

Choir School NEWS

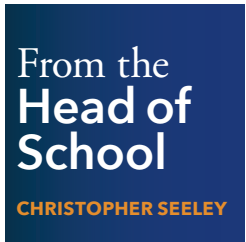
SAINT THOMAS
CHOIR SCHOOL



A NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF SAINT THOMAS CHOIR SCHOOL



JULY 2022



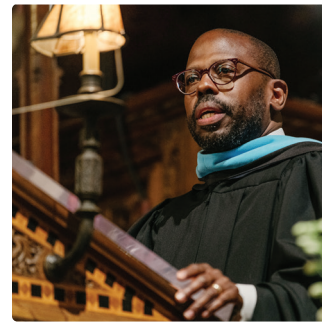
Dear Choir School Families, Alumni, and Friends,

Though the halls of the school are quiet during these summer months, the business of the school continues. At once we are putting the finishing touches on school year 2021–2022, and

we are preparing for the beginning of school year 2022–2023. I find myself thinking more and more about our purpose and the transformational experience that is at the heart of the Choir School. At our best, we transform the lives of young boys and equip them with the habits, passion, and skill that enable them, in turn, to transform the lives of others. You who have long connections to this place can attest to the veracity of that audacious claim, and you know well how your lives have been impacted by your connection to this wonderful school. I shared my own thoughts on these ideas in the closing days of the term, and I thought I'd share a bit of my remarks from Prize Day and the Leavers' Service.

As you read a bit of my reflections and take in all that we share in this newsletter, I hope you will be reminded of your own personal connection to the Choir School and join us as we celebrate the culmination of another great year in the history of our school. I look forward to the year ahead, and as we move on beyond the restrictions of the pandemic, we hope to welcome many of you back to the school and church or to a gathering of Choir School friends in some other area of the country. —CAS

Mr. Seeley delivered the Prize Day address and the homily during the final service on Sunday.



An excerpt of each is included here:

Prize Day: ... You also know that this experience has not only been about you. A critical element of the purpose of this wonderful school is to transform the lives of young boys so that they can be in position to transform the lives of others. You have lived this out through singing and service,

through friendship and community, through learning about and alongside others. You have received the gift of a Choir School education, and you have the responsibility to make it matter in your life and in the lives of all with whom you come into contact. It's not that you now know everything you will ever need to know or that you can do all the things that will ever be necessary for you to do. Those parts of who you are will continue to develop in time. But you do know what it means to live in relationship to others and to take responsibility for the experiences of others. The world is very much in need of people like you...

Sunday Homily: ... So, please boys, for one final time as this choir, before Wells, Harrison, Will, Max, Mich, and Fernando go out into the world, nurtured by the love they receive from God, their families, this church, and their school, inspired by the cultivation of their faith, and fortified by the Power of the Holy Spirit, lead us all in saying, Bless, O Lord, us thy servants who minister in thy Temple. Grant that what we sing with our lips, we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts, we may practice and show forth in our lives. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Everybody Loves a Road Trip!

Concert tours have always been eagerly anticipated by the choir, and that sentiment is magnified after more than two years home-bound due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The treble choristers of the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys are scheduled to sing concerts in Chicago, Ill., and Madison, Wis., in October. Stephen Buzard, former assistant organist at Saint Thomas Church under John Scott is now director of music at St. James Cathedral, Chicago, and has extended an invitation to Dr. Filsell and the choristers to participate in events during the cathedral's annual *Diocesan Treble Festival* the weekend of October 8 and 9, 2022. Dr. Filsell will be the guest conductor of the event, directing Saturday rehearsals and an Evensong on Sunday afternoon. The Saint Thomas choristers will sing in the festival and present a solo concert on Saturday evening, as well.

The tour also includes a concert at Luther Memorial Church located in the heart



of the University of Wisconsin campus. Andrew Schaeffer, director of music, had worked with the choir school to arrange for a concert in the fall of 2020, which was canceled. The boys of Saint Thomas Choir School look forward to (at last) fulfilling that contract at 7 pm on Thursday, October 7, 2022.

If you are interested in attending a performance in either Chicago or Madison, please consult the church's website for details of the location and whether tickets are required.

The Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys is currently scheduling a concert tour in October of 2023, that will include venues in Georgia and Florida. Specific locations will not be announced until the tour schedule is complete. The choir is under management of Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc. and all arrangements are made through the company. If you would like to recommend a location or host the full choir, please contact John McElliott, president, by email at john@concertorganists.org.



A note sent to admissions from a recently accepted student.

Choir School Welcomes Seven New Students

The 2021–2022 academic year drew to a close with a marked improvement in admission activity. At one time, the choir school maintained an impressive statistic of nearly 100% of visits by prospective families leading to a request for an application and audition. COVID-19 has prevented those visits for about two years. As families are able to travel and young students can be vaccinated, the school is experiencing a rise in admission visitors. Between February first and June first, seven boys were admitted to the choir school, two starting during the second semester.

