



the CLARIFIER

CLAREMONT ROTARY NEWSLETTER

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

Claremont Rotary Year 92 | Week 6 | August 7, 2020

Program: Grant Gershon, LA Master Chorale Offstage *submitted by Jim Lehman*

Grant Gershon, Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, is our speaker today. He's a local kid (grew up in Alhambra) of many talents, including helping tune the organ in Disney Concert Hall, which we visited as a club with Roger House. Grant is a pianist, a singer, resident conductor of the LA Opera, member of the Board of Councilors of the USC Thornton School of Music, and has been guest conductor in music halls and opera houses around the world. The LA Master Chorale is the largest independent professional choral organization in the country, and as a choral organization is Exhibit A among potential super-spreader outfits—and thus is unable to get together to sing, not for the last few months nor for the foreseeable future. Unable to congregate, they've had to re-invent what they do over the last few months.

Interestingly, from January 1 until mid-March, they had enjoyed one of the busiest periods in their history: four performances of Mahler's Second Symphony with Zubin Mehta and the LA Philharmonic; they recorded a new work by Eric Whitacre, "The Sacred Veil," commissioned by the Master Chorale; they gave the world premiere of "Sunrise," by film composer Jeff Beal, at Walt Disney Concert Hall, they gave three performances of "Lagrima di San Pietro" in Montreal and Toronto; they gave two concerts with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the LA Philharmonic showcasing music of the Weimar Republic; they recorded Ives' 4th Symphony with Gustavo Dudamel and the LA Philharmonic; they sent six singers to Gstaad, Switzerland to premiere a new piece by visual artist Doug Aitken; and were in Auckland, New Zealand on March 13 for a performance of "Lagrima di San Pietro."

March 13 was the day after the NBA announced the cancellation of their season, the day after Tom Hanks announced he had the Coronavirus, right when the stock market took a dive, and things ground to a halt. The morning of the 13th, the members of the Master Chorale were treated to a Powhiri, a Maori greeting ceremony in which you touch foreheads, touch noses and literally breathe the same air as your hosts—

Continued on page 4

OFFSTAGE WITH THE LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE



Sad News: Honorary member **Ron Murphy** passed away this week. Ron was most recently a member since 2016, but also served in the Club from July 1989 to 1999, and then joined a Club in Oregon. Even then, he was a frequent visitor. We will say more when arrangements have been made.

NEXT PROGRAM: Friday, August 14, Jose Ignacio Santos will talk about Mexico's public health, including the approach to COVID. Please join our [Meeting on zoom](#) at noon (click on the underlined link!) The meeting begins with music just before noon and fellowship at noon.

ROTARY, THE MEETING submitted by Mike DeWees

Child of Wonder From the Sacred Veil by Eric Whitacre was the opening preliminary song performed by LA Master Chorale (released on July 29). Our recording was disrupted but can be [listened to here](#). Before opening the meeting, we were all dispatched to breakout rooms.



Break-out Room Chatter

Break out room peek into discussion by **Jim Lehman, Harry Sparrow, Karen Sapio** and **Dennis Smith**: Karen's computer fan is next to her microphone so when it runs it sounds like a lawn mower..."Had I known I'd be running the church from this laptop I'd have made other decisions" Karen said. They also discussed how we can help schools and with tutoring and other assistance. Buff dropped into a room/table that was all men — just like at the lunch meetings! That session had devolved into a meeting about Out on the Town with Claremont Rotary. Stay tuned! **Peter Weinberger** joined us today — the first time on zoom, was talked into doing the program next week, and then graciously stepped aside when Buff found another! We also welcomed first time zoomer, Clarina Pio Roda.

WELCOME GUESTS AND VISITING ROTARIANS

Stephanie Campbell from Pomona Rotary attended after hearing about the program from Buff who attended her club earlier in the week.

John Chase, Past District Governor of District 5300, was invited by **Ron Coleman**.

Bill Gershon visited to find out what his son is doing.

