After fourteen years at Saint Thomas, I’ve become eligible for my first-ever sabbatical, a six-month period beginning on July 1, 2017. During my absence, Amy Francisco, our seasoned English teacher, will expand her responsibilities to serve as Acting Head of School. As the newsletter goes to press, I’m making final preparations for this exciting opportunity and passing the reins into Ms. Francisco’s capable hands.

My time away will be divided between two spots rather unlike West 58th Street: Morocco and Marseille. I’ll be working in parishes with significant ministries to refugees, and the focus of my daily life and work will shift markedly from my “day job.” Rather than addressing the educational needs of young people, I’ll be helping persons from different creeds and cultures who seek a better life for themselves and their families, often against great adversity.

As stimulating as these challenges will be, I shall miss the rhythm of our common life at Saint Thomas. Happily, time apart is beneficial: it reminds us of our many blessings and our capacity to build meaningful relationships in new contexts. I look forward to returning to Saint Thomas in January 2018 with fresh perspectives – and stories to share.

You are always in my thoughts and prayers.

–Charles F. Wallace, Headmaster
We were pleased to welcome the Reverend Dr. D. Stuart Dunnan, Headmaster of Saint James School, back to our pulpit to give the commencement address. Saint James has been home to many Choir School graduates, and Carl Erickson ’17 is headed there in September. Father Dunnan’s tenure at Saint James has been marked, among other accomplishments, by a revitalization of the school and a determined defense of its Episcopal character. He understands more than most what Saint Thomas offers its boys, and his address pointed to many of those things. Here are some excerpts:

I was a boy chorister myself under Dr. Calloway in the National Cathedral, and he was a student of Dr. Noble’s, so I know something of the life you live here and of the journey now ending for those of you who are graduating. In fact, I spoke on this occasion nine years ago, so I need to be careful not to repeat myself. But I want to begin with a theme that I introduced then, and explore with you the gifts that I think you have received here:

First, you have boarded here, which has given you the gifts of independence and resilience. It has also been a gift to your parents, preparing them for your lives as young adults in high school and college, as they have not been here with you in the way that parents can be with you at day schools, driving back and forth, eating breakfast and dinner with you and putting you to bed at night, and therefore reliving each day with you and tempted to fight each battle for you, which really needs to be your own if you are going to grow up. You have had to handle more on your own than the average middle school student, sorting out your own relationships with your friends and teachers and addressing your own problems. You are, as a result, much more ready for high school and for all that comes beyond.

Second, you have had the extraordinary experience of living in this great city. You feel safe and “at home” here, which gives you an added measure of courage and self-confidence.

Third, you have gone to a very small school, so you have enjoyed the deeper friendships and the closer relationships with your friends and teachers that come with that. More important, you have not been able to flee from your social mistakes, as the school is too small for that. This means that you have learned to apologize and to forgive in order to repair your broken friendships. You have also gained, I think, a better sense of your own importance – of what you can do, and of how you can help.

Fourth, you are Saint Thomas choristers, so you have sung the Church’s and our culture’s finest music, which is challenging and intricate, at the highest level of excellence. This means that you have learned how to focus and pay attention, which very few young Americans, especially boys, know how to do these days. Because of the work you have been doing here, and the quality expected, you have been forced to watch the page and the choirmaster, to stick to the tempo and get the notes right without making a mistake, because your mistake could ruin the whole production. You have learned to read music and to control and direct your voice. This requires a unique blend of physical, intellectual, and emotional effort on your part, which very few can do at your age, or ever for that matter. It is a skill and a talent for life, however you choose to use it. You have also gained the courage to sing in public and the humility to blend into the sound of the group, and this again is a unique combination of attributes which will always set you apart.

Fifth, you have led worship in one of the grandest shrines of the Anglican Church, so you have become familiar with the beauty of our language and liturgy, and have gained a greater understanding of prayer and sacrament. In doing this, you have gained an appreciation for holiness and the sacred in space and time, which, sadly, is rare in our time.

Sixth, you have lost yourself in a great venture. You have worked for your choirmaster and not for yourself, and you have achieved in that effort the higher goal of truly beautiful music, meaningful worship, and extraordinary art. And again, this is rare these
days, in America especially, when most young people are unchallenged and falsely praised in school for mediocre work and minimal achievement. They are constantly told how “wonderful” they are, and the adults around them “take care of them,” but fail to challenge and believe in them, to believe in what they can do. But the life you have known here, the life of the chorister, goes back to the Middle Ages and is based on the medieval model of apprenticeship. You have had real work to do; you have been taught how to do it; and you have been expected to produce a quality product.

Finally, you have been given in this work an appreciation for “serious” music that comes to us from the past and not just from the present, and you have discovered the ability of sacred texts and gifted composers to inspire us. This is an appreciation which should keep you anchored in the Church and in the study and performance of music, but beyond music into art, history, science, higher mathematics, language, and literature, all of which are timeless and inspired by genius.

Father Dunnan closed with these remarks:

When sixth formers, which is what we call seniors, graduated from Saint James this year, I reminded them that all the rules they have followed at Saint James can be distilled into two basic expectations: be polite and tell the truth. But I also reminded them that what is wonderful about these expectations, simple as they are, is that they keep us safe, pleasant, and productive. Because being polite requires us to engage other people with empathy and understanding, to put ourselves in their shoes, to honor and respect them, to consider their needs and not just our own. And telling the truth requires us not to do or say anything we might ever need later to lie about, so to live honorable and virtuous lives.

But the rules, I told them, and the expectations they support are just the start. There are deeper questions which determine the quality of our lives – who we are, and what we do for others. And the questions are these: Was I grateful and generous? And was I brave and kind?

So, these are the questions which I would ask you to ask yourselves as you think back on your time at this remarkable school and as you anticipate your schools to come: Were you grateful and generous here? And were you brave and kind? Did you truly appreciate what you were given? And did you do your best to give in return? Could you stand against the crowd when the crowd was wrong? Did you include the outcast?

