

CELEBRATING DR. MARY HOPPER: A Tribute to 21 Years of Leadership



THE OLD MAN ASSOCIATION

INFORMATION AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR THE OLD MEN OF
THE WHEATON COLLEGE GLEE CLUB

A Student-Led Publication



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Dear Old Men,

If you had told me when I came to teach at Wheaton in 1979 that I would be the conductor of the Men's Glee Club, I would have laughed. But now, I laugh with joy at the memory of conducting these wonderful young men for 21 years. One of my more skeptical conducting friends years ago said that all a men's choir needed to do was put on tuxedos and everyone would think they were wonderful. Thankfully, the Men's Glee Club can do more than just wear tuxedos. I always wanted these men to prove themselves musically, and every year they have sung with passion, beauty, and (most of the time) in tune.

And, of course, there is a lot of laughter. One of my favorite memories is from my first tour when one of the bus phrases was not clear to me. I thought they were saying "Hold the rail—it's dirty!" And then there was the time I helped a storyteller by taking his watch off while he was talking! I have really enjoyed all the antics and traditions of the Glee Club.

Beyond singing well, these men care for each other. Some of my most memorable moments in the Club have been those when the men gather around one of their friends to pray for them during difficult times. The community and care in the Glee Club will always be a special aspect of this choir.

I will miss these gentlemen so much, but I will be in the area and will continue to be their biggest fan.

Dr. Mary Hopper

A Letter from the MTK President

Gentlemen!

“Live for the glory of God” Paul writes in 1 Corinthians. This, more than anything else—our motto, our traditions, our comedic uses of Sir Dieterich Buxtehude—conveys the mission of the Wheaton College Men’s Glee Club.

These past two years have certainly been challenging. Ask any first- or second-year students about dorm social events, singing at commencement, or how they like Stupe (the far superior dining option to SAGA), and they will most likely respond with perplexed looks. Singing amidst the COVID-19 restrictions last year required determination and a considerable amount of patience when it came to diction. We sang most of the year masked and spaced 10 feet apart, then 6 feet apart, and there was no live audience with which to share our music. You should try to meet Dr. Hopper’s tonal expectations when wearing a cloth covering your mouth! Yet, we persisted and even bonded despite a pandemic that significantly limited community and intimacy. We recorded a socially distanced yet exquisitely-crafted concert in the new Armerding concert hall; we pulled off the briefest tür in history (3 hours). Somehow, we held a banquet on campus for those yearning to taste Chick-fil-a. It’s all true! God used our experiences to remind us of His purposes for the Club, to share the gospel through our music, and to lift up our brothers in love.

Dr. Hopper’s last year of serving as our director after 21 years has truly been exhilarating. We’ve celebrated the opening of the Concert Hall and the joyous return to live performances, we’ve relished singing in the newly-dedicated Clayton Halvorsen choral rehearsal room, and we’ve resumed our typical schedule of concerts. The Club worked tirelessly to prepare for the annual Christmas Festival (the crowd particularly enjoyed A King is Born). In February, we performed the Chichester Psalms in collaboration with the Women’s Chorale and Concert Choir. And on April 2nd, we performed Dr. Hopper’s last Glee Club home concert.

The home concert was an especially magnificent evening full of fantastic music, including a piece written by current Clubber Chris Coster, usual traditions (like E’en So & A Mighty Fortress—this time, with a remarkable number of Old Men crowding the stage!), and a teary surprise for the High Conductress herself to close the night: an SATB setting of Psalm 96 commissioned by the Old Man Association, written by Old Man Craig Curry. We had rehearsed it secretly along with the Women’s Chorale under the leadership of Old Man Randy Benware, and premiered it at the concert. We performed the same piece again in the Chorale’s home concert a week later. It has been such a privilege to celebrate Dr. Hopper’s last year as Glee Club director with live, maskless performances of excellent choral music such as these.