The successful candidates include two younger siblings, a member of Saint Thomas Church, and alumni families. We happily welcome a new chorister from St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., Matthew Steynor, Director of Music. A special shout-out to Peter Berton, former assistant organist at Saint Thomas under Gerre Hancock, and now director of the Newport Choir School and St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, Newport, RI, for his support of Choir School recruitment. Another note of thanks to the Houston (Texas) Boy Choir for the music training and nurturing a love of singing in a welcome addition to the sixth grade.

Alumni Notes

JAMES DOUGLAS '99 was recently appointed Artistic Director and Conductor of the Renaissance Singers of Annapolis, Maryland, and elected co-dean of the Annapolis Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. James continues to serve as

director of music and organist at Annapolis' historic St. Margaret's Church and Day School since 2018.



HENRY '03 and **GEORGE '02 TOOTHMAN** were with their dad, Farley, on a recent trip to the Home Depot in Emeryville, California, and held an impromptu reunion with **EVAN SPADACCINI**, a member of the class of 2003.

Left to right, Henry, Evan, and George



FILIP SENTYPAL '18 and **CARL ERICKSON '17** recently met up for a weekend camping trip. Filip attends Tulane University and Carl is a student at the University of the South, Sewanee.

Evan, left and Carl, right

IAN FISHER '95 is living in the Chicago area and singing with the choir at St. James Episcopal Cathedral. He looks forward to the trebles' October tour when he will have the chance to hear the performance and sing with the choristers.



Celebrating the Class of 2022

 Eighth Grade Ensemble performs (left to right):

William P. hails from New York and joined the Choir School in sixth grade. In the fall he will attend Loyola School in New York, NY.

Harrison B. hails from Tennessee and joined the Choir School in fifth grade. In the fall he will attend Christ School in Arden, NC.

Max S. hails from New York and joined the Choir School in fourth grade. In the fall he will attend Woodberry Forest School in Woodberry Forest, VA.

Fernando M. hails from New Jersey and joined the Choir School in third grade. In the fall he will attend Don Bosco Preparatory High School in Ramsey, NJ.

Wells A.G. hails from Massachusetts and joined the Choir School in fourth grade. In the fall he will attend Concord Academy in Concord, MA.

Mich S. hails from Massachusetts and joined the Choir School in fourth grade. In the fall he will attend Northfield Mount Hermon School in Gill, MA.

Prize Day and Graduation Ceremonies were held Saturday morning, June 11, 2022. The graduates and their families enjoyed a festive dinner with faculty and staff that evening. The following morning, the Class of 2022 sang or served as acolytes in their last serve at Saint Thomas Church as students.

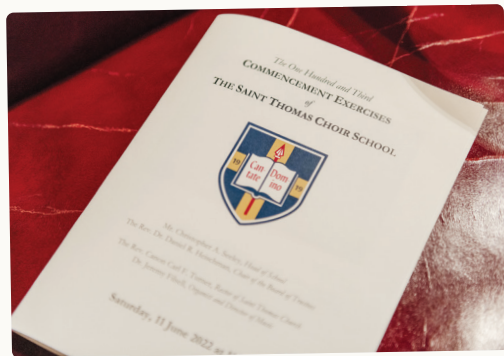


Dr. Filsell directs the choir during the Prize Day and Graduation Ceremony.



Maks Adach, assistant organist, and Dr. Filsell, director of music are all smiles after the final service.

2022 Graduation Highlights



2022 marks the 103rd Commencement Exercise of the Saint Thomas Choir School.



Faculty taking a walk to form the procession in the back of the church.



Cake for dessert after the graduates' dinner.



Voice teacher Giuseppe Spoletini conducts the eighth grade ensemble.



Prizes and awards are polished and ready.



Eighth grade class have another photo opp with the dessert buffet.



One of many bittersweet embraces.

Fond Farewells

Members of the eighth grade class are seldom the only ‘leavers’ each spring and this year is no exception. We will bid farewell to three members of faculty who will move on to new challenges and opportunities. There is some sadness, of course, in this news, but we also celebrate these three members of our community and thank them for all that they have done during their time at the Choir School.



Mr. Christopher Cuomo has taught history, coached sports, served as an advisor, and been a supportive colleague to many in his time at STCS. He has guided students in their study of history and its significance, helping them to hone their analytic skill, and leading them to understand

themselves and the diverse people and cultures of the world. Beyond that, Mr. Cuomo’s kindness and genuine concern for his students mark every interaction with the boys, and we will miss his enthusiasm, joy, and many contributions to our school. Mr. Cuomo departs to explore other opportunities beyond teaching.



Ms. Christine Hruska has been at the school for two years and done much to keep the school moving, organizing our daily schedule and adjusting the routine according to myriad demands. She has also coached soccer, taught English, counseled students and families through the secondary school

search process, and served as our director of studies. As this list of responsibilities suggests, Ms. Hruska’s presence at the school is broad and deep, and though she moves on to another teaching post, we know that her affinity for Choir School remains.