And always remember this: we have many homes in this life. And you know this because of what you have experienced here: you have your home with your parents, and you have had a home here at Saint Thomas. One does not replace the other. Our sense of “home” just broadens and deepens as we grow older, giving us more gratitude and courage and a greater confidence to be ourselves and to live lives that matter to others – to do real good.

So, make your next school your next home. Be both blessed and a blessing, just as you were here.

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**OUR MISSION**

The Saint Thomas Choir School houses, nurtures, and educates the boy choristers of the world-renowned choir of Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue. Through rigorous musical training and highly individualized classroom instruction in a familial, Christian environment, the school instills in its students the intellectual skills and ethical values that will enable them to embrace life with confidence, responsibility, and joy.
EIGHTH GRADE TRIP

After the final notes of “Come, Labor On” floated to the Saint Thomas Church clerestory in June, most students rushed back to 58th Street eager to load their last bags into the car and start summer break. But, for the newly-minted graduates, there was one final rite of passage: the eighth grade trip. The Class of 2017 traveled with Father Wallace and Ms. Francisco to Barcelona – a first for STCS – and then to London. It was a wonderful week of historical and musical discovery, cultural exploration, and renewed friendship.

The Spanish leg of the trip began with a visit to Montserrat, a mountain about forty-five minutes outside of Barcelona and home to one of the only other fully boarding choir schools in the world, the Escolania de Montserrat. We relished the opportunity to learn more about a school and choral tradition that are so similar to, and yet so different from our own. We appreciated the behind-the-scenes tour of the school and monastery provided by the school’s Headmaster, Sergi D’Assís Gelpí. The boys even got to sing in an ancient chapel, and Dylan got to play their newly-installed organ. In their free time, the boys tackled a challenging hike to the top of Montserrat, with a gasping Ms. Francisco in tow.

After the peace of Montserrat, we descended into the hubbub of Barcelona itself. The boys developed an appreciation for tapas and took particular interest in the Picasso Museum and the stunning guided tour of Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia Basilica. We also got to visit Lluís Girbau, a former gap student at Saint Thomas and a graduate of the Escolania de Montserrat. Mr. Girbau showed us around his city, brought us to the beach, and invited us to his parents’ house for a dinner that included homemade charcuterie, local mussels, wild boar stew, and dulce de leche ice cream. This dinner was a highlight of the trip, and the generosity and openness of Mr. Girbau and his family were a touching testament to how deep and how far the Saint Thomas bonds extend.

A high point of the UK portion of our trip was our visit to Windsor Castle. David Conner, the Dean of Windsor, and his wife welcomed us into their home and gave us an insider’s look at St. George’s Chapel and the Deanery itself, including the table on which King Charles I’s head was sewn back onto his body, among other historical treasures! The boys left with a true, burgeoning interest in British history.

The next day, we completed our tour of the world’s fully boarding choir schools with a visit to Westminster Abbey. After attending a service in the morning, the boys chatted with their counterparts over lunch and a lively game of soccer. We spent our final afternoon visiting the Imperial War Museum, where we were joined by another former gap student, James Gallimore.

The trip gave the boys a deeper understanding of culture and history, particularly of the choral tradition they have been a part of for the last six years. They deepened bonds with each other, renewed friendships with former Saint Thomas family, and made new friends as their circles widened and overlapped. We are very grateful to the Boys’ Fund, which makes this annual trip possible, and to the many friends who opened their doors, their hearts, and their kitchens to us!

–Amy Francisco
Father Wallace began his first-ever sabbatical over the summer. After a few days to recover from the end of term, he traveled to Morocco to look after the Anglican Church in Tangiers. The parish, which has been without a priest for many months, provides vital ministry to a growing population of sub-Saharan refugees. Later in the fall, he will take up a similar post in Marseille, France, combining parish work with an agency that assists refugees from the Middle East. We wish Father Wallace safe travels as he explores new places, speaks new languages, makes new friends, and finds new ways to love and serve our Lord. He will return to the school office in early January 2018.

During Father Wallace's sabbatical, Amy Francisco is steering the ship as Acting Head of School. An alumna of the Groton School and Middlebury College (BA Literary Studies), Ms. Francisco has been teaching English and SSAT Prep at the Choir School for the last five years. In that time, she also coached soccer and track, supervised the library, and coordinated high school placements, all while completing her MA in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. While serving as Acting Head, Ms. Francisco is continuing to teach English; we suspect that she, like Hermione Granger, makes use of a time-turner to find enough hours in the day!

This June we bid farewell to Cait Morgan, who leaves us to continue her doctoral studies full time. At Prize Day, Father Wallace paid tribute to Mrs. Morgan:

Even in our era of multi-tasking, perhaps no one at the Choir School has tasked as "multi-ly" as Cait Morgan. She came to us in 2011, when we were seeking to fill two teaching positions, Latin and PE. It had never occurred to us that one person might fill both roles. But then, we had never met Cait. She appeared on our doorstep after completing her Masters in English and Comparative Literature at the University of Virginia. Once here, she immediately set high standards in the classroom and the gym, for the students and for herself. In a delightfully retro twist, she called the boys by surname, announcing for example in Latin class, Mister Blogs, translate paragraph two. Stressing punctuality, she made it clear that "on time" meant "early." While establishing order and discipline, Cait managed to make Latin cool. Under her tutelage, excitement steadily built amongst the boys as they awaited results for their National Latin exams; after the exams, boys proudly paraded around school corridors wearing their hard-won medals.

Multi-tasking yet further, Cait overhauled the program in which our students prepare for SSAT tests; she immersed herself in the eighth graders' applications for high school; she revamped the Physical Education curriculum; she made camp fun for the boys, and tolerable for the staff. Cait always kept an open door to anyone seeking help or advice, serving us all as a wonderful friend and mentor.

As her highly successful tenure with us draws to a close, we're privileged to have known Cait first as Ms. Speaker, then as Mrs. Morgan, and we look forward to knowing her as Dr. Morgan once she completes her doctoral studies in Classics at Columbia University.

