

“It has always been a great joy for me to work with the Children’s Choir of Fiesole and I remember vividly our collaborations – may it be *Moses and Aaron* by Schoenberg, *Tosca*, *Wozzeck* and *Frau Ohne Schatten* or the 3rd Symphony of Gustav Mahler. I congratulate Prof. Joan Yakkey on her wonderful work with the children, and the children on their great musical achievements!”

ZUBIN MEHTA

*Chief Conductor, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino,
Florence, Italy*

Music Director, Los Angeles Philharmonic

Music Director, New York Philharmonic

Music Director, Israel Philharmonic

Music Director, Montreal Symphony

“Joan Yakkey has inspired a generation of students to learn and love music. I spent time with her on several occasions in Tuscany, her home territory. She is a consummate musician and has clearly been a wonderful mentor and inspiration to generations of young Italian singers.

At our first meeting, I had the challenge of “teaching” her how to conduct a madrigal by Cypriano de Rore about whose music she knew more than I! In the end we shared ideas and I was immensely impressed by her sense of style and the depth of her knowledge and understanding of Italian Renaissance music.

I have subsequently seen a number of her editions of Renaissance and Baroque music, specially written for

her young choirs and have admired her practical and enthusiastic approach to the encouragement of young singers and her determination to help them experience all styles and periods.

Dear Joan is a champion in many more senses than one. We all owe her a debt of gratitude for everything she has given the musical community during her long and active life.”

SIMON CARRINGTON

*Professor Emeritus, Yale University
Co-Founder, The King's Singers*

“My mother has a tremendous legacy in the thousands of students she has taught for over 40 years in Florence. She has created many famous musicians who credit her, Joan Yakkey, with much of their success. I think what is most unique about my mother’s teaching is that it makes music fun for children and, at the same time, entices them to learn and progress faster and at a higher level than most other methods – including Kodaly and Orff. Her method is the imagination of a child.

I am not sure if or when my mother will become famous beyond Florence where she has been revered for many years. I think that the world hasn’t completely discovered her and her method – it is so simple that people don’t believe that it actually teaches complex musical thought. However, those who have used her method know of its incredible value. These individuals are all very strong musicians and teachers who have

deep knowledge of the young mind and how the learning process develops. You need geniuses to understand that something simple produces the best results that remain with you for your whole life.”

ELENA PIERINI

Choral Director, Landestheater, Linz, Austria
Choral Director and Kapellmeister,
Theater of Aachen, Germany
Choral Director, Giglio Opera Theater, Lucca, Italy
Choral Director and Kapellmeister,
Theater of Nordhausen, Germany

“My experience in the choir of the Fiesole Music School under the guidance of Joan Yakkey is one of the most beautiful memories of my childhood and adolescence and one of the most influential experiences for my career.”

ANTONIO GIOVANNI

Countertenor

“I find all of these songs, the people singing, and their Maestra Joan Yakkey just deliciously filling up my soul with delicate arranging... When you listen, the music is so radically charming that you can sink into it happily for the half hour it plays.”

CANARY BURTON

Pianist, composer, writer, ASCAP Plus Award Winner

“I owe my technique and love of music to Joan.”

KATJA DE SARLO

Mezzo Soprano, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino

Joan Yafkey

Her Children's Choir Legacy
in Florence, Italy

ANN C. GAUDINO, ED.D.

Joan Yakkey: Her Children's Choir Legacy in Florence, Italy

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AUTHOR'S NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout this book, I have attempted to provide a vivid description and account of the life events, methods, performances, and music of Professor Joan Yakkey and The Children's Choirs of the Music School of Fiesole and The Luigi Cherubini Music Conservatory of Florence, Italy. All are at the heart of encouraging children's music education and choirs, developing outstanding adult musicians, and continuing the tradition of music especially in Florence, but even more broadly throughout Italy.

The contributions of Professor Yakkey and these music schools are significant. For centuries, Italy had a rich tradition of music and music training. However, in more recent times, music education opportunities declined, especially in schools. Over the past 50 years, Professor Yakkey's choirs and classes at these music schools filled the void by offering scaffolded programs of increasing complexity for children through young adults. Ultimately, this effort has resulted in the production of high quality musicians and performances that have continued the rich music tradition of Italy.

I would like to extend thanks to the many people whose support and contributions made this book possible:

For my family: Dave, Bill, Mom and Dad, for your support.

For Joan Yakkey, the administration and faculty at the Music Conservatory in Florence, Italy, and the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole for allowing me many opportunities to teach in their schools, and their support for writing this book.

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With admiration for Professor Joan Yakkey and the magnificent choral music programs that she has led for over 40 years.

ANN C. GAUDINO, Ed.D.

Associate Professor, Millersville University,

Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Founder and Editor-in-Chief,

The Excellence in Education Journal

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CHAPTER 1

THE EARLY YEARS

Joan Yakkey was born on October 18, 1942, in Flushing, Queens, New York City, to Aida Caruso and Harold Yakkey. Her mother was of Sicilian/Neapolitan heritage and her father was of German/Swiss descent. Joan is the great granddaughter of Filadelfio Caruso, who immigrated from Sicily and founded the first Italian-American newspaper in New York City called “Il Popolo” (The People). This combination of heritage had an early influence on young Joan who loved music, puzzles, and composing which she thought of as putting together musical puzzles by writing notes and rhythms together.

When Joan was a baby, her father was drafted into the United States Army during World War II and was stationed in northern Europe. He was a driver for higher ranking military officials. After the war, he continued by driving trucks in New York City. Joan’s mother worked as a secretary, then as a payroll secretary and notary public. While her husband was away at war, Aida Caruso Yakkey moved from Flushing to Woodside to live with her family who would help to care for baby Joanie. The family was very poor and

THE EARLY YEARS

Joan recalls her mother trading food coupons for milk. “We lived with that World War II history. The men didn’t complain. After the war, they went back to work, but they also had work to go back to.”

Joan’s earliest memories of her father were of his natural ability with language and music. “My father had a great ear. He could pick up any language. If I got any musicality, it was from him. He could hear a melody and sing it, play it, remember it. He could sit and play any instrument almost instantly.” Although her parents were not formal musicians, they had a long heritage of detail-oriented work. “I remember my father, being part Swiss, could take a watch apart and put it back together.”



Figure 1: Joan and father, 1944

Her mother's family loved opera. How could they not with her mother's given name, Aida, and her Aunt Carmen! Opera was forever playing in the home – all the great performances of the Metropolitan Opera. Every Saturday, Joan would listen to it. "I listened to opera my entire youth and I came to know and love the melodies." Many were composed by famous Italian composers like Verdi and Puccini which resonated with Joan's family heritage.

Joan grew up proud of her Sicilian heritage. She was told that it was an advantage to be Sicilian because Sicilians have genes from people around the world who conquered, traveled and immigrated there. Her mother's family viewed this as a great asset, believing that it developed high levels of thinking. Yet, with this Mediterranean joy also came some regret for, in those days in New York City, to be Sicilian was to be a minority. Being an only child also presented challenges. So, Joan quickly learned to entertain herself... and even the neighbor children.

The apartment in Woodside had a roller-piano that Joan could play while watching the hammers hit the strings when the wooden sliding panel behind the music stand was opened. Joan was fascinated with the inner workings of the piano and her mother started explaining and teaching her, but "it was as if I knew how everything fit together already. I knew the black notes and the white notes. I just looked at the music and played it. I figured it out myself," said Joan. And so, for hours, this little grey-eyed, blonde-braided, German-Sicilian only child would sit and contemplate

THE EARLY YEARS

the piano—its strings, hammers, sounds, and pedals—and she would make up little tunes, always trying to play a phrase or two from the beautiful Italian operas and songs that she had heard many times on the radio.

Joan's mother recognized this innate musical talent and scraped together money to send her for piano lessons at age four with Mrs. Danek, a Slovakian immigrant, who encouraged the creativity and began teaching Joan the basics of the lines and spaces and where the notes were located on the keyboard. This was all fascinating to Joan – like a giant musical puzzle made just for her to figure out!

In this way, Joan passed her earliest time at home, always singing, playing from her piano albums and trying out new musical ideas. On hot summer days in New York, with windows wide open, Joan would play whatever came to mind, and neighbors became accustomed to the familiar sounds from the little girl in Flat 1B. Eventually, they carefully followed the sounds to the Yakkey flat, not because they were dismayed, but because their children wanted to be part of the music, too! And so, by age six, Joan was 'promoted' to the grand role of ensemble director of the neighborhood four to seven year olds. Joan was at the piano and the others played whatever they could get their hands on that made sound... an old musical instrument, pots and pans, a washboard, etc. Together, they made a glorious noise!



Figure 2: Joan and childhood friends practicing in the Woodside apartment, 1948. Joan is seated at the piano with hair in braids

It was in these earliest years that Joan felt herself drawn to music, playing the piano, composing, and directing. She loved every minute and couldn't get enough of any of it. Fortunately, the other children felt likewise and so there were many hours of merry music-making for the children while the parents convened in the Yakkey kitchen for coffee and conversation.

Joan's musical aptitude continued to blossom and, by the time she was seven years old, Joan was teaching piano. "I had about 20 kids over the years in the apartment and I was teaching them piano lessons. All the families wanted their children to play piano, so I began teaching many of them. We would have little recitals."

Her days were temporarily interrupted when she began attending school, but the Woodside Public School

THE EARLY YEARS

burned down when Joan was in second grade and school stopped; many children were sent home for a year until a new school could be built, while many were transferred to nearby schools in other districts. Families that were able schooled their children at home. Aida Caruso took advantage of this time to teach Joan the basics of reading and writing, but also skills like cooking, knitting, and coloring. Of course, this time away from school really didn't feel like a loss to Joan because she now "had more time for her music!"

Joan was able to attend school again at age eight. There were 75 children in her first and second grade classroom, most of whom were immigrants. They had no homework because there were too many children and many did not know the English language, but Joan's mother continued working with her at home and also scraped together the money needed for private music lessons.

In Public School 11 (PS 11) in Woodside, Joan went for violin lessons with the school's music teacher in the morning and also continued studying piano privately with Mrs. Danek. She was not a strict teacher, though. She often would be cooking during lessons and out of the room, leaving Joan to invent many accompaniments where she could not reach the notes with her small hands.

Joan started writing her own music. "I just liked it. I loved puzzles. I would get up in the morning before school just to do all my puzzles on the floor and I often wrote music in my notebook. Writing music was like putting together a puzzle." Her mother was very

attuned to this and provided puzzles for Joan to do in the mornings before school and made sure that she had ample time at the piano, to put together “her” musical puzzles as well. The puzzles had names and the musical tones and rhythms often represented things like animals, buildings, and the noises of New York City. Joan would picture these things in her mind then set out at the piano to make a new musical puzzle that represented what these things would be if they were music.

At times, she would write the puzzles down on paper. She knew from Mrs. Danek about lines and spaces and how when the music sounds higher, the notes go up on the staff, and when it sounds lower the notes go down. She also knew that there were different lengths of notes like whole notes which were long and eighth notes which were short. So, Joan drew out her staves, and decorated them with the notes, the sounds, and pictures of whatever her music represented – not knowing that someday this experimentation would be the very basis of her *Il Segno e Suono* (The Sign and Sound), a method she would later develop in Florence, Italy, for teaching music reading and writing to her students.

She began teaching many neighborhood children in Woodside how to read music, often using her own creations and score. They learned much by rote, and also developed memories of the music well enough that the Yakkey flat soon became the concert venue for little recitals the local children would do for their families and anyone else who would listen.

THE EARLY YEARS

At age nine, a local pastor heard of Joan's interest in music and the piano and decided to foster her God-given talent. She was given the keys to the nearby Baptist church. Joan would spend hours studying a "new" instrument, the organ, on her own. It presented some challenges with multiple manuals (keyboards), stops with different sounds, and a large pedalboard which she could barely reach to play with her feet. All in all, the organ was a new "puzzle" for Joan to discover and figure out how music could be constructed on the instrument.

She was soon invited to sing in the choir – "all the adults, and little Joanie Yakkey. I loved it!" exclaimed Joan. Joan took it all in, from the Bible stories to the sermons, to the music, to the Sunday meals. It was a great place for her to learn and grow.

At the end of primary school, Joan attended public junior high school in Sunnyside, but only stayed two years. Her involvement in music continued to grow. "I played all the time... I played for all their assemblies. So the teachers suggested I audition for the High School of Music and Art in New York City."

After a grueling three days of auditions on piano and violin and ear training exams, Joan was admitted. "They weren't interested so much in what you already knew. It was how a student learned and thought. They looked for musicality and capacity to learn music." Over the three days of auditions, the teachers would give lessons and see how the students responded and how quickly they learned. Joan was admitted to study piano, violin, and composition!

CHAPTER 2

FORMAL STUDIES: THE HIGH SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND ART AND QUEENS COLLEGE

Going to the High School of Music and Art in New York City was a turning point in Joan's musical life which, up until then had consisted of independent study, playing, singing, composing, and directing. Here she would soon see the magnitude of her talents and that her talent was ripe for nourishment from the accomplished musical faculty.

Perhaps one of the truest signs of her love and commitment to music was evident in her daily commutes to and from the High School of Music and Art. She traveled by five trains for one and a half hours to get to school and the same to go home. But Joan never felt afraid or lost or even bored. Along the way, she met up with several other students and they traveled parts of their journey to and from school together – always singing and writing music as they went. “It was our time to study. We did solfège and sight singing on the trains... the whole train had a concert every day!”

Once at school, Joan had weekly piano and violin classes as well as private composition lessons. Other

FORMAL STUDIES

classes included music theory, music history, French language, and typical American high school classes like English, history, math and sciences. Joan clearly remembers a chemistry professor coming in very excited the day that DNA had just been discovered!

The music instruction at the High School of Music and Art was primarily based on a European conservatory model as the vast majority of the professors were from Europe or were first-generation Americans. There were many Germans and eastern European Jews and, naturally, Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland were frequent visiting artists. The student body was equally diverse with about half the students being African-American, a quarter being Jewish, and many first-generation Americans. The school was a virtual melting pot of cultures and music.

Joan was young, but she immediately connected with the diversity of the student body and faculty, and the magnitude of talent and ideas shared by Bernstein, Copland, and others. Although at that time the High School of Music and Art was not yet famous, Joan somehow knew it was history in the making and that it was the right place for her to be, learn, and grow.

The High School had several orchestras, graded in levels according to performance and study experience. Joan studied the violin in a group class and participated in orchestra rehearsals on a daily basis for four years, progressing from one level to the next. She had excellent teachers and conductors who offered the best in procedures and content for a continuous learning experience. Needless to say, these musicians

had a great effect on Joan's development as a teacher, conductor, performer and composer.

There were many new cultural experiences for Joan as well. Joan had her first African-American friends and she remembers being surprised at first that they were so musical, yet later learning how many had grown up singing the spirituals of their slave ancestors. The teachers, many of whom were Germans and European Jews, had numbers tattooed on their arms from the concentration camps. They spoke multiple languages, while Joan knew only English. Many of the students were more wealthy, had traveled the world, and also spoke various languages. They would head to Juilliard after high school because their parents could afford to send them there. But there were also poor students, and for them the High School of Music and Art was a haven where they could grow as artists and escape poverty. It was here that Joan says, "I discovered my self-worth," and she realized her talent, determination, and potential in music.

Joan also realized that she was, for the first time in her life, in the company of students who were multi-talented musicians. She fondly recalls Allen Gross, another student, who was fascinated by the scores of Gustav Mahler (whose music was greatly ignored during the war, but brought back into vogue afterwards by Bernstein). During study hall, Allen would study the scores, humming and conducting. "I would sit and watch him... he was devouring this Mahler symphony." Joan had never been around other students with such talent and interest and she took it all in.

FORMAL STUDIES

Joan had always studied piano privately; first with Mrs. Danek from Czechoslovakia, then with a mother and son in Woodside who had immigrated from France. From age 10 to 18 she studied with Nikolai Stember from the St. Petersburg Music Conservatory in Russia. Joan had found his name in the local phone book, an address in Sunnyside, near an aunt and near her Junior High School. Little did she realize at first what an imaginative teacher he was, telling tales to explain musical form and various themes!

Maestro Stember had the most formative influence on Joan's piano technique, taking into account the full body's sound creation and not just the finger movement. He barely spoke English, but Joan understood his intent from just watching him pedal and imitating his touch on the keyboard. He always listened well to what he was playing, and scrupulously wrote in the pedaling.

During her college years, Joan studied with the Behre Piano Associates (now located in Vermont). This was an interesting new point of view where the fingers barely move at all on the keyboard and the shoulders and arms control the hand movements. Joan noticed that the piano techniques of the Western European countries had basically inherited organ and harpsichord methods that are very finger dependent, and people needed to study constantly, whereas the Eastern European and Russian piano keyboard technique was sonorous and relaxed. It considered the whole body in motion; a pianist could not easily forget

her music since the body movement is wider and offers more sensations to the brain.

Joan graduated from the High School of Music and Art in 1960 and continued her music studies, enrolling at Queens College where she double majored in piano and composition. At Queens, for \$10 tuition per semester, Joan studied counterpoint and composition with top-notch musicians like Leo Kraft (1922-2014) and Hugo Weisgall (1912-1997), and she also played violin in the orchestra and sang in the choir with the conductor John Castellini (1906-2002). Many of these same professors also taught at the famous Juilliard School, but Juilliard was very expensive and Joan was able to get the same music instruction for much less cost at Queens College.

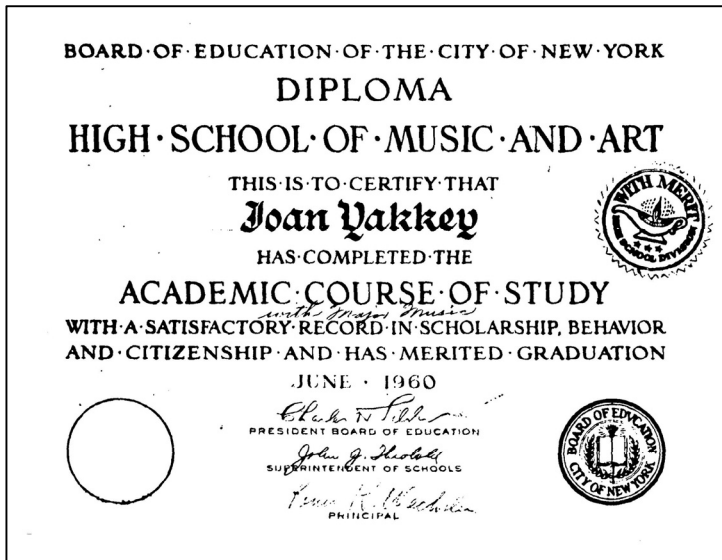


Figure 3: Joan's diploma from the High School of Music and Art, New York City, 1960

It was at Queens that Joan learned much from these professors and also, for the first time, really appreciated the magnitude of her musical gift. “The first day, I remember other students in class couldn’t sight sing. I was 18 years old and, in thinking back on that day, I realize I was basically shocked that many of my sophisticated classmates were having difficulty hearing and singing the simplest exercises. I really had no idea of their difficulties. I quickly decided to talk to the professor and I offered to sing the last page of the courses. I did it!” With that, Joan was exempt from the courses. It was then that she realized she had perfect pitch while most others didn’t. “Many students at the Music and Art High School had perfect pitch. It was the norm. But it wasn’t until I went to Queens [College] that I woke up and realized that not everyone had this gift or my natural ability for understanding music. I could analyze music because I had always written it and other [students] couldn’t.” The professors allowed Joan to be exempt from several courses due to her natural ability which already surpassed that of her trained peers.

Joan composed many pieces upon request that were performed by both faculty and student groups: a string quartet, incidental music to the drama *The Snow Queen*, various choral pieces, songs for piano and voice, and children’s piano pieces. She also accompanied singers and instrumentalists on a weekly basis, and learned how to interpret music quickly at a glance. Essentially, she was reading music in a manner that was to later transform into her method – focusing

on the shape and direction of groups of notes that actually could be played in any key. She continued to develop her ear and a knowledge of scales and chords that enabled her to adjust her hands on a piano and transpose music whenever needed.

While at Queens College, Joan was awarded several prizes and scholarships and performed in the college orchestra, chorus and Madrigal Choral Ensemble. Her ability to both compose and accompany led to opportunities for her to accompany many singers and instrumentalists who were performing her original works. One of the most memorable collaborations was with the young flutist Paul Dunkel (1943-2018) who Joan knew from the High School of Music and Art. Paul later became Conductor, then Professor, at The New England Conservatory and Eastman School of Music, and was also Music Director of the Westchester Philharmonic.

Like many young, highly capable, American music students, Joan was encouraged to travel to Les Écoles d'Art Américaines in Fontainebleau, France, where she studied composition, harmony, and choral music with the famous Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger in the summer of 1963. It was a unique experience to listen to the French language all day long and also study music.

Joan's most vivid memory was attending the first solfège class in which Mlle. Boulanger required students to speak the syllables in rhythm before trying to sight sing the music. This was an elementary step that was quite foreign to Joan – she had already developed great proficiency at instantly singing new

FORMAL STUDIES

music. So, she instinctively did not speak the syllables in front of everyone in class, but instead sang the music at sight perfectly. Mlle. Boulanger was appalled and immediately screamed, “Il faut parler!” (It is necessary to speak [the solfège syllables]). Joan was unsure of what was required and so humiliated that she never went back to class!

Joan applied for Boulanger’s madrigal choir. Boulanger immediately noted that Joan had not been in class (and doubted that she could sing), then auditioned her, and complimented Joan for sight singing... and let her in! Boulanger reassessed her negative impression of Joan’s abilities to advance her to the ensembles. But, on musical taste, they continued to differ. “I showed her what I had composed and she didn’t like any of it!” said Joan. So, Joan continued to sing in the madrigal choir and ignore the rest of her studies until she got back to Queens to study with Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975), a visiting professor of composition from Florence, Italy. It was choral director John Castellini and Luigi Dallapiccola who inspired Joan to want to someday visit Italy and absorb the Italian musicality.