As for what lies ahead in the rest of the school year, we look forward to singing in Dr. Hopper’s very last on-campus performance with the Glee Club: the Commencement Concert on May 6th. While we are disappointed at the cancellation of this summer’s European Tür, we are nevertheless excited to be able to hold a domestic Tür in South Carolina and Georgia the week after graduation. This will serve as a nice last hurrah for Dr. Hopper, as both the Club and Chorale will tour with her.

When our final score is written, part of who God will have made us by His grace will be due to you, Dr. Hopper. We men, new and old, from this generation of 21 years, thank God for you, and honor you, as his blessed instrument in our lives. The Psalmist proclaims, “I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever; with my mouth, I will make known your faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 89:1). What better witness to this command than our beloved conductor, Dr. Mary Hopper.

May she live forever!

Men’s Glee Club 115th President,
James Graham, ’22

TESTIMONIALS AND THANK-YOU'S

...from Current Clubbers

These past four years in the Glee Club have been a time that I have learned to deeply treasure. I am so thankful for Dr. Hopper's incredible musical and spiritual leadership and her deep love for God which is evident in everything she does. She has had a significant impact on the discerning of my call to vocational worship ministry. I am more prepared to be an effective vocal coach and team leader because of her incredible example.

-Max Anliker, '22

Interactions with Dr. Hopper were among some of my first impressions of the Wheaton College faculty when I visited before being admitted and during my first few days on campus. From those first experiences until now, she has consistently shown a remarkable dedication to the Club and the Conservatory and genuine care for each student. Dr. Hopper has encouraged, challenged, and helped me grow as a musician, person, and, most importantly, a Christian. Her application of the Christian walk, the Wheaton College motto of "For Christ and His Kingdom," and the Wheaton mission of integrating faith and learning will remain a striking example of a courageous yet humble servant of Christ for the rest of my life. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be positively impacted by Dr. Hopper, and I pray that God will richly bless her for her years of faithful service to Him.

-Joel Jamison, '23

In my two years singing under Dr. Hopper's leadership, she has helped me grow not only in my musical abilities but also in my faith and character. She always makes a point to hear about how each member of the choir is and has (on more than one occasion) made a point of praying for me when I wasn't doing so well. Since joining Cabinet this year, she has always been the first to offer encouragement and support during busy seasons. I will miss her presence and leadership next year, but I'm thankful for her impact on me personally over the past two years.

-Sam Burk, '24

Dr. Hopper is amazing, and I am so glad I got to spend time with her during her last year. While I struggled with health issues, she always checked in and ensured that I was doing well. She always started rehearsals with a smile and made us young freshmen feel comfortable in our new environment. I'm sad to see her leave! But her mark will always be left on Men's Glee Club and me, specifically with her kindness. Thank you for everything, Dr. Hopper!

-Jackson Connor, '25

...from Past Clubbers

Enough cannot be said about the wonderful impact Dr. Hopper has had on the lives of so many students. It all begins with her prestigious origins at the University of Iowa, a state that, in my experience, produces the most stupendous choral aficionados! I can only imagine the challenge it was to take the helm of a choir that had such a long, illustrious, implausible, and always true tradition. Yet Dr. Hopper brought energy and joy to us all, adding to the legend of the Men's Glee Club. Her drive pushed us to excellence, and her knowledge sharpened our talents. All the while, she created an environment where it was impossible not to have fun. Personally, Dr. Hopper's service to the young men of the MGC goes beyond choral excellence. She helped me through times of struggle, loss, and doubt. Her faith in my potential and the encouragement she offered was a gift to me that I am not sure I was ever truly able to communicate. Thank you, Dr. Hopper, from the bottom of my heart, for the example you have given to all of us in the Men's Glee Club. I will always reflect on my time in the MGC, full of laughter, encouragement, and musical excellence, with overwhelming joy. And you, as a director, mentor, and friend, I will thank God that you were there for me in some of the most pivotal times in my young life. Veritas, Integritas, Fraternitas.

