. A few years ago I started writing these updates – they are basically recaps of a few days' worth of tour which I e-mail to the parents.

You all know that we NEVER let the boys contact home; well, with technology these days, it's getting harder to justify to parents that they will not hear anything from us during the whole tour. So I decided to write and e-mail these updates every few days during tour. The parents still don't hear from their own boys, but at least they can hear about what's going on with the whole group.

I have to admit, I do enjoy writing them – it gives me a chance to process what we've been through, brag a little on the choir, and at the same time hopefully put the parents' minds at ease. If you get a chance, be sure to read the article and go to the website for all of the updates from this year's tour. Some of you were in Singapore with PBCC many years ago, but this was the choir's first time to Vietnam, and it was a remarkable experience.

And now we look forward to this season! Remember that first day of the season? Turning in old music, passing out new music, meeting all the new "candidates", reading through a few of the new pieces... some of these things never change, but others are a bit different now...like the assignment of big brothers/little brothers and the addition of a "cambiata" part for boys whose voices have started to change.

But we continue many of the traditions started so many years ago, and get these boys prepared for some fantastic holiday concerts (not to mention the Nutcracker and Philly POPS concerts) as we look to end our 50th year on a high note!



Thanks for reading, and thanks again for coming to see us all in June. Have a great year, and I hope to see you throughout the coming year!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff".

Jeffrey R. Smith  
Artistic Director and Conductor

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Visit our NEW website at [phillyboyschoir.org](http://phillyboyschoir.org)

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# 50th Anniversary Celebration ..... An Unforgettable Event!

To the over 150 PBCC alumni who joined us for the big concert weekend celebration highlighting our 50th anniversary, THANK YOU! We sincerely hope that amazing performance at the Kimmel, the renewed friendships, and the memories from your choir experience were special for each of you.

So many men traveled from near and far to join in singing "Shenandoah" together with our current cadets, choir, and chorale under the baton of Dr. Robert G. Hamilton, and for a moment time stood still as the final notes of that beautiful song, and all the emotions that went into singing it, drifted across the audience in Verizon Hall.

The weekend began Saturday evening with the Gala held at the Bellevue Hotel in Philadelphia. We laughed, ate, and danced into the early morning hours. We also honored three very important people with the Standing Ovation Award presented to Carol Stroud, Ukee Washington, and Dick Weirauch (posthumously, accepted by his wife Gail) for their contributions to PBCC over the years.

## *Gala at the Bellevue*



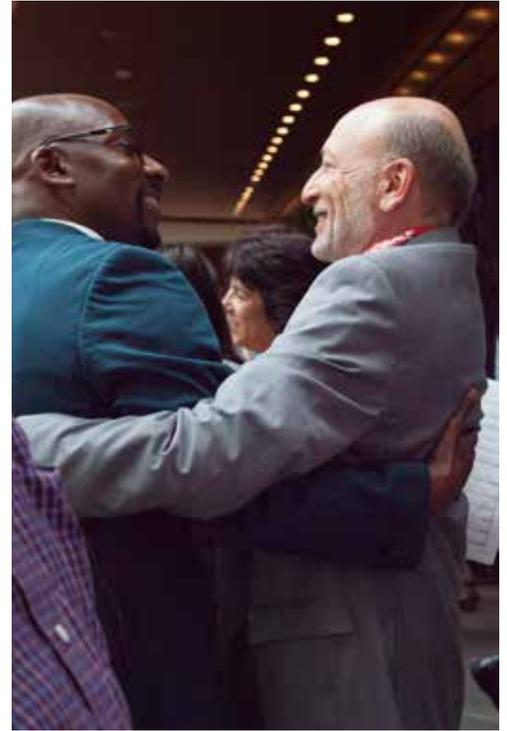
# 50th Anniversary Celebration ..... An Unforgettable Event!

On Sunday, alumni arrived early to the 50th Anniversary concert at the Kimmel and soon the lobby was full of friends reuniting.