At Queens College, her compositions for all instruments and ensembles were increasingly performed and recognized. In 1964 Joan performed her own *Passacaglia 1964 for Piano* at Carnegie Recital Hall with the Behre Piano Associates. In March 1965, Joan was awarded the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship toward graduate studies and she graduated

JOAN YAKKEY

in 1965 from Queens College with a B.A. in musical composition.

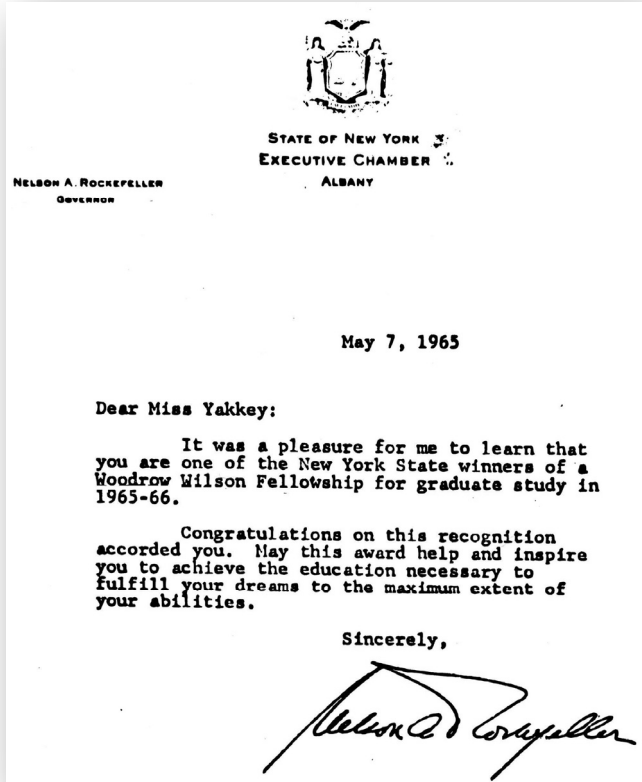


Figure 4: Letter from Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, New York, congratulating Joan on her Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, 1965

Joan also received a prestigious award letter from Saul Novack (1918-1998), Dean of Arts and Humanities and Professor Emeritus at the Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College:

FORMAL STUDIES

May 17, 1965

Dear Joan,

I am happy to inform you that you have been granted the Karol Rathaus Memorial Prize which is given to that graduate student who shows herself to be an outstanding musician, in your case with particular excellence in the field of composition. This is the most important prize in the eyes of the Music Department, and carries with it the amount of \$100. You have also been granted the Lincoln J. Reisman Music Scholarship for the most promising student planning to pursue graduate studies in music; this award carries with it the amount of \$100. You will be pleased to know, as well, that you have received departmental honors as a reflection of your general college average and departmental average. I am inviting your parents to attend the annual Honors and Awards ceremony following the Student Composers program on Friday, May 28th.

Saul Novack

Joan had the summer off and decided to sightsee and tour Europe including France, Germany and Italy. It was the visit to Italy that made an indelible mark on her mind and heart as she saw the great works of art that were a visualization of the music of many centuries which she had grown to love. She realized that, at some point, she had to get back to Italy to study music.

JOAN YAKKEY

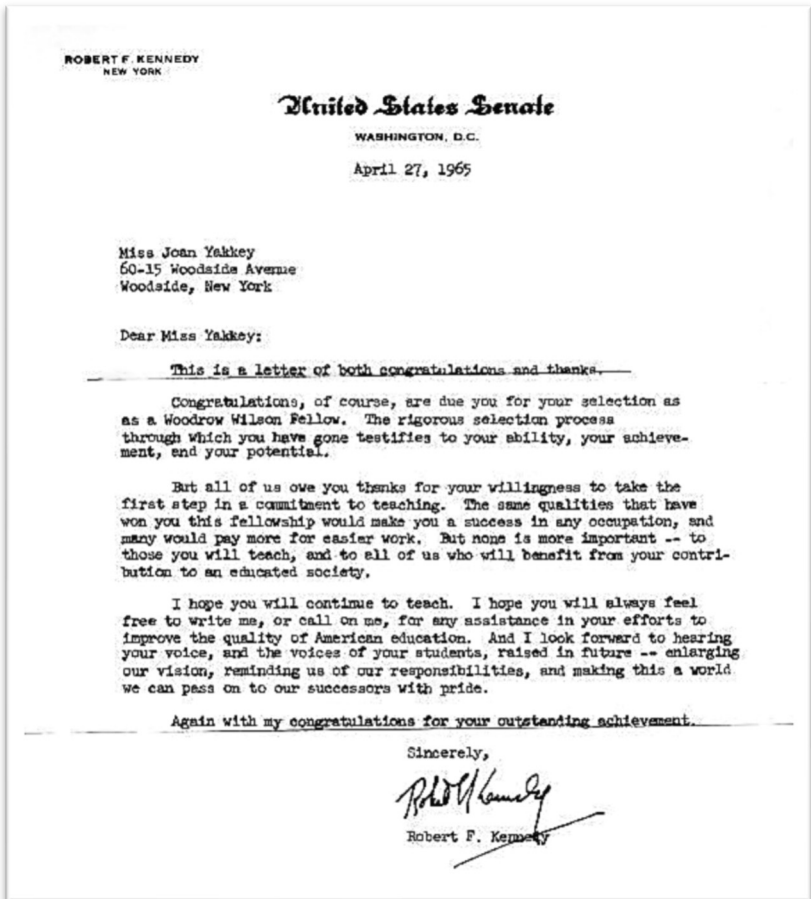


Figure 5: Letter from Senator Robert F. Kennedy congratulating Joan on receiving the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, 1965

The University of California at Berkeley beckoned and, returning to the U.S.A., Joan began her Master's in Composition, studying with Seymour Shifrin (1926-1979). However, Joan did not stay long. "Shifrin transferred to a Boston area university the following year and I decided to return to Florence where I enrolled in the Music Conservatory as a piano major."

CHAPTER 3

ITALY: THE CHERUBINI CONSERVATORY AND FIESOLE MUSIC SCHOOL

Joan's compositions and performance abilities were recognized just as quickly in Italy as they had been in the U.S.A., and there were even some humorous moments. As a conservatory student, Joan was invited to accompany a memorable performance of opera arias with a noted bass soloist at Sala delle Laude in Florence. This was a significant opportunity for Joan as a conservatory student, but the evening was not without difficulties. Joan tells this story:

At intermission [the bass] complained to me that the grand piano was open too high and the noise covered his voice! I answered that I didn't ask to have it opened and he should have taken a look at the hall before the concert began. I couldn't go out there and close it and he needed to ask someone else. So he did but he was furious at me – even though none of this was my fault. I 'got even' in my little way since I dislike being mistreated – I played the final Aria from Puccini's La Bohème in a different key, while he continued to sing in his regular key. It was naughty but memorable!

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Nonetheless, Joan loved Florence and she loved Italy. There was a freedom in the Italian lifestyle and thinking that spoke to her creative spirit. “The Italians were definitely severe in their thoughts, but they never tried to prevent me from creating and composing as I liked.” Joan felt that she was, “able to do [her] own thing in music and the Italians appreciated the results.” She also began dating a dear boyfriend whom she later married.

Joan graduated from the Music Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini, Florence, in 1970 with a degree in Piano Performance where she had studied for three years with Maestro Guglielmo Rosati. In 1975, she then received a degree in Choral Music and Conducting with a famous historian and professor, Paolo Fracapane, and immediately applied for teaching positions in the State schools.

Although Joan has many memories, none is more dear to her than February 1, 1971, when her daughter, Elena Pierini was born. From infancy, Elena went everywhere with Joan, including the music schools, and was constantly being exposed to all kinds of music. Elena loved every type of music and had a natural talent for both music and drawing that was nurtured by her Italian father, grandfather and uncle – all artists – and by the artwork that is pervasive in Florence. Elena drew music, decorated it, colored it and so on – much as Joan had done as a child but at a more sophisticated and artistic level as she was continually surrounded by the great art and music in Florence and through her mother’s work. When Joan was still studying and

singing with Fragapane's Choral Music course, little Elena often came along to listen, absorbing the Renaissance counterpoint.

In 1975, Joan began teaching in the G.B. Martini Conservatory in Bologna, Italy. Her assignment was teaching choral conducting and choral music to music teachers which included composition, improvisation, accompanying, transposing, and methods. This course provided promotion points for teachers to increase salary and pursue better jobs. She traveled to Bologna twice weekly, sometimes bringing her pre-school age daughter with her to sit in on many classes.

Joan herself also got promotion points for teaching at her conservatory which gave her a sufficient number to apply for a more prestigious position at the Music Conservatory, Florence, her Alma Mater. She was offered a position of teaching secondary piano and eventually also became Director of the Children's Choirs – a position that she held for about 30 years while Maestro Giovanni Cicconi (1938-2016), a great enthusiast of children's choirs, was Director of the Conservatory. Joan retired in 2007 as Professor Emerita.

In between teaching and tending to Elena, Joan found time to study and attend the Orff Institute in Austria to learn the methods of Carl Orff and then the Hungarian Kodaly Institute to learn the methods of Zoltan Kodaly. Fortunately, for several years there was a Kodaly Learning Center in Florence where Joan could observe and attend the Teachers' Seminars. Since her degrees were in performance and composition, these institutes

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gave her new and very different insights into music teaching methods.

Elena also continued to have a profound influence on Joan as both a mother and teacher. By age six, Elena would go to the opera theater every week without Joan just to watch the opera! The actors would take her in and she would be backstage admiring the singers and watching all of the shows. She had a natural interest in percussion and began formal study of percussion then piano. All the while, Elena continued to draw and color music in her own unique way.

In 1977, Joan took her daughter to the Oratorio San Fillippo Neri (a monastery, just behind the Uffizi Art Gallery, dedicated to helping children) to join a small children's choir. Little did Joan know that this would also be a turning point in her career. Shortly after her arrival, the director became ill and the monks asked Joan to teach the children's choir. Joan remembers that she put a small ad in the local newspaper to invite children to join the choir. Many families responded and it wasn't long before the choir was performing in various churches around Florence. Joan's ability as a teacher and children's choir conductor were now in the Florentine spotlight with both the clergy and famous musicians taking notice.

Word of Joan's children's choirs quickly spread to Maestro Piero Farulli, the Founder and Director of La Scuola di Musica di Fiesole (the Music School of Fiesole in a small suburb of Florence). Although the school was relatively new, Farulli's international reputation was well established from his national and international

performances with Il Quartetto Italiano (The Italian Quartet). Farulli had toured the world with the quartet for many years and, in doing so, became intrigued with how some other countries promoted music for all people. Italy, a country with a rich musical heritage spanning hundreds of years, did not. By the end of the first World War, music in the public schools had all but disappeared (and music instruction in public schools remains rare even today). Farulli wanted “Musica per il Popolo” (Music for All the People).

His concept was like a pyramid. As a base, all young people should have access to a foundation of beginning music classes where they learn the basics of reading, singing, and developing a musical spirit with courses becoming more rigorous and select over time. Everyone should have the opportunity for this exposure, especially the young child who is so ripe for learning. Instruction was then to progress to higher and higher levels. While high levels of performance would not be for everyone, Farulli felt that such excellence, the top of the pyramid, could not exist without the basic foundation, or the lower parts of the pyramid.

Farulli was also known to seize the moment. His nephew Antonello Farulli, Professor of Viola at Scuola Musica di Fiesole, recounts that, “When he saw something he liked, he said, ‘We must do this now in Italy!’ There was no waiting, no testing, no moving slowly. It was to happen now!” It was this vivacious desire in Piero Farulli that created momentum to build the school and develop the program. The huge

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difference between the Fiesole Music School and the Music Conservatories of Italy was (and still is) the emphasis on musical education for very young children that continues through their school years. Maestro Farulli saw this organized successfully in other countries and considered it an absolute necessity to offer Italian musical culture to all Italians regardless of age.¹

To inspire the students to begin and continue their studies, the teachers and the teaching methodology had to be excellent. Fortunately, Maestro Farulli had a keen eye for spotting potential instructors who were excellent musicians and teachers and who had rapport and a love for children. For the youngest children, he wanted instructors who could connect with their joy, excitement, and creativity – not only teaching them music, but inspiring their inner musician. Farulli saw Joan as just this person. His nephew Antonello Farulli states that, “In fact, for Farulli, Joan was perfect. She was strict but kind, and an excellent musician. The incredible relationship she had with children convinced Farulli that she would be a main column of the school.”²

¹ Antonello Farulli, personal communication, December 7, 2016.

² *ibid.*

SCUOLA DI MUSICA DI FIESOLE
FONDAZIONE

Il Direttore

Al Maestro Arnold Bosman
a Joan Yakkey
a tutti i ragazzi del Das Berliner Requiem e del Brundibar

Fiesole, 18 febbraio 1997

Una tromboflebite mi costringe ancora a non muovermi dal letto. Vorrei tanto stasera essere lì con voi per festeggiare e farvi i miei complimenti per questa bellissima avventura nella quale siete stati coinvolti grazie alla geniale idea di Cesare Mazzonis del Teatro Comunale.

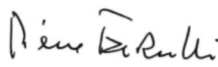
Sono certo sarà un'affermazione della nostra Scuola, che ancora una volta darà a tutti l'immagine di un nuovo positivo episodio delle ragioni umane, musicali e didattiche che la Torraccia si è sempre prefissa.

La musica è un bene di tutti e dobbiamo operare perché questo si avveri.

Spero che lo spiacevole momento passi rapidamente e mi sia concessa la possibilità, davvero attesa, di potervi ascoltare ed abbracciare in una serata successiva.

In bocca al lupo per stasera, complimenti e felicitazioni a tutti, dico a tutti!

Con affetto



Piero Farulli

Figure 6: A letter from Piero Farulli demonstrating his philosophy of music education as he wrote to Joan and the choirs on their performance of the Brundibar opera, 1997

Similarly Edoardo Rosadini, the orchestra director of the Scuola Musica di Fiesole and also one of Joan's

former students, stated that, “Joan had great ideas and, like Farulli, was not afraid to move forward with them.”³ She was “the one” to build the children’s choir program at Farulli’s new school from a beginning level for all children and progressing in complexity and ability to perform the most demanding children’s choir music and opera parts. And so, in 1979, Farulli hired Joan to do just that. She was to be the main column of the school.⁴

Joan accepted Farulli’s offer and began teaching in the Limonia building of the Fiesole Music School. She had to end the San Filippo Neri chorus, but many of those young singers followed her to the Fiesole school. Joan saw this as a moment of creative expansion for both herself and for young Elena who “loved to sing and improvise music.” Joan reportedly, “took the position both for [her] career and for Elena.”

Joan arrived at the new school, housed in a sixteenth century villa on a hillside just below the medieval town of Fiesole. The history of the building was perfect for the school. Once the villa of a wealthy family, the building had been dedicated in the nineteenth century as a place to help children and then became an orphanage. After the world wars, there was less need for the orphanage and it closed until acquired by Farulli in the late 1970s with an agreement that it would be used specifically for the purpose of children. It was here that Farulli would develop and establish his

³ Edoardo Rosadini, personal communication, December 7, 2016.

⁴ Antonello Farulli, personal communication, December 7, 2016.

famous music school and the villa still serves today in that capacity.

After 20 years of choral activity with the children at the Fiesole School, Joan was well known. In the year 2000, Giovanni Cicconi, Director of the Cherubini Music Conservatory, was the first to promote Joan's idea of teaching a children's choir at the conservatory.

Joan was already piano professor at the conservatory since 1978, and Cicconi, also a pianist, was both fascinated and open to new musical ideas and teaching methods. He too was an advocate for teaching children music and singing from a young age, and such an opportunity was generally not offered in State Conservatories. Director Cicconi asked Joan to develop a 'Preparatory Music Course' at the Cherubini Conservatory. Joan believes that, "If it weren't for his enthusiasm, I wouldn't have been able to hold this 'special' course for children at the Conservatory where I could further develop my ideas about teaching and directing children."

During one concert, Joan incorporated students playing handbells – a tradition that would continue for many years. Handbells had not been used much in Italy, and Cicconi was immediately taken by their sound and how they worked. After one concert, he asked the students if the bell clapper would shorten and lengthen to make different pitches. When the students showed him that each bell had its own pitch, he laughed exclaiming in delight, "Meraviglioso!" (Marvelous).

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Joan was often encouraged and supported among her colleagues and students, and it was this success that helped develop her confidence and others' confidence in her.

Don Stanislao Kmotorka, a Salesian priest, was the choral direction teacher for the Teacher's Education course. Like Joan, he was a foreigner to Florence, and this created a collegial bond between them. She learned much from him on choral folk music and settings and they often did choral conducting classes together at the conservatory. Joan was able to bring the Fiesole School Children to the Conservatory to serve as the chorus for conducting exams that the new conductors had to take.

Joan was also inspired by the priest's life story; he had escaped from Czechoslovakia during the Russian occupation by crossing a lake at night holding his shoes above his head. He ended up in Austria and was helped by the Salesian monks and then transferred to Italy.⁵

As Joan began working with the beginning children's choirs both at the conservatory and Fiesole school, she quickly found that neither the Orff nor the Kodaly methods were a good fit for the situation she faced. In her own words, Joan states:

The Kodaly and Orff methods were and are fine, both useful for teaching music in a public school or in a music school, but both were rather specific for each country's respective school system and respective cultures: fifty years ago, during Kodaly's lifetime, the

⁵ <http://www.donbosco.it/Objects/Pagina.asp?ID=226>

Hungarians were an ethnically unified culture with scarce financial means (voice was their only melodic instrument and pencils and hands were used to create rhythmic sounds).

Music classes met daily from kindergarten onwards. The children were organized by the state government and everyone studied the Kodaly method to memorize intervals, names of notes, and positioning on the music staff with great patience from an early age. The country was also rich in folksongs that used basic notes such as do, mi, so, and la arranged into tunes which the common person knew well. These folk tunes were sung and played in homes and elsewhere and children were exposed to them from an early age (much as American children are exposed to nursery rhymes when parents read to them as youngsters).

The results for the Hungarians were marvelous with children singing well in tune and being able to sight read folksongs fluently. Most cultures would not have been able to interest the students in such a methodical study where all teachers are trained equally. Out of great respect for the famous composer, to this day his teachings continue to be carried on throughout the world, albeit with odd variations (many times due to misunderstandings). I do hear from colleagues in Hungary that, since Kodaly's death, things have not proceeded as well as before; his personal inspiration was needed, the system required years of study and patience, and in this age of computers and speed such a virtue is scarce.

As I worked with my children's choirs I found that the Movable Do system worked fine when dealing with tonality or modality such as was present in the

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Hungarian folksongs. But what about atonality, bitonality, or constant modulation as in late Romanticism? The Movable Do system then becomes very complex. For all of these reasons, I felt that the Kodaly method was not the best option for my students.

In contrast, the Orff method required the acquisition of many expensive melodic and rhythmic percussion instruments with the addition of recorders, guitars, strings, etc., in order to form mini orchestral or chamber ensembles. This is possible in a wealthy country where there is a great musical and orchestral tradition such as in Germany and Austria and where the Education Ministry supports new ideas for teaching music in public schools.

Such ideas were proposed and supported by one of Austria's most important composers, Carl Orff. Orff himself wrote volumes of studies and settings of folksongs and dances for children to work with in the schools. The Orff Schulwerk was designed for teachers as a reference book with examples of different settings of folk tunes, but teachers rarely do so.

However, like Kodaly, there have been misinterpretations of his method. Orff's musical scores are often simply replicated in class settings and concerts without any specific writing for or by the students. Recordings of the Orff Schulwerk scores are available. This was not what Orff intended: his Schulwerk was a 'handbook by example' and not 'compositions' to be performed as written. The books are published now in several languages as scores.

Much misinterpretation surrounded this method, in my opinion, due to this very fact, or maybe many

*teachers don't feel qualified enough to match Carl Orff's endeavors at arranging folk tunes. Many teachers make no attempt to create their own repertory for their children to learn and perform. Many schools throughout the world cannot afford the Orff instruments, and many schools do not have musical activities, music teachers or a music room. This may also be the case in certain areas also in the United States. Music Education doesn't seem to be organized or coordinated anywhere in the manner in which Hungary was organized under Kodaly's guidance or Austria was organized under Orff's influence.*⁶

The Orff method required xylophones and metallophones and other instruments, none of which Joan had. The Kodaly method, although more economical, was created with the intent of children receiving daily music instruction. Joan also did not have this luxury as her classes met only once or twice a week. For these reasons, in part, Joan rejected the idea of using the Orff and Kodaly methods in Florence with her students. Nonetheless, Joan did not despair but rather approached the situation with the same creativity that she had shown in her family's small flat in Woodside, New York.

She noticed one day while teaching, that Elena was coloring the notes in the music and coloring pictures that matched the direction of the melodies and form of

⁶ <http://musicmethod.blogspot.com/2011/02/signs-and-sounds.html>

the pieces. Elena loved to draw and had a long lineage of artists on her father's side of the family, most notably grandfather Piero Pierini (1908-1994). She began drawing pictures decorated with music notation and she would use different colors to represent different pitches.

A typical parent might have responded by telling a child not to color in the book, but instead, Joan watched. She was reminded of her own childhood beginnings in music with drawing notes and making them into puzzles (songs) which she would then sing and play and teach the other kids as well. In class, as Joan watched Elena coloring her music, other children came over and watched as well and then took out their books, borrowed Elena's colored pencils, and began their own creative coloring of music.