We also bid farewell to Stephanie Tennill, the school's vocal coach. Ms. Tennill taught at the school for nine years and enthused generations of boys to good singing habits and to a love of music that was choral, liturgical, and more; she got her students to think broadly about music, and she developed not only their classical sensibilities, but also Broadway, folk, and other musical interests. She is a talented technician who was able to articulate to the boys what good vocal technique was all about, without making them think it was difficult. She also helped manage that awkward and potentially painful transition, the voice change, by coaching boys through the change and in some cases helping them return to the choir in the Gentlemen's row. She could help with vocal questions in a daily rehearsal, but she was also concerned with the development of the boys outside the choir. She nurtured the individual strengths and remedied the weaknesses for each child. She could even be seen making announcements at lunch about the least damaging technique for coughing during cold season.

Ms. Tennill and her family are relocating back home to St. Louis, where her parents live. She has already secured a post as Assistant Professor of Music at St. Louis University, her alma mater, and she and her husband are expecting their second child this fall.

Finally, we say goodbye to Simon Frisch, music theory teacher this year. Mr. Frisch did much to extend the music theory curriculum into performance work, and we wish him the very best as he continues his music career.

This September we welcome Elizabeth Ratze, who joins the faculty teaching Latin. Miss Ratze is from Farmington, Michigan. She attended high school at Cranbrook Kingswood and majored in Classics at Columbia University. It was at Columbia that she met Cait Morgan — in fact while taking some of the same Latin classes. They became friends, and Miss Ratze visited the Choir School several times before learning that the position would become available. Miss Ratze has experience in the classroom, having taught ACT prep classes and ballet for years. Ballet, in fact, is Miss Ratze's other life outside Classics. She has been dancing since she was three, and during her last two years...
at Columbia, she was the Artistic Director of the Columbia Ballet Collaborative, a nonprofit performance group, and spent 20-30 hours per week (on top of her regular course load) running that organization. She also found time to participate in Christian Union and to attend church in town.

Speaking to the Choir School News, Miss Ratze revealed that she was homeschooled when she was the age of the Choir School boys. Her mother and grandmother are both teachers, and she and her five siblings were educated at home through eighth grade, after which they all attended, or plan to attend, Cranbrook Kingswood. She said that when she came to visit Mrs. Morgan's classes, there was a powerful familiarity about it, since her elementary and middle school experience was essentially a classroom of six, much like several grades at the Choir School. Miss Ratze will be consulting with Mrs. Morgan about the Latin curriculum in the fall, and we have no doubt she will soon feel like a member of the family, albeit a family slightly larger than six.

We also welcome Colin MacKnight to the music department as Assistant Organist and to the faculty as Music Theory teacher. Mr. MacKnight will be joining Mr. Hyde and Mr. Sheen in running rehearsals, particularly with the probationers, and he will be reshaping the music theory curriculum to integrate it more closely with the singing repertoire. Mr. MacKnight received his Bachelor’s and Master’s from Juilliard, and is currently a C. V. Starr doctoral fellow there, having completed the first year of their DMA program. He also served from 2013 through the summer of 2017 as Organ Scholar at the Church of the Resurrection uptown.

When we asked Mr. MacKnight how he came to be an organist, we discovered a path slightly out of the ordinary. He told us he had played “a bunch of other instruments” before getting interested in the organ. When asked of what “a bunch” consisted, he revealed that he’d begun playing the guitar when he was six. This led to bass guitar, then double bass, trumpet, sax, drums, but not, interestingly, piano. His father is Rector of St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church in Bethesda, MD, so Colin grew up around church music. For his senior year of high school he boarded at the Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Massachusetts, having been admitted as a double bassist. Fate, however, had other plans, and that year he fell increasingly in love with the music of Bach, which led him to take organ lessons, which in turn led him to apply and be admitted to Juilliard for organ. Most people, he explained, choose an instrument first and then come to love its repertoire; for him it was the other way around. You can visit his website colinmacknight.com to read more about this talented young man.

We are delighted that Giuseppe Spoletini will be joining us in September as our new vocal coach. Mr. Spoletini hails originally from Calgary, Canada. He began singing in sixth grade as a treble, and later attended the University of Manitoba (BMus) and the Manhattan School of Music (MMus). Mr. Spoletini is a professional vocal coach, and he tells us that the bulk of his students are in high school. When we asked Mr. Spoletini how he got interested in working with children and teenagers, he cited his experiences doing inner city outreach while studying at MSM. Sometimes he would be part of group bringing opera into a school, and other times he would go alone into a classroom to share his own musical journey with the students – in either case providing what might be the only musical exposure the students received at school. In addition to his coaching work, Mr. Spoletini continues to sing professionally, and his performance ensemble, O Sole Trio (www.osoletrio.com), has performed across the US, Canada, and the UK. He is also Director of Music at Greenville Community Church in Scarsdale, NY. We look forward to the experiences he will bring the boys.

This fall, in addition to teaching history, Kevin Carpenter will be leading the SSAT prep classes and training for the New York Marathon, which he will run to raise money for the ASPCA. To sponsor Mr. Carpenter, please visit secure.aspca.org/team/kevin-carpenter.

Congratulations to math teacher Noah Appleton, who wed Elena Tardanico in September! We look forward to seeing some pictures in the next newsletter.

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It was a busy term for the choristers, with the rigors of weekly evensongs and masses punctuated by tours, concerts, and more. In January, they went to South Carolina on a recruitment tour rescheduled after Hurricane Matthew, giving concerts in Aiken, Greenville, and Charleston. Mr. Hyde also worked with the cathedral choristers in Charleston. “It’s just as much about being goodwill ambassadors and sharing our talents with the wider choral community as it is about spreading the word about Saint Thomas,” he explained.

