

Sewanee Church Music Conference July 12–18, 2010

Jane Scharding Smedley

In its sixtieth year, the Sewanee Church Music Conference continues to offer a well-planned week of choral rehearsals, organ repertoire and anthem reading sessions, worship—and fun social events! Regular attendees know to reserve the second week of July for their annual pilgrimage to the ‘holy mountain’ in East Tennessee, home of the gathering since its founding in 1951. This year’s faculty presented a triple encore: **Malcolm Archer**, **Peter Conte**, and **Bishop Joe Burnett**.

One of the strengths of this conference is the sensitivity of its leadership to the needs and requests of participants as revealed in an annual survey, and the attention to detail shown by the board of directors. Choral repertoire for the two major liturgies—Friday Evensong and Sunday Eucharist—is carefully selected to provide teachable opportunities during the week, but also quality literature accessible to most choirs back home. This emphasis on quality as well as usefulness is apparent in the commissioned works. This year’s anthem, penned by Malcolm Archer himself, was premiered during the Sunday Eucharist at All Saints Chapel, University of the South at Sewanee. Using a text from Colossians, Archer’s setting of “We Give Thanks to God” was an excellent example of new music sought by this conference.

On the organ bench, Peter Conte displayed his phenomenal improvisational skills and fondness for transcriptions. Opening a solo recital with his arrangement of Arthur Sullivan’s overture to the *Yeomen of the Guard*, even more of his touch was shown in selections from Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*. The silent film *The Kid* allowed Conte ample opportunity to explore the tonal possibilities of the chapel’s Casavant—all to the delight of his audience.

Archer and Conte were a superb team leading the 150 singers through daily rehearsals of anthems by Stanford, Stainer, and Holst for Evensong and Eucharist, demonstrating techniques and sharing their expertise along the way. As chaplain, Bishop Burnett offered a profound look at the “liturgical logics of Rubrics,” using titles known to many organists via Dan Locklair’s suite. One of the strong points of the week is the integration of musical and liturgical issues. Bishop Burnett’s thoughtful words resonated deeply with his listeners.

The week also featured **Marty Wheeler Burnett** and **Mark Schweizer** in anthem reading sessions, **Bradley Almquist** in choral voice training techniques, and **Susan Rupert** in the ever-popular “Episcopal Basics.” Lois Fyfe’s music display was open around the clock for browsing. Numerous opportunities for interaction with the faculty exist—a strength of this conference. Rehearsals, lectures, worship, and fellowship were complemented by delicious meals prepared by the competent and friendly staff of the DuBose Conference Center. The annual formal banquet gave all a chance to dress up—then let their hair down at the hilarious “Frolic”!



Malcolm Archer and Peter Conte in rehearsal with attendees

Next year’s conference will include Dale Adelman and Todd Wilson, with the Reverend Barbara Cawthorne Crafton as chaplain. For more information: <www.sewaneeconf.com>.

Jane Scharding Smedley has served as organist-choirmaster at St. Peter Roman Catholic Church in Memphis, Tennessee since 1980. She earned bachelor’s (Rhodes College) and master’s (Wittenberg University) degrees in sacred music, and holds the Colleague and Choirmaster certificates from the American Guild of Organists. She currently serves as secretary of the Sewanee Church Music Conference board of directors.

Organmaster Shoes the right shoes on the pedals!

Oxford \$57.⁹⁹ plus postage

Mary Jane \$49.⁹⁹ plus postage

usually SHIPS within 24 HRS not including weekends

Whole & Half Sizes in 3 widths
1 1/4" Full Heel for pedaling
Suede Leather Soles

Call TOLL FREE: 1 (888) 773-0066
www.organmastershoes.com
44 Montague City Rd, Greenfield, MA 01301 USA

Scattered leaves ... from our Sketchbook

SCHOENSTEIN & CO.
Established in San Francisco • 1877
www.schoenstein.com * (707) 747-5858