Joan soon began requesting that students bring colored pencils to music class. She wanted to try out the coloring idea with all the children and see if they took to it as she and Elena had. At first, Joan incorporated simple directional graphics for children to color. Then, it was really Elena's drawing that inspired Joan to extend the freedom to her students to draw pictures of objects – waves, buildings, Christmas trees, pyramids etc. – to then be decorated with notes. Students would then copy the notes onto the music staff in the shape of the picture.

The children responded with delight as they colored notes and made pictures out of the music. Suddenly, Joan realized that this was a perfect match for these Florentine children who had grown up surrounded by

great art from artists like Michelangelo of the Renaissance period that permeates the city of Florence. In fact, Joan remembers that one day a child came to class with a drawing of a man covered in notes. The child exclaimed, “Questo e il mio Davide!” (This is my David! referring to Michelangelo’s work which is housed in Florence). The child had ‘improved’ upon Michelangelo’s rendition of David by covering him with notes! And then the child offered to sing what David would sound like. Joan smiled with delight – noticing too that this version of David was amply clothed by musical notes! Joan reflects:

Historically, Florence is a city of art. It’s visual. And children are exposed to all of this art from infancy. It is all around them as their families travel with them around the city and the children become attuned to art and drawing. I was able to capture their natural interest in art and bring it into music. This is how I developed my Sign and Sound workbooks.

As time progressed, Cicconi’s and Farulli’s support of Joan only increased as she published the *Sign and Sound* methods and her students gave many successful concerts at the schools, first in Italy, and then in other countries. Joan was able to produce results with children’s choirs like none other.

CHAPTER 4

THE SIGN AND SOUND OF MUSIC



Figure 7: Child coloring in the Sign and Sound book

Quickly, Joan began to incorporate drawing and coloring more and more into her classes for children of all ages. In 1980, she formally published a series of graded workbooks called *Il Segno e Il Suono* (The Sign and Sound). These five music coloring books were created for children ages 5-13 and aim at gradually introducing young people, through singing and games,

to the general concept of the relationships between music symbols and their correlating sounds. The books were used by the Children's Chorus at the Music Conservatory in Florence and have been used since the 1980s at the Fiesole Music School where Joan still teaches today. *Il Segno e Il Suono* books are available in both Italian and English and have been used throughout Italy and around the world. Over time, additional support materials called *Music Cards* and *The Language of Music* were developed and used.

* * *

Over these many years that I have collaborated with Joan and both music schools, I have discovered that attempts to describe these methods inevitably fall short. One needs to hear of others' experience, observe them in the classroom, and participate in them. One must observe and speak with the students at various levels who have progressed through the methods to see and hear the resulting ability of adolescent students to read and write music, singing incredibly complex melodies and rhythms at first sight.

In an attempt to provide such an experience for readers of this book, I have provided firsthand accounts of those who have used the methods, a brief description of the methods, pictures, links to websites, and recordings. I hope that this multi-modal approach will give the reader as immersive of an experience as is possible (noticing too that the memorable performances and recordings from the next chapter resulted from this tutelage!). Please do keep an open mind in reading and experiencing this method. It is

possibly much different from what you have experienced – much different from Kodaly or Orff – and incredibly effective.

First-hand Accounts

In 2011, I took a group of university students to Florence to complete their education field hours by observing and teaching with Joan. Students were required to keep a field journal, and one student, Betsy Francis, wrote this:

With Professor Yakkey's books, there is a sort of freedom which allows the student to learn the fundamentals of music by ultimately creating his or her own music. The best aspect is that it is actually quite simple. It is a method which can be used to teach all ages as it encourages students to be imaginative and creative yet is still an organized, structured approach to understanding the music. With this method, the students' music abilities and interests are further encouraged because they are more likely to enjoy learning and making music on their own terms rather than from a dry method that allows little room for innovation. The method is simultaneously simple for the child and instruction but complex to explain. You need to observe and experience it.

Annamaria Vasalle, now a high school teacher, grew up using these methods and has sung in many operas and choral performances as a child and adult. In her experience:

The texts are a precious means for a music education that stimulates a child. Students learn musical

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notation through drawing, through visual association and intuition of pitch. They respect an individual child's required time to learn by avoiding an obliged and constraining structure, but rather follow the child's innate capability to elaborate autonomously, thus developing his spatial and acoustic sensitivity that becomes naturally musical.

Riccardo Foti sees the methods through a different lens. He has served as accompanist and assistant for the choirs for over 30 years, has accompanied many performances, and watched students grow through the program into accomplished musicians. He speaks of the method and teacher stating:

The first thing that one notices is Joan's personal and creative way of introducing music to young people (from 5 years up!). She combines many theoretical and practical elements that allow children to form a concrete idea of the basic musical elements (often many well-trained musicians struggle to keep up!). Children form an idea of the structural relationship between the score and the sound. The incredible thing is that the general formula is a game. Joan's method uses many games and activities and the children learn even very difficult things without realizing it – using their imagination and having fun!

From my own experience many times in the classroom and watching rehearsals, I notice a palpable sense of joy in the children during class. Smiles, laughter, spontaneous movement, happen simultaneously with significant learning. While in many places, music theory and sight reading can feel like drudgery for students, this is never the case in Joan's classroom.

Mezzo soprano and former student Katja De Sarlo further elaborates on the environment that Joan creates in the music classroom and performance venue stating:

The most beautiful and most important message ever that came to me from making music as a child was the JOY in doing so. We were carefree and had fun learning notes – simultaneously bringing together lightness and great seriousness – making music with a very effective method of learning!!

It is so remarkable that with this joy, there is also tremendous learning and performance that has resulted in top-notch performers. Aldo Tarabella, Director of the Lucca Opera and Professor at the Fiesole School, states:

Students who have studied this method with Joan are better prepared when they come to the conservatory. They come with the skills necessary to be successful, and because Joan has provided many excellent performance opportunities, they also come with a sense of theater. I have had to teach many basics to conservatory students, but I never have to teach them to Joan's students.

The Books and Music Cards

In the *Sign and Sound* books, children write their own music and learn to navigate among the various notes and rhythmic values in various clefs. In the first book, indicated for children ages five to eight years, students learn the basics of musical notation and are asked to

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draw different types of designs, placing musical notes on them. The book begins by introducing long and short rhythms (whole and half notes) which students copy. Next, the teacher chants them on a monotone and students chant and copy the rhythm. Students are then asked to draw a simple picture like a wave or mountain and put the notes on the picture. The child then sings or plays his interpretation on the piano or melodic percussion instrument (an Orff instrument).

The teacher often begins by asking, “What would your picture sound like if you sang it?” These are very rough approximations in which students demonstrate understanding of direction of melody and longer and shorter rhythms. A steady beat is always maintained and the child must be consistent in his interpretation within an exercise.

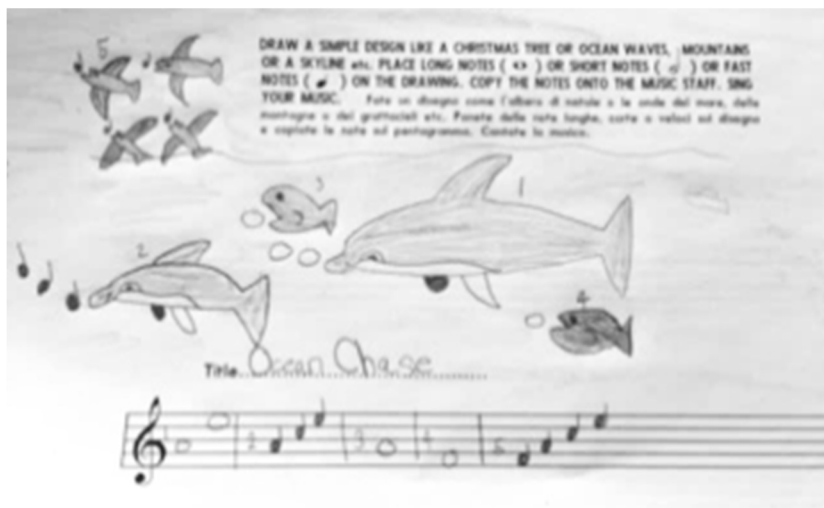


Figure 8: Child's drawing of 'An Ocean Chase' in the Sign and Sound book

Students are then introduced to a staff with five lines and four spaces and asked to put the same design on the staff. The teacher continues by telling and demonstrating that the higher the notes on the staff, the higher the pitch. The student now sings or plays his design with melodic directionality and rhythms as he has pictured it on the staff.

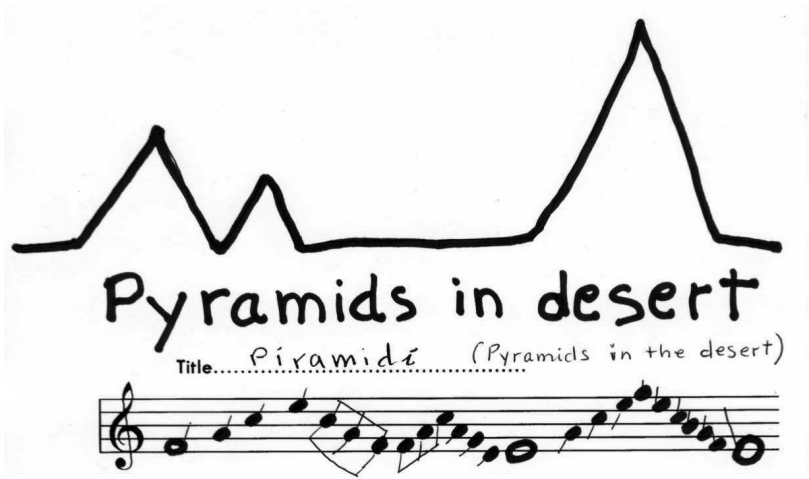


Figure 9: Child's drawing 'Pyramids in the Desert' in the Sign and Sound book

The second book begins by reinforcing skills developed in the first book as children copy graphic designs and place notes on them, demonstrating directionality of a melody and again singing or playing their design. This is followed by new exercises in which children must color notes according to pitch (for example, *do* is blue, *re* is red, and *mi* is yellow). Notes are placed above and below a single line. For example, if *do* is on the line, then *re* is in the space above the line. If *do* is in a space, then *re* is on the line above.

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All exercises are written in whole notes with four beats, as the focus is on the melody and not rhythm at this point. Eventually, longer and shorter rhythms are added together with the pitches. Notes are added sequentially in the order of the scale (*do, re, mi, fa, sol* etc.) on increasingly more lines and spaces that make sense visually (in contrast with the Kodaly method which introduces *sol* and *mi*, then *la*, low *do* etc.). Again, rhythms begin with whole notes and then become more complex.

Each pitch has its own unique color that remains constant throughout this and subsequent books. Students come to associate a pitch, like *do*, with its color, blue, and *re* with its color red. Exercises move in stepwise fashion at first, then adding small skips between *sol, mi* then *sol, mi* and *do* in Kodaly-like progression.

Increasingly complex rhythms are added, drawn, and performed. Often as the complexity increases, the teacher first demonstrates pitch sequences and rhythms as the process of reading, writing, and singing becomes increasingly more precise. Then the student follows the teacher's example by himself reading, writing, and singing exercises printed in the book as well as ones that he has created himself.

This progression remains more visually focused. When *mi* is introduced, the exercises involve two lines with *do* being present on any of the lines or spaces. In this way, students become accustomed to a moveable *do*/moveable clef system. By the end of the book, students are drawing and coloring a full scale on the

five-line staff with ledger lines added above and below the staff. Again, *do* remains movable so that students are able to read in any clef, and transposition of keys becomes very easy. After coloring some exercises, students again play or sing them. Space is also left for students to compose their own scales.

The fourth book focuses on study of the C clef with exercises in two- and three-part harmony that are sung or played. Again, there is opportunity for original composition. The fifth book introduces more complex rhythms, tonalities, and intervals.

As a supplement to the books, there are *Magic Music Cards* (over 600) with rhythms and melodies that can be combined by the teacher or student to make various exercises. They are somewhat reminiscent of a Mozart Musical Dice game as they can be connected together in many ways.

Cards are arranged in levels with increasing complexity of melodic and rhythmic patterns, eventually adding time signatures and key signatures. They provide a more portable and flexible experience and opportunities for games such as: Memory, Follow the Conductor/Be a Conductor, Chamber Music, Invent a Song, Theme and Variations, Dictation, Don't Stop or You're Out, The Oratorio/Cantata/Opera, Be an Arranger, Create a Story, and Write Your Own Song.

The *Language of Music* books offer additional supporting sight singing exercises in a contemporary idiom. These begin on simple intervals and rhythms sung in unison and progressing to complex melodies

and rhythms sung in two- and three-part consonant or dissonant harmony. Again, the method aims at transforming what would ordinarily seem to be a difficult feat for singers, sight singing dissonances in polyphony, into a very easy, satisfying and enjoyable sonorous experience. Each group of singers is asked to remember and sing only two or three notes in each exercise and it is remarkable the effects obtained when all is combined.

The Repertoire

While students work through these various exercises and games, it is important for the reader to understand that they are also singing and performing a vast repertoire of music. With the youngest children, much of the learning is by rote echoing the instructor, but with manual graphic indication as the melody develops. As students progress in their sight singing, the methods are also then incorporated into the teaching of the repertoire, beginning with various folksong books authored by Joan. More often than not, because students have been so interactive with the method, they spontaneously bring what they have learned to the songs they are studying.

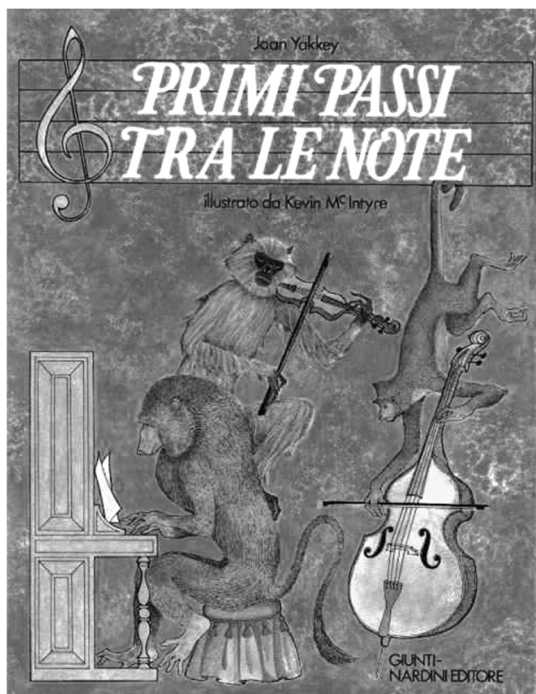


Figure 10: The first songbook by Joan, 1989

As one peruses the concert programs, recordings, and videos of the choirs over the years, it is immediately apparent that students are being exposed to and performing a tremendous variety of music. Accompanist Riccardo Foti describes it this way:

Another secret of the success of the choir program is the vast and diverse repertoire that students have the opportunity to study and sing; from the traditional folk songs from around the world (thus helping to keep cultural traditions alive that often we are losing), to the polyphony of the 1500s, from the masterpieces of the Baroque to Jazz, passing through the classical and operatic repertoire, without neglecting the 1900s and

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the music from the movies ... it is impossible to get bored. The result is the awakening of a passion for music in hundreds of young people and their families!

Thus, students leave the program with a comprehensive music background that can serve them if they choose to pursue music professionally, cherish the memory, or someday decide to enroll their own children in the program (which many have done now over the years). Teaching many generations of children over the past 40 years, Joan's methods and classes are a recognized staple in Florence; there have been many newspaper and magazine articles written about Joan and her choirs throughout the years.

One parent, Daria Duranti, an alumni of the school's Youth Chorus who enrolled her daughter Giulia in the program, summed up the experience stating, "When we think of choir, we think of Joan. Her influence is well known throughout the area and throughout Italy."

Testament to the Methods: Barbara Strozzi Ensemble, Joan Yakkey Consort, and Tempus Floridum Ensemble

The Barbara Strozzi Vocal Ensemble was the first testament to the *Sign and Sound* method, demonstrating the high level at which young singers who studied using Joan's methods for many years could ultimately perform. This ensemble was comprised of singers who began their studies around 1980 and later sang together for eight years as mature musicians in the 1990s. All are still in contact with Joan and collaborate in special moments. Many of their

recordings have been incorporated into videos on Joan's YouTube channel.⁷ These were eight young ladies (Katja De Sarlo, Elena Pierini, Claudia Pozzesi, Vanessa Zuffanelli, Caterina Paoloni, Maria Stefania Scarinzi, Ilaria Bon and Eleonora Tassinari), seven of whom had studied with Joan since they were young children. Other singers from the chorus were added through the years (Martina Mattioli, Alessandra Rinaldi, Antonio Giovannini and Marta Lupi). Almost all of these singers are now professional musicians. Growing up, learning through the *Sign and Sound* books and singing in the Youth Chorus at the Fiesole School, they learned how to decipher a musical score through Joan's methods and were able to study and learn any vocal page given to them, or that they were asked to perform on special occasions by City Governments, Associations and Theaters.

The original "Barbara Strozzi" singers first belonged to the madrigal chamber choir at the school and included Giulia Lemma, Fiorenza Miniati and Francesca Sbordonì. They participated in International Choral Competitions in Budapest 1991 and Lago di Garda 1992. They also performed on many important occasions, such as the visit to the school by the president of Italy and at the International Festival of Young European Choirs, Montpellier, France 1993. Their voice teacher at school was at first Antonia Brown, soprano, then Steven Woodbury, tenor. The ladies decided to continue singing together and

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/user/joyakkey>

consequently formed the Joan Yakkey Consort for a brief period. Under this title, the ensemble performed in an opera that won a competition in 1990 at the Opera Theater of Alessandria (“Vincent”), written by a woman, Michèle Reverdy. Giulia Peri, now a professional singer was soloist as the young Vincent Van Gogh. Following this experience and a CD recording of Popular Venetian Airs of the 18th Century, with an instrumental ensemble and the singers Antonia Brown, Stuart Gardner and Roberto Scaltriti, the ladies decided to call their vocal octet Ensemble Vocale Barbara Strozzi.

They had the perfectly balanced voices required for amalgamating early polyphonic music. They met weekly for many years during the 1990s to rehearse at Joan’s new house, near the music school. The singers were particularly interested in Renaissance vocal motets, canzonettes and madrigals, but also studied and performed contemporary scores.

The ensemble’s inaugural concert with eight singers was in the famous Dante church of Florence, in October 1993. They performed an a cappella program of early music by Palestrina, Di Lasso, De Victoria, Monteverdi, Vecchi and Di Venosa. Many of these pieces were edited and reprinted by Joan and now can be acquired on her Musicaneo page⁸. They recorded an important CD of music by Claudio Monteverdi, Canzonettes and *Sacrae Cantionum* for three voices, and with a few

⁸ <https://joanyakkey.musicaneo.com>

added choral singers, recorded in Bari the opera *Brundibar* by Hans Krasa in Italian.

As time passed, the Barbara Strozzi Vocal Ensemble acquired all new singers and was transformed into today's Tempus Floridum Vocal Ensemble that celebrated its 20th anniversary of friendship in music in 2018. Their repertory also includes folk music arrangements (many on Joan's Musicaneo site) and contemporary film pieces. Floriano D'Auria, countertenor, is now the Tempus Floridum's organizer and arranger of many pieces for the group to sing.

They are very successful and hold concerts every month in prestigious Tuscan villas and churches. In 2018 they were invited again to northern Spain to participate in an International Choral Festival.

There are about twelve singers in the group now, alternating concerts. Most were Joan's students, and now are mothers who send their own children to the Fiesole School choral classes to study with Joan. The singers are Francesca Cataoli, Claudia Aversa, Marta Ciuffi, Floriano D'Auria, Marta Lupi, Francesca Macconi, Valentina Matucci, Alessandra Rinaldi, Camilla Silvestri, Erica Baldi and special guest singers Cecilia Cazzato and Katja De Sarlo. Joan is their Artistic Director and conducts the group on occasions at concerts.

The important factor to note is that Joan has always insisted on musical literacy for young singers from ages 4-20, starting with her *Sign and Sound* coloring books to the sight singing series *The Language of Music* that

over time enable a musician to read and remember entire pages of music, and learn a new piece in few rehearsals. Today, time is money, and lives are frenetic; one must be able to study independently and the time spent on early sight singing instruction pays off in saved time in the future, while assuring proper intonation and rhythm even in difficult circumstances (poor acoustics, performing with other conductors, etc.).

All of Joan's choral groups have an enormous amount and variety of pieces in their repertory, and this was noticed by other choral directors who were present at the concerts on tour in Poland (August/September 2018) with both the Madrigal Singers and the Youth Chorus from the School of Fiesole.

While students in ordinary school choirs are only together for a few years, the fortune Joan has had with her music school choirs is that children start singing at age 5 and finish the courses at age 18, after which they normally join other specialized early music choral groups, or the Cathedral Chorus in Florence, or study voice for a career as soloist. Many still help Joan as assistants with the younger children.

For more information and to order the *Sign and Sounds* methods visit:

<https://joanyakkey.musicaneo.com> and
<http://musicmethod.blogspot.com>.

CHAPTER 5

MEMORABLE PERFORMANCES BY THE CHILDREN'S CHOIRS OF LA SCUOLA DI MUSICA DI FIESOLE AND LUIGI CHERUBINI CONSERVATORY

As part of this book, Joan was asked to reflect back on some highlights of performances over the years. The performances included many students, faculty, conductors from the Oratorio San Filippo Neri, La Scuola di Musica di Fiesole, The Luigi Cherubini Conservatory, recordings, and guest conductors.⁹

These are her many wonderful memories.