March saw a second tour, to New England. The choir travelled to Boston, where they stayed at the Harvard Club, visited Fenway ballpark, went on a “duck tour,” and performed at St. Cecilia RC. Next stop was Concord, where they gave a concert at Trinity Church and met some alumni. The tour finished with a visit to Christ Church, Greenwich, where they sang a joint evensong with the Christ Church choir.

Just before Holy Week, the concert season continued with a performance of C. P. E. Bach’s *Saint John Passion*. Given that the choir has tended to perform J. S. Bach’s Passions, it was interesting, Mr. Hyde told us, to do music by his son. The piece is more straightforward and also more concise than the other Passions, which suited this year’s younger choir and allowed for some other music in the first half, including Klopstock’s *Morning Song of Creation*. “It was the first time for some of the kids to be learning German,” Mr. Hyde added, “and it was a good starter for several boys for whom English isn’t their first language. They picked it up well!”

In April, Mr. Hyde directed the 44th Annual Choirmasters’ Conference. In addition to the usual master classes and open rehearsals, Mr. Hyde took the opportunity to talk about chorister recruitment, and he invited Loraine Enlow, Admissions Director, to do an entire session on the subject. Mrs. Enlow discussed the larger trends that impact chorister recruitment, among them changing attitudes towards boarding and the decline in Episcopal Church membership. Both she and Mr. Hyde worked to put the message across to these choirmasters, who work on the front lines of choral music, of the great educational benefits our choristers receive and also of the talent and skill they bring back to their communities afterwards.

“The formal musical curriculum in which Saint Thomas students are immersed serves them well in any musical endeavor or style.” –TheaterScene

The final concert of the season was given on May 11, *Glory Be To Thee O Lord: Songs of Faith, Hope, and Love*. The program focused on twentieth century American pieces, including Sir George Shearing’s *Songs and Sonnets from Shakespeare* and Aaron Copland’s *In the Beginning*. The latter had been recorded by John Scott on the choir’s *American Voices* CD, which was re-released at the same time as the concert. TheaterScene said, “The Saint Thomas Choir just can’t sing badly: the boys’ innate talent and all the singers’ superb and disciplined musical training make their singing skilled and lovely. The older boys, over the course of the academic year, have developed maturity, clarity and confidence; the two or three particularly strong sopranos are fine young musicians. The littlest boys have just about found their musical footing.” The reviewer pointed to several highlights, including Eric Whitacre’s *i thank you God for most this amazing day*: “The boys’ musical training is so secure that they can handle Whitacre’s surprising chords and harmonies on the way to reassuring resolutions.”

Mr. Hyde’s first season as Director of Music has come to a close, and he is now not only fully integrated into the church and school communities, but also leading the vanguard of evangelism for the school. “It’s not until you’re in the school community, living and breathing it, that you realize how special it is,” he said. “And that’s the challenge we face, getting people to understand that…the care and attention the staff pay to the students, the way teachers sat up late in the evening at camp this spring helping a boy with his graduation speech, the way Father Wallace is on top of every detail about every person…it’s a family atmosphere you can’t find anywhere else.”
INSIDE THE CHOIR SCHOOL

PAINTING JOHN SCOTT

One of the ways the school decided to honor and remember John Scott was to commission a portrait of him to hang in the school. (Some might say having his image carved into the new Miller-Scott organ would be sufficient, but those people would be wrong – very wrong!) Thanks to donations from a small group of parishioners, the school was able to commission painter Benjamin Arnold for the project. Arnold is a British portraitist who trained in London and Florence, and who now lives in the Hudson Valley with his wife, also a professional artist. This winter Mr. Arnold paid a visit to the Choir School to speak to the boys during their art classes and at lunch, and to give a special presentation about his background and the process of painting Mr. Scott’s portrait.

Mr. Arnold explained that when he began his fine art studies at the Camberwell Art School in London, he found himself dissatisfied with their emphasis on modern art. “While I was there, I became preoccupied with the work of people like Caravaggio, Rubens, Titian, the masters of sixteenth and seventeenth century oil painting,” he told the class. “I was fascinated by how they were able to see what was going on in the world, understand the symbolic dimensions of myth and literature, and translate them so everyone else could experience it.” Mr. Arnold explained to perplexed middle schoolers that these were the days before YouTube tutorials, so because he had never taken a figure drawing class, he literally did not know how to paint or to draw realistically. He began copying photographs, but, he said, “something just didn’t feel right.” Upshot: he decamped to Italy for four years and studied at the Florence Academy of Art.

“Every day, morning to night, we drew live figures. And because they move, it teaches you to use your brain. You have to think about what you’re representing – you can’t simply copy.” In the beginning, he said, his work was terrible, and he almost gave up. “Trust the process,” his teachers told him. “Keep drawing.” He did, and gradually his drawings improved. “Practice, practice, practice. For a while, they’d have us practice drawing statues; it’s three dimensional, but it doesn’t move!”

After sharing with the boys how he learned to draw and then paint from life, Mr. Arnold began to discuss the challenge of making an oil painting of Mr. Scott with only a photograph to work from. “Why should I make an oil painting when this wonderful photograph of him exists?” he asked. “I need to interpret it. I need to think about who he was. And as I thought about it and discussed it with Father Wallace, we realized – he was an organist; his hands were how he communicated with the world. In the photograph, the hands are hidden, but we realized they needed to be there in the painting.”

Mr. Arnold told the boys about his technical process, too. “I had to make my own canvas. Like a chef needing to know the ingredients, I had to make sure the quality would be good enough to last.” As soon as his canvas was ready, the first thing he did was put a basic color tone on it. “If you’re staring at a white piece of paper, you don’t want to make a mark on it because white is perfect. I like to start with a little bit of a mess to get things going and to remind myself that it doesn’t always go perfectly.” Here he showed a slide of a messy, half-finished painting. “This looks like a bomb going off in a paint factory,” he said, “but this was done by John Singer Sargent, and it’s one of the few unfinished paintings we have of his. I find that if you throw a little fireworks into the process, it makes you think a little differently, think on your feet.”