-Harry Zuber, '13

Dr. Mary Hopper is the kind of person who believes in those who fail to believe in themselves. No matter how downtrodden, unskilled or aimless you may feel, Dr. Hopper sees potential in you and teaches you to see it in yourself. On a tour in Dallas, we saw her work with a high school choir for 25 minutes, and in that time, she made them professionals. Every year she takes a group of non-music majors and draws out the most beautiful music. She sits in on our weekly cabinet buffoonery and manages to make sure everything gets done. No matter what problems or fears I have brought to her, she has always returned with opportunities and encouragement. Mary Hopper is the embodiment of excellence - so much so that she empowers her students to be the same. There will never be another director like the Most High Conductress, and hundreds of young men and women are better musicians, professionals, and disciples for knowing her.

-Mackenzie Terman, '17

You have helped me and others restore our enjoyment of singing by expanding our musical repertoire and refining our vocals and sense of rhythm. Best wishes for your retirement, and thank you so dearly for your diligent work with these men with whom I and others share deep belonging.

-Aaron Hanes, '20



MORE Testimonials from Past Clubbers

Dr. Hopper,

Thank you for your devotion to our great God, the Wheaton College Conservatory of Music, and in particular, the Men's Glee Club and Women's Chorale. You have instilled in me a striving for excellence as worship that reaches beyond making music and imbues all areas of life; I am certain many others concur. Thank you for your example of virtue and craftsmanship. Thank you for holding the Glee Club to veritas, integritas, and fraternitas. Thank you for graciously allowing, and even joining in, many of our Tür traditions. Thank you for showing grace and facilitating disciplined practice when we fell flat (or even sharp). Thank you for smiling with joyful gratitude when we achieved excellence. Thank you for leading us in the way of Jesus, with virtue and craftsmanship. No other can be our most high conductress – may you live forever!

I am certain that God will continue to accomplish great things in and through you in this next chapter of your journey. With that, may the LORD bless and keep you; the LORD smile upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Yours in and for Christ our King,
Kurt Pazdra II, '18

MGC was one of the best parts of Wheaton for me. I enjoyed the camaraderie and the great music we performed, including the Messiah and Berlioz Requiem. I still find encouragement in the words of various songs. MMGCE was an amazing experience - singing in St. Paul's Cathedral and Stephansplatz in Vienna, and visiting so many cities in Europe. As a piano major, I didn't really know how to sing my freshman year, but Dr. Hopper accepted me into the Club and taught me so much during my four years. While music is important to Dr. Hopper, even more so are the words and the faith it communicates. Thank you for all you taught me and blessing on your next chapter in life.

-Josh Beets, '08

I have worked on dozens of programs with Dr. Hopper and have spent countless hours rehearsing with her, but the most precious memory I have with her is sitting next to her at Heather Haefliger's memorial service. We were able to sit in vulnerability and comfort one another. I am so thankful for her heart for her current and former students.

-Ian Zanski, '16



A Story! A Conductor Story!

Russ Terman, '13

MGC Secretary 2011-2013

As impossible as it seems, it has been 12 years since I first met Dr. Hopper. It was a characteristically sleeting Chicago day in December. I, having no previously discernable musical ability, was auditioning with three of my four suitemates for the Men's Glee Club.

Stepping through the doorway of McCallister Hall, which I certainly had no occasion to darken at any other point in my freshman year, I meandered my way through what looked (and frankly sounded) like some sort of instrumental prison complex. Finding the correct room, I sat nervously and waited until my turn to audition. Once inside the room, I stood toe-to-toe with the seasoned music PhD with her expectant face framed with two sharpened blades of steel-gray hair, and her all-seeing blue eyes appraising me from behind black spectacles. Being a poli-sci major, painfully and inevitably a lawyer, I called on my education and training and did the only thing I knew how to do: I faked it.