All the alumni were greeted at a welcome area where they added their signatures to a special poster that now hangs in our choir rehearsal hall.

Each alumnus also received a commemorative PBCC "50 years of tour" t-shirt, an alumni car magnet, a PBCC swag bag, and a very special DVD produced just for the 50th by six of the charter members and our current choir.

## *PBCC Alumni Welcomed at the Kimmel Center*



# 50th Anniversary Celebration ..... An Unforgettable Event!

The concert's first half included some newly commissioned pieces, "America, the Beautiful" conducted by Dr. Hamilton, and the combined singing of "Shenandoah" followed by a second half of songs from the best of the past 50 years. It truly was an incredible afternoon of music sung by an incredible choir.

Afterwards, over 500 people including alumni, their families, and current choir members and their families joined at the choir building for fun. There was birthday cake, food trucks, a rehearsal hall full of memorabilia photos, and lots of love and fellowship.

Many hours were spent filling our spirits all revolving around our love for singing and the Philadelphia Boys Choir. One alum was overheard to say "There is a treasure trove of memories from my days in the choir in the rehearsal hall. Made my heart so, so happy and it was just what I needed!"

If you weren't able to join us, we hope that these photos of the events will help you feel as if you were there and more importantly, we hope that you will keep in touch and attend other PBCC Alumni events and especially our annual Kimmel concerts.

As we continue to celebrate our 50th Anniversary throughout 2018, we plan to keep the brotherhood strong and hope you'll be a part of celebrating the Philadelphia Boys Choir & Chorale with us EVERY year.



# 50th Anniversary Celebration ..... An Unforgettable Event!

## PBCC Friends & Families at the Birthday Bash



## 5 for 50 Campaign ..... A Call to Action

Throughout our 50th Anniversary year we have been telling you about the “5 for 50 Campaign” launched by a substantial contribution by long-time board member and choir alum, Ned Moore and his wife, Binka.

The goal is to have 500 people follow Ned’s lead and make a 5-year commitment of giving in support of the Philadelphia Boys Choir & Chorale.

Keep in mind that your gift amount can be paid monthly over 5 years, so if you commit to \$1,500 that’s only \$25/month and if you can commit to \$3,000 that’s just \$50/month (less than a mobile phone bill) for which you will be recognized. Whatever you can do, we NEED YOU NOW!

As we enter the final months of the year, we need a commitment from YOU to reach our goal of 500 people participating by the end of 2018. If you haven’t signed up for our 5 for 50 Campaign, NOW is the time.

Commitments, whether they are small or large, from 500 people who value the choir, add up to provide the organization with predictability and stability over the next 5 years and into the future.

How important was the choir to you? What kind of impact did it have in your life? So many have shared the life changing experience that they received being part of this organization.

It’s our turn to step up and support this so we make sure this experience is here for the next boy just like it was here for you. Can you help us reach our goal so that we can continue to give kids from the greater Philadelphia areas that have the talent the chance to pursue that talent if they don’t have the financial means to do so?

Our organization does amazing things and this campaign is critical to making sure we can continue.

We NEED your support. Don’t delay, please make the decision and reach out today to sign up for your monthly commitment to the 5 for 50 Campaign. You will feel great knowing you are providing this experience for every boy that comes through our doors next and ensuring that the Philadelphia Boys Choir & Chorale continues to change lives far into the future.

It is now easier to give a recurring gift on our newly redesigned website! Go to [www.phillyboyschoir.org/5for50](http://www.phillyboyschoir.org/5for50)



## Dr. Robert G. Hamilton..... Reflections on 50 Years of PBCC

Judy Houdeshel, Director of Engagement and Alumni Relations, interviewed Dr. Hamilton to get his perspective on the 50th Anniversary Concert. Here's what he shared with us after the big day!

**Judy Houdeshel:** We were so happy that you could be at the 50th Anniversary Concert this past June to conduct the choir and chorale singing "America the Beautiful" and then the cadets, choir, chorale AND 150 alumni united in singing "Shenandoah". Can you share what it felt like for you to raise your baton and direct these two meaningful songs again?