After getting a messy tone on the canvas, Mr. Arnold makes a study. “If I’m going to invest a huge amount of time and energy, I want a crack at not only solving problems, but finding problems.” One problem he found was the representation of the organ. The decision was made to represent the organ as it is now, rather than as it was in the photograph, so he had to do a lot of work with perspective to make the new organ fit with the older image. He also needed to find a model for the hands. “I got my father-in-law to pose for me, and I started photographing my own hands as well.”

Mr. Arnold spoke of the value of what he called controlled chaos. “You need to do something in order to react to it. If you’ve mastered it all before you’ve even started, then the process is going to be boring, and people are going to see it. Every brush stroke is a record of my thought process. The more you vary the way of working and allow spontaneity, the more it shows in the final process.” During the Q and A, he revealed a striking detail from the mess of creation: “I was quite a way into the painting, and I was thinking, It looks weird. I brought it into the living room with some other paintings I’d done, looked at it for a while, and thought, It’s just…too big. So, I let it dry, sanded it down, and painted over everything again. You’re always building over things, even if it’s mistakes.”

The boys (and the lucky adults in the room) were mesmerized by this peek into a different kind of creative process, one the boys encounter briefly in their art classes, and one that stands in conversation with the music they make every day. It was also moving to see and pass around images of Mr. Scott. We are excited to have commissioned this talented and dynamic artist who understands the gifts of the past and the mysteries of creation, and we look forward to seeing the finished painting in the new year.
IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM
Saint Thomas choristers do more than make music – this term they made instruments! Mr. Eppley’s art classes crafted full-scale models of instruments ancient and modern. If you stop by the school in early fall, you might catch the exhibit.

They also created their own boxcars for the annual Pinewood Derby held in the gym.

The 2016-17 Geo-Bee has drawn to a close. Over the year, the field narrowed to four or five heavy contenders, and from them Carl (grade 8) emerged as the winner, with Noah (grade 5) a close runner-up. Congratulations to all who beefed up their geography!

The seventh grade dominated the annual Independent Reading Contest this year, having read the most pages per student across all three terms. They narrowly beat out the fifth grade and thus earned their grade a trip to Scoops, the local ice-cream shop at camp.

It was a great year in sports for the Choir School. The upper school basketball team had a 3-3 record, with come-from-behind wins over Browning and The Cathedral School. The upper school soccer team also had noteworthy season – they won a game! We’re told that Filip scored a hat trick, and Emanuel, the team’s goalie, stopped a penalty kick, bringing them to a 3-0 victory over the School at Columbia. Everyone hopes for two wins this fall.
FROM THE ARCHIVES

Anticipation of the Choir School centenary in 2019 has us visiting the archives to learn more about the school’s history. Those who have read Canon Wright’s history of the parish will know that the Choir School first opened its doors on March 3, 1919 at 123 West 55th Street with twenty-one boys, fourteen of them boarders. Fewer, perhaps, know the less public but equally important historical detail of Marcel Dupré’s 1957 visit to Saint Thomas, or of the standing penalty that year for receiving three demerits. We learned about the latter two this summer when David Hill ’58 paid a visit to the school and brought the newsletter of the day, the Ioneer (a more extensive publication than this one, produced with typewriter, pencil, and ditto machine). Mr. Hill also shared a photograph of himself, his brother Richard ’54, and Dr. Candlyn. The archives are full of gems like these, as are the memories of alumni young and old. We look forward to exploring them over the next few years in this publication and on our Facebook page. If you have photos or archival treasures to share, we would love to see them! Please contact alumni director Susan Hill shill@choirschool.org.

From the Ioneer, 1957

Marcel Dupree Gives Recital Here

Marcel Dupree, celebrated organist of St. Sulpice, Paris, came to the United States recently to play a dedicatory recital at the Henry Edsel Ford Auditorium in Detroit, Mich. On his way back, M. Dupree gave a recital in St. Thomas Church, the only other recital he gave in this country. Because of the Asian flu we were not able to hear this recital, which was on a Thursday evening.

M. Dupree, when told how disappointed we were, very kindly at noon the next day, for those boys who weren’t in bed with the flu, played for us, among other things, his own improvisations on “Fierce Was The Wild Billow” by T. Tertius Noble. We felt extremely honored to be given a private recital by this famous organist. —R.A.
YOUNG ALUMNI IN MUSIC

What do boys do when they leave the Choir School? First stop is high school, but from there, they have gone on to work in every field, from the military, to medicine, finance, law, education, writing – and, of course, music. It’s gratifying to write about boys who have gone on to be musicians, but we were curious what this “going on” actually entails, particularly at the beginning. How does one pursue music professionally? What does that look like today? To help us understand, we caught up with four alumni who are finishing their undergraduate or graduate studies and making the transition into their professional music lives.

Joshua Ross ’10, tenor. When we spoke with Joshua Ross, he was home in Virginia Beach recuperating from a tonsillectomy. Even though his tonsils had only come out the week before, his voice was already feeling more resonant, he told us. “The first thing I said after waking up from the surgery was, There’s so much room back there!”

Joshua is a senior at the Manhattan School of Music and will graduate in 2018 with a Bachelor’s of Music in Vocal Performance, which for him means opera. He told us he will be the first college graduate in his family! Even though Joshua didn’t get serious about opera until high school, his route to the Choir School did begin with an audition for a local North Carolina production of Amahl and the Night Visitors by Gian Carlo Menotti. After casting Joshua in the title role, the director gave Joshua free voice lessons, taught him the part by ear, and eventually helped him audition for the Choir School. Joshua credits the Choir School with his most important musical and vocal education. “They taught me everything, especially Mr. Scott and the organists,” he says. After the Choir School, Joshua attended a magnet public school in Virginia Beach, the Governor’s School for the Arts, which eventually led him back to New York City to attend MSM. Joshua tells us he may apply to graduate school, but what he really hopes to do is get an agent to New York City to attend MSM. Joshua Ross, he was home in Virginia Beach recuperating from a tonsillectomy. Even though his tonsils had only come out the week before, his voice was already feeling more resonant, he told us. “The first thing I said after waking up from the surgery was, There’s so much room back there!”