Working with Maestro Zubin Mehta has always been such a pleasure. He was always so conscientious of the quality of sound and balance. Mehta would always call me next to him and ask me to go back in the concert hall to listen. I would give him feedback and he always graciously accepted it. In the Strauss and Berg operas, the stage directors wanted a chorus of little children but

⁹ There are many more pictures of these performances than can be included in this book. They can be viewed at:
<https://joansblog2017.wordpress.com/2017/04/15/showsconcertsfoto>

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M^o Mehta desired a big sound... but little children don't have a big sound. M^o Mehta often complained that he couldn't hear the children enough so I often suggested that all my children would be part of the chorus on stage or back stage – even the adolescents – so that we could make a sonorous impact. He always said the more the merrier. He wanted all of them so they could be heard since the orchestras were always in front of the stage, never beneath in a pit. He was always so happy with the sound of the children's choir in these performances. He was so nice to work with; extremely professional, very organized and very good with the children. He always rehearsed with them first.



Figure 11: Joan and Zubin Mehta in rehearsal, Florence, Italy, 2013

Late romantic operas have especially difficult music for children. The vocal parts have large jumps and they are not easy to anticipate, especially in *Wozzeck*. This is

where using my *Sign and Sound* methods paid off. My students were accustomed to the idea of using designs with notes and coloring notes, kind of as a visual way of coding music. I used this same technique to teach this music. I made graphic designs of the music for the students to see and use. It helped them to get a sense of the direction of the musical lines and intervals. Also, the music is interspersed between the children's choir singing and adult soloists. They go back and forth. They come and go. So, to get starting pitches and timing on entrances, my children's choir had to know the adult soloists' parts as well as their own. I used the *Sign and Sound* method to design graphics of the music for the soloists' parts, and then my children's parts. The graphics helped the children to learn the music quickly and accurately and be able to follow the action when on stage.

Traditional Christmas Concerts, every December since 1979

The first Christmas Concert with our choral students was in the Cathedral of Fiesole, a bitter cold Saturday, December 22, 1979. We sang again in the freezing cathedral, in our coats, in December of 1980. I had many wonderful enthusiastic students who had been studying with me for only three months! We sang Gregorian chants and Italian Carols in unison and in two voices. The children came to class three times a week and we were the only children's choir in the Florentine area at the time. Maestro Piero Farulli, Founder and Director of the Fiesole Music School, was very

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enthusiastic and active in recruiting new students, the price to attend the school was very economical and we studied together about five hours weekly, including solfège studies and sight-reading exercises. This is not the case today unfortunately; I now see most of my students about one to two hours weekly. Through the years our “Concerto di Natale” became more inclusive and is now called “Concerto degli Auguri.”

Festa della Musica, 24 June every year since 1981

This is the traditional day for recitals of all the classes in the school at the end of the school’s academic year. Sometimes orchestral and choral concerts take place in a church or in the Roman amphitheater in Fiesole. We always participate with about one hour’s concert program including solos.

Early Collaborations with Orchestras and Adult Choruses, 1980-1984

I notice that our first concert together with other groups was in July 1980 in Pontassieve (a town on the outskirts of Florence). We collaborated with Maestro Elio Lippi and the adult chorus of the School in an all Baroque Sacred music program. The children were very excited and well prepared. These were the years prior to great traffic in Florence and air pollution; their voices were very clear and healthy.

Our first two opera productions were for a full cast of children who performed the main roles and sang throughout the opera. Many were also soloists but a few adults from the School’s vocal department were

included. The operas were *I Due Musicanti* (The Two Fiddlers) by Peter Maxwell Davies, and *Talgor* written for our school by Maestro Riccardo Luciani.¹⁰

I Due Musicanti was presented at the Fiesole Roman Amphitheater in the summer of 1980, with repeated performances on tour in Dortmund, Germany, May 1981. I remember we studied for two full years every Saturday afternoon together with the orchestra – what a lot of work! We all went together by train to Germany, instrumentalists, children’s chorus, soloists, conductors (Mauro Ceccanti and myself) and organizers. In this opera the two fiddlers must sing and play the violin. We had exceptionally talented students as soloists, who are now famous musicians and professors: Maria Costanza Nocentini (in the singing role as the Queen), Lucia Nocentini her sister, and Virginia Ceri (violinists) who now heads the successful Suzuki Center of Florence; I have kept choral classes for her young students.

The second large opera production, 1983 and 1984 which included practically everyone in the school, was *Talgor* by Riccardo Luciani, a Music Appreciation professor. This production included about 70 children/teenage singers. It was a new story of small aliens that arrive on earth to teach the adults how to behave. The young children had marvelous astronaut costumes. The scenery and costumes were designed by Fernando Farulli, a famous painter, and Piero Farulli’s brother. The stage director was Sylvano Bussotti, a

¹⁰ <http://www.cedomus.toscana.it/cedomus/libreria-musicale-privata-antonino-riccardo-luciani-s-totti/>

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famous contemporary composer who worked with the school at the moment. The libretto was developed by a famous writer, Giuliano Toraldo di Francia. The composer and I met many times to discuss the score and the children's capabilities. This was presented in 1983 at the Fiesole Roman Amphitheater and at the Opera Theater of Florence then brought on tour to Milan in 1984, Sala Pier Lombardo, production of *Teatro alla Scala*. We had wonderful costumes. Here, as after many other important concerts, Piero Farulli wrote a long letter to the children complimenting them on their studies and explaining the situation in Italy and the need for better musical instruction.

Sandro Pertini, President of Italy, Visit to the School of Fiesole, June 1982

It was a very warm day and the President of Italy arrived with his body guards and other dignitaries to visit the Music School of Fiesole that had already won many prizes and was becoming known throughout Europe. The children's orchestra performed on the lawn and my children's chorus sang with microphones. They were so excited. We had to walk the whole country road to the school for security reasons. This president is still very beloved by the Italians.

Opera: Opera delle Filastrocche (music by A.V. Savona / texts by G. Rodari), Teatro della Pergola, Florence, Regional Orchestra of Tuscany, Conductor Maurizio Dini Ciacci, June 1983

This score involved only six young singers for the musical moments, the rest was in recited drama form. The scenes and costumes were wonderful, many had masks and wigs, the music was contemporary, rhythmic and blasting at times, melodies created on children's rhymes. I remember I had suffered extreme laryngitis during the months of preparation so my assistants were of great help. We also didn't have good recording equipment for study at home as we do today, but we came through and the show was a great success.

Third Symphony by Gustav Mahler, Conductor Jan Latham Koenig, Orchestra of Montepulciano, Lago di Garda and Siena, Summer 1983

The Chamber Choir of Cologne, Germany toured with us. It was great fun and the children became close friends. The Chamber Choir helped us with the German pronunciation. They were excellent, young northern voices, without the vibrato and deep tones of the Mediterranean people.

Opera: The Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten, Regional Orchestra of Tuscany, Convent Santa Croce, Batignano, Grosseto (Tuscany), Production Adam Pollock, July 1983

In this circumstance only two children singers were required, but we also had substitutes. We lived on a

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farm with goats nearby and studied our scores and stage movements. I also had a dog at the time and had to bring her up during rehearsals! My daughter came along too as substitute but Maria Costanza Nocentini was a wonderful 16-year-old soprano who did all the shows, ideal for the role of Flora. Matteo Capanni was little Miles, a very intelligent, introspective and diligent treble voice. The setting and lighting were marvelous and scary, in a former Convent where the spirits sang unexpectedly behind stone walls. I still have all the wonderful critiques from the newspapers.

***Third Symphony by Gustav Mahler, Israel
Philharmonic Orchestra and Maggio Musicale
Chorus, Conductor Zubin Mehta, September 1983
and again in Siena, August 1998***

After four years of existence, our chorus was called in to sing Mahler's Third Symphony with these famous institutions. The 1983 performance was a wonderful concert in the famous Verdi Theater of Florence. The concert was on a Saturday evening. We were to have one rehearsal together, choruses, alto soloist and orchestra the evening before but the instruments traveling from France didn't arrive for the rehearsal! Panic – how do we perform together without even one rehearsal together? The Israeli Philharmonic, observing the Sabbath, could not work from sundown Friday evening to sundown Saturday evening. So the scheduled rehearsal on Friday evening went on with Florence opera theater's choral Director, Roberto Gabbiani, at the piano. Mehta wanted to hear the children. They told me that every signal of his was extremely clear, so no

problems. The children were very adaptable. This too is part of my method. All scores are presented in several interpretations to ensure a performance can adapt to the circumstances: a different conductor, different acoustics, etc. The Israeli instruments arrived the following day and the concert went on perfectly Saturday evening after sundown. M^o Mehta had phoned Piero Farulli the day after the concert to congratulate him on the Children's Chorus, and Maestro Farulli wrote a letter to all the singers explaining that they received compliments because they studied well and had an inspired teacher. I still have this letter.

The 1998 performance was fine, but the day was challenging since we had to get to Siena in the morning to rehearse and then wait until about 11pm to sing. The children had fallen asleep on the floor of the sacristy of the church waiting. They had a wonderful day but frankly they sang like robots at that late hour.

***Opera: La Bohème by Giacomo Puccini, May
Festival Florence, Conductor Ivan Fischer,
Producer Ugo Gregoretti, November/December
1983***

This was our first performance in the Florence opera theater with the May Festival orchestra and chorus. The soloists were wonderful and famous: Catherine Malfitano and Neil Schicoff and others. The children were well prepared musically; they had studied the entire orchestration of their parts because running around on stage and singing at the right moment, whether you can see the conductor or not, requires a

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knowledge of the entire score. Maria Costanza Nocentini, soprano, was in this first production along with my daughter, Elena Pierini, and many others who now still sing and are professional musicians.

Concert of Opera Choruses, Florence Opera Theater, Conductor Maurizio Arena, September 6-7, 1984

The children had studied several opera choruses in which young voices are required, and enjoyed singing with the Florence opera singers in a concert with music by Puccini, Verdi, Leoncavallo, Rossini, etc. They knew everything by memory and received many compliments. Mind you, this was before the existence of YouTube and mp3s, so we studied often together at school, referring to my method of reading music. We never studied a score in just one manner when a different conductor would be present because the children needed to learn to be flexible.

Concert Fiesole Youth Chorus, Basilica San Domenico, Siena, May 1985

This was a terrific group of about 20 adolescents all with wonderful voices. We sang pieces by Palestrina, Hungarian composers and Contemporary American and Italian music in the beautiful basilica in Siena. My assistant at the time was Alexandra Amati, now a lecturer at San Francisco Opera and Orchestra, and resident tutor at Harvard University. I always notice her in a photo from this concert.

***Opera: Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten,
Festival Torre del Lago, August 1986***

Once again only two children were involved in this production that took place in the park of an old villa to create wonderful scenic effects. The children worked hard at learning their parts. Britten's *Turn of the Screw* is not exactly easy! I also helped rehearse the adult soloists, all known singers, including an American opera singer. The opera was given in Italian and we all lived at Torre del Lago for two weeks of rehearsals. For lack of funding these type of extended experiences don't happen anymore. Singers arrive to venues prepared and rehearse together, for just a few days at the most, prior to performance.

***Opera: Orfeo by Claudio Monteverdi (arranged in
contemporary style by Luciano Berio), Florence,
May Festival Chorus, Piazza Santo Spirito,
European Capital of Culture, July 1986***

This was the second presentation of this opera arrangement. The first took place in the courtyard of Palazzo Pitti in 1985; various instrumental groups played the Monteverdi music, overlapping sounds, the public walked around following the soloists, motorcycles entered at the end of the opera when the protagonists headed for hell. It was fun! My daughter Elena had pre-recorded the famous Prologue to the opera ("Io la musica son"). I remember the auditions to find a voice appropriate for this recording in 1984. My daughter Elena always accompanied me to the theater for rehearsals and such. I brought about 10 young

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adolescents for the auditions with the composer Luciano Berio, but Elena sat on the side and just listened. Maestro Berio heard all of the children and then asked who Elena was, and I said she was my daughter and was not prepared for the auditions. But he had her sing anyhow – and chose her! So that was difficult to explain to the others, but he noticed her good sense of rhythm and her sweet voice perfectly on tune. I have this recording still.

Cantata: Carmina Burana, May Festival Chorus, Orchestra and Ballet Corps, Florence Opera Theater, European Capital of Culture, December 1986

There are the two famous sections in *Carmina Burana* that require a children's chorus. We have sung this score many times through the years. This performance was special as it included the full Ballet of the Florence Opera Theater. This dance company has now been eliminated. The one particular fact that we all remember is that a dancer slipped and fell at one point and the children just let out a scream!

International Choral Competition, Arezzo, Italy, August 1986

I had 24 wonderful adolescent singers by now who had been singing with me since 1980. My assistant Antonia Brown, a soprano, helped us to learn proper vocal technique and I too learned a lot. We did very well at the competition, singing difficult pieces in four parts a cappella by Palestrina, Liszt and Barber. We also entered the Gregorian chant competition. We earned

third prize. Many prizes were not even given out as the juries were very exacting.

Choral Tour to Burgos, Spain, November 1986

Our adolescent Youth Choir prepared repertory in the space of two months and accepted the invitation by the government of Burgos, northern Spain, to hold a concert in the cathedral and at the music conservatory. We prepared solo pieces, choral and instrumental/vocal repertory. One flutist, Giulia Nuti, was an exceptionally talented 10 year old. She now sends me her own children to our Choral Workshop classes and has become a noted harpsichordist. We had such a warm welcome and were taken on tour. There were many newspaper articles that I still have.

Opera: La Gioconda by Amilcare Ponchielli, May Festival Chorus and Orchestra, Conductor Miguel Gomez-Martinez, November 1986

As you can see, we had many requests in 1986. We were asked to learn this score about two months prior to the opera's opening. The number of children was growing, so I could count on about 20 adolescent singers and a group of younger boys. Boys are much needed for opera productions. Costumes were missing here for the sailor's chorus and we wore much of our own apparel, with a vest or a belt that the costume section of the theater found for us. In contrast, the costumes for four pages were exquisite. I still have the photos.

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Pastoral Visit to Fiesole and San Domenico, Performance for Pope John Paul II, October 18, 1986

In 1986, the Pope came to visit Fiesole, and my students performed for him at the church in San Domenico just down the street from the Fiesole Music School. The chorus sang Palestrina's motet *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, a string quartet with Piero Farulli played from Haydn's Op. 51 and the orchestra and adult choir sang Mozart's *Ave Verum*. Kent State University from Ohio was holding classes at our school at the time and joined the performance, and they still prize the photo of us all together.



Figure 12: The Fiesole Children's Choirs performing for Pope John Paul II, Church of San Domenico, 1986

The Pope congratulated us on the beauty of the music and such an extraordinary performance of such difficult music by children. This was one of the early successes

for the choir program and also the *Sign and Sound* methods. The children who study instrument and solfège and those who study only solfège learn equally. You don't have to be an instrumentalist to learn the method or learn to sight sing and sing well. It is a common misconception among musicians that only those who play an instrument can be the best musicians and singers in a choir. My methods have proven that the brain doesn't need to know about an instrument other than the voice to be successful. If you get the concept of up and down, spaces, black and white, you hear the music a couple of times, you develop the musical skill and memory. Younger children develop this through the *Sign and Sound* books. The older children continue the development through the *Language of Music* books. They're really quite simple and you can't not do it right or not learn to read, compose, and sing music. It's a general learning system that can help any student learn to read and sing music and prepare for performance. This concert for the Pope brought these methods to the attention of many.



Figure 13: Pope John Paul II congratulating Joan and Piero Farulli after the concert

Opera: Tom Thumb (Pollicino) with contemporary score by Hans W. Henze, Conductor Mauro Ceccanti, Director Giuseppe Leva, Florence Opera Theater, March 1987

This is a very difficult opera to learn as it is dissonant although interesting rhythmically. In fact, I have prepared children to sing it several times. We had a double cast, and the stage director had, unwittingly, created two sets of stage movements and found himself working with different children. We took so much time to learn the opera that he never had the time to develop the final scene. I remember the mothers and the singers themselves decided on what to do to end the opera. I had very talented children at the time, most of whom are professional musicians today. This was presented five

times in the Small Hall of the Florence opera theater where the acoustics were very dry. This theater no longer exists.

***Opera: The Prodigal Son by Benjamin Britten,
Conductor Roberto Abbado, Margherita Theater
of Genova, April 1987***

Here I was called in to help the Genoa Conservatory's Children's Chorus in the production, adding some of my own singers. The part for the children to sing off-stage is very difficult vocally, but we managed. I went to Genova several times with an assistant and we recorded the music to be studied. My students and I immediately noticed the difference in understanding the score between our singers and the conservatory children who had been brought up in the traditional solfège system where they speak the notes for years and don't hear the sounds. Our singers quickly learned the strange new rhythms and difficult intervals typical of Britten's style.

***Opera: Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria by Claudio
Monteverdi, Florence Opera Theater, June 1987***

This opera requires a large children's chorus so we performed together with another choral group from Prato. It wasn't much fun for the children since they basically sang off-stage. But they learned to love early baroque opera.

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RAI Choral Festival of Contemporary Music, Rome, September 1987

This was a concert series with three choirs from different parts of Italy. I was surprised at the applause and tremendous response to our presentation. I didn't realize our choir was already well-known even to the State Radio-Television authorities (RAI) in Rome. I was treated like a princess!

Youth Olympics (Giochi della Gioventù), Rome Soccer Stadium, October 1987

This was an interesting performance. As the gymnastics proceeded, eight choruses (with about 200 singers) performed a contemporary work by Egisto Macchi in eight vocal parts – one part per choir – with two synthesizers. Needless to say, it was difficult to synchronize in a large stadium even though there was a conductor in the center of the arena. She was having difficulty and, at a certain point, I started conducting myself, listening to the synthesizers, and several groups were following me instead. I just couldn't resist.

Third Symphony by Gustav Mahler, Opera Tour to Theater Morlacchi, Perugia, and San Carlo Theater, Naples, January 2-4, 1988

We gave three performances, traveling by bus, and sang with the Italian Youth Orchestra that studies at the Fiesole School together with the women's section from our adult chorus. My daughter Elena was percussionist in the orchestra, so she played for the first three and last movements, but moved into the chorus to sing with the

women in the fifth movement. It is such beautiful music. Some parents came along for the trip.

***Choral Festival in Poggibonsi (Tuscany),
American Music Concert, Pianist Elena Pierini,
April 1988***

This was a very successful concert. The songs from American musicals were unusual at that time in Italy and the audience enjoyed them. I had brought back the scores from America. I had a wonderful Youth Choir of about 22 members, ages 13-20. They were terrific and many still sing in various choral groups throughout Europe. There is a review from this concert and I kept it: "The Fiesole Youth Chorus directed by Joan Yakkey has a vast repertoire and can present an entire concert program differentiating themes according to necessity and the audience's pleasure. This evening's concert dedicated to American Musicals and Songs, to say the least, has left the audience very enthusiastic."

***Cantata: Carmina Burana by Carl Orff,
performance with percussion and two pianos
with Adult and Children's Choruses of the School
of Florence, Director Roberto Gabbiani, Abbey of
San Michele Arcangelo at Badia a Passignano,
near Florence, July 1988***

This was a cool evening, and the children were beautifully dressed with bows, white blouses and black skirts. We even got to see the famous Fresco of Ghirlandaio in the Cenacle of the Monastery, usually closed to the public.

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***Opera: Haensel & Gretel by Engelbert
Humperdinck, Spoleto Festival dei due Mondi,
Pianist Giuseppe Bruno, July 1988***

This was an interesting production of the famous opera in its original form with only piano accompaniment. The costumes were beautiful. It was given in a very small theater, Caio Melisso, and the space backstage was minimum. Some scenes were very adult themed and the children were not allowed to watch! My daughter was with me so I got all the information!

***Concerts in the Castle, the church of Pontgivert
and the Museum of Modern Art, Tour to Reims,
France, September 1988***

This was a memorable tour to Champagne country. We brought a lot of repertory, Gregorian chants, Renaissance motets, Laude, American musicals, contemporary settings. We stayed with families and brushed up again on our French. We were welcomed by the mayor of the town, had lots of champagne and even toured one of the biggest champagne farms and caves where the wine is carefully cured. I stayed at the home of the director of the local school's children's chorus; we had met in Florence.

***National Festival of Children's Choirs, Bergamo,
May 1989***

We participated in this festival with about 25 children ages 7-13. I had arranged Orff's Schulwerk for piano four hands, in Italian, and the audience loved it. My daughter was playing the piano with another girl. We

also sang a few things in canon and in unison. The jury members told me that it is not easy to sing in unison and obtain a good sound. I remember two little singers who fought the whole concert about who should be standing where. My assistant at the time, soprano Donatella Debolini, was of great help.

***Opera: Turn of the Screw by Benjamin Britten,
Metastasio Theater, Prato, November 1989***

For this performance, I prepared the treble soloist, Luca Paoloni, for the part of “Miles”; he is now professor of violin. His sister “Flora” was a former student of mine, but studied with another person to prepare for this production. This is not an easy opera for young voices.

***Audio cassettes for Children’s Song Books,
Nardini editors, with the children soloists and
small vocal and instrumental ensembles from the
Music School***

“Buon Natale” 1987; “Girogirotondo” 1988;
“Rataplan” 1988; “Primi Passi Tra Le Note” 1989;
“Marcondirondello” 1989; “Ninne Nanne di Tutto il
Mondo” 1990.¹¹

¹¹ All arrangements were developed by Joan. The books are still on sale in the stores of Florence and the original cassette tapes have become CDs

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***New opera: Vincent by M. Verdi, Conductor
Will Humburg, Laboratorio Lirico, Alessandria
September 1990***

This opera won a competition for new works on the Centennial of Van Gogh's death. Giulia Peri was very young, but sang from the theater's balcony as soloist in the part of Van Gogh as a child. The audience sat on stage as the opera was performed in the orchestra. Here we performed as the "Joan Yakkey Consort" since we were off-season from the school.