Ron Coleman introduced son **Mateo Coleman**, sporting the latest in pandemic haircuts or rather the lack of one. (Could be a Musketeer?)

Ron also introduced **Dr. Joel Wilson** the CHS and El Roble Chorale director (and soon, Mateo's director!)

Michael Ryan, classical guitarist, and his wife **Lisa Woodward Phillips**—who is physician at the VA hospital had so much fun in the breakout session, that they're potential new members. In the pandemic Michael has been practicing 4-6 hours a day and doing two Facebook live concerts a week 6pm to 7pm Thursday and Saturday and preparing for classes starting soon.

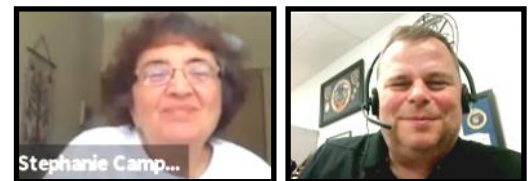
We tried to get a solo of the "Welcome" song going in the presence of so many musical guests, but **Randy Prout** said no and **Mateo** turned it down, so **Christine Hayes** stepped up and started the Smile song instead of the Welcome song so the peanut gallery stepped up and butchered it. (a bit of a mixed metaphor, but you understand if you've been listening!)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Forthcoming Programs: August 14, Dr. Jose Ignacio Santos, Mexico's equivalent to Surgeon General, will talk about public health in Mexico in the time of COVID, and some ethical issues about distribution of Vaccines. **August 21**, **Rebecca Ustrell**, from Curious Magazine will be talking about Inland Empire artists.

August 28, District Governor **Greg Jones** makes his official visit to our club.

The new directory will be out soon and includes the calendar for the year. For now, know that we'll be dark September 4 for Labor Day.



President Buff introduced in advance of his arrival, **Alan Leech**, one of Ireland's leading tenors who has performed with most of Ireland's orchestras and choirs in oratorio and concert performances. He also has a passion for education and choral development.



Mark Carson did an update on Taste of Claremont which is now "Out on the Town with Claremont Rotary." After several committee meetings we are focused on driving business and supporting the businesses and maybe a goody bag or wine glass or something. We're working on a way to sponsor a local business Courier ad before the event, through Go Fund Me or something similar and any money above the advertisement will go into the foundation. We will have brochures and advertisements that will go into the Courier. The committee also plans on a silent auction that may produce some revenue.

Meeting continued on page 3



Fine Time with Sergeant

Zoe TeBeau

Lyn Childress was fined for 91711 zip code as she'll soon be a new

Claremont resident up near the (former) Claremont Club thanks to the help of seller's dynamo realtor **Bernadette Kendall**. Lyn was sold by the staging and cooking display in the kitchen.

Sylvia suggested fining anybody who is chewing or putting their butts in the camera. Zoe fined her for the suggestions and fined **Pat Hauducoeur** for moving around in her seat. **Chris Hayes** should have been fined for kissing her dog on the lips during the meeting.

Clarina Pio Roda is a red badger who, when asked which committees she signed up for, couldn't recall. Zoe made her a wildcard. (We welcome all participants on committees, and welcomed Clarina for her first meeting on Zoom.

Don Ralls birthday is August 11th and he is celebrating by going to work and bringing lunch into the office for the whole staff.

Susie Ilsley's birthday is Saturday 8/8 and **John Tulac's** is Sunday 8/9. Fine!

Don Gould, who has been practicing piano for 10 years, has made YouTube recordings of his piano pieces. It takes him about 6 months to learn a new piece and once he moves on to another, he forgets the last piece.

While we waited for our speaker to begin, **John Chase** told us what he's been up to in the last 2 years since he was DG. He's swapping jokes with Ron Coleman and at the District Level he's the Finance Chair for DG Greg Jones. He's also looking for opportunities to create new clubs.

Buff asked **Mateo Coleman** how he is surviving as a student in the world today. He said he had fun talking with his friends and making music together with friends online .