Joshua has also been active seeking out and recruiting future choristers: “As long as I am in the music industry or the world of classical music, I will always keep an ear out for boys who I think could be a good fit for Saint Thomas. I have Saint Thomas to thank for all of my music ability. They gave me the foundation, the building blocks, and the self-confidence to be what I am now.”

John Carson ’10, piano. One of Joshua’s classmates, John Carson, is a senior at St. Olaf College in MN majoring in Collaborative Piano. He also sings bass with the St. Olaf Choir, his only extracurricular activity since the choir has five ninety-minute rehearsals each week and goes on a two-week tour every year.

We asked John if he’d played piano at the Choir School, and he confessed that he began with the violin but then switched to the piano because he didn’t like standing up to practice. More seriously, he told us how much John Scott’s piano playing inspired him. Not the organ! we asked. No, John confirmed, the rehearsal piano. “I loved the way he could bring the whole organ part or even all the orchestral parts to life using only the piano. There was a position in rehearsals called the Listening Boy. You would go and stand next to Mr. Scott so he could scrutinize your vocal technique, and you would turn pages for him. No one liked doing that because of the pressure, but I loved it because it was a front row seat for his amazing piano work. I felt that what he was playing while rehearsing us for a concert was more interesting than hearing the actual orchestra.”

Joshua Ross, he was home in Virginia Beach recuperating from a tonsillectomy. Even though his tonsils had only come out the week before, his voice was already feeling more resonant, he told us. “The first thing I said after waking up from the surgery was, There’s so much room back there!”

During high school at the Hill School, John continued piano, studying with Marcantonio Barone at the nearby Bryn Mawr Conservatory of Music, after which he came to St. Olaf’s. When we asked why he prefers “collaborative” piano to solo work, he said, “I like playing off someone else. I think in some ways collaborative piano takes more of a raw musical skill than solo piano. You’ve got to really listen to the other performer and have a strong skill for sight reading and for adapting to situations that aren’t under your control. I also love the repertoire, playing opera reductions, and Brahms, Beethoven and the like where the piano plays just as much of a role as the other instruments.”

After graduation, John is planning to take a gap year to work as a pianist in as many settings as possible before applying to graduate school for piano.

Daniel Castellanos ’09, composition. Danny Castellanos emerged as a composer of note while still at the Choir School, so we weren’t entirely surprised to find him still composing. When we spoke with Danny in June, he had just completed year four of a five-year program at Bard College. This fall he will be a “super senior,” studying at both the conservatory and the college, and completing a double major in Music Composition and Classics to earn a double BA in June 2018. This summer, he had a busy to-do list writing an extensive orchestra piece for graduate school applications, due at the end of the summer, and for his classics course, writing a song cycle based on Catullus’s poetry. In addition, he was headed to the Atlantic Music Festival in Maine, where he would participate in the composition program and where he hoped also to meet professors from graduate schools. Oh, and two of his compositions would be premièred and read – he was editing the orchestra parts when we spoke.

Danny’s earliest composition is “Eternal Light,” a choral anthem he wrote in the seventh grade. Mr. Scott liked it so much that he gave it a performance with the choir and included it on the American Voices recording (which has just been re-released). Danny told us it was an important moment, not only because of the incredible encouragement right at the beginning, but also because he still gets emails about it. “People contact me on Facebook, having heard of the piece. Can we play it? Can you send us the sheet music?” After the Choir School, Danny went to
Groton, where he says he had some informal tutorials in music theory and composition but didn't write anything that was performed. An important juncture was the summer between tenth and eleventh grade when he attended the Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan. He spent six weeks in the composition division with nineteen other young composers, and for the first time since the Choir School he found himself surrounded by other serious musicians. When he came to Bard, his composition work took off, and he has recorded his work twice a year since then.

Bard's requirements have pushed Danny towards instrumental music, and he told us about writing his first string quartet two years ago. “When I was composing it, I was thinking less about the form or even the musical narrative, and more about how many cool things I could do with the strings. I was so excited to hear it played by these four musicians who I thought were wonderful, but then when they played through it, one said, ‘I’m sorry but this part makes no sense. I just wanted to shrink into a turtle shell. But, I took the quartet, restructured it, and it went over much better.’”

Danny still takes voice lessons (with Rufus Muller), sings in a choir, and plays the piano. He says that ideally he’d like to compose for chamber ensembles, or on a larger scale for a concert venue. He is inspired by the kind of orchestral innovation in Andrew Norman’s Play for orchestra, by Ted Hearne’s work, and by Nico Muhly’s. He has written a few songs for voice and piano based on Emily Dickinson’s poems, one of which was performed and recorded, and he says he’d like to get back to writing choral music at some point.

Did he know he wanted to be a composer while at Saint Thomas? “Definitely! Back then, I doubted myself less. Now I think a lot more about exactly what I am trying to do as a composer. At the Choir School, I was Head Chorister, and I never really enjoyed standing out as a soloist. It felt awkward to be a performer without any instrument to hide behind.”

Nathan Fletcher ’07, composition. When we caught up with Nathan Fletcher this summer, he had just completed his MA in Composition at Mannes/The New School and was busy sowing as many seeds as possible in the field of composition. He had just begun an internship at Boosey and Hawkes, the world’s largest classical music publishing company. Like all internships, it involved grunt work, but Nathan was also learning the Boosey proofreading method and getting experience doing basic music editing. Since he is interested in composing for film and stage, working for a music publishing company was teaching him a lot. Music editors, he explained, look at everything in a score, the note spellings, technique markings, also questions such as Is this do-able? Is this triple stop playable on an instrument? Then there are typographical questions such as layout, spacing, fonts, and typos.