***Third International Choral Competition,
Budapest, March 1991***

Six madrigal singers participated in this competition. We sang Renaissance works and other classical pieces and received only 83/100 points. We sang in three events in different buildings. The jury objected to our pronunciation of Latin in a work by Verdi, so we lost points on that, though they said to me that they were very happy about how we sang. We did well but learned to ask ahead of time what Latin pronunciation would be acceptable. I mean, really – We don't know how to pronounce and interpret the text and music by Giuseppe Verdi???

***Cantata for Children: De Origine Musices by
Sergio Liberovici, Carignano Theater, Torino,
September 1991***

This is a contemporary didactic cantata for youth choir in three-part harmony, a children's chorus that mostly made sound effects of animals and birds in rhythm,

narrator, children's orchestra and a toy rhythm orchestra. We worked together with the composer and several school groups for many months and then presented the work for the schools in Torino. I have the recording. Alessandra Rinaldi, who now sings with Ensemble Tempus Floridum, was one of the child soloists. I remember re-writing the children's choral score so that it was more accessible to them, using my ideas from my *Sign and Sound* method.¹²

New Year's Day Concert, Florence Opera Theater, 1992

We sang the *Fantasia* by Carlo Savina, written for our school. Various ensembles performed. It was the first performance of this work.¹³

International Choral Festival, Riva del Garda, April 1992

We participated with the school's madrigal singers in this competition and received second prize. We had stiff competition with groups of various ages from all over Europe. Lago di Garda is a picturesque place to be and we enjoyed the visit very much and became friends with many other singers from other countries.

¹² More information about the composer can be found at: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergio_Liberovici

¹³ More information about the composer can be found at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlo_Savina

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Third Polyphonic Choral Festival, Palazzo Pignano, Cremona, June 1992

This was a competition for children. There were three choirs that participated and we presented difficult works that the children liked (including two sections of a Stabat Mater composed by my daughter Elena Pierini). No one received any prizes at all, and believe me, at the conclusion of the day all the parents and singers were very upset and let the organizers know it. But the place was beautiful and we had a fun time despite the rain!

Opera: Die Frau Ohne Schatten by Richard Strauss, Conductor Spiros Argiris, Opera Theater of Florence, February 1993

This was the first time we studied this score, and it is very difficult musically and vocally. But we did well. I remember that with minor children in the production it must finish by midnight. Well, that didn't always happen. One evening's production went much slower than usual, and we concluded much later than usual, and everyone was worried! All of the Ensemble Barbara Strozzi singers were in the group, which was quite large since they sing off-stage at the end of the opera.

Tour and Choral Festival, Montpellier, France, April 1993

Montpellier Geode High School "Jean Monnet" invited youth choirs from all over Europe. I brought our newly developed group of Madrigal Singers from the Fiesole school (a group of eight adolescents). We sang several concerts together, got to tour the area and stayed in

guest houses on the high school campus. Some singers stayed with families and we all had to brush up on our French! We gave important concerts in the Church of Notre Dame des Tables and in the enormous cathedral Saint Pierre. I remember the food was delicious, and we got to eat seafood at the port on the Mediterranean. I received a beautiful thank you letter afterwards signed by all the parents of my singers and I still have this letter.

***Visit to the Fiesole School by Luigi Scalfaro,
President of Italy, Madrigal Singers, May 1993***

We had just gotten new outfits for the singers – long colored skirts and white blouses. I have beautiful photos of eight madrigal singers (including my daughter) in the same rehearsal room that I still use today. It was also the day that a singer's mother died, so it was particularly emotional for everyone.

***Opera: Wozzeck by Alban Berg, Spoleto Festival
dei due Mondi, Conductor Steven Mercurio, June
1994***

Here our children's chorus sang their little nursery rhyme towards the end of the opera while playing Ring Around the Rosie. The boy protagonist in the opera, who was more of an actor than a singer, was not a student of mine. He was required to sing a few notes at the end of the opera, but he had never sung before. So I was asked to help out and I did; in two days he learned to sing the part. I never got any thanks of course, mind you. They had been trying for weeks to get this boy to

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sing high pitches and I knew what had to be done vocally. But I saved the day and the little boy knew it.

***Opera: Moses und Aron by Arnold Schoenberg,
Conductor Zubin Mehta, Orchestra and Chorus of
Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, 1994***

My daughter Elena was my assistant in this opera. The singers (including Giulia Peri, Antonio Giovannini, Valentina Giusti and others) had to sing the Prologue to the opera. This is in dodecaphonic style, very difficult frankly, with strange rhythms and intervals. I really had marvelous singers. They are all professional musicians today. I remember distinctly that at the first rehearsal with the orchestra in the theater, my singers were well prepared while the others really had a lot of studying left to do!

***Opera: La Damnation de Faust by Hector Berlioz,
given in symphonic form, Conductor Myung-
Whun Chung, Florence Opera Theater, January
1995***

This was an interesting experience and it has been the only time that I prepared this work. It is not easy singing in three-part harmony in French and Latin. The theater asked for a large children's chorus and I put together about 50 singers. Two days before opening night I received a fax with musical pages and a request to teach the children an extra part where they needed to sing a few words then laugh diabolically. I met the children at the theater two hours before the dress rehearsal and they learned the part, once more studying it not in a traditional solfège system, but through my *Sign and*

Sound methods. It was a great success and the conductor was wonderful. The children were placed in single file in front of the Maggio Musicale chorus and lining up at the stage door to enter, they extended to the street outside the rear entrance of the theater. We had the opera by memory and it was given in concert form.

Regional Choral Competition, Lucca, April 1995

Youth Scholastic choirs participated from all over Tuscany in this festival. I brought two choirs with me for the competition, the Children's Choir and the Youth Chorus from the Fiesole School. We won both first and second prizes. It was fun, but it was also obvious to all of our parents that we sang much more difficult music than the other choirs and that our singers were well prepared and understood perfectly what they were doing.

Opera: Carmen by Georges Bizet, Spoleto Festival dei due Mondi, Creator Gian Carlo Menotti, Conductor Paolo Carignani, June 1995

We stayed in Spoleto for two weeks for rehearsals and six performances. Two grandmothers stayed with us at a nun's convent. We ate in the local restaurants and everything was provided for by the festival that obviously had abundant funds at the time. I remember meeting the festival's creator, composer Gian Carlo Menotti, for the first time. Our children's choir was mostly girls at the time and he wanted all boys, so I was prepared to leave. But then the organizers spoke to me and they decided to dress the girls as boys. "Well, what

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else is new?” said I. My daughter was with me on this adventure. Children sing in Act 1 and Act 4 of this opera, and during Acts 2 and 3 they brought us dinner!

Opera: The Little Sweep (Il Piccolo Spazzacamino) by Benjamin Britten from “Let’s Make an Opera” in Italian language, Conductor Arnold Bosman, Stage Director Marina Bianchi, February 1996

This was a calm and successful production for the school children of Florence and nearby towns. We had a double cast and presented eight shows. Since the opera presents a moment in which the children in the audience must sing, whichever cast was not on stage, participated in the front rows of the audience to lead in the singing. We had wonderful adult soloists and great actors. Britten’s music is never outright easy, but he was a child singer himself and thought along the lines that I always have when composing melodies for children to learn. So I was very surprised to realize in this production that I wasn’t the only one in the world to think of musical necessities for children in the way I did. We have a CD of this production.

Opera: The Magic Flute by W.A. Mozart, Conductor Simone Young, Florence Opera Theater, Seven performances, 1996

A children’s choir was brought from Germany to perform in *The Magic Flute* opera at the Pergola Theater of Florence. It was thought that German children would be best to sing the role of the three Knaben in German for this very difficult, fast, music. They practiced all day and night. It was the usual hot summer in Florence and

the children weren't accustomed to such heat plus they were exhausted from the constant rehearsing. One fainted on stage. The theater spent a lot to bring these children, house them, etc., and a lot was lost. For the next year, they called me for my children to sing instead.

There were many challenges for my singers – learning the German was not easy and the music goes very fast. Add to that, they had to perform on swings suspended from different heights hanging quite high from the ceiling above the stage. We had a double cast, but only with five singers. My daughter Elena learned two parts so she could sing all of the seven performances. They couldn't hear each other or see the conductor. They had to use their ears that they had developed through my methods, listening keenly to the orchestra, entering at the right time and on the right pitch. Plus, they had to sing straight out to the audience to be heard, so they couldn't even look down at the conductor. I remember during one performance, the conductor stopped moving as she (an Australian woman) was having a lively unpleasant discussion with a viola player! My heart nearly stopped, but the orchestra just went on playing, following the young soloists. Needless to say, everyone was horrified, but the show continued.

These were smart students, now all professional musicians but they had also studied for many years with me from a young age. As you can see from reading about these many different performances, I need to get results very fast. My method is fast; students don't have to think of a lot of things all at once. I don't meet with

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my students much – I never did. So they have to learn very fast. In this way, my methods prepared these students for the great demands that opera performances make on them. Often, composers don't write children's opera parts with the natural voice and ability of children in mind. It is much higher and much more difficult. Centuries ago people were smaller and a boy's soprano voice lasted till age 16. Nowadays many change voices at age 12. This late age of maturation allowed composers in the past to write difficult music for treble voices that was performed by older teens. Today, these parts must be performed by younger children. Because of my methods of training and teaching, my students are naturally adept to these difficult situations.

Opera: Brundibar by Hans Krasa, a Holocaust opera for children, Piccolo Teatro, Opera Theater of Florence, Conductor Arnold Bosman, Staging Marina Bianchi, February 1997

We had a double cast for this production. The music is not difficult but it is interesting to recreate the sounds of Jewish music from the 1940s in the Terezin concentration camps. We had found a young lady to play the accordion whenever “Brundibar” (the evil character representing Hitler) appeared on stage. We presented two shows and many school children came. The ending was taken from the film *Schindler's List*, where the little girl appears with her red coat. Then there were signs hung for the audience to read at the end with all the names and ages of the children who had originally performed this opera for the Nazi forces and

the Red Cross. Most had died soon afterwards in Auschwitz.

CD of the opera Brundibar by Hans Krasa, first recording in Italian language, Conductor Francesco Lotoro, Instrumental Ensemble Musica Judaica, Barbara Strozzi Ensemble (Joan's students), CMCD 016. Produced by Sorriso s.r.l.

Brundibar is a Holocaust Opera in two acts that was first performed in Terezin in 1943. The Italian libretto was written by Clara and Daria Domenici. The original libretto in Czech and German language was by Adolf Hoffmeister. We went to Bari, Italy, to make the recording. Antonio Giovannini and Katja De Sarlo sang the two principal roles. They were teenagers at the time, and are now both professional singers.¹⁴

VII Regional Choral Festival Competition, Congress Hall of Florence, May 1997

I brought three youth choirs to this festival for school choirs. There were many others present. We were awarded first, second and third prize, and then unfortunately we were no longer invited to these events.

¹⁴ This CD may be found at: <https://amzn.to/2pMvWeE>

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Memorial concerts for the bombing of the Uffizi Galleries and the killing of children, Fiesole Youth Choir, Pianist Elena Pierini, Countertenor Antonio Giovaninni, Terrorist Attack in Via de Georgofili May 1996 and “Firenze Vive,” May 1997

Twice we gave an hour’s concert with pieces from various Requiems that I had arranged for female voices. It was a sad event. One of the elementary schools in the area near the Uffizi Gallery in Florence where the bombing had taken place is now named after one of the children killed in the attack.

Cantata: Carmina Burana by Carl Orff, Conductor Zubin Mehta, Piazza della Signoria, Florence, Florence Opera Chorus and Orchestra, July 1997

On this video, for which I am so grateful, the children sing at minute 40 and later at minute 54. They were perfectly synchronized. It is amazing to watch. Actually they also sang the entire ending as you can notice at minute 58:15. M^o Mehta said to me, “Do the children know the ending?” And I answered, “Yes, can they sing with the adult choir?” And he said, “Yes, of course, the more the merrier.” Several of the students in this group are now professional musicians (Martina Mattioli, Valentina Peleggi, Antonio Giovannini, Martina Rojas Chaigneau, Elena Pierini, Caterina Paolini, Claudia Aversa, Alessandra Rinaldi, Annamaria Vassalle, Elena Meozzi, Maria Gaia Pellegrini, Giulia De Sarlo, Francesca Macconi, Francesca Macchione, Eleonora

Macchione, Linda Giuntini, Matteo Carta). Others continue to sing with the Ensemble Tempus Floridum.¹⁵

Concerts for the City of Scandicci, Sala Consiliare, October 1997 and February 1998

These were very fulfilling concerts featuring several of our choirs. The organizers from Scandicci, including the Director of the Cherubini Conservatorio Giovanni Cicconi, were very grateful. We sang various types of music with a wonderful pianist, Fabiana Barbini.

Religious Poem: La Vita Nuova, Op.9, on a text by Dante, Maggio Musicale Theater of Florence, Conductor Günter Neuhold, January 1998

This score was not difficult and was in the language of Dante that the children knew growing up in Florence. They patiently learned this score and sat quietly during the three performances until it was their time to sing. Again, we needed to study not only our own singing parts, but the context of the orchestra and the opera chorus that sounded around us.

Opera: Wozzeck by Alan Berg, Conductor Zubin Mehta, Florence Opera Theater, May 1998

Towards the end of this opera, the children sing a rhyme while playing in the street. Just before they sing, the orchestra stops, ending in D minor. There is a bar's rest then the children pick up in a totally different key, starting on A flat. The whole time they tried to

¹⁵ The video: <https://youtu.be/iQRsq1E8B-Y>

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memorize this note, but frankly I always stayed just behind the curtain out of view to sing them the note and give them a downbeat. I think in this production M^o Mehta insisted that the children turn to see him for the attack to start the phrase. The children really don't sing much but it requires time to rehearse singing and dancing together.

Opera: Wozzeck by Manfred Gurlitt in Concert form, Conductor Gerd Albrecht, Opera Theater of Florence, Maggio Musicale Chorus, June 1998

This opera is extremely difficult to read and sing and was produced in the same period as Berg's *Wozzeck* conducted by Zubin Mehta. The children's chorus is for five voices, and we had six months to learn three pages! We studied two bars at each lesson, the music was very chromatic. The students were very patient and we needed to analyze each bar in order to learn it, using my note reading ideas on melodic spatial movement. I remember clearly how young Antonio Giovannini, now a world-renowned countertenor, concentrated to memorize his part and was present at every rehearsal.

CD Recording of Sacrae Cantiunculae and the Canzonette for Three Voices, Claudio Monteverdi, vol. 1. FLO 69003, 1995

Eight singers (named at the end of Chapter 4) studied 12 motets and 12 canzonette and made this beautiful recording at a small church in Settignano, Florence, Italy. Everything was edited by Joan Yakkey with the collaboration of the singers. An early instrumental

ensemble accompanied some of the canzonette with music written for the occasion by Joan Yakkey.

Barbara Strozzi Vocal Ensemble, an octet of Joan's former students which specialized in early vocal music was invited to hold concerts on special occasions, 1993-1998

Highlights include:

Cathedral of Pitigliano (Grosseto) 1993 – invited by the Episcopale.

Concert of early music at the Dante Church in Florence 1993 and 1994 – invited by the Association “La Ghironda.”

Concert for the 400th anniversary of the deaths in 1594 of G.P. da Palestrina and Orlando di Lasso, Teatro Rondò di Bacco (Palazzo Pitti, Florence) 1994 – invited by A.gi.mus Association.

Regional Choral Competition at St. James Church, Florence 1994. 2nd prize.

Christmas Concert in the Sala di Buonumore, Luigi Cherubini Conservatory, Florence 1994 and 1996.

Christmas Concert “Intorno al Ceppo” at the Congress Hall, 1994. Invitation by the city government of Florence.

Christmas Concert, San Lorenzo church of Prato 1994. Invited by the Concert Society Roberto Fioravanti.

Early Music concerts in Florentine churches: Santa Maria dei Ricci, Abbey of San Miniato al Monte, St

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James Episcopal Church, Florence Baptist and Methodist Churches 1994-1997.

Early Music concerts and festivals in the famous cathedrals of Tuscany on invitation by Choral Associations and local governments: Siena, Pistoia, Prato, Pisa, Florence, Signa, Borgo San Lorenzo 1994-1997.

“Il Pozzo, la Rocca” dramatisation of poetry by Saint Catherine of Siena, 1996.

Opera: The Queen of Spades (La Dama di Picche) by Peter I. Tchaikovsky, Florence Opera Theater, Conductor Semyon Bychkov, April 1999

For this opera, I taught the Russian text and song to the small children in the school, ages 7-9. It took six months to learn, but they were beautiful and had good memories and sang well. They sing right at the start of the opera then get out of their wonderful costumes and go home. The funny thing was that the entire text to the opera had been changed, in Russian, and we only found out about this one week before opening night. So after a very lively exchange of ‘what to do now’, the producers asked me to change one word in the song. Well, the children were so used to the original text that some were able to change and others not. But the show went on six times all the same. It got excellent reviews.

Opera: The Rooms of Mozart (Le Stanze di Mozart), International Festival, Rovereto, September 1999, Goldoni Theater, Florence, October 1999

This show was written and directed by Marina Bianchi and depicts the life of W.A. Mozart through the eyes of his elderly sister. The stage had many doors and as each one opened a different phase of Mozart's life became active. This show required that I research and edit many pieces that Mozart composed as a child so they could be adapted to the actors and singers on stage. The rehearsals were very long since Marina invented everything on the spot, trying and retrying certain effects.

Contemporary opera: Jakob Lenz by Wolfgang Rihm, Opera Theater of Florence (Maggio Musicale Fiorentino), Conductor Arnold Bosman, September 1999

This opera was very difficult. It required a sextet of young adults and two younger voices. As the story proceeds, the protagonist intensifies his madness, and so the music becomes always more intense and frankly very difficult. The soloist, Lenz, was a renowned Swede who had performed this opera all over Europe. I managed to make recordings voice by voice for the members of the sextet to study. The scenes were beautiful and the lighting was very colorful.¹⁶

¹⁶ For more information visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang_Rihm

Children's Oratorio for Epiphany: The Comet (La Cometa) composed by Joan Yakkey in commemoration of the new millennium, multiple performances December 1999 / January 2000

The Comet – La Cometa is a full Christmastide or Epiphany Oratorio that maintains the traditional form such as Handel's *Messiah*, in miniature, for young singers (including Overture, Choral parts, Arias, Recitatives, Duets, Narration, etc.). It is written for two children's choirs, narrator, soloists, hand percussion, handbells, acoustic or electronic piano and/or organ with violin or flute or other melodic instrument(s) – all adaptable according to availability and circumstances.¹⁷

Through this piece, young singers learn the music and also the form and tradition of Oratorios.¹⁸

Première performances were coordinated by the Department of Choral Activities for Children and Youth Singers School of Music of Fiesole, Florence, Italy.

The groups and musicians that participated in the first performances were: Children's Choral Workshop – Children's Polyphonic Choir – Youth Choir; Director Joan Yakkey; Pianist Fabiana Barbini; Organist Riccardo Foti; Violinist Anton Horvath; Handbells Elisa Ferragina, Arianna Commare; Drummers Marta

¹⁷ An excerpt from the full performance:

<https://youtu.be/Rzc1WHOQbu8>

¹⁸ © 2000 Music and Libretto by Joan Yakkey available in English, Italian, and German. Inspired with permission from the publishers of the book *The Four Wise Men* by Michel Tournier.

The Comet is available for download at:

<http://joanyakkey.musicaneo.com/>

Tucci, Camilla Silvestri, Vittoria Quartararo; Hand Percussionists Claudia D'Intino, Silvia Scannerini.

There were four première performances, some included chosen selections from the Oratorio:

1. *SS: Annunziata School (Poggio Imperiale), Florence, December 15, 1999*
2. *Church of San Bernardino. Borgunto Fiesole, Fiesole, December 18, 1999*
3. *Cathedral of Florence, Santa Maria dei Fiori, January 6, 2000*
4. *Verdi Theater, Florence, January 11, 2000*

THE CAST of THE COMET

(La Cometa - Der Komet)

NARRATOR

3 ASTROLOGERS (SSA or TTB)

KING GASPAR'S 2 SERVANTS (trebles)

AZIKO, COUNSELOR TO KING GASPAR (mezzo-soprano/ baritone)

CAMEL (treble)

THREE WISE MEN: GASPAR, BALTHASAR, MELCHIOR (SSA or TTB)

ELDERLY COMPANION (soprano or tenor)

KING HEROD (contralto or bass)

A SERVANT (contralto or bass)

THE ASS (treble or soprano or tenor)

THE OX (treble alto or mezzo-soprano or baritone)

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL (treble or soprano or tenor)

THE COMET (treble or mezzo-soprano or baritone)

CHORUS I – younger children: unison singing and sound effects (following graphic indications)

CHORUS II – adolescents or adults: unison singing and 2/3 part voicing (SS/SSA) available also for choirs of mixed voices upon request.

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***Opera: The Magic Flute by W.A. Mozart,
Conductor Theodor Guschlbauer, September
2000***

Here three of my best singers – Katja DeSarlo, Giulia Peri and Marta Ciuffi – sang as the three Geni. There were six shows. I now notice that the theater has its own Children’s Chorus. The last show of *The Magic Flute* had imported a German cast, including the children. They did not teach the Italian children this part. We did instead, albeit with singers not really children, but small in stature and very secure in their singing. Katja now sings with the Theater’s Chorus.

***Oratorio: La Natività by Don Domenico
Bartolucci, who also conducted the concert, Santo
Stefano Church, Florence, May Festival Chorus
and Orchestra, October 2000***

I’ll never forget this performance. I sat low in front of the children who were in the first row of the Theater’s Chorus singers. Next to me was the choral conductor. The composer was quite elderly at this point and was conducting the concert himself. At a certain point he wrongly cued in the trumpet players and everyone was scrambling to catch up. Then there was a general silence, and all the musicians were unsure how to proceed. The children were waiting to sing their part and waiting for a cue from the conductor. But this never happened and I just stood up and grabbed their attention and gave an enormous sign to breathe and a downbeat to start singing. The adult chorus followed the kids and all ended well. The theater conductor sitting right next to me couldn’t believe it. He thought all was lost but he

gave me a wink afterwards. He was Spanish and a nice guy who realized I had saved the whole concert.