Announcements, cont'd from p.2

Anita Hughes announced that the Double Tree is not available at least until October 1st.

The Club placed an ad in the upcoming Almanac of the Claremont Courier. Thank you **Nona Tirre!**

Rotary International has nominated its first female to be RI President, in 2022-23, **Jennifer Jones**, a Canadian. Jennifer has been Rotarian since 1997 and has been in many roles at the District and RI levels. Sylvia is excited about her appointment, as she is not just the first woman, but a very capable, extraordinary woman. Sylvia predicted in 2016 that she would be tapped for the role. Jennifer has a law degree and is founder of a Media company.

Sylvia attended a Bay area sister city celebration this week, and mentioned that Claremont had sister cities from the 1960's and 70's: Guanajuato, Mexico and Kumasi, Ghana. She suggested that we might revive the idea with a Rotary focus.

Inspiration for the Day

by John Tulac

Life is too short to listen to bad music.

Next to love, music is the best solution to any problem. Music feeds the heart with what it needs at the moment.

Of course, that doesn't always work out. Fred Allen said: "The first time I sang in the church choir, two hundred people changed their religion."

Oh, but no matter.

"Sing, then. Sing, indeed, with shoulders back, and head up so that song might go to the roof and beyond to the sky. Mass on mass of tone, with a hard edge, and rich with quality, every single note a carpet of color woven from basso profundo, and basso, and baritone, and alto, and tenor, and soprano, and also mezzo, and contralto, singing and singing, until life and all things living are become a song. (Richard Llewellyn, *How Green Was My Valley*)

But getting there to such sublime state is not easy.

Albert Einstein said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting the same result."

In other words, all band directors, choral masters and orchestra conductors are insane.

And we are so glad they are.



Gershon, continued from p. 1

going down a line of people repeating the ritual with each, a beautiful ceremony that all are now grateful resulted in no infections transmitted in either direction, particularly as New Zealand has famously managed to avoid widespread infection and has now had over 100 days without a case.

At that point, they returned to LA, canceled the rest of the season, all of their touring commitments, and stopped doing everything they normally do. They talked about what to do and how to do it, with life mostly online, and came up with a list of five goals. First, keep constituents—singers, audiences, supporters, friends, listeners—engaged with the LA Master Chorale. Second, create and share material that is beautiful, interesting and inspiring. Third, fill the gap for patrons and audiences who had intended to attend now-canceled events. Fourth, provide opportunities and creative outlets for our singers. Fifth, take advantage of this unprecedented situation to engage new audiences and try out new strategies that would outlast the current crisis.

With that framework, they started several initiatives in late March, early April. One of the first was a series of interviews online with Jenny Wong, the Master Chorale's Associate Conductor, now Associate Artistic Director, along with Grant interviewing artists like composer Morten Lauridsen (first Composer in Residence for the Master Chorale), Eric Whitacre, the most recent Artist in Residence, Peter Sellars, stage director, James Newton, composer, Billy Childs, jazz pianist and composer, to name some.



Conversations became wide-ranging—

they started out with a focus on choral music, but as we moved into May and June and into the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, and the renewed prominence of the fight for social and racial justice, the conversations moved into that domain as well, and probed what choral music can bring to the moment. Choirs can be seen as a microcosm of society at large: the composer and jazz artist Kamasi Washington talks about the “harmony of our differences,” and to Grant that is what a choir is—each singer is a unique person with a whole range of experiences, and choir provides a place where we can acknowledge our differences along with a framework where we can harmonize. You can find these interviews on the LA [Master Chorale website](#).

A second initiative was to reach into our vaults—every concert at Disney Hall is professionally recorded, so they pulled from that treasure trove 11 concerts and broadcast them over 11 weeks, along with original program notes. Grant, Jenny, or one of the singers served as host for the broadcasts, adding material about what the program meant to them or to the Chorale, as artists.

