



Rogue Valley Chorale

— 25th —
Anniversary

1973-1998

Lynn Sjolund, Conductor

Twenty-five Years Remembered

Lynn Sjolund, *Conductor/Artistic Director*

Surely it can't be twenty-five years since the "founding mothers" made an official proposal visit to me about forming an adult choral group. The founding mothers, Judy Cushing, Karen Foster, Kathy Gordon, Leslie Hall, Mary Kay Harmon, Nancy Purdy and Laurie Widman, proposed the idea that southern Oregon singers needed an outlet for their talents. They suggested that auditions be held, a program selected and rehearsals begin in September. Though their purpose was a bit self-centered, they were eager to have a group in Medford that would allow experienced vocalists to continue singing music that would be challenging, inspiring and significant musically.

They asked if I would accept the responsibilities of conducting and programming if they would take care of all of the work of production. The answer, if I remember correctly, was a qualified "yes" dependent on the time and singers available and with the understanding that programming was to be my domain. All agreed and the process was started with auditions that found 47 singers. Eighteen of the original group are singing in the Chorale today. Also, a Board of Directors was formed and MarAbel Frohnmayer elected the first president.

Our first concert was held on November 15, 1973 at Medford High School. Signe Lusk was our first accompanist. Now Signe works as a coach/accompanist for Portland Opera. Included in the first program were the *Sancta Maria* of Mozart; *Komm Jesu, Komm* of Bach and the Respighi's *Laud To the Nativity*. Following intermission the Chorale sang a group of Morley madrigals, *Six Chansons* of Hindemith and *Three Gypsy Songs* of Brahms.

Since the first year the group has gradually grown with the largest number singing in the Christmas Concerts in 1997. Usually the Chorale has about 80 members. Our music library has become extensive and the original charge of the "founding mothers" has been achieved over and over. According to our programs over 500 singers have participated in the group for varying amounts of time.

At a planning retreat last June a new mission statement was drafted. It is the result of what has been successful in our history. It states:

"The Rogue Valley Chorale is a group of choral musicians that presents an annual series of concerts for audiences and performers. We strive for technical excellence, artistic integrity and to share with the community choral works of enduring value. We do this to preserve choral tradition, to foster musical growth and educational outreach, vocal improvement, and to share the excitement and joy of singing through choral music."

Without the excitement and joy we would have folded. Without the musical integrity and value we would have lost our best musicians. There have been highlights in almost every season. Some of the musical events that you may remember are:



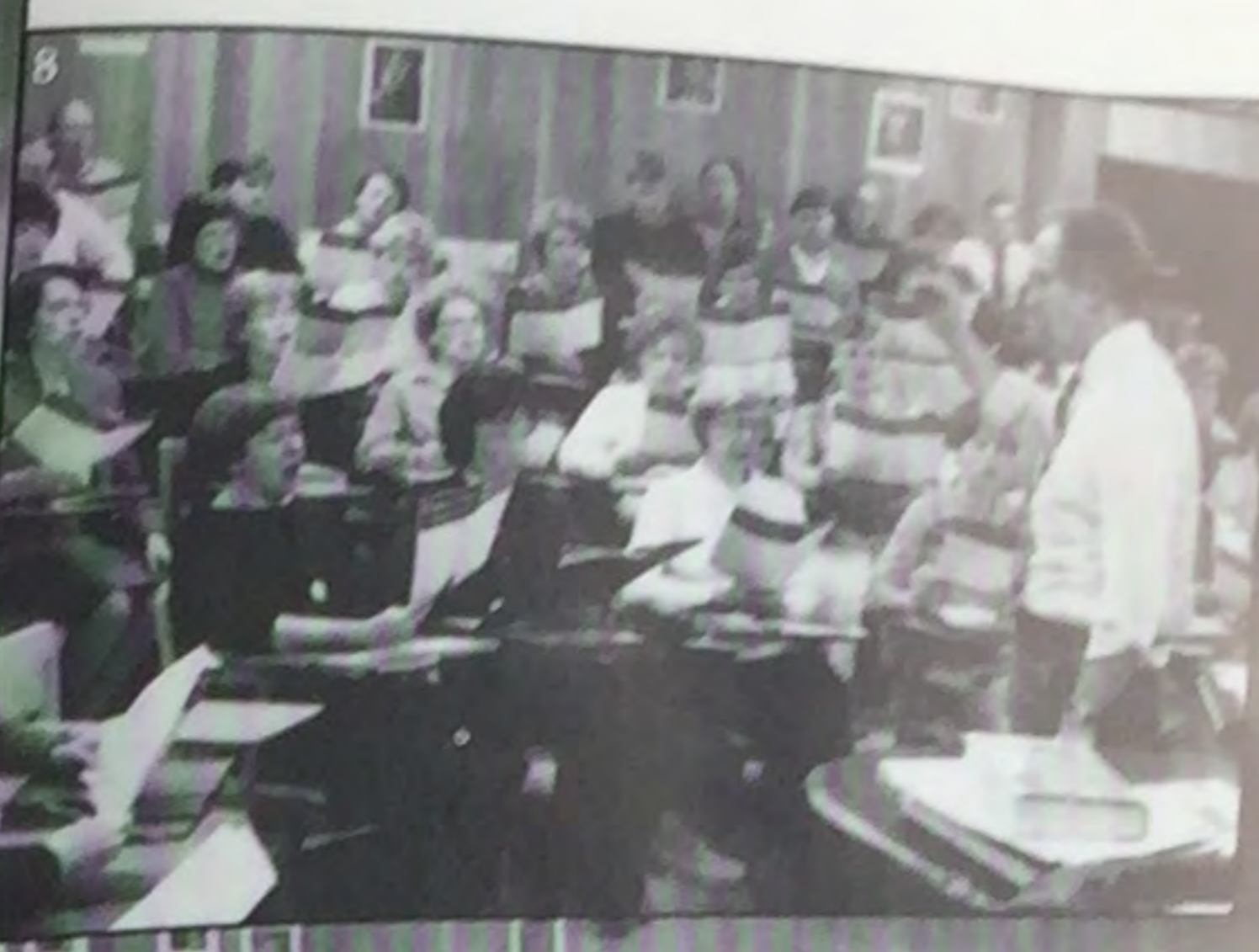
The Rogue Valley Chorale celebrates its Silver Anniversary on May 16 and 17. Shown here are the members singing with the Chorale who sang with the group when it was organized in 1973. Pictured left to right, Barbara Hewitt, Kathryn Gordon, Doris Sjolund, Kathleen Davis (seated), John Gilsdorf, Richard Swanson, Lynn Sjolund (conductor), John Leavens, Karen Foster, Gary Lovre, Carroll Graber, Ed Houck, Marjorie Swanson, Keith Campbell, Nancy Purdy. Not pictured: Mary Kay Harmon, Leslie Hall, Richard Frisbie, Ron Hollensted, and William Matthews.

WHO MAKES IT HAPPEN?

Volunteers, board members and enthusiastic audiences have been a vital part of the Chorale's existence. Trying to list all of our benefactors would be impossible without leaving out some very important contributors. However, over the years some have done more than could ever be expected. Certainly all those who served as President of the Board of Directors have put in countless hours of work, along with those who have acted as managers in seeing that we had risers and chairs and stands. Our loyal recording engineer has given us an audio history. The people who have worked on publicity, programs and special events are too numerous to name. Our loyal librarians have also been a tremendous help. And all those regular, loyal singers who have been a part of the group from one to twenty-five years. . . .