***Opera: I Pagliacci by R. Leoncavallo, Florence
Opera House, Conductor Bruno Bartoletti,
October 2000***

The surprising thing about this production is that the costumes were updated a bit to about the 1940s and were very colorful. Children always enjoy learning this score; it's very lively. I remember one evening a disturbed spectator ran through the audience to the orchestra pit and jumped in among the orchestral players chasing one, who ran out the back door. The music never stopped!

*****Note from author:*** *I remember fondly this performance because it was the first that I attended with Joan after my son and I arrived in Florence in the fall of 2000. The children sang beautifully and the costumes were so colorful and detailed. We were backstage with Joan and some of the actors. I turned around to see the actors, all dressed as clowns, acting and entertaining Billy, my son, who was just three years old. He was completely mesmerized and staring in awe of this performance going on just feet in front of him! The actors were tremendous and even included him in their little skit. Something we will always remember!*

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***Opera: La Bohème by Giacomo Puccini,
Conductor Roberto Rizzi Brignoli, Florence Opera
Theater Chorus and Orchestra, January-
February 2001, 9 shows***

The stage director for this production was the famous Jonathan Miller. The conductor's downbeat went up but the children learned to adapt to his gestures. The costumes were beautiful and the children enjoyed themselves.

***Oratorio: Elijah by Felix Mendelssohn, Conductor
Roberto Abbado, Florence Opera Theater, March
2001***

Here four young soloists sang the famous Terzetto and the part of the boy Elijah. We have a wonderful photo together with the conductor.

***Visit to the School of Fiesole by President of Italy
Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, May 6, 2001***

We sang the Italian National Anthem and the children and parents were just thrilled. I have several photos with us all together with President Ciampi.

***Oratorio: Judas Maccabeus by G.F. Handel,
Conductor Ivor Bolton, Teatro della Pergola, May
Festival Orchestra and Chorus, May 2001***

The children's chorus sang the famous song "See the Conquering Hero Come." This too was a very instructive production because M^o Bolton is a known expert of Handel's music. He was very severe with the adult chorus members, some of whom showed up late

to rehearsals! But he was very happy with our punctuality and singing.

Opera: Attila by Giuseppe Verdi, Conductor Roberto Abbado, Opera House of Florence, October/November 2001, 6 performances

This was a lovely production – very calm – and the children were on stage for a long time as actors since there isn't too much for them to sing. They enjoyed themselves and finished their homework while waiting to go on stage.

Joint concert with The Philadelphia Boys Choir, Salone del 500, Palazzo Vecchio and Church Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Summer 2002

These concerts and meetings were organized by the American-Tuscan Association of Florence. My children became friends immediately with them. The only problem was the extreme heat that summer. The boys choir included men. They were more than 100 singers plus organizers, and it was very difficult to organize their meals. Mostly everyone ate picnic style in open spaces.

Opera: The Magic Flute by W.A. Mozart, Conductor Myung-Whun Chung, Regional Tuscan Orchestra, Verdi Theater, 2002

Again my singers prepared the parts of the three Geni. It was a production in costumes but without scenery, basically in concert form. M^o Chung was an excellent conductor and the reviews in the newspapers were superlative.

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Concert in the Pantheon with all our singers, Conductor Joan Yakkey, Rome, Spring 2003

What a beautiful place to sing! However, the acoustics are difficult given the dome overhead that has an enormous hole in it. Certain sounds escape while others circle around the dome changing pitch. We did have to try out several locations in the room to find the best one acoustically. We have beautiful photos of this event.

CD of the opera: Tosca by Giacomo Puccini, Andrea Bocelli, Fiorenza Cedolins, Conductor Zubin Mehta, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Fiesole Children's Chorus, 2003, CD Decca ASIN: B00008JL7Z

The opera chorus and orchestra met in the Theater together with my Children's Chorus from the Fiesole School for two afternoons. The soloists also came and the recording went very quickly. The children had a wonderful experience singing right next to the professional singers and observing how Zubin Mehta organized the recording process.¹⁹

New Year's Day concert directed by Joan Yakkey, Fiesole School Orchestra, Schola Cantorum Adult Chorus and Youth Chorus, Florence Opera Theater, 2004

Here three orchestras from the school played several pieces and we presented a new choral work by Fabio Vacchi, "Capodanno con Piero," dedicated to Piero

¹⁹ <https://www.allmusic.com/album/puccini-tosca-mw0001386098>

Farulli for 30 years of service to the School of Music of Fiesole. This work was short but extremely dissonant and difficult to sing. In fact, the ladies from the adult chorus sang together with the children. We had fun though, as usual at the concert, but rehearsing this score was stressful due to the dissonances which are so typical of contemporary Italian music.

Opera: Khovantshchina (Chovanščina) by Modest Mussorgsky, Conductor James Conlon, Florence Opera Orchestra and Chorus, September/October 2004

We had about 20 young children in this opera. The costumes and scenery were magnificent. The music wasn't difficult to learn and the children had a wonderful time.

New opera: Volevo un Foglio by Giacometti & Montelbetti, Winning score for a competition to celebrate "Thirty Years of the Foundation of the School of Music of Fiesole," Conductor Carlo Rizzari, Goldoni Theater of Florence, Fiesole School Youth Orchestra, October 2004

This was an interesting new score and it required at least six months of rehearsing although there wasn't much to study for the choral singers, but a lot for the soloists. I had to adjust many of the choral parts that were either too simple or too difficult and I had the composer's permission to do so. With a double cast of soloists, it took a lot of time to stage – about two solid weeks in the Goldoni Theater of Florence. The parents were quite tired, but the performances were excellent. Several

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performances were during the morning hours (our singers had to skip school!) for the school children and two performances for the general public. The two composers were very patient and kind and happy.

Holocaust Concert in Memory of January 27, 1945, Music by Betty Olivero, Goldoni Theater, Florence, January 2005

This was a difficult, contemporary score (*L'Ombra che Porta il Sogno*, 2005) that was given to me piece by piece in full orchestral score through email as it was being composed. I developed the vocal parts for the children. The Israeli composer had firm ideas and she visited our rehearsals often. We had a successful concert.²⁰

Cantata: Carmina Burana by Carl Orff, Estate Regina, Montecatini, Conductor Giovan Battista Varoli, Opera Chorus of Florence Theater, January 2005

This was a lovely relaxing evening. We had only a few singers left in town over the summer and joined forces with another children's chorus from the area (Rubiano). We gave the concert in the Terme Tettuccio (Tettuccio Thermal Baths).

²⁰ More information about the composer can be found at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betty_Olivero

***Opera: Tosca by Giacomo Puccini, Conductor
Zubin Mehta, Florence Opera Theater, May 2005***

This again was a wonderful production, a thrilling “Te Deum” finale and a young Giulia Peri (now soprano with various early music groups) sang the solo with no vibrato as the shepherd boy at the opening of Act 3. In the newspaper critique (Sole 24 ore, May 8, 2005) we read: “Finally a Shepherd boy who sings perfectly (a posto).”

***CD of the opera: La Boheme by Giacomo Puccini,
Soprano Barbara Frittoli (Mimì); Tenor Andrea
Bocelli (Rodolfo), Soprano Eva Mei (Musetta),
Bariton Paolo Gavanelli (Marcello), Baritone
Natale de Carolis (Schaunard), Bass Mario Luperi
(Colline), Coro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino/
Coro di Voci Bianche della Scuola di Musica di
Fiesole/ Israel Philharmonic Orchestra/ Zubin
Mehta: conductor, 2000, Decca ASIN:
B0015S3HY2***

A small anecdote about this recording of *La Bohème*. It was recorded in Israel with the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra. The soloists and the Maggio Musicale Chorus from Florence went to Israel for the recording. An Israeli children’s choir had been contacted to sing in Act 2. For some reason, it didn’t work out with the Israeli Children’s Choir; the music goes extremely fast and in a foreign language for the Israeli children, so I received two weeks’ notice from Mehta’s secretary to get my children ready to add their voices to the recording. Mehta had two hours of free time on a Sunday morning in the opera theater of Florence, and

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we had to squeeze in the children's parts over the audio of the rest of the recording already finished in Israel. That was not easy! The music was barely piped in to be able to sing along at the right tempi. But we did it and Mehta even commented that they were singing in Tuscan pronunciation "Noci di coho" and I answered him saying that Puccini was a Tuscan himself from Lucca, so he wouldn't have minded. And at that he was satisfied and finished the recording session that morning.²¹

***Symphony No.3 "Kaddish" by Leonard Bernstein,
Conductor Zubin Mehta, Florence Opera Theater,
May 2006***

This was very difficult music to put together. The children have a five-part canon to sing and everyone who had studied with me this year took part in the production. The children were set up in the theater in a single line behind the orchestra. The opera chorus sat behind them. At the rehearsal, a wonderful thing happened. Mehta was putting everyone together in the section where the children's chorus was to sing this galloping canon in syncopated rhythms, representing the youthful years of the composer. He was conducting in a fast three, as would be required, but I had always conducted in a measured one beat, giving the downbeats of each measure. Mehta tried to put things together a few times and it wasn't working so he offered me his baton to show him how I conducted the children. Oh my

²¹ The review can be found at:
<http://classicalcdreview.com/bocelliboh.htm>

God, I was trembling! But I got my courage together and conducted in one beat per measure, and the orchestra followed the chorus perfectly. I got a big applause by everyone and a former piano student of mine, Alessandro, took a photo from his cell phone of me conducting, with Mehta behind! See, the idea was not to be perfect with the syncopations, but to stay together with the measures on the canon. The section represents children playing and it didn't need to be perfectly synchronized. Anyhow, that was an unforgettable experience. Mehta never rehearsed that section again before the concert and I was backstage listening and praying. He conducted in three at the concert but gave a strong downbeat that kept the canon together. I still have this photo in a frame in my house!²²

Choral Festival Dresden, Germany, May 2006

We gave two concerts in Dresden. We had been invited to join other choruses from “sister” cities to celebrate the restoration of the exquisite Frauenkirche, that had been bombed during WWII. Every stone was saved and the entire church was reconstructed exactly the way it was before the war. The acoustics are awesome; every choral director's dream. In fact now I see on television that every New Year's Day a concert is broadcast internationally from this church. The inside is white marble and the church is rounded with balconies and several entrance ways. We sang a cappella music that

²² The article can be found at: <http://www.jewishquarterly.org/issuearchive/article1756.html?articleid=327> and the video can be found at: <https://youtu.be/QNanHeFjnew>

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resulted just beautifully. I had a variety of children with me, and everyone participated with great joy and success. We had an official welcome by the city government in town hall. Again the children stayed with the generous families from the Mittelschule Weixdorf, buses worked well to and from the homes, and we went on tour often. We even took an extensive boat ride with all the other choral singers on the beautiful Danube. Everything was offered by the local authorities. The Philharmonischer Kinderchor of Dresden then came to Florence and sang in the cathedral in Pisa. Of course, the tourists weren't quiet and the Germans were used to great respect for children singers. But in Italy, alas, it's rather difficult to obtain silence in any concert venue.

Third Symphony by Gustav Mahler, Conductor Zubin Mehta, Florence Opera Orchestra and Chorus, September 2006

For this performance, Mehta desired at least 40 children singers, so we put two choruses together and sang with Marisol Caballo's group "I Ragazzi Cantori di Firenze." The magic of Mehta's direction was such that everyone sang together perfectly from the first note. The orchestra had played this score many times under Mehta's baton.

Christmas Concert at the General Consulate of America in Florence, December 2006

This cold winter afternoon was organized by the Tuscan-American Association. We sang about 30 minutes of Christmas music and our magnificent pianist of many years, Riccardo Foti, accompanied us. The

guests appreciated our music. A photographer came and gave us wonderful pictures of the event. To enter the Consulate from the private door, every name had to be listed and communicated beforehand. Afterwards we joined in on refreshments.

Opera: La Bohème by G. Puccini, Conductor Stefano Ranzani, Stage Director Jonathan Miller, Opera Theater of Florence, January 2007, 7 shows

As usual, the children enjoyed themselves doing these shows. The reviews were excellent. From the newspaper critique (Giornale della Toscana): “Let’s not forget the children’s chorus from the School of Fiesole prepared by Joan Yakkey who always demonstrate their accurate precision and impeccable professionalism.” I have this article. The shows were all sold out. Italians love this opera.

Sweden Tour, two concerts in Göteborg and one in Stockholm, August 2007

We stayed about a week in Sweden with a wonderful group of choral singers including some soloists. We gave three concerts and stayed with the families in Göteborg and in hostels in Stockholm. We also had time to tour, visiting the Conservatory and the Opera House. All was organized by Kerstin Ricklund and the families of the Brunnsbo Musik class of her school. Carina

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Olofson organized our beautiful concert at the Swedish Church of Stockholm. The acoustics were wonderful.²³

CD recording for the children's book Gogo on original music by Ennio Clari, 2007

This is a very colorful children's book, written by a Swiss author and published in Switzerland, about the adventures of animals in an exotic country and desired relative musical settings. The animals each had a song to interpret and some songs were sung in chorus. The composer organized a day at recording studios and the children experienced the participation in a recording session and discovered how well they needed to interpret their characters.²⁴

Concert Beatus Angelico, arr. Joan Yakkey, Basilica Santa Croce, November 2007

In a freezing Florence church, we sang my arrangement of Antonio Vivaldi's *Beatus Vir* with Riccardo Foti at the piano. Many other groups participated in the evening's festival of sacred music.²⁵

²³ This video on YouTube has received 62,000 views to date:
<https://youtu.be/W2SXELbHuic>

²⁴ The book can be found here https://www.amazon.it/canta-suona-nella-giungla-CD-Audio/dp/8882038114/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1500294560&sr=1-4&keywords=Gogo

²⁵ A video can be found here <https://youtu.be/6MCR4GblPt8>

***Choral Festival for School Choruses, Alessandria,
May 2008 / May 2018***

This was a festival for youth choirs from many parts of Italy. About 12 choirs took part, mostly from schools. It was not a competition. We each sang 15 minutes in the morning at the Music Conservatory in Alessandria (near Torino) and the jury gave comments to each choir; they told me that my children sang very loud. Mind you this was a small Renaissance room in the conservatory and it echoed greatly. We all participated in the concert in the afternoon with two pieces each. I'll never forget this final concert. We were presented as the final choir, and the announcer literally presented me saying, "Italians must now learn from an American conductor how to sing in the bel canto style." I couldn't believe it! These kind of words only make other choral directors upset. But I was very flattered and proud of my kids. I have beautiful photos from this choral festival. We sang a contemporary sacred work with piano accompaniment and a four-part a cappella motet, "Cantate Domino" by Giuseppe Pitoni, 16th century. We are repeating the experience in 2018 with Renaissance a cappella repertory, "La Foi" by Rossini and contemporary arrangements of musical selections from the *Harry Potter* movies.

***Opera: Mephistofeles by Arrigo Boito, Conductor
Bruno Bartoletti, soloist Samuel Ramey, Florence
Opera Theater, June 2008***

This was an incredible concert! The Fiesole Children's Chorus sang and had to repeat this tongue twister in 6/8

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time as fast as they could: “Siam nimbi volanti dai limbi. Nei santi splendori vaganti. Siam cori di bimbi, d’amori. Siam nimbi volanti dai limbi.” The phrases repeat over and over and it takes practice to get things smooth. We were told to study Part Two, which we had done for several months. Then at the first rehearsal with the orchestra, we realized we also needed to know Part Three and we didn’t even have that music. So in one afternoon we printed out Part Three for the children and practiced an hour before the second rehearsal together. Thank goodness the music was similar to what we had already studied. The children also told me they were following the conductor’s elbows for the rhythm. I believe at the time M^o Bartoletti was nearing age 90. He was a very kind and sweet gentleman and kept time in his own fashion, cueing in the players.

Cantata: Carmina Burana by Carl Orff, Conductor Christopher Franklin, Florence Opera Theater Chorus and Orchestra, Roman Amphitheater, Fiesole, July 2008

This was a perfect performance in the cool air of the hillside town of Fiesole. We were only about 15 singers, but frankly there wouldn’t have been space for a large group.

Tour to Ostrava, Czech Republic, October 2008

Upon an invitation by the choral Director Milan Chromik of Ostrava, we traveled by plane to Prague, visited the city a couple of days, then went by a local crowded train to Ostrava. At the train station in Ostrava, family cars of the children from the Ostrava Children’s

Chorus picked up our singers and brought them to their homes for three days. They were kind and the children (many adolescents) sang well and were very musical and fascinated with our repertory which was quite different from theirs (mostly folk music). We toured the area, then went to a picturesque resort town by bus, stayed in hotels, had meals offered and gave a wonderful joint concert in the local ancient church not used anymore for religious functions, full of frescoes that had wonderful acoustics. Czech TV videoed the entire concert and broadcast it. We were also given a copy of the DVD. What service! I put these videos on my YouTube channel. Alex, a University student, sang with the Czech chorus and became our guide since his English was excellent. We paid for our traveling to Ostrava, but everything else in Ostrava was funded by the Czech government.²⁶

***Opera: La Bohème by Giacomo Puccini,
Conductor Giampaolo Bisanti, Florence Opera
Theater, November 2008***

We had 21 children participate in this production, many boys; as usual the costumes were beautiful, the children were lively and did a wonderful job.

²⁶ Two videos: <https://youtu.be/EGpgLruuDjY> and <https://youtu.be/wCzGlv1Akzs>

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*Figure 14: Performance of Puccini's La Boheme,
Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, 2008*

***Opera: I Pagliacci by R. Leoncavallo, Scenes and
Stage Direction Franco Zeffirelli, Conductor
Patrick Fournillier, May Festival Orchestra and
Chorus, February 2009***

The vivacious colors and the enormous cast made this show extraordinary with costumes and scenes from the 1960s. A company of circus clowns was hired to take part and it was mutual love at first sight.²⁷

***CD: Auguri e Buon Natale, Fiesole Youth Choir
and Soloists, Autumn 2009***

We sang about 30 international Christmas songs in various formations on this CD. We recorded everything in two mornings because we were well prepared, and the task at hand was distributed among several soloists

²⁷ This is the TV presentation:

<http://www.operaclick.com/recensioni/teatrale/firenze-teatro-comunale-pagliacci> Another recording is here:

<https://youtu.be/5lf3yt5oXYk>

and different choral groups. I still have about 500 of these CDs that we sell every Christmas since it was recorded. The CD jacket was created with drawings made by the children. I arranged all the songs and created the orchestral backgrounds on the computer with the Sibelius music program, so the final effect is very interesting. It wasn't easy to record over the background music, but we had practiced with an orchestral recording for several months.

***Ensemble Vocale Tempus Floridum CD recording,
“Donne in Armonia” (Women in Harmony),
Collaboration between Joan Yakkey from
Florence & Canary Burton from USA, 2009***

Ten singers collaborated on this CD with Ennio Clari at the piano and Joan Yakkey conducting. It includes Folksong arrangements, original songs and choral works. Many of Canary Burton's solo songs were arranged for choral ensemble in both Italian and English languages.²⁸

***Christmas Oratorio by J.S. Bach, arranged for
string quartet, organ, soloists and treble chorus
by Joan Yakkey, Auditorium Cassa di Risparmio
and St James Church, 2008 and Abbey S.
Salvatore e S. Lorenzo at Settimo (Scandicci),
December 6, 2009***

Learning this score actually took two full years. We had given excerpts of the Oratorio for our Christmas concert

²⁸ Review available at:
<http://cdinformation.blogspot.com/2010/06/cd-reviews-on-women-in-harmony-donne-in.html>

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in 2008 with a string ensemble of young students from the school. The Oratorio is adapted (simplified a little and shortened) but includes 90% of the musical sections (Recitatives, Arias, Duets, Chorales etc.). The music of Bach can be interpreted in a thousand ways and still retain its original beauty. It took me only six months to rewrite everything. We sang in Italian from a Ricordi edition. I have a wonderful recording of this event.²⁹



Figure 15: Joan conducting Bach's Christmas Oratorio, 2009

***Christmas Concert with piano accompaniment,
Gipsoteca Art Institute (now closed), Porta
Romana, Florence, December 16, 2009***

We sang for many guests who then remained for a banquet. The large room had extraordinary statues and

²⁹ The video is here: https://youtu.be/nijLiqL_pjA

other art works. It also had wonderful acoustics. The audience was very attentive and applauded us often. We sang Christmas carols and excerpts from Bach's Oratorio.³⁰

Operetta: L'Isola dei Pappagalli con Bonaventura (Parrot Island) by Sergio Tofano, music by Nino Rota, Director Aldo Tarabella, Verdi Theater in Florence, Tuscany Regional Orchestra, youth chorus and soloists from the Fiesole School, Conductor Marcello Bufalini, May 2010

This was a beautiful production with easily learned music for the children. The students from the Fine Arts Academy of Florence made the costumes and the scenery, which was extraordinarily colorful. There were nine professional actors and musical drama dancers from Prato that held the roles of the adult protagonists. They obviously had studied a lot. All the lyrics were in rhyme and extremely funny. Wonderful show! ³¹

Opera: Die Frau Ohne Schatten, by Richard Strauss, Conductor Zubin Mehta, 73rd Florentine May Festival, Florence Opera Orchestra and Chorus, April/May 2010

The story of this opera is very unique. It is about a woman, who isn't human, and is without a shadow but desired to become human. It was written by Richard

³⁰ The video is here: <https://youtube/Os5eWwofTIM>

³¹ This article has a picture of the children singing on stage: <http://www.giornaledellamusica.it/rol/?id=3194> The video is here: <https://youtu.be/Os5eWwofTIM>

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Strauss in 1917 during WWI. It was a difficult time in the world, and Strauss wanted to write a beautiful fairy tale with a happy ending. The beginning of the opera is scored for six children soloists, the voices of the unborn children, but you rarely see this part being sung by children. It is very difficult. So usually, opera theaters ask adult singers to perform the first act. The rest of the opera though has many children's parts in it, and nothing like a melody you can learn and repeat, it's mostly in conversation form so the children need to learn the whole score in order to sing their own parts in the right moments.

