

LONGWOOD CHORUS

The Newsletter

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Finding Community



Rehearsal in [Vanderbilt Hall](#)

Welcome all to the Longwood Chorus this Fall 2020 Season. It will certainly be unique. While so many of us will miss the opportunity to share space and song with one another in Vanderbilt, we are also deeply thankful and gladdened to make space for song in our lives. The members of this choir - medical professionals, researchers, and students alike - are pushed by challenging work and hours now more than ever, with fewer sources of levity and friendship. Our chorus hopes to be such a source this year, to the very best of our ability. Sharing music, laughter, work, and our lives. This newsletter hopes to be a conduit for the latter three. Every other week we will be adding profiles on a few members of our esteemed group and providing a space for announcements, updates, and connection. Read on and, if you feel inspired, reach out to friends - old and new.

- Dan Horgan, [Social Chair](#)

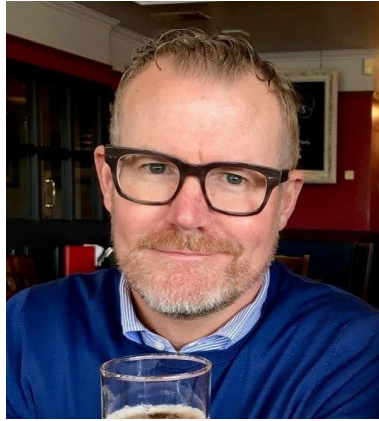
ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, & CONGRATULATIONS!

As it is our first edition we don't have anything to share here just yet. That's because this section will be written in large part by you choirites! Please email Dan (dnhorgn@gmail.com) with any updates, big plans, birthdays, occasions, reflections, or news etc. that you have to report either for yourself or on the behalf of another choir member. This space will function much like a public bulletin board and so the more notices the better! Start submitting!

THIS WEEK'S Featured Faces



Emma!



Steve!



Deb!

Emma Sydir

Third Year PhD Student in Biophysics, [Dana Farber/Harvard Medical School](#)

Where Is She From?

Emma grew up in San Jose, California and spent her earliest years in and around the Bay Area. Staying close to home, she went to UC Berkeley to study Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. She speaks very fondly of the community in Berkeley and considers it home. It was also where she got her start in research sciences! She has been in Boston for almost four years now as a graduate student.

What Does Her Lab Work Look Like?

As a third year, Emma spends a great deal of her time in the lab “pipetting and growing yeast,” in her own words. She is among very good company with many other students doing wet lab medical research in our choir. Her research focuses primarily on the nuclear

envelope, its maintenance, and repair. She hopes to carry her research work into a career, potentially in academia or industry.

How Did She Find The Choir?

Like many of us, Emma began her career as a singer and musician as a performative youngster. Thankfully her talent was channeled in high school by a choir and director that worked with some classic classical pieces, including Mozart's Requiem; very trusting in the high school talent. After continuing to sing with choirs through her time at Berkeley she was forced into a short hiatus by her move to grad school. Thankfully, she had a wise and kind labmate (former choir president Jiunn Song!) who recommended her to the Longwood Chorus. She's been with us ever since.

What Does Emma Do For Fun?

Emma is an avid skier, so much so that she only considered graduate school in Boston because it had some proximity to the sometimes snowy/sometimes icy mountains of New England. Off the mountain she is an active member of the Boston soccer scene and a baker. One of her most challenging projects resulted in individually and neatly packaged pistachio cardamom carrot cakes, gifted to her lab mates. Perhaps we will be so lucky to sample one someday.

Finally We Asked, What's One Of Your Favorite Songs?

The answer: [Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis](#)

Steve Barbour

Science Operations Manager, **Howard Hughes Medical Institute, BCH**

Where Is He From?

Steve was born in the rather unique community of Deer Isle, Maine. An island off the coast of Maine, south of Bangor, and of just a few thousand residents outside the summer season. Before long his familiar territory expanded down to the Mid-Atlantic when his family moved down to Baltimore, where he grew up. A Mainer at heart though he was drawn to back up to Waterville, ME to attend Colby College before again returning to Maryland to begin his career at Johns Hopkins. He first came to Boston as an MBA student at BU and ended up calling the city home. As a now longtime local, Steve has roots spanning much of the east coast; there are family back in Deer Isle, old friends in Baltimore, and us kind folks here in Boston.

What Is The Howard Hughes Medical Institute?

The HHMI plays a special role in the medical research community. Howard Hughes is at its core a resource allocator and manager for some of the best biomedical scientists in Boston and the world over. As an Operations Manager, Steve is in fact the manager of these

resources and their team of roughly twenty professors and lab heads working across the medical institutions of Boston. While shouldering quite the responsibility, Steve says he loves his work for the variety of projects he is able to involve himself in and the brilliant people around him everyday.

Where Did He Start Singing?

As is so common, Steve found his first chance to sing in a church which luckily had a fantastic emphasis on music. Steve was able to progress from youth to adult choir there and to chorale in high school. He then brought his vocal talents to Colby where he sang in a small jazz ensemble, in a capella, and again in chorale. After moving to Boston Steve sang with the Back Bay Chorale for many years before eventually finding the Longwood Chorus at the call of a poster on a lightpost in 2019. He has thankfully been with us ever since!