- 1974 Philip Frohnmayer appeared as a special guest soloist.
- 1975 Rosemary Wood, former Medford soprano, appeared as guest. Mozart's *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* was performed, too.
- 1976 The Chorale performed Haydn's *Missa Sancti Nicolai* with the Rogue Valley Symphony.
- 1976 As part of the Bi-Centennial Celebration the Chorale performed for several years as the historic "German Singing Club" as part of the Britt Festival's summer schedule.
- 1978 Part of Bloch's *Sacred Service* was performed with Greg Fowler, cantor. Helen Rifas, harpist, joined the women of the Chorale in the *Ceremony of Carols* of Benjamin Britten.
- 1979 Mozart's *Requiem* was performed with orchestra and soloists and *Carmina Burana* was performed for the first time.
- 1980 Fauré's *Requiem* was performed.
- 1981 The Chorale appeared in Portland at the Music Educators Conference held at Jantzen Beach.
- 1982 The Rogue Valley Children's Chorus appeared as guests in their first concert, Mira Frohnmayer appeared as soloist for Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody* and the Vaughan Williams *Magnificat*.
- 1983 Chorale celebrated ten years of music making with 70 singers in the group.
- 1984 Zimmermann's *Psalmkonzert* with the RV Children's Chorus was performed.
- 1985 Handel's 300th year was celebrated with the Chorale singing Part II of the *Messiah*. Bach's 300th birthday was celebrated as the Chorale performed the *B Minor Mass*, Soloists: The University of Oregon String Quartet, Ellen Frohnmayer, soprano; Mira Frohnmayer, mezzo-soprano; James Stanard, tenor; and Ellison Glatly, bass-baritone. Special musicians came from the Portland Opera Orchestra and from California.
- 1985 After a successful "Great American Picnic" in 1983 at the Hauptert residence, a second, larger event was held on the Britt grounds. Money was raised for the production of the Bach, *Mass in b Minor*.
- 1987 Palestrina's *Missa: Tu Es Petrus* for three choirs was performed. Lynn Sjolund took an extended leave while teaching at Loyola University in New Orleans. Russell Otte and Sean Warren continued the high quality programming with Rutter's *Requiem*, Haydn's *Heilig Messe*, and another performance of Orff's *Carmina Burana* as well as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the Rogue Valley Symphony.
- 1990 Chorale women joined the local Bar Association for *Trial by Jury*. They took the production to Seaside for the State Bar Association convention in 1991.
- 1991 James Brown made his first Medford appearance in Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* at South Medford High.
- 1992 Special performances with the new Schoenstein Pipe Organ at First Presbyterian were sung.
- 1993 First European tour to Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Another Britt performance with Marin Alsop conducting Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* happened after our return.
- 1994 "Let Freedom Sing" included DeCormier's *They Called Her Moses*. A Concert version of *Gondoliers* by Gilbert and Sullivan was appreciated at the Spring concert.
- 1995 "Chorale Lite:" *It's Show Time* appeared at North Medford. Our second European tour to Sweden and Norway included singing high "c's" on the high seas.
- 1996 Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with Chris Thompson, baritone, in the title role, was performed to three SRO houses.
- 1997 Bach's *Passion According to Saint John* was performed for the opening of the Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater to SRO. Special soloists included Clayton Brainerd from the Met, James Brown, Julliard Artist, Janet Campbell, San Francisco, Craig Kingsbury, Portland singer/composer and our own Susan Olson, soprano. The theater gave new life to downtown Medford and became the Chorale's new home.
- 1997 The world premier of the Christmas cantata *Visions* by Charles Cassey was featured along with Part I of Handel's *Messiah*.
- 1998 Philip Frohnmayer returned to sing the cantor's role in Bloch's *Sacred Service* in a moving, memorable performance. Also on the program was music from the Holocaust with special narrative by Don Dolan.
- 1998 Summer: The Chorale goes to Italy to sing and be ambassadors to Alba, Medford's Sister City.
- 1998 Season dates announced. Programs will be built around great works to finish this millennium.

Twenty present members of the Chorale are either music teachers or former music teachers. Many members participate regularly in church choirs and most sang in college or university choirs at some time.



1. "Trial by Jury," September, 1990
 2. Keith Campbell at rehearsal
 3. Sean Warren, Director, 1988-1990
 4. "Trial by Jury," September, 1990
 5. Chorale in the park
 6. Husband/Workers of the "Founding Mothers"
 7. Marge & Dick Swanson and Doris & Dick Sjolund dressed for German Singing Club, Summer, 1976

8. Rehearsal
 9. Rehearsal
 10. Concert, 1975
 11. Rogue Valley Chorale, 1975
 12. Rehearsal
 13. Judge Ross Davis sings *The Judge* in "Trial by Jury"
 14. Rehearsal
 15. Bad Goisern, Austria
 16. Rehearsal

Travel stories abound, but there are three or four that are especially memorable.

Bad Goisern is a beautiful little village in the Austrian Alps. It was there that we stopped to visit and sing a church service/concert in 1993. That evening a group of local musicians came to the hotel at which we were staying. There we sang for each other, danced folk dances and American line dances and generally had a fine time that turned into the "party that had no end". In the morning the whole town new about the American visit.

The second event on the same trip in 1993 was the visit to Veszprem, Hungary where the Chorale joined the local chorus to sing the Kodaly *Te Deum* with an orchestra from Budapest and soloists from the Budapest Opera and our own Susan Olson. After the concert we were given a fine formal reception by the city and then a street was closed off while we all danced Hungarian folk dances.



The Chorale in St. Giles Church in Prague in 1993.

For the Chorale's twenty-fifth anniversary trip is to northern Italy they will sing concerts near Lake Como, in Mestre (near Venice), in Ravenna, Florence and Medford's Sister City, Alba. Informal concerts are also being scheduled at various historic sites. On July 3 the concert in Alba will be held with an Alba choir in a new facility similar to the renovated Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater. On July 4th the group will be feted at a large civic dinner. There are about 60 singers in the traveling choir and the total traveling is about 75.