I trained my students and they performed these parts with ease. Again, they had the ability to learn music quickly because of their strong music reading, sight singing skills and their developed ears. I had very little rehearsal time with them, but they thought of the music graphically as they had learned and they could remember the designs and the corresponding sound.

In the third act, the chorus is off-stage with microphones and speakers projecting the sound into the theater. That was difficult to coordinate, but the technicians are professional and were perfect. The children's choir sings in three-part harmony and goes up to a high C three times. I had students say that they've never made a sound that high, but we practiced those high notes at every rehearsal. Their ears were trained, and they could reproduce the score from what they learned in the *Sign and Sound* books. The opera theater anticipated that children could not sing these parts and brought in adult women singers to double the parts.

When Mehta heard my children (together with some additional older former students) sing these sections, he said that the adult women singers were not needed. So it gradually became just the children singing and their performance was excellent. We had a big applause.

At the end, we were taking our bows and Mehta came to me twice backstage, took my hand and thanked me. It was so beautiful. These are truly unforgettable moments. He never learned my name in over 25 years of collaboration and he always called me “That American woman,” but I knew he recognized me. He is so concentrated always on making a good performance; he treats all the musicians with utmost respect and obtains wonderful results, in my opinion. We were scheduled to give four performances but the theater musicians went on strike, so we only gave the first and last shows. That was really a shame after so much rehearsing!

This production was an enormous success and received outstanding critiques in the newspapers and international reviews.³²

³² Mehta presents the opera here: <https://youtu.be/R2tcy5HxHEI> and other video: <https://youtu.be/jc7YimLLv2A>

Double CD recording of opera: I Medici by R. Leoncavallo, Conductor A. Veronesi, Singers: Placido Domingo, Carlos Alvarez, Daniela Dessi, Renata Lamanda, Florence May Festival Chorus and Orchestra, Children's Chorus: Scuola di Musica di Fiesole directed by Joan Yakkey, Deutsche Grammophon BOO3AMAOVU, 2010

I remember well the performance of this newly discovered opera in symphonic form at the Puccini Festival at Torre del Lago, prior to our recording which was done on a hot July day in 2009 at the Florence Opera Theater. We had about 25 children singing at the performance but for the recording during vacation time, only 12 children were available. They knew the score well and sang in 2 parts. The technicians from Deutsche Grammophon expressed their satisfaction and complimented me personally on the children's chorus. They liked the sound very much of a choral group composed of both boys and girls, and were amazed that they could follow a new score being so far away from the conductor and not able to even hear the women of the opera chorus with whom they often had to sing. The German technician went on to say that he often records with the children's choruses from Germany, and they are so well trained that they become inflexible and cannot follow a constant change in tempos, as was happening in this score. Our chorus was not so well rehearsed for this score for lack of time; we only knew about the recording two weeks earlier, and only half the children were available. However, it was through my methods that the children could master the music so

well and so quickly. The CD is now on sale on the internet.³³

***Opera: Tom Thumb by H.W. Henze, Conductor
Francisco Bonnin, Piccolo Teatro, Opera Theater
of Florence, October 2010***

We collaborated in this production with Marisol Carballo's young singers. Our madrigalists interpreted the roles of the six brothers, whereas the "Ragazzi Cantori di Firenze" sang the parts of the sisters. As I said before, many musicians love this score which has been a great success. The scenes and costumes and the children are always lovely to see, but just listening to the music is very disturbing to my ears: it is intellectually conceived and then in certain moments becomes blatantly folk-like and boring with repetitions. The long solo part for the small boy, Tom Thumb, is very difficult, dissonant and rhythmically advanced. I remember the extensive rehearsals with the little boy and the conductor – I felt so sorry for both. Britten instead always wrote melodies and rhythms for the children in his operas that were appropriate for their age and experience and helped by a certain orchestration. Britten has a whole different viewpoint that never fails to function and never bored a child to study.³⁴

³³ <https://www.amazon.it/Leoncavallo-I-Medici-Plácido-Domingo/dp/B003AMAOVU>

³⁴ <http://www.nove.firenze.it/b010191552-per-pollicino-30-ragazzi-in-scena-al-piccolo-teatro.htm>

**War Requiem (Op.66) by Benjamin Britten,
Conductor Semyon Bychkov, Florence Opera
Chorus and Orchestra, October 2010**

Britten's music is always difficult but among my favorites. It just makes such good sense architecturally speaking and lies so well in the voice. It was a lot to study, I admit, and I had also re-written all the children's chorus vocal parts. In the theater for the concert, we sang from outside the second balcony, but I was having trouble seeing in this period so the theater's choral director conducted the children. We received many compliments. They were perfectly in tune. We had many adolescents singing with the children.³⁵

**Concert in the courtyard of Bargello Museum,
June 2011**

The younger children from our Polyphonic Chorus entertained the guests of a convention seated at tables around the courtyard of the Bargello Museum for a dinner. Often the school accepts concert requests from private agencies and, in this case, the agency organized us perfectly. We waited in a nearby hotel until it was the right moment, between courses, to sing. There was an acoustic grand piano for our pianist, so the evening was a great success. I have lovely pictures of this evening.

³⁵ Here is an article:

<http://www.operaclick.com/recensioni/teatrale/firenze-teatro-comunale-concerto-di-semyon-bychkov>

Opera: The Toy Factory (La Fabbrica dei Giocattoli), Children's opera by Joan Yakkey, October 2011 in Italian, April 2015 in English, American première

I bought a beautifully illustrated children's book on the legend "The Sword in the Stone." I quickly imagined a modernized version of the story. I wrote the libretto myself thinking of the sequence of musical numbers. The story begins in a toy factory in old Europe, where the owner dies and leaves his young son Arthur in charge, only to be helped by Wizard Merlin; he and Witch Mim (Mad Madam Mim) use their cell phones instead of magic wands to create spells and magic. After the owner's death, the factory was not functioning well, the music goes crazy, the children were unhappy and young Arthur wasn't even nearby! Wizard Merlin is invoked to better the situation. Arthur was living on an island in the Pacific and Merlin grabbed his Delta plane to find him and educate him. The story then follows the same line as the original legend and ends in a full chorus in Rossinian style, with all the characters celebrating together – Arthur has learned to govern the Factory, Little Squirrel becomes his fiancé, and Merlin and Mim get engaged!³⁶

³⁶ The entire opera can be seen in 22 videos on Joan's YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/user/joyakkey>

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Figure 16: World premiere of The Toy Factory children's opera, composed by Joan, performed at the Puccini Theater, Florence, 2010

The score required nine months of preparation with our children. It was written to include all of the choral groups at the school, young children, adolescents and soloists. The score contains all the elements of an opera (overture, dialogue, arias, choruses, duets, etc.).

Two adults from the voice classes participated. The scenery and costumes were made by the Art Institute of Florence. Director Aldo Tarabella coordinated everything and it was a marvelous experience. The children learned so much about theater and acting and memorizing a score. The school's orchestra stayed the last week of stage rehearsals in the Puccini Theater of

Florence and I helped from the orchestra pit to conduct the choral parts and cue in certain soloists.³⁷

In 2015, we were invited to Carefree, Arizona, to present the opera in English, together with the Musical Theater class of Boulder Creek High School (Anthem, AZ) prepared by Kirk Douglas. Six of my singers were able to make the trip. The local newspapers and magazines printed long articles with many photos about the production. There was no orchestra available due to a shortage of funds, so I played the keyboard together with another pianist, and re-wrote the piano-vocal score for two keyboards at the last minute. We gave four performances and my cousins from the Los Angeles area came to two of them. So, it was a great satisfaction both professionally and personally. The audience had a wonderful time and I would like to publicly thank Mezzo-Soprano Mary Sue Hyatt for having organized this event for me and my singers, and for the offer of hospitality developed through the Lutheran Church of Carefree and its members. The Italian girls also gave a concert at this church and sang at two services. They are still in contact with their host family.³⁸

³⁷ The whole opera is on YouTube, on Joan's channel, in Italian. We have a DVD of the opera in Italian with English subtitles added. This is the opening chorus:

<https://youtu.be/LUEQHJt1FRU>

³⁸ The videos are here: <https://youtu.be/gb1JZ8luMdo> and <https://youtu.be/84E-WPU3Pys>

Selections from Bernstein's West Side Story, New Year's Day Concert, New Opera Theater of Florence, 2012

This was one of the first concerts in the New Theater, and it was still under construction backstage. The chorus memorized two selections from *West Side Story*, and managed to get the hand rhythms straight. We had practiced listening well to the syncopated rhythms and the velocity of the English language. It was a great success.³⁹

Ballando con la Vespa di Toti, Roman Vlad Concert, Foyer of New Opera Theater, May 2012

This is dodecaphonic vocal music for children written by Roman Vlad on Italian rhymes for children, presented during his Conference in May 2012 at the Florence New Opera Theater where he unveiled his latest book. He loved the children that afternoon and explained to the public that dodecaphonic music can be learned by anyone. I reorganized a few songs from a large collection to facilitate the score and the effect was exactly what he had in mind. I had done this before, synthesizing a composer's intent into a new graphic style accessible to a child.⁴⁰

³⁹ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/BuOtXMT6Xoc>

⁴⁰ The video is here: https://youtu.be/V_WHIQaRAnU

***Opera: Der Rosenkavalier by Richard Strauss,
Conductor Zubin Mehta, Florence Opera Chorus
and Orchestra, 75th May Festival, 2012***

Learning this score was very tricky. The children sang a similar phrase several times, but it was never really the exact same music! That is really asking for extraordinary minds and time and patience to learn when to sing what, and all while running around the stage. Maestro Mehta was very happy with the children. As usual I rewrote the children's vocal score to match their level of solfège comprehension with my system of thinking in shapes and blocks of music (similar to phrases).⁴¹

***Concert Tour to Dublin with the Madrigalists of
the Fiesole School, Two noon concerts in the
cathedrals, Two Evensongs and a service at the
Unitarian Church on a Sunday morning, August
2012***

We were 16 singers including older boys and our pianist Riccardo Foti. We brought a sacred repertory of 25 pieces and were just in awe at the beauty of Christ Church Cathedral and St. Patrick's Cathedral. We processed for Evensong services together with the priests and have wonderful photos singing in the famous chancels with candles.⁴²

⁴¹ Videos are here: <https://youtu.be/E9KQUNMc3G4> and <https://youtu.be/twoF506oyCo>

⁴² The video is here: <https://youtu.be/KHlzG7ilFZk>

“Sister Act”: title for our former choristers, First Choral Reunion, St. James Church in Florence, April 1, 2013

Several of my former students requested that we organize a reunion. So we created a group on Facebook and decided on the repertory we loved together, got organized, sent scores for everyone to study and had a brief rehearsal in the church prior to the concert. What a powerful emotional experience! I invited my present younger choral singers to join in, and many came. During the concert someone stole the bouquet of flowers that the girls were planning to give to me! We were laughing so hard because they left the card which I read to everyone. Afterwards we all went for a pizza together nearby and promised each other to get together again.⁴³

Opera: Macbeth by Giuseppe Verdi, Pergola Theater of Florence, Conductor James Conlon, New production, May Festival Opera Theater, Florence, June 2013

Two children soloists are usually required as the ghosts in this opera. This was contemporary staging but the music is always beautiful. Sarà Sayad Nik and Lorenzo Carrieri sang the songs of the ghosts.⁴⁴

⁴³ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/9Lc20ncidxA>

⁴⁴ The articles are available at:

<http://www.gbopera.it/2013/06/firenze-teatro-della-pergola-macbeth/> and <http://www.operaclick.com/recensioni/teatrale/firenze-teatro-della-pergola-macbeth>

Cantata: Carmina Burana by Carl Orff, Conductor Zubin Mehta, Maggio Musicale, Mandela Forum, Florence Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Furas dels Baus, 2013

We have prepared the children's chorus for *Carmina Burana* many times with M^o Mehta and other conductors. In the summer of 2015, we performed *Carmina Burana* in the Florence Sports Theater called Mandela Forum with a Spanish acrobatic group Fura dels Baus and Mehta conducting. They did acrobatics during the music. There is a rooster part that is sung by a countertenor, and the acrobats taught him to go up the pole like a rooster going up to a higher place to crow.

The stage setting for the children was very difficult. Maestro Mehta was behind them and students were spread out across the stage. The show is in total darkness with the lights on the acrobats. The children had to crawl across stage to not get in the line of sight of the singers. So, they could not see the conductor. It was very difficult – just this total silence and they start singing out of nowhere. The children were having difficulty with the entrances and Mehta called me down to the podium to ask if I could please conduct them. He told me to go in front of the children and dress in black with white gloves so that the children could see my hands. This helped, but there were still so many distractions for young children with thousands of people in the audience, in darkness, with difficult music, monitors to follow and being spread across the stage. Again, we relied on the *Sign and Sound* methods emphasizing the directionality of the music. I did not

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use traditional conducting gestures but rather directional gestures, creating designs with my hands showing the music, just as students practice doing in my classes with their own compositions. At the end, M^o Mehta recognized the difference and value of this approach and acknowledged that I had my own way of conducting them – directionally.⁴⁵

Cantata: Carmina Burana by Carl Orff, Valenzano Castle in Sabbiano, Conductor Ennio Clari, Three amateur Tuscan choruses sang together, July 2014

How beautiful to perform this work in a genuine castle! Only 10 children could take part given that others were away on vacation. The two pianists, percussionists and soloists were professional musicians. We had a wonderful dinner all together afterwards.⁴⁶

Holocaust Opera: Brundibar by Hans Krasa, Conductor Elena Pierini, Goldoni Theater of Florence, Youth Orchestra Conservatorio Cherubini, October 2014

I rewrote the entire piano-vocal score in Italian for this production. The director, Marina Bianchi, had certain ideas in mind and it was just quicker to create a new score than read from what is published in three languages, in different rhythms and in two versions. The composer had written this opera in Prague before his internment in the Terezin concentration camp.

⁴⁵ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/XGID-bwqO4o>

⁴⁶ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/V2GVkN82PT8>



*Figure 17: Joan and Elena, Brundibar, 2014.
Photo by Massimo Sabatini*

During his imprisonment he dedicated himself towards keeping the Jewish children busy with positive activities and re-wrote his opera *Brundibar* for them to learn and present to the Germans on the post and to the Red Cross delegation that visited. And so we have two versions: the original Prague version and that which was re-written in the Terezin camps (with lowered keys and simplified tunes). We presented pieces from both versions. The scenery and the costumes were stark which represented the concentration camp. The accordion player was a genius – I believe a fellow from Albania who knew how to create that Eastern-Jewish sound. The soloists were young but very convincing, and the children were in two casts. I spent hours daily for a month figuring out and communicating with the families which singers could get to rehearsal on what

days and what bus they could take and who would accompany them.⁴⁷



Figure 18: Elena conducting Brundibar opera, Teatro Goldoni, 2014.
Picture by Massimo Sabatini

**A Little Jazz Mass by Bob Chilcott, Conductor
Joan Yakkey, Christmas Concert December 17,
2015**

A great concert! We had studied the *Little Jazz Mass* off and on for two seasons, and finally sang the full work at a concert at St. James Episcopal Church in Florence before the Schola Cantorum Francesco Landini

⁴⁷ The videos are here: <https://youtu.be/zs0Wo2KEdTtw> and <https://youtu.be/TaPUwv011B8>

presented other 20th-century repertory directed by M^o Fabio Lombardo.⁴⁸

Progetto Bach, Conductor Fabio Lombardo, Basilica Santa Trinita, Florence, April 2016

We studied the chorales, Soprano/Treble and Cantus Firmus parts of four Bach Cantatas for four months, learning the German pronunciation and sustaining the sounds with deep breathing. We then joined with other groups from the school to present a wonderful concert in the center of town along the Arno river. The children learned so much during this period, and the results were fabulous.⁴⁹

Competition Concert for Scholarship, Madrigal Singers, April 2016

Nine singers prepared a Madrigal program to compete with all of the school's groups to win scholarship money. And they won first prize! Each student received 200€. ⁵⁰

Mass at the Cathedral in Fiesole, Fiesole Youth Choir, June 2016

The acoustics here were terrific and the organist accompanied. We sang the traditional Mass sections from scores given to us by the organist: Kyrie, Gloria,

⁴⁸ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/nJnVFxRg1mQ>

⁴⁹ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/sjfaz-y62vo>

⁵⁰ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/hDYPI5fmsGo>

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Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei. The parents came and enjoyed the service.

Il Volo concert “Una Notte Magica,” Placido Domingo, Palermo Symphonic Orchestra, Homage to Luciano Pavarotti and the Three Tenors, Piazza Santa Croce, Florence, July 1, 2016

Three young tenors and Placido Domingo held this famous IL VOLO concert in Florence. We were asked to participate at the last moment. This concert preparation was a very intense 10 days and there were many mishaps. I told the school this and they kindly offered me compensation. The “Volo” organization asked us to prepare the children to sing the refrain of a popular song “Mamma” – this in full vacation period, writing and calling all our families. We needed permission slips from the parents, tickets at half-price, correct clothing, a search for extra singers and intense rehearsals in the great summer heat. Our dress rehearsal with the orchestra in Piazza Santa Croce went fine, but then for the concert the microphones were not on and the children could not be heard at all! The whole concert was being videoed to make a DVD, which is now on sale. It was on television a few months later and you could finally hear the children. They fixed that somehow! But what a disappointment during the concert with 25 children singing, all that rushed preparation and nobody could hear them with a symphonic orchestra playing under mics! The name of our choir was neither announced at the concert nor printed on the program, and it’s not on the DVD either.

We tried to get a photo together with the Three Tenors and Placido Domingo, but were unsuccessful.⁵¹

Midsummer Night's Dream (text from Shakespeare) by F. Mendelssohn, Spira Mirabilis Orchestra, 3 shows: Bassano del Grappa, Cividale del Friuli (Mittelfest), Artesella, July 2016

This score for chorus is anything but easy with four-part harmony for children. We studied it for six months as we had children of all ages. Again I rewrote the whole vocal score for the two Elves and chorus. There are two orchestral editions so it took time to figure out which to follow. We had a wonderful time in Bassano staying several days in a large Monastery for rehearsals, sleeping quarters and meals. The organization Spira Mirabilis provided for everything. I was amazed. How fortunate we were! We then traveled by bus for three concerts in the vicinity. The scenery of the mountains and white highways was just beautiful and the children enjoyed themselves very much. The dining was excellent and the children had a large park to play in. The Orchestra Spira Mirabilis stayed with us. What a lovely town Bassano del Grappa. I am so glad to have visited here. Our concerts were a great success.⁵²

⁵¹ The video is here: <https://youtu.be/Tu5FlaeHfkY>

⁵² The video is here: <https://youtu.be/Bcjj6iTCgVc>

Choral Interlude for Mayor Nardella's Christmas Salute in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, December 2016

Here we only sang for about 15 minutes on the steps of the famous Salone del Cinquecento, but it was very exciting. Fiesole and Florence have often been political opponents throughout the centuries, so in this sense our invitation was a sign of collaboration between the two governments. A lot of singers came and all their parents did too. We included Cohen's "Hallelujah" on the program (as a tribute to his recent passing) and the audience sang along.

Ensemble Vocale Tempus Floridum Concert, Conductor Joan Yakkey, Scuola di Musica di Fiesole, May 21, 2017

This ensemble is comprised of former students who sang in my children's choirs for many years, so I appropriately wish to acknowledge this concert in this list. Our artistic director was enthusiastic. It was a very affectionate and emotional concert, 50 minutes of a cappella music of all sorts, but also many works of mine. The Tempus Floridum Ensemble gives many concerts.⁵³

⁵³ Many selections are at: <https://youtu.be/fv3cJ3Svq7g>



Figure 19: Tempus Floridum ensemble and Joan

***Opera: Haensel and Gretel by Engelbert
Humperdinck, Scuola di Musica di Fiesole, June
2017***

In this opera, my children sang the final chorus. They were dressed as the gingerbread men who have been put to sleep by the evil witch. Hansel comes by with a magic wand and they come to life, kicking, moving and also have to begin singing. Again, this is very difficult music vocally – two-part harmony which becomes three-part then four-part and many changes of tempo. Children have to be able to keep track of their parts. One might begin on the top of the two-part harmony, then be a second in the three-part, and skip to third in the four-part. So, visually, they must be able to follow this

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difficult score. Again, the *Sign and Sound* method was helpful as the children could draw visual representations on their scores connecting their various parts. It helped them to learn the music and memorize it.

Welcome Day Concert, Roman Amphitheater of Fiesole, September 6, 2017

We were invited to sing at a ceremony held to welcome the new university students of the European University Institute, which works jointly with Fiesole on programs of history, archeology and vicinity. I emailed the families of our Youth Chorus at the end of August and many were able to come back to school from vacation for two rehearsals prior to the concert. Our pianist, Riccardo Foti, was wonderful, and he too came to the rehearsals and helped set up all the microphones and the keyboard. We sang various songs: the European anthem taken from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Italian folk tunes and arias from operas. We also all had a quick dinner together afterwards in the amphitheater offered by the university.

