



A Great Connector

by Lisa Gibbs, Ed.D.

Show Choir Camps of America (SCA), a dream turned into reality for founders Dwight Jordan and Sue Moninger more than 40 years ago, is a week-long summer intensive with training in all areas of show choir. As stated on their website, www.showchoir-camps.com, their dream began with “what would it be like to be coached by the finest instructors in the country, to study with award-winning choreographers and choral directors with both educational and professional experience, and be exposed to vocal coaches who have worked not only in renowned choral programs but also with Broadway performers?”

What would it be like? Here's the basics. There are two weeks, one at Millikin University and one at Heidelberg University. There are two tracks, one for students ages 12–18 and one for teachers. The schedule includes auditions, daily workshops in industry related topics, rehearsals and performances. But what does a week at Show Choir Camps of America really look like? Dwight and Sue provide a deeper look.

Guest Artists

Rita Moreno was the headliner at the first camp Dwight and Sue organized. A scheduling issue resulted in Harry Chapin taking Moreno's place, and "he was such a wonderful person! He donated the money we paid him to world hunger. He came out just to be with the kids." Sue continues, "That's what we look for in our staff and educators, people who are amazing at what they do and they are great educators who care about the students. They are very passionate about lifting up the students, caring about them, working with the whole individual, head and heart and spirit."

For the 2023 camps, Tony Award winner Beth Leavel and Broadway conductor Phil Reno will

have a Q & A with the campers about their work on Broadway and then perform. According to Dwight, "there is a connection because the campers meet the star first in person, then get to see them perform." Twin brothers Brian and Scott Nicholson, dancers and choreographers for Ariana Grande, are also coming to SCA this summer. They will be teaching a dance class, presenting a Q&A and working with the dance ensemble. It is interesting that they were once SCA campers themselves.

Sue points out "we also bring in some very special people we think are pertinent for today's times. One of those people for this year is Jasmine Fripp, who is known as "the Passionate Black Educator". She will be teaching choral musicianship through hip hop - how to use hip hop in the classroom, what the messages are culturally, and how to create safe space for students who love and value genres outside the traditional Western European canon."

Sue continues, "last year we had Melanie Stapleton. She is transgender and she talked about the transgender student, how we address that whole issue at all levels. She was extremely helpful for our teachers and there were many questions."

Workshops

SCA has adapted over the years to stay current and provide students and teachers with all the tools they will need for show choir. As more choreographers



registered for the camps, the schedule was adjusted to also have sessions for them. Dwight explains “when vocal people are doing reading sessions on new music, I created things for the choreographers to do.”

Sue goes on to describe more about the camps. “We have reading sessions of the newest music, elementary through high school. We do a ‘tried and true’ session, which has things that have been proven in the past, things that are done at a lot of festivals. Especially for new teachers, they can hear things that have worked before, whether it’s two-part, three-part, eight-part music, plus the absolute latest trending music that is out there. Also, three or four costume companies come and set up a whole room full of everything you could imagine. One of the things

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the teachers say to me the first year they come is ‘Wow, this is so much more than a show choir camp. This is a camp where we get everything’.

Sue continues “we also present a technology workshop every year. This year Erin Small will show all the tools we can use on our devices and involve the students interactively. There are fun games, similar to Jeopardy for example, where they learn about musical elements, or other ones that help you learn to read music. The teachers will learn about the latest technology and can share things they are using that someone else may not know about.”

It’s Really About Community

Students and teachers from all over the country attend, representing 30 or more states and four countries in any given year. “One of the things they can learn in camp is about other students and teachers from other parts of the country,” Sue enthuses.

Dwight adds “the biggest thing about the camps is there is a community from what’s been created. These kids are making lifelong

friends. The teachers and choreographers love this week because they get a chance to be together. They develop a support group then work with each other all year long. If somebody needs something or has a problem, they have all these people they can call or post on our Facebook page and somebody comes to their aid. That’s been one of the greatest parts of this whole journey we have been on is the network of people that’s happened.”

Sue continues “the greatness of Instagram or Facebook is we hear so much from students who maybe start out as campers, become counselors, and then go on to do their thing, but they still all keep in touch and remember the great times and the friends they met. Like Dwight said, they become lifelong friends. I feel like some of the weddings we go to are a reunion!”

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What is the last day like? Sue expresses “at the very end they wonder ‘how do we say goodbye?’ They have really had a chance to bond and make new friends, which is great. I feel like in some ways it’s been a great connector for people around the country.”

Where and When

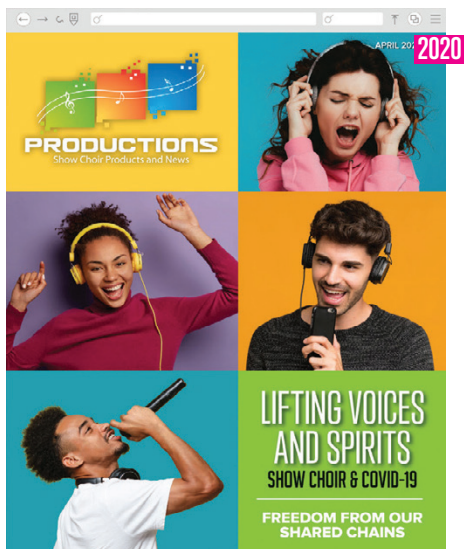
This year, the first camp is at Millikin University in Illinois from June 18 - 24 and the second is at Heidelberg University in Ohio from July 9 - 15. Millikin University holds a special place in the hearts of Dwight and Sue - they are both graduates and hosted the first SCA camp there. They are excited that there is a new state of the art facility at Millikin, the Center for Theatre and Dance. For teachers, Heidelberg University offers teachers education credits no matter which camp a teacher attends. The university also offers credits to those pursuing graduate degrees.

SCA still has space so register now at www.showchoircamps.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Productions* staff writer Lisa Gibbs earned her Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration in 2018. She is an advocate for arts, particularly dance, in education and for increasing the financial well-being of artists through financial education.

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