Mary Ann Campbell of the Mail Tribune Staff came up with some memorable moments as when she woke with a start with a cymbal crash at the *O Fortuna* of the *Carmina Burana* performance at the First Christian Church. Or when M.A.C. wrote about Doris Sjolund's beautiful trills in the Vaughan Williams *Mass in G minor*. Doris had no trills, nor did she sing any.

There are always problems with programs that seem to go unnoticed until they are printed. Many remember the title *Jesus Christ IN the Apple Tree*. And the fact that Intermission, according to the program, came after the *Sacred Service* and not before.

Leslie Hall, soprano and a past-president of the Chorale Board of Directors, writes: "Often when we sing a fine piece of music particularly well, I am overcome with emotion. I feel particularly proud of what we have offered the community over the past twenty-five years, and remember the personal joy it has give me to participate."

During its twenty-five years, the Chorale has received grants from: The Carpenter Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Oregon Arts Commission and the Oregon Community Foundation. Each of these organizations has helped make it possible for us to prosper and we are grateful.

Thanks for the Memories

(As sung at the 20th Anniversary Celebration)

Thanks for the memories---
The concerts Spring and Fall, the Summers out at
Britt--
The times we got new dresses 'cause the old no
longer fit---
Oh, thank you, so much.

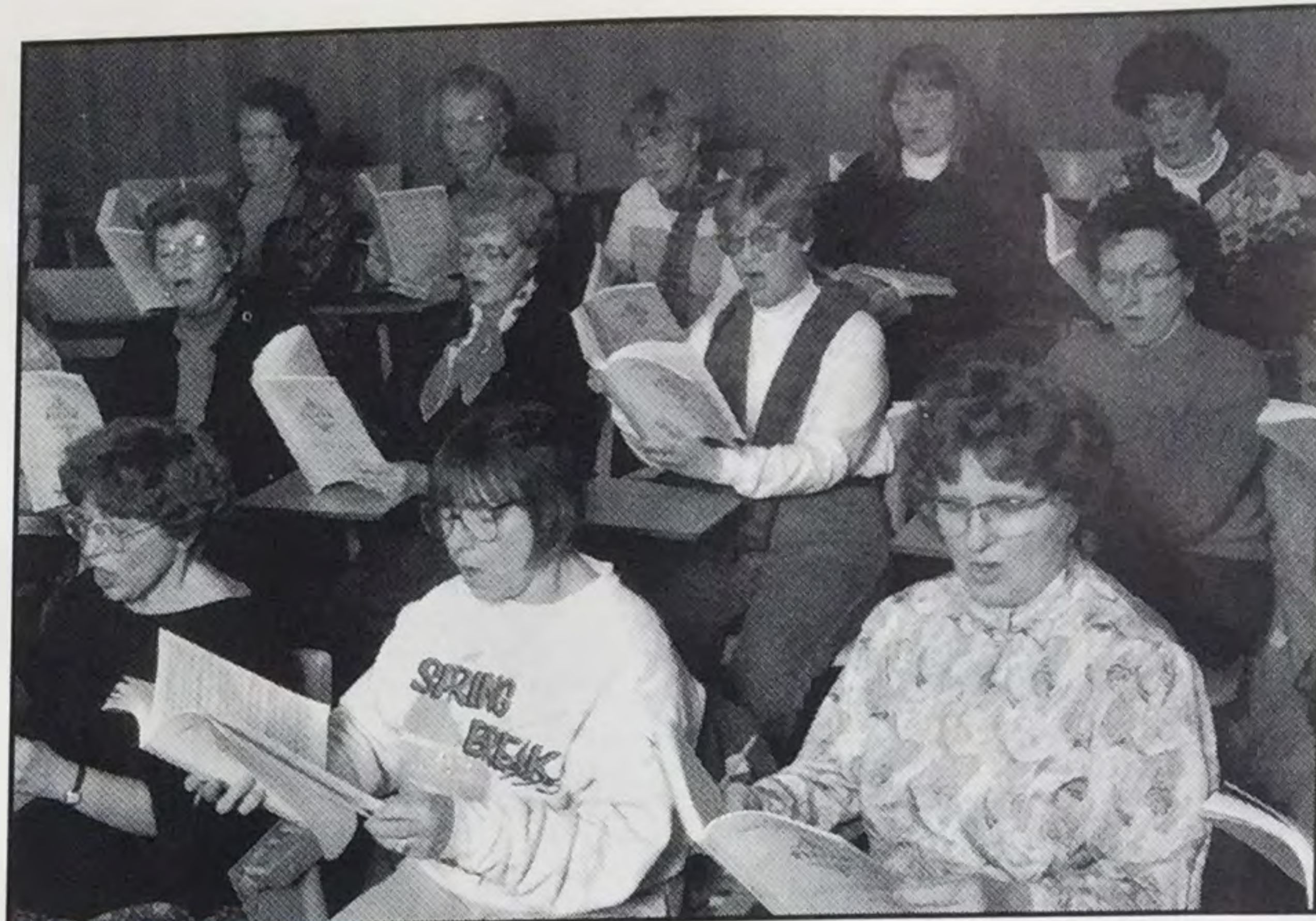
Thanks for the memories---
The basses going slow, the tenors way too fast--
The altos trying to hit high E, sopranos at full
blast---
Oh, thank you, so much.