When not at Boosey and Hawkes, Nathan was composing two chamber operas. The first is for the Washington National Opera as part of their American Opera Initiative. Nathan was commissioned along with two other young composers to write a twenty-minute piece, and his will be for three singers and a thirteen-piece chamber orchestra. The second composition is for a short film. How did he get this gig? we asked. It turned out that Nathan sings as a tenor with the choir of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, and one of the other tenors knows the filmmaker, and the filmmaker had recently parted ways with the previous composer, and they needed a replacement, stat. Something similar happened earlier this spring when Nathan was asked to compose incidental music for an Oxford University production of The Picture of Dorian Gray – an old friend was producing the show, the composer had dropped out, Nathan Fletcher to the rescue.

If there seems to be an element of chance in Nathan’s budding career, it’s actually something he seeks. “I’m trying to see where circumstances take me,” he told us. “I want to have as diverse a career as possible. A little music editing, a little singing, a little commissioned work. I would love to try doing orchestration for theater and film, but I can’t just say, I want to be the next John Williams. Even though of course I would love to, and I idolize him, I have no idea if I would have the temperament for the industry of film scoring with the hustle and the deadlines and so on. Even John Williams stumbled into his film scoring career. His training was in piano, and he started out as a session pianist in Hollywood. Being part of that crowd of musicians, he was tasked with writing a few things that needed to be written quickly in a recording session. When they were in a jam, they’d get “Johnny” to do it (that’s what he was called then). He didn’t plan to be a composer; he stumbled into it and became John Williams.”

In his own way, Nathan has also stumbled into composition. At the Choir School, he says he didn’t do any. “But during that time I started to binge listen to film music, which I became aware of by being in the city, for instance going to see Spirited Away on a Saturday, or stumbling into the anime section at Forbidden Planet and finding albums by that same film composer, Joe Hisaishi. I don’t remember my interest being particularly conscious; it was just a natural series of encounters with that music that kept me coming back for more. I have a vivid memory of being in the computer lab at the Choir School and watching a Tokyo concert recording of Hisaishi’s work. It wasn’t film music but concert music with exotic instrumentation, instruments I’d never seen before and in strange combinations, like marimba with saxophone and erhu. I watched the videos from that concert dozens and dozens of times. That’s how I tend to listen to music I like, over and over until it’s memorized.”

“Another thing I used to do at the Choir School was learn how to play all that music by ear. I would do that instead of practicing my actual piano music. I’ve heard a similar story from other composers – when you’re supposed to be practicing your piano repertoire, but you find yourself veering away from it and your practice sessions turn into improvisations, or into learning music that you heard somewhere else. Something [my twin brother] Zak and I would do when practicing Brahms duets was ‘mess with’ the music, like add chords with lots of stacked thirds, or play polyrhythms that weren’t written. I remember doing that with some Debussy, changing the music to be – in my view – better. So that’s how it started, but when I was at the Choir School, I didn’t see myself as a composer at all; I was just fooling around and avoiding practicing my assignments.”

In high school Nathan often made YouTube videos of himself playing film music that he’d learned by ear, but because he also
The Alumni Association is pleased to announce our new President, Aaron Primero ’05! He succeeds Tom Carroll ’88, who for the past six years has served on our Board and for the last two years was our President. During his tenure, Tom oversaw the continued growth of our Alumni Association, broadening our outreach by welcoming many former choristers back to the school. Thank you, Tom, from everyone in the Choir School family! And thank you for your continued support as we work towards our centenary.

Aaron is an Investment Banking Associate at Goldman Sachs in New York City, and he served on the Board from 2011-2013 before returning in 2016. Chad Newsome ’81 P ’13, is our new Vice President. Chad was on the Choir School Steering Committee in 2005 that worked to establish the Alumni Association, and he served as the Association’s first President. He is currently National Sales Manager at PL Custom Body and Equipment Co., Inc. in Manasquan, New Jersey. Please join us in offering Aaron and Chad a warm welcome!

**ALUMNI BOARD NEWS**

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Dear Alumni, Parents, and Friends,

I am delighted by the opportunity to serve the Alumni Association and the Choir School as President of the Alumni Board. I want to first thank Tom Carroll ’88 for his six years on the Board as both member and president. He and Susan Hill P ’97, ’98 have put a lot of thought and work into developing the Alumni Association. Some great events came out of their efforts this year and last: November’s Alumni Weekend, dinners during Advent and Holy Week, Pizza Night in February. Even with the demands of a practicing surgeon and the perils of I-90 and I-95 South from Boston, Tom has remained incredibly present. And we all hope he continues to be.

I am thrilled to work alongside Susan, Charles, and Amy to help build and guide the Association through the school’s centenary. But more than anything, I’m thrilled to work alongside you. The Choir School needs you, your ideas, your resources, and – especially as the school charges towards its hundredth birthday – your participation.

As 2019 approaches, two things in particular deserve our attention: development and recruitment. Let us alumni be more and more thoughtful about how we stay connected to one another and to the school. Both online and through a series of events, we intend to push the dialogue forward to hear how the Alumni Association can help you and how you can help the school. When it comes to recruitment, let us think how we can help get the word out and draw batches of promising choristers and scholars. These sorts of deliberations require input and involvement from all of us, not just a committee or board.

So as summer leans into fall, I encourage you to stay in touch and reflect on how we can all contribute to an awakening of our Association, how we can continue to take ownership in our school, for whose past we are grateful and for whose future we may continue to be generous.

Sincerely,

Aaron Primero ’05, Alumni Association President
aprimero@choirschool.org
BOY TO GENTLEMAN

We are proud to announce that Nathan Fletcher ’07 will be joining the Gentlemen of the Choir in September as a tenor. Mr. Fletcher graduated in May from Mannes/The New School with a Master’s Degree in Music Composition. He received an Honorable Mention in this year’s ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Awards for his Poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay for soprano and orchestra. He is currently working on two chamber operas: one commissioned by Washington National Opera, which will premiere in January at the Kennedy Center, and the other which will take the unique form of an entirely sung-through, Facebook-themed satirical short film. Please see page 12 for more about his composition career.

