

October 18, 2008

Dear SGC Alumnae:

I'm sure you can relate with me when I say that singing in the Seattle Girls' Choir was a life changing experience. Life in the school hallways can sometimes be unkind to an awkward teenager who is interested in classical music. But when I walked through "the magical doorway" of the Choir practice room, I left behind the stresses of the teenage world and joined the greatest friends I'd ever known to make some of the most beautiful moments of artistry I've ever experienced. Eighteen years ago, when I graduated from Choir, on the last night of tour in Helsinki, one of the most meaningful chapters of my life came to a close. On my graduation application I wrote, "*Choir is the teaching of life through music*" and at the age of seventeen I had no idea how accurate that statement really was.

Dr. Wright's unrelenting and unapologetic commitment to excellence was the single most important principle I've ever been taught. And although we didn't recognize it at the time, what he was doing was empowering us to achieve anything we could dream. By simply getting out of our own way and shedding our egos, we could allow ourselves to be vulnerable, letting the purest music, the purest part of ourselves, to manifest itself in song.

**This commitment to excellence instilled in me as a chorister has steered me through life and made me more successful.** I can't tell you how many times I've heard Dr. Wright's voice in my head – "*Early is on-time, on-time is late, and late is unacceptable.*" Or found myself raising my hand involuntarily to take ownership of a mistake. When I decided to change careers and attend culinary school, I relied heavily on the lessons I learned in Choir to get me through a very rigorous program. And that commitment to excellence is one of the main tenets of my catering company today.

While you may be feeling nostalgic as you read this, I suspect in the past you may have felt ignored because since you graduated, the communication from the Choir to you and your family has been next to non-existent. I myself have been frustrated over the past fifteen years about the lack of communication from the Choir, especially since I live on the East Coast. I have felt disappointed that an organization that my family and I loved and sacrificed for would seemingly adopt the attitude – *out of sight, out of mind* – not realizing this task fell to volunteers struggling to sponsor opportunities for current choristers. But I want you to know that this is all about to change.

**The Choir's new Board recognizes that the alumnae are the keepers of the Choir's invaluable institutional history.** Many of us were members of the Choir in its infancy and pride ourselves on having helped build its reputation. The Board understands that it is important for us to cherish and understand our past as this will help us build a solid and successful future for the Choir. I have been working with our enthusiastic Board members to formulate a strategy to reengage alumnae and their families and make them feel more connected to the Choir. Here are just a few changes the Choir will work to accomplish over the next year:

- ❖ Provide a vehicle for alumnae to reconnect with one another and make new connections within a strong community of women with shared experiences by creating an alumnae page on the SGC website, with tools for updating contact information, links to Facebook groups, *Chorus Lines* newsletters, concert schedule, Ancora, publicity, and alumnae performing artists.
- ❖ Use regular email updates to provide alumnae and the community information about current SGC activities and direction
- ❖ Develop mechanisms for alumnae and chorister relationship building and mentorship

In the coming months you will hear more from me about the specifics of the campaign. In the meantime I think that you'll agree that this is an exciting beginning. As we alumnae have matured, so too has the Choir.

In 2007, the Seattle Girls' Choir Guild purchased the Choir from Dr. Wright creating one non-profit organization and administrative entity. Currently, this amazing organization continues to function on the backs of selfless volunteers who love the Choir. Despite this extraordinary goodwill however, the Choir will never be able to reach its full potential unless the organization is able to hire qualified professionals to manage the program. This professional growth and expertise is also needed to raise a well endowed scholarship fund in order to reach a wider audience of potential choristers. If you think it sounds a lot like the chicken and the egg dilemma, you're right!

Enclosed is an appeal from the Choir introducing their new Annual Fund initiative, of which I am very proud to be the Alumnae Chair. I would ask that when considering your potential contribution, to think of the profound effect the Choir has had on your life. **Consider how your life might be different without the principles and experiences you attained, and think about how your contribution could impact a young girl, who just like you did, needs a "magical doorway" in her life.** I would also ask that you share this letter with your parents, because I know there are many alumnae parents whose lives were profoundly influenced by their daughter's involvement in the Choir.

If you are at a point in your career that prohibits you from making a financial contribution, think of other creative ways for you to contribute. Perhaps your company would be willing to give in-kind assistance or make a pledge. Tell your boss that you would not be as great an asset to them without the Choir's influence in your life! Share your personal talents as an in-kind gift to the Choir – web design, information systems management, catering, grant writing, publicity, marketing, or events management – the Choir needs you!

If you are concerned that the Choir may not have your current contact information, please send an email to [stacia@seattlegirlschoir.org](mailto:stacia@seattlegirlschoir.org) with your name, email, touring information, and years in SGC – and **please encourage your "alum chums" and parents to do the same.** We are working very hard to maintain a current list of contacts. As Seattle Girls' Choir alumnae we have the privilege of being woven into the fabric of the Choir's history, but let's also be a part of the future by giving back to an organization that has given us so much.

Warmest regards and more soon,

Camille Unich Dierksheide  
Seattle Girls' Choir Alumna 1990  
Annual Fund Alumnae Chair

PS – Check out SGC concert schedule at [www.seattlegirlschoir.org](http://www.seattlegirlschoir.org) – and come sing at the Holiday Concert on December 13! We are organizing a post-concert alumnae party, which we hope will become an annual event. If you are interested in helping and/or attending, please let us know. Also, check out the 1990 SGC Tour Facebook Group!