Thanks for the memories---
The Bach, the Brahms and more --- the unpre-
pared encore---
The way we always learn our notes just as we take
the floor---
Oh, thank you, so much.

Thanks for the memories---
It's now been twenty years; it brings us all to
tears---
We'll try to sing another ten before you plug your
ears---
O, thank you, soooo much!!!

Authors: "The Committee"

Donna Daniels, alto, still remembers March 11, 1983. "I was new to Chorale and so were the green dresses with a sash at the waist. We were performing a Bach Cantata. During intermission I went to the ladies room and promptly dipped the sash in the commode. Fortunately it was a warm recital. The material dried quickly, but it was a sour note in my mind. The rest of the years have gone quite smoothly."



Alto section at rehearsal

Carroll Graber, a charter member, soloist and regular tour member, writes: "The worlds great choral masterpieces were meant to be shared with mankind, and I get to do that every Monday night. So, Monday nights I am back in school experiencing Bach, Brahms and a host of other composers—learning, growing. And, most of all, enjoying this wonderful gift with my friends."

David and Debra McFadden remember the basic rules for singing as delivered by Lynn: 1. When the notes go up, go up. 2. When the notes go down, go down. 3. Music should be beautiful. If you can't make a beautiful sound - - - DON'T SING. There will be other opportunities to sing beautifully. 4. When all else fails and the music is hard - - - let humor carry us all forward."

Gary Lovre, past president of the Britt Board and the RVC Board and longtime music teacher and consultant, remembers being stuck in the elevator in between floors of the Park Hotel in Prague. He says: "It wasn't very musical, but it certainly was unforgettable."

Ed Houck, another RVC Board President, regular recording technician, and charter member recalled the long, hot bus trip from Veszprém to Prague. Of special note was the fact that there were absolutely no rest stops until the women on the bus insisted on a break. The men headed for the corn field on the right and the women were anxious to get to the corn field on the left. The place was memorialized as "The Field of Streams".

Barbara Hewitt writes: "Bach's B Minor Mass, singing in 'in the round', James Brown singing Judas Maccabaeus and performing the Kodaly Te Deum in Veszprém where the conductor wept, were musical high points. During the 25 years of learning, refining and performing a vast array of unique as well as traditional works, I have been greatly enriched."

Joani Bristol, who served as RVC Board President says: "Singing with the Rogue Valley Chorale has been a great privilege. The opportunity to sing great music, to make new friends and to travel with the Chorale has been most rewarding. My association has greatly enriched my life."



Rogue Valley Chorale, 1992

Eric Smith, bass section leader and regular soloist, reminisces: "After singing with the Chorale for the last twelve years I realize how special these people are as friends and artistic supporters. The music in each varied program is always inspiring and fulfilling".

Anita Caster, another past-president of the Board of Directors and a regular alto soloist, says: "The people in Chorale are like family to me. I look forward to the fellowship each Monday night. The singing brings us together. . . but it's more than that."

Don and Janet Dolan, soprano and baritone/tenor tell us: "After singing with choral groups in L.A. for twenty years, we were delighted to find a top quality group here, the Rogue Valley Chorale. It made our move complete." Don was our narrator in the Jewish music program and in *Visions at Christmas*.

John Leavens, a bass who is always on the other end when there's work to do, remembers: "We were assigned to pick up a large barbeque at Southern Oregon University for the Great American Picnic. The only other person who was free to help was Keith Campbell. Keith is rather short and I'm 6'4". It seemed like I was always going downhill and poor Keith was always going up hill. When we moved them we also picked up about 150 chairs and 20 tables. All the work paid off, however, and the picnic was a huge success." He adds: "RVC has given me an opportunity to experience great music and great composers that I would not have been able otherwise to know. It has been a wonderful release every Monday night to get lost in the music."

Doris Sjolund, wife of the director and founding conductor of the Rogue Valley Children's Chorus, finished it all by saying: "Well, Lynn never got hooked on Monday night football".