

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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Upcoming Performances

The Men's Glee Club is singing in the Commencement Concert at 7:30 on May 5th ! Reserve your seat for free at <https://tickets.wheaton.edu/shows/commencement-celebration-concert/>

Happy Spring, Old Men!

The Wheaton College Men's Glee Club is grateful to the Lord for the joy shared as we learn new music, fellowship in prayer groups, and work diligently in preparation for our Spring Concert. Please let me highlight a few wonderful experiences.

Christmas Festival was particularly sweet this year. Attendance was at pre-COVID levels, and a spirit of unbounded praise was evident throughout Edman Chapel. Here's a link to the beautiful video recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC4u2XsXP70>.

My first Wheaton College Christmas Festival was in 1970 (!) as a member of the Men's Glee Club, and this year's was a special moment I'll never forget.

Voice Day, an event hosted by the Men's Glee Club for high school tenors and basses and the Women's Chorale for sopranos and altos, was held in the Concert Hall on January 14. Seventy-five singers from many Illinois schools, as well as homeschool students, were hosted. I led rehearsals in the morning with the Women's Chorale and their high school counterparts and in the afternoon with the Men's Glee Club and theirs. We sang together and had an opportunity to demonstrate some Wheaton College friendliness and mentoring. The conductors from the high schools were unanimous in their enthusiasm for the day and their hope that it would happen again. If you're in the area, stop by on Saturday, January 13, 2024. Better yet, let your local directors know about this new outreach and encourage them to keep their eyes peeled for information.

On January 28, we were honored to join Old Man Ed Bedard in celebrating the life of his dear grandfather. Several members of the MGC drove to Libertyville, IL, to sing "E'en so" at the funeral service. We were touched by Ed's words and the sweet note we received from Ed's grandmother. Later that same day, we witnessed the transformation of New Men into Old Men at the Old Man's retreat. While the transformation rites may have changed over the years, the outcomes of loyalty, brotherhood, dedication to musical excellence, and spiritual commitment are evident at every rehearsal.

I hope to see you at our next concert! In the meantime, "Peace be to you and grace from Him who freed us from our sins."

Jerry Blackstone, conductor
Wheaton College Men's Glee Club
Old Man (1970-72)



The Big Transition

The transition from one director to another is bound to be a challenge for experienced members of the Glee Club, who are used to a certain style of conducting, leading rehearsals, and an overall artistic vision for the Club. Through all of this, Dr. Jerry Blackstone has shown an eagerness to inspire the Club to musical excellence and personally connect with individual singers. He has been a welcoming face to new singers in addition to building comradery with the upperclassmen and joining in the Glee Club's culture. During rehearsals, it is apparent that Dr. Blackstone holds the men of the Club to a very high standard, both in our musical capabilities and in the Three Pillars of Truth, Integrity, and Brotherhood. Dr. Blackstone's first semester and a half as the Glee Club's director have brought multiple changes, but I am excited to see how Dr. Blackstone's leadership continues to push the Club to grow as men.

-Sam Burk, Business Manager

Valentine's Day

On February 13th, as the Women's Chorale were just ending their prayer groups and about to begin rehearsing, a group of Glee Club men burst through the doors of the Choral Rehearsal Room and threw about a hundred paper airplanes with handwritten pickup lines and love notes on them toward the women. Four Clubbers emerged from behind the curtains on the upper level of the room and rained airplanes down from above. MGC had taken the last few minutes of their rehearsal the previous Thursday to write on and fold the planes, and about 15 men volunteered to throw the planes. The Clubbers left the rehearsal as soon as they had come, leaving the Women's Chorale members "a bit surprised," according to Dr. Blackstone, conductor of both MGC and WoCo. We hope the surprise was mostly pleasant.

-Davis Whyte, class of 2023

Old Man Party

We celebrated the Old Man Party in January in the snowy fields of St. James Farm. We arrived in the afternoon and started with the Rook tournament. During the game, New Men were asked to leave in groups with Old Man leaders for prayer walks. Eventually, the groups arrived at the final destination, where they were handed sweaters and paddles in the presence of the cabinet and Old Men. We concluded the party with Dr. Blackstone conducting "E'en So" and the BuxtaWalk. The Old Man Party this year was a great success. This was the first time we celebrated OMP off-campus since the OMP on the Florida beach during our COVID-disrupted tour in 2019. Walking through snowy fields during sunset surrounded by candlelight was particularly memorable. The return of off-campus celebrations and our increased enrollment is a testament to the continued thriving of MGC after COVID.