**Dr. Hamilton:** *I was so happy to be invited back conducting the Choir, especially for the 50th concert this past June. I could truly conduct "America the Beautiful" and "Shenandoah" in my sleep, I know them so well.*

*I was so surprised to see 150 alumni return and sing "Shenandoah". It's that moment you realize you spent the bulk of your life doing the right thing. I hope I will be able to come up and conduct for the 55th Anniversary Concert.*

**JH:** After the concert, we gathered together for the Birthday Bash and Reunion. Do you have any special memories of that day that are particularly meaningful to you?

**RGH:** *There were special moments on that day, especially seeing several of my fraternity brothers from college. I was very proud that they would come so far on my behalf; also to see and greet all the alumni who also traveled near and far to attend; and meeting some of the new members of the Choir and Chorale.*

**JH:** Where are you currently living and what activities do you fill your days with?

**RGH:** *I am currently living in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and I spend 4 days a week at the gym, and I enjoy my pool in the back yard - also many nights out to dinner with close friends.*

**JH:** Is there any special message you would like to share with your PBCC alumni friends?

**RGH:** *Just keep on supporting the choir. Jeff Smith and John Stroud have done a magnificent job with the Choir. The standards by*

*which they teach and conduct will live on for many years to come.*

**JH:** Do you have an all-time favorite tour? What made it your favorite?

**RGH:** *I would say my favorite tours would be the Soviet Union, Germany, and China, especially the Great Wall. We sang Easter Sunday services on the Great Wall of China. And knowing that I would see Russia for the last time called the Soviet Union. In Germany we traveled through the Brandenburg Gate just before the wall was torn down.*

**JH:** You had the vision of creating a wonderful choir when you started the Philadelphia Boys Choir 50 years ago. What is most meaningful to you when you hear the Choir sing now knowing that your vision is still thriving and growing strong after all these years?

**RGH:** *I would say that the Choir has tremendous support from the alumni and the standard of the choir is still making the PBCC the best Choir in the world. There is no other choir finer.*



The Philadelphia Boys Choir & Chorale tour this summer was to Singapore and Vietnam. 73 boys and 17 men represented Philadelphia as America's Ambassadors of Song in Southeast Asia from July 4th through July 19th. As in the past, boys still do not communicate directly with their families at home. But unlike the past, technology allows parents to receive periodic email updates from Artistic Director Jeff Smith. We thought you would enjoy "traveling" along vicariously with PBCC through an email sent from across the world.

## July 6th

*Wow....what an exhausting first day. But we knew it would be. The first day is always the toughest - between traveling for 20 hours straight and the 12-hour time change, it doesn't get much harder than that. On the 4th, we arrived at JFK with plenty of time to spare. We sang "America, the Beautiful" while waiting at the gate. The others at the gate loved it! Several people came up to me, very impressed with the group. And I have to say - they did a great job! I was also proud to have a military vet come up to me to thank me.*

*We told the boys to try to stay awake on the first 6-hour flight (to Frankfurt) - which wasn't difficult since they were all excited about the start of tour. We landed in Frankfurt, got off the plane and had about 1.5 hours to kill. I couldn't help but use that time to practice the Singapore National Anthem and the Vietnamese folksong. The people in the airport were delighted. We got back on the plane for the 12-hour flight to Singapore. A few boys had some stomach problems and even home-sickness on the first flights, but that always happens. But when we landed (on July 6th morning), and got out of the airport, everyone seemed back to normal - ready for a great tour!*

*We hopped on the buses for the "Flower Dome", where we went right through security into the conference room for a sound-check and rehearsal. Sound check took longer than we had hoped - they must have sung the first few lines of "Star-Spangled Banner" 20 times....without complaint though! The boys were now looking super tired. Some were falling asleep whenever they sat down. But we knew it would happen....we tried keeping them up...and they plowed through it.*