What Are Some Of His Hobbies?

Steve is a man of many interests and talents! Outside of the chorus he is very active, most enjoying exercise in the form of swimming and cycling; he has even biked a few supercenturies in his day. He is a lover of the culinary arts and greatly enjoys walking the restaurant dotted South End of Boston. Usually an avid traveller, slightly put off by the current circumstances, Sicily is next on his list to visit. To lessen the blow of our landlocked reality, Steve has been reading now more than ever and is loving it.

We Asked Again, What's One Of Your Favorite Songs?

His answer: [Sheep May Safely Graze In Pasture by J.S. Bach](#)

Deb Porter

Website and Information Systems Specialist, **Division of Medical Sciences - HMS**

Where Did Deb Get Her Start?

A true Bostonian, Deb originally hails from Dorchester before moving just a short distance to Sharon, MA. She stayed local for college, attending Southeastern Massachusetts University, now UMass Dartmouth. She went further afield in her early career of programming for industry, but found her way back home to work with Harvard. She's now been settled here for the last several years.

What Does She Do For Harvard Medical?

Deb is quite the wiz in many things coded and computational. So much so she is in charge of the maintenance of many of HMS' critical systems. These systems include many of their internal databases, the entirety of the HMS website which she both built and now maintains and new sites currently under development with OpenScholar. In addition to all of that she is the primary tech liaison for six PhD programs. Her expertise is well earned getting an early education in mathematics and code, then beginning her career as a

mainframe programmer to industry before eventually taking on web and database development for Harvard Business School.

Where Did She Start Singing?

Deb also found her way to choir through the church, beginning at a young age in a youth choir with her sister. She continued singing there and joined a madrigal choir in high school. She took a break from singing in college and for sometime after, but found her way back to it when she returned to Boston. Initially singing with her home church in Sharon, she eventually moved to the far closer First Baptist Church of Boston and then to the Old Cambridge Baptist Church where she is still a member today. She found us folks here in the Longwood Chorus after discovering a flyer right on the Medical School campus. She's been with us since the Spring of 2019 and we're still lucky to have her!

What Does Deb Do With Her Free Time?

Thankfully, her hobbies are rather pandemic friendly. Outside of music she very much enjoys knitting and literature. She is perhaps most a fan of the science fiction genre, mysteries, and some of the Stephen King classics. She might be about to pick up a copy of Dune in preparation for the upcoming film! Most recently she's thinking of taking up a bit of interior design, decorating her home with some handmade Norwegian crafts inspired by her heritage.

Her Favorite Song, You're Wondering?

A classic: [\(The Angels Wanna Wear My\) Red Shoes by Elvis Costello](#)

Board Member of the Week



President - Christopher Chen, PhD

Chris is a postdoctoral research fellow in the department of Neurobiology at HMS. His research program revolves around the many functions of the cerebellum, specifically how cerebellar dysfunction can cause anxiety and social disorders. He is fully funded by the NINDS, and will be starting his own lab soon.

Chris has been with the Chorus since Spring 2019 and has twice been elected president. He heads the Board and is often the conduit between all things. You may hear him speaking carefully and wistfully in the Zoom and you can always count on him to hear and maybe answer your questions! Chris is a student of the ukulele, a pioneer of Taco Tuesday and of course a brilliant neurobiologist.

I asked Chris a question I intend to ask to all of the board members as we move through this year, **what does the choir mean to you?** His response was kind and genuine, and reading it made me all the more thankful to be a part of this community. He answered the following:

“Growing up, music was a huge part of my life. My mother pursued graduate studies in piano performance, and I literally grew up listening to her students from my crib. As hard as she tried to tutor me though, I was an abysmally undisciplined piano player with little talent and even less skill.

I picked up singing much more readily. Starting from middle school, I was singing in at least 3 different choirs every season--your typical selection of school, community, and State-level groups. I even ran a small church choir for a time, along with a tiny acapella group, and ended up leading my high school chorus in my last year there. College was no different. I sang in every group I had time for: from Glee Club to acapella to the more traditional University Chorus under the direction of Dr. Steven Sametz. I think I was only a couple credits from officially adding music to my degree from singing-related credits alone.

I made the deliberate decision to stop music completely when I started my PhD. I simply didn't want to risk taking time away from research for "frivolous" pursuits like the arts. I lasted two years before I had to buy myself a ukulele, but aside from that and karaoke, music was absent from my life for the entirety of my PhD and the first years of my postdoc (almost 10 years).

Those first years of my postdoc were horrible, for many professional and many more personal reasons. I was taking an elevator down to my lab's animal facility when I noticed a flyer advertising a chorus whose aim was "to prevent burnout in medicine and science." It seemed resoundingly relevant. The tryout happened that day, and I remember it distinctly: it was the first time I had matched tones to a piano and done arpeggios in a decade. Never had I been so happy to do a sight-reading exercise.

Singing with the Longwood Chorus helped me get through a hard patch in my life. After my first season, I felt I should serve the group in some capacity, although I didn't imagine that it would be in the capacity that I'm serving now. Apparently, this was what was needed. I'm not the musician I once was (that breath control just doesn't come back), but I think I've accrued enough skills in other areas to be able to give back to this community in a useful way.”

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)