Mr. Fletcher is only the second chorister to have returned to the choir as full-time Gentleman. The first, Curtis Streetman ’84, sang under Gerre Hancock. Mr. Fletcher, whose chorister career began with Dr. Hancock and ended under Dr. Scott, will now span three Directors of Music as he joins Mr. Hyde’s choir. He began singing last summer as a substitute, and on his very first Sunday after accepting the full-time position, we observed Mr. Lippold, a long-standing Gentleman, adjusting the collar of Nathan’s cassock in the ambulatory before the service. “You can take the boy out of the choir,” Mr. Lippold murmured, “but you can’t take the choir out of the boy.”

ALUMNI EVENTS

This Easter saw an alumni dinner at the school after the Tenebrae service on April 12. Tom Schreppler ’74, P ’09, was there with his wife and daughter. We were also pleased to see Tom Carroll ’88, JP Burlington ’91, Richard Jarrett ’05, and at the service, Erik Suter P ’16.

Later in the spring, Geoff Simpson ’78 and Trevor Weston ’81 stopped by for the May 11 concert, and in June we had the pleasure to meet David Hill ’58 (right), who brought us a special gift – a copy of the Ioneer from 1957. Please see page 10 for highlights!

GORDON ROLAND-ADAMS MEMORIAL

The memorial service for Gordon Roland-Adams took place at Westminster Abbey the first Saturday in February, attended by Father Wallace and Aaron Primero ’05. Aaron writes:

Apart from a prayer for the departed, nothing about the service drew attention away from the rites of evensong. That was GRA’s style: keep it all unchanged, the routine, the liturgy, stick to Bairstow, stick to your manners – as Londoners did during the Blitz, he’d remind us. Both his mannerisms and his flair for pageantry were imports from the British Empire. As Headmaster of the Choir School from 1997 to 2004, he never wore the same tie twice, as least so far as I noticed. They were always perfectly tied, with only the knot showing in a starched collar. A loose tie was ‘tie slippage,’ and like an untucked shirt or uncombed hair, it was forbidden. Indeed, GRA had an Old Testament temper, and to him etiquette and good diction mattered more than popularity or sport.

To the Abbey choristers and teachers, he was a legend. Seeing so many old boys there, on a Saturday evening, was moving. We wore different school ties, but none of them slipped. I talked to a few of his former students after the service, and we exchanged many of the same stories: his dressing up as Santa every Christmas, raining candy on us when we were good, sharing those nuggets of wisdom that only now make sense to us and reveal how much New Testament there was in GRA.

On the way down Fifth Avenue to the church before concerts, GRA required two things of us: that we wear our cloaks and remain silent. This felt odd to me, and a little embarrassing as a cloak is in itself an oddity, and walking down Fifth is like walking down the runway. The demand was pure GRA, though, the silent and formal presentation in service of our ministry in a loud and careless world.
Jan-Carlos (JC) Ramirez ’14 recently sang at Carnegie Hall with the Riddlers from Avon Old Farms School (AOF), performing “The Testament of Freedom” for Veterans Day. As it happens, the visit to the city became a reunion of sorts for JC. His mother writes, “The twenty boys and their choir directors would have been without a roof and beds if it weren’t for the generosity of Father Wallace, who allowed Riddlers to stay at the Choir School. This hospitality let them attend rehearsals and the concert with ease and ample practicality.” JC said: “I am always happy to come back and visit my home away from home. This time, I was able to share some of my Choir School experiences with my AOF friends.”

Augie Segger ’15, Luca Cantone ’15, and Elyot Segger ’19 sang in a service at Trinity on the Green in New Haven. Rachel Segger P ’15 & ’19 is the Music Program Manager there and played the organ for the service. The Saint Thomas family gets around!

We are grieved to announce that Rick Slattery, father of Stephen Slattery ’01, died on September 1. Rick was a steadfast supporter of the Choir School, for many years working on Choir School auctions and dinners and making many friends among choristers, their families, and parishioners. In addition to being a member of the Noble Guild, Rick leaves the legacy of his generosity, warmth, and friendship.

To submit your own class notes, send an email to alumni@choirschool.org. Follow us on social media: ChoirSchoolNYC on Instagram, @ChoirSchoolNYC on Twitter, and “like” our Saint Thomas Choir School Facebook page.
A NOTE ABOUT GIFTS TO THE CHOIR SCHOOL

All of us at Saint Thomas Choir School are deeply appreciative of the many contributions received throughout the year from generous and thoughtful alumni, parents, alumni parents, parishioners and friends. These gifts are critical to the school’s ability to advance its mission. The list below includes everyone who has given to the school through a pledge to the 2017 Annual Appeal or gifts made to other funds in the period of July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. There will be no donor lists in the next Winter/Spring Newsletter as the Summer/Fall 2018 Newsletter will list all gifts to the 2018 Annual Appeal and to other funds in the period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

Great effort has been made to present accurate and complete listings of donors. However if you wish to report a discrepancy, please contact Kevin Hearne khearne@SaintThomasChurch.org or Ann Hall Kaplan akaplan@SaintThomasChurch.org.

Gifts to the 2017 Annual Appeal, directed to the Choir School

Annual pledges provide for the ongoing expenses of the school through the General Operating Fund.

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Notable Dates  
FALL/WINTER 2017

September 17 • 4pm  
Evensong with Sistine Chapel Choir

Fall Tour • please see website for service/concert times  
October 11 - Trinity Church, Hartford  
October 12 - St. Peter's Church, Cheshire  
October 13 - Trinity Church, New Haven

CONCERTS:  
October 26 • 7:30pm  
Pärt, Rutter, and Vaughan Williams

December 5 & 7 • 7:30pm  
Handel's Messiah

December 14 • 5:30pm  
Britten's Ceremony of Carols

December 14  
Alumni dinner with the boys following A Ceremony of Carols

For more information about alumni events, please contact  
Susan Hill at shill@choirschool.org