*I gave them a little pep talk before the performance, and they pulled it off! They had to stand on this small stage, on either side of the podium, for about 20-30 minutes during some long political speeches (one from an American with an important title at the Embassy, and one from one of the mayors of Singapore) - and most of them stood still and looked sharper than they usually do. This was a minor miracle - they had a 20-hour transport, arrived in Singapore at 7am (which would have felt like 7pm to them), had a full day of sightseeing, and were beautifully singing the two national anthems around 7pm (which would have felt like 7am).*

*I was so proud and impressed with them! They represented us so well, and the Embassy staff was ecstatic about the whole thing. As always, these boys pulled off a tough one, and I think they were proud of it too. I know I was certainly proud of them. Though it was tough, I'm sure glad we did it. A neat experience, for sure.*



If you'd like to read more email updates sent from this year's tour you can do that by visiting our webpage [www.phillyboyschoir.org](http://www.phillyboyschoir.org) and clicking on ALUMNI. We have linked the remainder of Jeff's details from tour including a concert sung in the pouring rain, stories of scorpions and snakes, and visits to a children's orphanage and other amazing sites. They are quite entertaining and informative to read and are sure to bring back reminders of some of your great tour memories.

## Stay Connected... A Message from Judy Houdeshel, Director of Engagement



It truly was a whirlwind of events this summer with the concert and celebration of the 50th Anniversary of PBCC in June and then tour in July. As we look to put the finishing touches on a year full of celebrating the past, present, and future of PBCC, I'd like to send my heartfelt thanks to all the alumni for their tremendous continued support of the choir.

Whether it is in the form of reaching out in a friendly email, posting photos on the PBCC Alumni Facebook page, adding your voice with other alumni, cadets, choir, and chorale in the breath-taking notes of "Shenandoah" on the Verizon Hall stage at the Kimmel, or

being present at the Birthday Bash or Gala, it is evident how the bonds of PBCC have remained strong over all these years. You are a very special group of many ages and backgrounds all united around the music and experiences of the Philadelphia Boys Choir.

Many alumni have asked if there was a video made of the 50th Anniversary Concert. The answer is YES and you can purchase that by calling Delane Branson at 215.222.3500 x 806. A DVD of the entire 50th Anniversary Concert including the combined alumni/choir performance with Dr. Hamilton conducting is sure to be a keepsake for many of you.

We want to keep the PBCC Alumni momentum going. I'd like to hear from you on what you would like to do to reunite with your PBCC brothers and I'm here to facilitate that and serve as a conduit for communication. Would you like to have get-togethers before or after the December concerts? Let me know! Would you like to get a small group together to go through PBCC photos and memorabilia and identify the people in those pictures? We'd love to see that happen!

### *Philadelphia Lights Up in Red to Celebrate PBCC!*



### Contact us ... We'd love to hear from you!

Judy Houdeshel, Director of Engagement & Alumni Relations  
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@PHLBoysChoir



Philadelphia Boys Choir Alumni Group

Alumni webpage – [www.phillyboyschoir.org/alumni](http://www.phillyboyschoir.org/alumni)

Did you know that there is a Philadelphia Boys Choir Alumni page on Facebook?  
Over 400 alumni are members. Join the conversation today!

Most of all, we want you all to consider the June concert at the Kimmel Center as a kind of "homecoming" for PBCC alums – not just in anniversary years, but EVERY year. I look forward to seeing you at future events!

Judy Houdeshel  
Director of Engagement  
& Alumni Relations

### Schedule of Events... Mark your calendars!

#### Sing, Choirs of Angels (Our Holiday Concerts)

Friday  
December 14, 2018  
St. Katharine of Siena  
Wayne, PA

Friday  
December 21, 2018  
St. Rose of Lima  
Haddon Heights, NJ

Saturday  
December 22, 2018  
Church of the  
Holy Trinity  
Center City, Philadelphia

Tickets at  
[phillyboyschoir.ticketleap.com](http://phillyboyschoir.ticketleap.com)

Kimmel Concert  
(And Alumni Reception)

Saturday  
June 22, 2019