The third initiative was to re-create the Chorale's annual high school choir festival—an event they host at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Unlike many high school and college choral festivals that are adjudicated, competition-oriented events, the Master Chorale's festival simply celebrates choral singing. It has grown over time and now includes some 33 choirs from all over Los Angeles and Southern California. They come together for a series of rehearsals prior to the performance, having had the music for the entire year, working on it with their own choral directors, and including it in their own concerts during the year. In this festival they gather, some 1,000 strong, and blend it all together.

This year, unable to gather, they decided to create a virtual choir, using one of the pieces they had selected, Georgia Stitt's [“The Promise of Light.”](#) (The recording is amazing!) Knowing that not all the singers might feel self-confident enough to sing the piece into a computer for the virtual performance, they invited all to contribute in any way that was comfortable—a selfie, a spoken statement—something that could be woven into the totality. In the end, they had testimonials, footage from previous festivals, and the virtual choir performance, which together made a beautiful event for this moment in time.

There was also a virtual gala—the April gala is one of the Master Chorale's biggest fundraising events—and some \$500,000 in ticket sales meant they needed to do something for their supporters. The gala was going to honor Billy Childs, composer and jazz musician, who collaborated on a virtual performance, along with the Master Chorale, individual singers, smaller ensembles, etc. It ended up being highly successful, both in the generosity it brought forth, and in connecting and solidifying the community that supports the Master Chorale. There was a further benefit—the possibility of connecting far beyond our local geography. To some extent that happens with touring performances, but the virtual encounter can be anywhere, anytime, and it breaks down all of the barriers that might present themselves to someone's attending a performance live at Disney Concert Hall.

Finally, not without reluctance on Grant's part, the Master Chorale created a virtual choir piece. It was a bit of a leap of faith—trusting that the tech geniuses will take each of the individual performances, sung into the computer, and weave them into something artistically worthy. They did it to celebrate Alice Parker, composer and arranger, about to mark her 95th birthday. She was the creative partner of Robert Shaw, and their collaboration resulted in an impressive body of compositions and arrangements from the great traditions of American mu-

Gershon, continued from p. 4

sic. Before Covid, the plan was for her to visit LA, and to fete her with a concert of her work. Unable to do that, they chose her piece, “Hark, I hear the Harps Eternal,” for a virtual choir performance. Grant said. “We did it as a voluntary undertaking, expecting maybe 30-40 voices from the 100 members of the Chorale would participate—we got 94.” You can listen to the [short recording](#) on YouTube, or link from the [Master Chorale website](#), scroll down the main page to Media.



So, how do you record virtually? They made this one simple. The piece is all one tempo; I (Grant) sat at the piano and played their parts with a metronome ticking, and sent it to all the singers. They had the music, and we’ve performed the piece together before, so it wasn’t fundamentally new. Now, the piece is a capella, so when they sang their contributions, they needed to be using headphones so the ticking metronome and piano were not present in the virtual choir recording. We had a 45-minute Zoom meeting to review the phrasing, where the breaths would happen, etc. And they recorded at home—iPhones, computers, more elaborate audio setups, whatever they had—and sent it in. They could do as many takes as they liked, but what they sent in needed to be a complete run-through, not a splicing of the best bits: too technically messy for putting it all together. Then the tech guy, using relatively simple technology, like Logic by Apple, or iMovie, etc, put it together, adding resonance to enhance the acoustic feel.

President Buff then recognized another heavy hitter, Irish tenor Alan Leech, zooming into the program all the way from Dublin to talk of challenges in Ireland. He talked about recording Arvo Part’s [“The Deer’s Cry,” with a virtual choir](#). It was very demanding—even though there were only 16 singers. A minimalist piece with lots of silences, and involving lots of [rubato](#) (variable tempo), it was commissioned by the Louth County Council, in the area where Alan was born. They were encouraged not to over-enunciate final hard consonants, singing into a silence. All were watching a tape of the conductor, but the rubato really complicated things for the compilation.