"Do you have musical experience?" the woman in black asked. "Yeah... some," I said in what I believed to be a convincing tone. "I see," she said curtly, and my gaze dropped. Sensing weakness, she immediately and without mercy handed me a piece of paper with a menagerie of dots, lines, letters, and symbols that I vaguely thought I recognized from Hanna-Barbera cartoons and said with what I swear to this day was a smile "then let's jump straight into sight-reading."

After proceeding no further than the first line of the music, which was, as I recall, a line of monotonal quarter notes. Dr. Hopper had accurately surmised that "some," while not technically incorrect, was a rather charitable summation of my musical resume. However, she liked the timbre of my voice and was reasonably pleased with

my range. Before I had summoned the courage to climb out her window and shimmy down the gutter pipe to safety and freedom, she asked me one more question. "Are you willing to work hard during rehearsal AND work hard outside of rehearsal? Do you actually want to do this?"

The pause before my response still weighs heavy in my memory. Bound up in that moment were all the things I was unknowingly saying "yes" to. Hours of work and pounds of Ricola, experiencing and mangling some of the greatest musical works mankind has ever produced, excruciatingly deciding between numbers one and two, which to this day I swear sounded the same, planning banquets and a European Tour, two years serving in the Glee Club Cabinet, knowing every man by name and sight as secretary, experiencing a friend's death for the first time, rising up as a man of God.

I said "yes" and Dr. Hopper decided to take a chance on me and the rest, as they say, is buxta-history. In many ways she took a chance on all of us. From the organ and composition majors trying to skate through an ensemble credit, to the men who dropped out of concert choir to rekindle their love of choral music again, to the no-count hustlers like me who were hoping that wearing a tux in a chapel every year would subliminally convince Wheaton ladies we were marriage material. She took what we were and she pushed, coaxed, encouraged, and threatened us to be who we are now.

To me and countless others, Dr. Hopper was a conductor, a coach, a cheerleader, a mentor, and a friend. For those of us who still needed some conducting after Wheaton, she has been a sage advisor and constant ally, making time for the countless lives she has touched to siphon off just a little more of her energy, love, and spirit. Dr. Hopper will always be my conductor and rightly takes her place in the storied history of the fine men and women who have led the Men's Glee Club to glory. Also, she liked us better than Chorale, which they appropriately never got over, and which we should never let them forget.

Dr. Hopper was always such a huge supporter of us, not just as young singers but also as young men. Some of my fondest memories are when she would show up to support us all at the Bass-Tenor football game. During my senior year as pub man, I got to know her better in our many cabinet meetings in the old Conserv. I know of few people with such devotion, passion, and love for her students as we all passed through the Club, and I will always cherish my memories of that time!

-Pete DeRosier, '16

I didn't catch the 2021 concert, but I saw Dr. Hopper was the college's 2020 virtual Christmas Concert coordinator. Not only did she direct beautiful performances by Men's Glee and the Women's Chorale, but the entire production was masterfully put together. I'm sure it was a testimony to Dr. Hopper's skills. As an alumnus, I appreciate her work organizing the Wheaton College Men's Glee Club Old Men Facebook Group. Thank you, Dr. Hopper, for your skilled direction and for propelling the MGC through new technologies and challenges. May you have a refreshing and fulfilling retirement, and may God grant you Many Years!

-John Troy, '68

Another Note from an Old Man

Mary,

It's impossible to overstate your contributions to my professional and personal development over the past 30+ years. From the composing and arranging opportunities you provided me when I was a student to regularly programming my pieces, you have time and again encouraged me to use my gifts to serve Christ and His kingdom.

You provided me with my first "big break" as a composer/arranger while I was a student when you invited me to arrange "Of the Father's Love Begotten" for a Wheaton College Christmas festival.

I couldn't believe you trusted me enough to write something for all those ensembles, and I was thrilled when I heard the result.

That performance led to other opportunities, including our infamous barter of an arrangement of "Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo" for a Women's Chorale spring concert in exchange for my getting to borrow your husband Peter's MG convertible for the Men's Glee Club banquet! Once again, I was thrilled and delighted with the opportunity!

