

Sewanee Church Music Conference 2009

Jane Scharding Smedley



Conference attendees and faculty



Tom Foster rehearsing conference singers for Evensong

Since 1951, the Sewanee Church Music Conference has offered a rich musical and spiritual experience to musicians who serve primarily in Episcopal churches. Each July, approximately 150 organists, choirmasters, and choristers make their way to the DuBose Conference Center in Monteagle, Tennessee, to refresh their skills, learn new insights, and renew friendships with colleagues. A family-reunion atmosphere pervades the weeklong gathering, where first-time attendees are warmly welcomed by those who return every year to the "holy mountain."

Reverend James Turrell, from the School of Theology at the University of the South in nearby Sewanee, Tennessee, was conference chaplain. The parable of the steward who brings forth both old and new from the storeroom inspired his explorations of the liturgical renewal, inculturation of the liturgy, and the valuable role of musicians in bringing forth both old and new treasures from the storeroom of the Episcopal heritage.

Tom Foster and **Janette Fishell** served as the music faculty and were a superb team. They alternated as conductors and organists for the two major liturgies of the conference: Friday Evensong and Sunday Eucharist, both sung in All Saints' Chapel on the Sewanee campus. Along with Reverend Turrell, they provided leadership at the carefully planned daily Eucharists, an important part of the week for many.

Foster, well known for his work at All Saints', Beverly Hills, until retirement in 2003, last appeared at the conference in 1984. He has served as interim musician in various Episcopal parishes and is now Parish Musician at the Church of the Epiphany in Seattle. Janette Fishell, Professor of Organ at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, was making her first appearance at the confer-

ence. Dr. Fishell performed in recital on the Casavant in All Saints' Chapel, taking us on a musical tour of Prague, London, and Paris, through pieces by Petr Eben, Herbert Howells, and Widor.

Through choral rehearsals, workshops on psalmody, practice techniques, service playing, and an organ masterclass, Foster and Fishell brought forth both new approaches and affirmed older methods from their vast musical backgrounds. Worship repertoire included anthems by Richard Shepherd, Craig Phillips, Malcolm Boyle, and Phillip Wilby. Richard Webster's *Mass in Lydian Mode* was sung in the daily liturgies as well as on Sunday. The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis at Evensong were from David Hogan's *St. Alban's Service*. An *cappella* setting of Psalm 23 by former SCMC faculty Jeffrey Smith was particularly lovely. This year's commissioned work for organ, *Fanfare and Variations on "Merton"* by James Biery, was premiered by Dr. Fishell.

Choral reading sessions were presented by **Elizabeth Smith** (Lois Fyfe Music) and **Jane Scharding Smedley** (St. Peter Roman Catholic Church, Memphis). A detailed yet practical session on handbell techniques and repertoire was led by **Richard Moore** (St. Edward's Episcopal, Lawrenceville, Georgia). **Susan Rupert** (University of the South) offered sessions on "Episcopal Basics." **Keith Shafer** (St. Paul's Episcopal, Augusta, Georgia) shared organ repertoire based on hymn tunes. Music displays were provided by Lois Fyfe Music, St. James Music Press, Church Music Services, and Calvin Taylor.

The Conference Board of Directors places high importance on each year's offerings meeting the needs of those in attendance. Surveys are taken to guide the content of future programs and choice of faculty.



Tom Foster rehearsing conference singers; Robert Delcamp at the organ

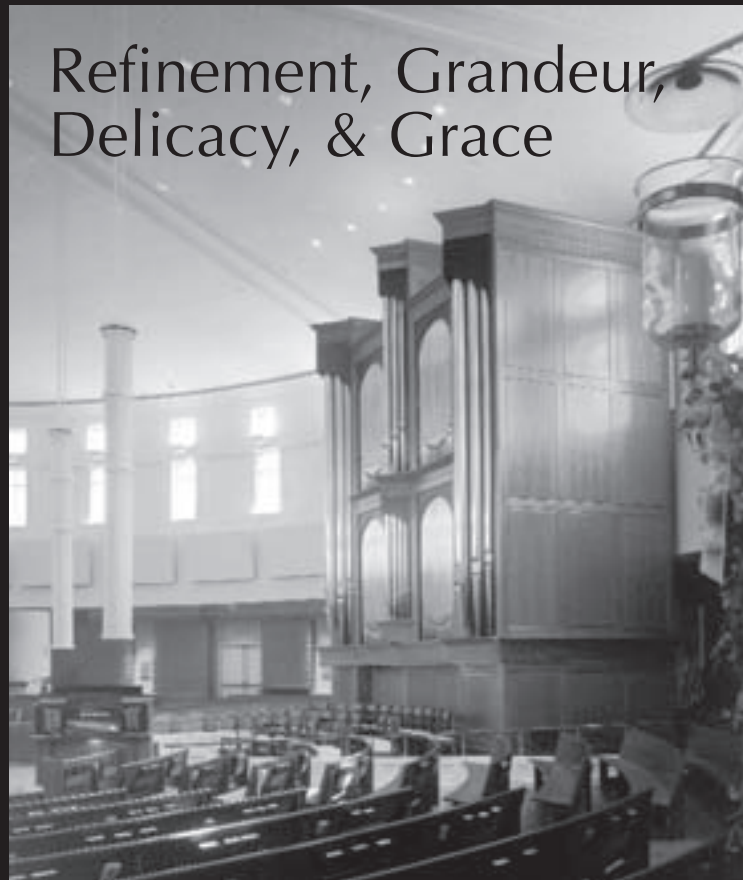
Delicious meals and comfortable accommodations are found at the DuBose Conference Center in scenic surroundings. Many comment favorably on the reasonable registration fee for a week filled with musical, educational and social events. The Sewanee Conference looks forward to its 60th anniversary in 2010, which will feature returning faculty Malcolm Archer (Winchester College, UK) and Peter Richard Conte (Wanamaker Organist, Philadelphia). Reverend Dr. Joe Burnett, Bishop of Nebraska, will return as chaplain. For more information on the Sewanee Church Music Conference, contact Dr. Robert Delcamp:

<rdelcamp@sewanee.edu> or Keith Shafer: <kshafer@saintpauls.org>.

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. Her teachers included David Ramsey, Tony Lee Garner, Frederick Jackisch, and Richard White. An attendee at the Sewanee Church Music Conference since 1979, she currently serves as secretary of the board of directors.

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