Alan has been working this summer with a YouTube sponsored program that enables Irish high school students to try a musical instrument—and maybe develop a lifetime activity.

Alan was asked to lead a team of teachers creating a virtual summer school—immensely challenging!

President Buff asked a question to both Alan and Grant: what have you learned from these times that will carry over to the future? Grant led with being able to take a step back and think about our responsibility in the wider world. At the Master Chorale, some things that have been in the works are coming into sharper focus. We are diversifying the artistic leadership and are working to lift up a multiplicity of voices, a multiplicity of viewpoints. For example, Jenny Wong, who has been the Associate Conductor, is now the Associate Artistic Director, a newly-created position. Reena Esmail, a brilliant composer, is Artist in Residence, and the three of us together provide the artistic leadership of the Chorale. Going forward, we are committed to programming music from composers who are from historically under-represented traditions and groups in classical music; e.g., composers who are Black, indigenous, persons of color, female identifying.

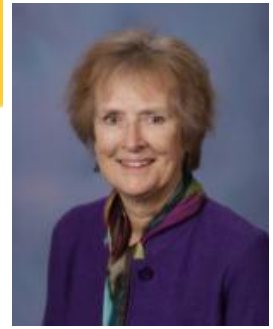
Alan reflected: putting on my teacher’s hat, we need to focus not so much on what we CAN’T do but rather on what we CAN do. For example, with undergraduates, normally you never have time to work on sight reading or on musicianship, but in these circumstances, you can. Putting on my conductor’s and performer’s hats, we performed the Faure Requiem two weeks ago with a small choir, just 12 voices (including Alan’s), to commemorate those who have died from Covid, with members of the national symphony, again a skeleton crew, maybe 10 of them onstage, all of us spread out. ([Listen here](#)) No audience; it was a livestreaming event.



The Chamber Choir Ireland has word that every date on their calendar is now booked for the rest of the year. “Our government funds the arts, and we’ve all been told not to panic: we’ll be looked after.”

Final thought? Grant: we look forward to making music in real time, in person, sooner rather than later.

Our thanks to Grant and Alan for spending part of their Friday with us, and to President Buff for making it happen.



Buff Wright

Claremont Rotary
President
2020-2021



UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Aug 14	Mexico's "Surgeon General", Jose Ignacio Santos
Aug 21	Curious Magazine, Rebecca Ustrell
Aug 28	Official Visit from District Governor, Greg Jones
Sept 4	Dark for Labor Day (Going somewhere?)



This is what happens when you give a President power AND Ink!



Bacon Bits

Let's fill up the pig!

Photo of the week
Submitted by Buff Wright



Website

Information about the club and back editions of this newsletter are always available on [DACdb](#) and www.claremontRotary.org

Join us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/RotaryofClaremont

Club [Bylaws](#) and [Policies](#) are posted for member access on DACdb

August Birthdays (many!)

- Bill Burrows, Bonita & Richard Ramos 8/4
- Brett O'Connor 8/5 Susie Ilsley 8/8
- John Tulac 8/9 Don Ralls 8/11
- Juli Minoves-Triquell 8/15
- Jeff Bonhus 8/22 Ned Paniagua 8/23
- Bob Siliciano and Peter Weinberger 8/25
- Kelly Carson 8/26 Armando Armenta 8/27



Notes: Jim Lehman (program), Mike DeWees (meeting) Photos: Peter Weinberger
The Claremont Rotary Club meets on Zoom at 12:00 on Friday until further notice

Sergeants' committee gathers before each meeting at 11:30 AM in the Orchard Lounge at the DoubleTree Hotel and anyone with information to share is welcome!!

Clarifier Committee

- Mike DeWees, co-editor
- Bill Burrows
- Lark Gerry
- Bobby Hyde
- Jim Lehman
- Steve Schenck
- Chris Hayes Shaner
- Harry Sparrow
- Peter Weinberger
- Buff Wright, editor