Mrs. Miriam Allman came back to Choir School six years ago after a brief interlude in her service as houseparent and school nurse. Mrs. Allman and her family—including her dogs—are well regarded by all at the school. Even as Mrs. Allman has raised her own children here, she has helped to raise

each of the boys who have made the Choir School a second home. In these past two years, she has led our efforts to ensure that the school has responded appropriately to the threat of the pandemic. Mrs. Allman will spend the immediate future setting up a new home for her family and taking a well-deserved professional break. We will miss Mrs. Allman and her family, and we’ll remember her time here with the same tenderness and care that she has shown us.

While it is not possible to replace these colleagues, the search for new faculty is under way and they will be introduced in the fall edition of *Choir School News*.

 Clockwise: Chris Cuomo, history teacher; Miriam Allman and her son, Luke; Christine Hruska, English teacher, director of studies

Alumni!

Send your news to alumni@choirschool.org for inclusion in a future issue of the *Choir School News*.

Be sure to include your complete name and year of graduation or years attended.

Calligraphy Prints are Found and the Story Told

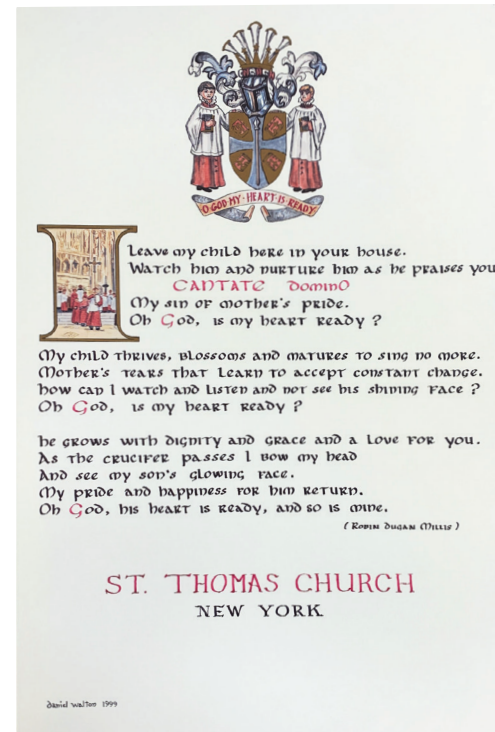
The Choir School and Church recently framed two copies of the beautiful calligraphy work done by Daniel Walton, father of Robb ’00. We asked Daniel to recall how his work was inspired.

I think the message will be meaningful at least to parents as their choristers transition out of the choir and, perhaps, to some, choristers also who may visit years after their choir experience...it may make them even appreciate their parents more and the emotional sacrifice that they go through to allow their child to be a chorister.

The story behind the print is rather simple really. It started right after Nathan Holtz and our Robb transitioned from chorister to become acolytes, owing to the fact that their choir voices had broken. That transition happened for lots of choristers whose voices matured during the school year. Making them into acolytes (a needed position anyway for conducting church services) allowed the boys to finish the school year and continue participating in the entire St. Thomas Choir School experience.

During the service, Robin Millis was in a forward pew alongside Mary and me and she, like us, was weeping and emotional during the service. Afterward, we discussed how gut wrenching it was no longer watching our boys sing the service but also how grateful we were that they were still there and involved. Like all the acolytes who have attended the school before them, they continue to “labor on” in service to God and the church. We all realized that and the love and pride we felt always and that day particularly was palpable to every one of us. So much so that Robin, on a napkin she had, penned the essence of our feeling that day. As soon as it was read I knew it must be codified and offered to put it down in a more formal way. That’s it... I came home and the print you have is the result.

Our thought was to gift it to the church for displaying so all could understand the importance and significance of becoming an acolyte after being a chorister. Later,



when it was shown to others someone suggested to make prints to be used as gifts from the school. The first opportunity for gifting prints was a European tour the choir made and, presumably, prints were given to officials at the venues where the choir sang and to families who hosted the boys, chaperones and clergy at each venue.



Do you know a boy who loves to sing?

Vocal evaluations and auditions of boys entering grades three through six in the fall of 2022 will continue through the summer.

The Choir School invites you to visit and learn more about this distinctive educational opportunity. Tuition is modest and generous scholarships are available.

Contact Ruth Cobb, interim director of admissions, at 212-247-3311 x 541, or rcobb@choirschool.org.

www.choirschool.org



Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise noted, all events take place at Saint Thomas Church.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 | 11 am

Opening service of the 2022-2023 academic year

WEDNESDAY-MONDAY, OCTOBER 5-9

Concerts presented by the Treble Choristers of the Saint Thomas Choir of Men in Boys
MADISON, WIS., AND CHICAGO, ILL.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23 | 2-5 pm

Open House at the Choir School
All are welcome. Boys in grades 2-6 are invited to join the choristers in the stalls at Evensong
Contact admissions@choirschool.org for further information

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27 | 7:30 pm

The Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys present their first concert of the 2022-2023 season
Visit www.saintthomaschurch.org/music/concerts

For news and events visit our website

Scan 







Contact Us

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Christopher Seeley, *Head of School*
Ruth S. Cobb, *Interim Director of Admission*

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