-David Yu, President

Old Man of the Year

The Old Man Association Board proudly presents the Old Man of the Year Award to Will Liverman this year. Will graduated from the Wheaton Conservatory in 2010 and pursued his Master of Music degree at The Juilliard School. Called "a voice for this historic moment" by the Washington Post, Will opened as Charles in Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, which won the 2023 GRAMMY Award for Best Opera Recording. Will was also nominated for the 2023 GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Recording for his work on Wheaton Professor Dr. Shawn Okpebholo's album, "Lord, How Come Me Here?" His new opera, *The Factotum*, which he stars in and composed with DJ/recording artist K. Rico, premiered at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in February 2023. We're very proud of what Will has accomplished, and we can't wait to see what the Lord still has in store for him!

Home Concert Reunions: Remembering Tours

The Men's Glee Club European Tour groups of 1963, 1973, and 1983 convened during the Home Concert on April 15 to celebrate their 60th, 50th, and 40th anniversaries. You will enjoy reading an excerpt from Thomas Beach and James Bergwall's 1973 tour diary and a copy of a review of the 1983 tour group from the Jerusalem Post.

1973:

The concert was beautiful. The Abbey church of Vienne is a small, 12th Century building, just the type most of our music was written for. The reverb time for the sanctuary is at least a few seconds, and the notes blended and built on one another in a way that was just thrilling. It was a pleasure to sing in that place. The only problem was that we couldn't give testimonies. This was to be the case at other festivals we were to participate in. Our testimony would have to be in how we act, talk, and sing, both in concert, and before and after.

The fourth section went over very well, and we received the rhythmic clapping which, in Europe, means "encore!". We gave them "Set Down, Servant," and concluded (or so we thought) with "A Mighty Fortress." We narced out and sort of dissolved into disarray as is our usual custom (for the purpose of greeting the people on the way out).

But the people didn't go out. They just kept clapping. In an unexpected departure from tradition, Coach waved us back up on stage. There was some frantic scrambling into line, and even so our lineup was somewhat different from usual. The crowd didn't mind, though (probably didn't notice), and enjoyed "Blessed Is He" anyway. So endeth day nine.

Thomas Beach & James Curt Bergwall
Wednesday, June 13, 1973. Vienne.

1983:

In May 1983, the MGC joined with the Israel Chamber Orchestra in a series of concerts around Israel, performing selections from Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 and Luigi Cherubini's Requiem in D Minor. In addition to their performance with the ICO, the Glee Club also performed their usual repertoire in concerts in Israel and throughout Europe. The Jerusalem Post described the concert as follows:

This is one of the most extraordinary choral ensembles ever to perform in Israel. These 45 young men – only 10 of whom are studying music at their university – are very disciplined, but not robots. Obviously, they enjoy singing, and produce rich and beautifully balanced vocal sound. Smooth chordal progressions, intonation of bell-like clarity, Latin, English, or Italian clearly enunciated, elastic tempi and marvelously shaded dynamics – all point to the brilliance of Clayton Halvorsen as educator and conductor. I've run out of superlatives. The choir sang sophisticated settings of some of the most beautiful spirituals. Nancy Hayden provided an energetic accompaniment at the piano. Nobody should miss Wheaton University's Men's Choir.





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!

Music Digitization Project

Music preservation has long been a priority of both Wheaton College and the Men's Glee Club. Musical recordings allow us to relive some of our favorite memories and reconnect with our most meaningful performances.

When my grandmother passed away in 2014, a CD of the Glee Club's 2013 Homecoming performance was still spinning in a player in her hospital room, playing favorites like Walk in Jerusalem and Precious Lord, Take My Hand.

In preparation for the Glee Club's 100th Anniversary, Old Man Brian Porick spent hundreds of hours converting records, cassettes, and data-tapes into digital formats to produce the album *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*, released in conjunction with the spring concert. Brian used every technology under the sun to preserve the earliest recordings in Glee Club history for future generations to enjoy.

Access to MGC recordings has been a challenging process. Recent clubbers have received CDs or digital files of their recordings, but there has never been a concerted effort to make recordings available to all Old Men in one searchable database; however, the Old Man Association is attempting just that.

The OMA has consolidated decades of digital files, intending to create a password-protected repository from which Old Men can stream old favorites and hear new tunes. A website through which Old Men can search for any MGC recording and listen to it immediately. We are finally at a stage where we can begin testing this new system and are looking for volunteers!

If you are interested in signing up to be a tester of this new MGC Archive, you can register at mgcarchive.org or by emailing us directly at mgc.alumni@my.wheaton.edu.

If you have recordings from your days in the Club, we would love to add them! Please reach out to us at mgc.alumni@my.wheaton.edu!