You were so gracious to premier "Three Poems by Amy Carmichael" at my final 1988 Commencement Concert, although the occasion that inspired that work, the passing of Anne Harrick's mother, was a sad one. I would never have imagined you would still be programming those pieces and include them in your final Women's Chorale concert. What an honor for me. You are singularly responsible for many people having the opportunity to sing and hear those pieces over the years. And the same can be said for generations of young



men that have performed "No Night There." Thank you!

But as much fun as I had being a part of many kinds of music-making with you (from the chapel music committee to a madrigal class), I always felt it was our shared love for Christ, and our mutual desire to honor and serve Him with music-making as an act of worship that underscored it all.

I remember you telling me a couple of years ago about your retirement decision and that "there are things you want to do!" I'm thrilled you'll now have those opportunities while continuing your ministry of musical excellence with other choirs and ensembles. Your impact and Christ-honoring influence will no doubt be missed by the college, but will live on among countless others like me who give thanks for and try to model even a portion of your encouraging spirit, compassionate heart, gracious leadership, and generous friendship. God bless you in this next chapter!

With love and respect,
Craig Curry, '88



Looking back on the Florida Tür...

Michael Wilder, Dean

Conservatory of Music, Arts, and Communication

It is hard to resist reflection on the March 2020 Men's Glee Club Florida tour and the impact of the intrusion of the emerging pandemic. Preparing for an evening concert at New Hope Church in south Florida, we received the news that students wouldn't be returning to campus but, instead, to their homes, following the tour.

This was a jolt in many ways, not least the potential end to the tour, the curtailing of the second half of the semester on campus, and the clear impact that it would have on singing and other music-making in the collective work of large ensembles.

After the men gathered outdoors in small groups to pray, it didn't take long for a sense of purpose and resolve to set in for these musicians. Inspired by words from MGC President and Maestra Hopper, the men resolved to commit to what they came to offer – the gift of music and faith for an audience that was even more eager to receive such a gift. We all agreed that Dr. Hopper and the men performed one of their finest and most inspired concerts ever. It was a night to remember and a sweet memory, as the pandemic months and years unfolded.



As I think about the many areas in that Mary Hopper has impacted my life, I am most thankful for her influence on my profession, education, and personal life.

I thank Dr. Hopper for her many years of service and leadership, including her years as President, for the American Choral Director's Association. She dedicated decades of commitment to sharing her passion for and encouraging the love of choral singing with thousands who attended state, regional and national conferences. Many choral conductors were positively impacted by the concerts, interest sessions, and workshops at each conference, leading to the enrichment of thousands of musicians. Thank you for going above and beyond to keep choral singing great!

I am so thankful that she gave 43 years to her students at Wheaton College, including myself, to learn to love the Lord through choral music and choral conducting. She has influenced and encouraged countless college students in the classroom, Women's Chorale, and the Men's Glee Club. She has given her life to her students to encourage them to grow musically, educationally, and spiritually while at Wheaton and help them be ready for the world beyond.

Finally, I am so grateful that my oldest three children had the opportunity to sing under Dr. Hopper's tutelage in Women's Chorale and Men's Glee Club. The opportunities to sing amazing repertoire, grow spiritually and in leadership, and travel around the country and world were because of her dedication and excellence. She gave her very best to these choirs.

Blessings to you, Dr. Hopper, as you move on to the next phase of your life, gracing those who will learn from you and benefit from all you can share!

-Randy Benware, '90



CONNECT YOUR FRIENDS

Know any former Glee Clubbers who don't receive these newsletters? Help them out! Send their email address to alumni@wheaton.edu (or encourage them to do so)!

CONNECT YOURSELF!!!

Join the "Wheaton College Men's Glee Club Old Man Association" Facebook group to keep in touch with what is going on with your fellow Old Men!



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