Christmas Concert for the Municipality in the town of Fiesole, December 8, 2017

I received a phone call from the Mayor's office in mid-November 2017, requesting that we perform a concert of well-known Christmas Carols on the big Italian holiday, December 8, the Feast of the Annunciation. This is traditionally when Christmas trees are lit throughout Italy. Knowing that some families would be traveling on a holiday, I invited all my students to take

part in the concert. I quickly arranged about 10 popular Christmas carols for two voices, a cappella (we were to be singing in the open square by the tree, and no piano could be set up). As it turned out, it rained that day so we performed the concert in a new large Convention room nearby, and the acoustics were perfect. Another successful concert, and I am now officially a good friend of the Mayor, a woman who is also the President of the Fiesole Music School.

Concert for the Project Colors for Peace, City Hall (Palazzo Vecchio), Florence, February 6, 2018

I was given only 10 days' notice to prepare this concert, but I didn't want to refuse. The 20 children that were able to come on short notice during a weekday afternoon prepared beautifully the five songs we had chosen. The exhibit consisted of 18,000 drawings from Primary and Childhood Schools of 110 nations representing all continents. They had been collected over three years, and were on tour in many countries; they were also exhibited at EXPO in Milan, during the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, at the G7 Foreign Office in Lucca and at the European Union in Brussels. So it was quite an international honor to sing at this exhibit.

Fiesole Youth Chorus Choral Festival and Tour in Poland: five different concerts with varied repertory, without their Director Joan Yakkey (who was ill at this time), Piano and Organ Accompanist Riccardo Foti, Assistant Conductor and Alto Francesca Cataoli, August/September 2018

The concerts took place in the churches of Opole Lubelskie, Kazimierz Dolny and St. Anne of Krakov. A concert was also given at the Historical Museum of Krakov and at the High School “August Witkowski.” The chorus was invited by the female ensemble “Chor Cantata” and the Mayor of its town, Opole Lubelskie. They sang one concert together directed by M^o Krystyna Pilat, alternating selections and singing three together. Our young singers learned a wonderful Polish folksong in Polish language.

The concert at the Krakov museum was coordinated by the Conductor Ewa Kieres. The High School chorus and the Fiesole chorus once again alternated selections and sang a “Dona Nobis Pacem” together. They also had a wonderful meal together.⁵⁴

Weekend in Music in Palazzo Strozzi Sacratì, Sala Pegaso, October 21, 2018

This was a very successful and important concert organized by the Tuscan Region where the city government of Florence opened the little known historic

⁵⁴ All videos are available on Joan Yakkey’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/joyakkey>

buildings, offering an early tour and a free concert. The concert actually turned out to be dedicated to Joan with two groups of her students singing Madrigals and Contemporary a cappella vocal music, much of which was written and arranged by her. The groups that sang were the Ensemble Tempus Floridum and the Young Madrigal Singers from the School of Music of Fiesole.

***Theater Project: “Destinatario Sconosciuto,”
Teatro Niccolini, Florence, Rosario Tedesco
production, February 2019***

This is holocaust drama written by Katherine Kressmann-Taylor and adapted for the stage by Rosario Tedesco. The Fiesole Youth Choir will be singing music by W.A. Mozart, Victor Ullmann and Ilse Weber (who died in Auschwitz along with one of her sons in 1944).

CHAPTER 6

ELENA PIERINI: IN THE EYES OF A DAUGHTER

“Her method is the imagination of a child”

Elena Pierini (b. 1971) is Joan’s only child. An accomplished musician in her own right, Elena grew up learning Joan’s methods and performing in her choirs. As a teenager, she simultaneously studied percussion, piano, musical analysis and harmony and holds degrees in piano performance from the Luigi Cherubini Conservatory, choral music and conducting from Florida International University, and percussion from the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole. She is recorded on many CDs and has directed choirs, opera choruses, and orchestras throughout the United States and Europe. She is currently the Choral Director at the Landestheater in Linz, Austria, and the Giglio Theater in Lucca, Italy. As part of this book, Elena was asked to reflect on her mother’s methods and teaching, and the effects they had on her own musical development.

When I was young, I often watched my father, Piergiovanni, and my Italian grandfather, Piero Pierini, create and discuss paintings; it was a family artistic tradition. At the same time I was often present when my mother taught piano and basic choral music to children, observing how she prepared her lessons and how she explained everything very simply and creatively, comparing melodic and harmonic structure to an event, a physical structure or natural scenery that the children could immediately identify and consequently grasp the correlation.

I was in a position to try and put together the two ideas of painting and music. My mother's method is the imagination of a child. One day, I began writing notes with colors. My mother encouraged me to continue and over time I developed drawings that could be interpreted with singing or playing an instrument by following the color schemes: musical notation that I could compose, color and perform.

The other children in my mother's class started coloring with me. The important aspect to my mother's teaching was the fact that young students were to have fun and enjoy their natural creativity. My mother took our simple ideas and developed them into a more formal, organized, and sequential method which was then published for all children to use to this day (the *Sign and the Sound* series).

This method is the simplest and most reachable for children. It is the least intellectual – compared with Kodaly and Orff. It does not start with a regimented approach as those methods do, but rather with a focus

on the complete creativity of the individual child. The Dalcroze Eurhythmics method is interesting but on a widespread teaching scale requires space for movement that is often lacking in schools. The Yakkey method asks each child to draw his or her own music and sing or play it when possible. Beyond singing approximations of long and short notes and high and low notes, there is no 'wrong' interpretation. As long as the child has a system and is consistent, whatever the child creates is considered correct and each student proceeds at his own pace.

Eventually, my mother gradually introduces different formal pitches and rhythms which children incorporate into their writings and performances. This occurs with amazing ease because children have already familiarized themselves with pitch and rhythm through their own creative exploration. The musical exercises become increasingly complex and even incredibly difficult with multiple tonalities which students sing against one another in counterpoint and contemporary harmony. Students have fun doing the workbooks and singing, as they are learning incredibly. It never feels like work to them.

I think what is most unique about my mother's teaching is that she makes music fun for children, she comments and laughs with them and, at the same time, entices them to learn and progress faster and at a higher level than most other methods – including Kodaly and Orff; the children feel very comfortable in what they create and interpret. Her way of working with the children is very open and fun and that inspires

their creativity. She is a teacher who will laugh at a joke with an eight year old. This will keep her young forever yet, she also emphasizes that they have the correct mechanics and technique. A great musician must have musical performance technique to the point of automatic intuitiveness so that creative decisions can be made on the spot without hesitation. For example, in an opera performance, the singer must figure out how to sing a high note, with little breath, lying on the floor. You must figure out the solution quickly and that's when you need the type of creativity that my mother teaches. If you only have the mechanics, you can't do this, but, if you're flexible you become more perfect than the others, having a creative solution to solve a difficult musical situation on the spot.

This is the flexibility developed through her methods with the youngest children and continuously emphasized as they grow, learn, and perform even the most complex music. It's how you get through a day, week, job, or perhaps any situation in life. These are the main skills that each student develops with her ideas and approach to creating music. It develops so subtly that students don't realize how much they have learned until as mature musicians, they have successfully overcome an unexpected difficult moment and realize how much their early formation was essential.

It is important for the reader to realize that my mother's teaching and directing remain creative and flexible. She even gets lost in her own creativity! A great example is how she embraces technology – she had the first Atari! When computers developed, she would say,

“We need to write music. What’s the best and fastest way?” Then she discovered there were computer programs that could make it faster and easier to reproduce musical pieces or vocal parts to study, thus quickly and efficiently fulfilling a student’s need. This is very unique because often older people shy away from technology but she is always looking for a better way with technology. Now she has even put her methods onto iPads. Why? Because it is the best way to reach today’s children that are so technically oriented: in effect, her method can be carried out in many ways. That is the genius of it. And talking about modern technology, she has many teaching videos on her YouTube channel for young singers to study new choral music while listening and following the score.

My mom gave me the tools to be able to study and that is the biggest gift that she has given to everyone. The purpose of her teachings is to both learn the music itself and also acquire a method that serves on many occasions; an exceptional pedagogue has that skill. My mother taught me and every one of her students how to think about music and how to organize a studying schedule.

However, it is important for readers to know that none of this came easily. Early on, my mother had difficulty in having her method accepted. She is an uncomplicated woman and a foreigner in Italy, and many did not take her seriously or recognize her genius. She would say, “In the end, all will work out,” and I was there long enough to see this. If it weren’t for these words from my mother in my head, I would have

never been successful as a musician and conductor. She always told me to “do the right thing, keep your principles and at some point most problems and difficulties will find a solution.” It has been true every time. Sometimes it takes longer and sometimes it happens right away. This is a philosophy one needs to adhere to every day in order to be successful. It gives you peace.

I am forever grateful to my mother for providing so many opportunities and raising me so well. I still call her with major problems and ask, “What do I do now?” My mother is way more patient than I am. She can see things from the outside and is also very diplomatic.

My mother has a tremendous legacy in the thousands of students she has taught for over 40 years in Florence. She has created many famous musicians who credit her, Joan Yakkey, with much of their success. Everyone knows that without Joan it wouldn't have happened. I think of her much like J.S. Bach who was an outstanding musician and teacher in his time, but not fully appreciated. It took many years after his death before his genius and music were widely accepted and valued.

I am not sure if or when my mother will become famous beyond Florence where she has been revered for many years. I think that the world hasn't completely discovered her and her method – it is so simple that people don't believe that it actually teaches complex musical thought. However, those who have used her method appreciate its incredible worth. These individuals are all very strong musicians and teachers

who have deep knowledge of the young mind and how the learning process develops. You need geniuses to understand that something simple produces the best results that remain with you for your entire life.

ELENA PIERINI
December 2016



*Figure 20: Joan and Elena, Brundibar opera, 2014.
Picture by Massimo Sabatini*

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This book arises from an 18-year collaboration that I have had with Professor Joan Yakkey at the Music Conservatory and La Scuola di Musica di Fiesole (Music School of Fiesole) in Florence, Italy.

With the internet becoming more prevalent in the year 2000, I discovered ChoralNet.com sponsored by the American Choral Directors' Association and posted a query if anyone knew of exchange programs for music teachers or choral conductors. After some time, I received three responses: one from Italy, one from Denmark, and one from Argentina. All requested more information about the exchange program I proposed. Really, I had not proposed anything yet, but simply inquired if anyone knew of any type of exchange programs. I wrote back to these music teachers/conductors asking if they would be interested in any exchange in which perhaps they would come to America and teach with me and that I could go to their schools and do likewise.

The directors from Denmark and Argentina were seeking a more established exchange program, which I didn't have, and our correspondence quickly dissolved. However, my correspondence with the music teacher from Florence continued.

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Professor Joan Yakkey and I exchanged emails which led to a fascinating discussion of our background, methods, recordings, compositions, and teaching. Joan shared ideas of the methods which she had developed (*Il Segno e Il Suono, The Sign and Sound*). I had some training in the Kodaly and Orff methods, but Joan's method, with its focus on discovery, coloring, writing and solfège going from general approximations of sounds to precise intervals was quite different. At first, I had doubts that it could work. But as I learned of the success of her program, international performances, the individual success and subsequent professional music careers of many of her students, and listened to the magnificent recordings of her choirs, I became increasingly convinced in the validity and reliability of the method.

After several months of correspondence, Joan one day wrote, "Why don't you come to Florence sometime to visit, learn my methods, and teach with me?" I was excited by the offer! Then reality hit – how would I possibly make this happen? How could I possibly take off time from work? Also, my son was just three years old. So despite this wonderful offer, I declined because I saw no way that it could work.

Some weeks passed and I kept thinking of this missed opportunity. Perhaps my son could come with me. Perhaps I could find some funding. Perhaps if I could find a substitute music teacher to cover my classes the school district would agree.

I applied for and received funding to cover expenses from the National Education Association (NEA), the

Rotary International, and local Italian Club. With this funding in place, I approached my school district and, after some discussion and negotiations, my request for leave was approved by Dr. Bill Weber, our very supportive Assistant Superintendent. One of my former students, Carissa Madley, had recently graduated with a degree in music education and was looking for substitute teaching experience. I contacted her and she was most interested in filling in while I was gone.

Joan provided much guidance and assistance as well. She helped to locate a small, inexpensive hotel with meals near her home where my son and I could stay. It was a perfect location, safe, and comfortable. My son would be able to continue his schooling with some small preschool classes and university students who could watch him while I taught. We remained in Florence for the entire fall semester with me observing and participating in Joan's classes, learning her methods, teaching her students, preparing them for recordings, and ultimately conducting in their Christmas concerts.

Since that time, I have taught numerous times with Joan at both the Conservatory of Music Luigi Cherubini in Florence and La Scuola di Musica di Fiesole. Joan also came to the United States twice. Once she joined me in teaching sessions about her methods thanks to sponsorship from Karen DiChiera, Director of Community Programs at the Detroit Opera House. Another time we collaborated on the *Lullabies for Free Children Project* sponsored by the

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International Association of Women in Music (IAWM). I was a principal at The Ellis School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Our elementary students wrote poems about children and freedom. Joan chose three and set them to music, and then Joan came to the school to conduct and record these songs which were published on the IAWM website.

With each experience, I have gained an appreciation of the tremendous quality of the choral program that Joan has created over the past 40 years in Florence and how her efforts literally saved the fate of contemporary musical instruction in Florence. While Italy has a rich tradition of music, the last century saw drastic cuts in music education in the schools. Joan's programs and methods brought music education back to the children of Florence. Without Joan's efforts, together with the support of Maestro Piero Farulli, founder of La Scuola di Musica di Fiesole (The Music School of Fiesole), music as had been known in Florence for centuries would have likely disappeared.

Joan's methods are surprisingly simple. At first, I did not imagine that they really worked. In fact, those ingrained in other methods often doubt if they could be effective; until they hear Joan's choirs perform and are overwhelmingly surprised by such young children giving high quality, beautiful performances of incredibly complex music – at which point they are convinced! Unlike other methods, *The Sign and Sound* begins with students creating rough approximations of sound, rhythm and notation which gradually become more and more precise and complex – just as babies

first babble approximations of sound and gradually learn to speak individual words and then link those words into phrases and sentences. Likewise, children in their native language, draw marks to represent sounds, which gradually become letters, short words, long words, and sentences. Using coloring, writing, and singing, students progress through *The Sign and Sound* series of playful exercises that become increasingly more precise and complex as they learn to read and compose their own music.

As I spent time with Joan and these programs over the past 18 years, I increasingly recognized the uniqueness of their story. With Joan at 74 years of age in early 2016, I began to recognize that no one, except for her, had really kept account of the program, performances, and effect on the music scene in Italy. Perhaps this is due to Joan's humility. It seemed to me that this information should and needed to be captured and recorded before it was potentially lost.

In November 2016, I traveled back to Florence with the purpose of conducting qualitative research regarding Joan Yakkey and her children's choirs to write this book. I garnered data through extensive interviews with Joan Yakkey, Elena Pierini, Antonello Farulli (Piero Farulli's nephew and Viola Professor at the Fiesole Music School), Aldo Tarabella (Director of the Lucca Opera and Professor at the Fiesole School), Edoardo Rosadini (Orchestra Director, Fiesole Music School, and Joan's former student) and administrators, faculty, colleagues, parents, and alumni of the Fiesole Music School and Cherubini

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Conservatory. I also observed Joan teaching and directing the choirs and made extensive notes. Interviews were conducted in person at the Fiesole Music School, and in and around the Florence and Fiesole areas and continued when I returned home via phone, Skype and email. I reviewed ephemera from Joan's personal collections as well as those from the schools and her colleagues. Finally, I journaled my own memories and thoughts from the past 18 years of collaborations with Joan.

Prof. Yakkey had given her approval for me to write her biography. The superintendent of the Fiesole school also approved my conducting this research as did Millersville University (IRB protocol approved November 9, 2016).

I approached this study with several research questions: How did Prof. Yakkey's upbringing and training influence the development of her methods and teaching? What are her significant accomplishments and performances? What influence have her methods and teaching had on students in Florence? What has been her influence on music education in Italy and elsewhere?

Interview questions for Joan Yakkey included: Please describe your life as it has influenced you as a musician, music teacher, performer and conductor in as much detail as you can recall. As a child, how did you first become interested in music? What instruments or other aspects of music did you study? Tell about your time at the High School of Music and Art in New York City. What influence did Bernstein and Copland have

on you? Were there other musicians and instructors in high school and college who influenced you? How do you believe each of these individuals influenced the development of your methods? Your teaching? Your performances? Please describe your role at the music school from being hired through the present time. What was the impetus for creating *The Sign and Sound* methods? How did you create and develop your music literacy methods? How have these methods influenced student learning and performance? What do you perceive as the influence your methods and teaching have had on music in Italy? Please describe notable performances of your students under your guidance since you were hired at the conservatory and music school. What is your legacy to music in Italy? Elsewhere? Who and what has had the most influence on you throughout your life? How has their influence affected your methods and teaching? How will your methods and pedagogy continue at the music school after you retire? When you retire, is there planning on how your methods and courses will continue? What are they? As you reflect on your life both professionally and personally, what have been your greatest accomplishments? Setbacks? How have you dealt with adversity? Is there anything you have not accomplished that you hoped you would? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Interview questions for Elena Pierini included: Please describe your mother's life in as much detail as you can recall. As a child, how did you first become interested in music? What instruments or other aspects of music

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did you study? What was your mother's role in your music training? What do you recall about the creation and development of the *Sign and Sound* methods? How have these methods influenced student learning and performance? What do you perceive as the influence your mother's methods and teaching have had on music in Italy? Has your mother had an influence on you as a woman in music? If so how? Please describe notable performances of your mother's choirs. Does your mother leave a legacy to music in Italy? What is it? Does your mother leave a legacy to music elsewhere in the world? As you reflect on your mother's life both professionally and personally, what have been her greatest accomplishments? Setbacks? How has she dealt with adversity? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Individual and focus group interview questions for others included: Please describe the context in which you know or have worked with Professor Yakkey. How has Prof. Yakkey's leadership influenced music in Italy? Elsewhere? What influence have her methods and teaching had on music in Italy? Elsewhere? What influences have her methods and teaching had on the development of musicians in Italy? Elsewhere? What influences have the performances of her students had in Italy? Elsewhere? Describe memorable performances by Prof. Yakkey and her choirs. What legacy does Prof. Yakkey leave in Italy? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Interviews and correspondence occurred in either English or Italian based on the level of comfort of the

individual who was being interviewed. I collected data through audio recordings using the Audacity program and by means of handwritten notes (which included key points in the discussion, notable quotes, and her observations of body language and mood of group members). There were also many informal conversations that occurred throughout the visit.

Data was captured through a Tape-Based Abridged Transcript. Data from the abridged transcript was organized using both Nvivo software and a Long-Table Approach. Trends and patterns were coded and analyzed both within role alike groups and across the role alike groups.

Limitations of this study include that some key individuals, such as Maestros Farulli and Cicconi and various colleague faculty members are deceased. It would have been fascinating to include their valuable perspectives about Joan and the choirs. Second, as there are now thousands of alumni of the program, it was impossible to reach many of them and their parents for their input. Finally, at times, I found myself struggling with understanding the nuances of the Italian language and Florentine dialect. Translators were helpful with recorded and written data. However, it is possible that I missed some information in informal conversations.

In writing this book, I prioritized firsthand accounts from Joan, Elena, conductors, directors, colleagues, parents, and alumni. I felt these provided the greatest detail and insight into their life histories, development of the methods and choir program, and performances.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The accounts of others who were interviewed as well as a review of websites and ephemera served to provide varying perspectives on all of these aspects.

The multiple data sources in this study informed each other. I began with the specific interview questions referenced earlier in this chapter. But as my research progressed, the line of questioning had to become more flexible. Meeting dozens of people influenced by Joan and the program occurred formally at times, but many times informally in hallways, cafeterias, and at concerts. So many people wanted to contribute, to say something in some way. This was the impetus for setting up the Facebook page which collected comments by anyone who wanted to post. The information collected from various people informed interpretation of accounts from Joan and Elena and vice versa. Concert stories were kept in the first person (“I”) referring to Joan as she told the stories. The same was true for Elena’s account. It seemed fitting that they be the tellers of these stories.

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF JOAN YAKKEY

<https://joanyakkey.musicaneo.com>

<http://musicmethod.blogspot.com>

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|--|-------------------|---|--|------|
| 1 | 15 Short Vocal Studies | English - Italian | SA voices & keyboard | Children's Chorus, texts from popular rhymes | 2009 |
| 2 | A Christmas Fantasy based on American Folk tunes | English - Italian | SA Children's Choir & keyboard | original lyrics | 1994 |
| 3 | A Christmas Medley for 2 voices | English - Italian | SA - SB - TB - TA Chorus or soloists & keyboard | Based on traditional Christmas tunes | 2014 |
| 4 | A Jingle Invitation | English - Italian | SSS Children's voices & keyboard | Simple canon with contemporary keyboard acc. | 2000 |
| 5 | A Stam Blam | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Children's rhyme | 1977 |
| 6 | Alma Redemptoris Mater | Latin | SSA voices a cappella | Antiphon to the Virgin Mary | 1998 |
| 7 | Ave Maria | Latin | SATB voices a cappella | Sacred Motet | 1998 |
| 8 | Balance - a Vocalise | Vowels | SSA voices a cappella | Inspired by a Canary Burton drawing | 2008 |
| 9 | Bazen Behin | Basque | SSA Children's a cappella chorus | Written for XV Composition Competition - Tolosa, Spain. New composition, text by Anton Kazabon | 2007 |
| 10 | Canon for Children on Different Texts | English - Italian | Children's SSS Choir & keyboard | Canon for 3 voices | 2012 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|---|---------|-----------------------------------|--|------|
| 11 | Cantate Domino (Sing to the Lord) | Latin | SA voices & keyboard | Motet on music by A. Vivaldi: Concerto Grosso, Op.8, n.1 | 2016 |
| 12 | Cantate Domino Canticum Novum (Sing to the Lord a New Song) | Latin | SA chorus or soloists, piano acc. | Arrangement of music by A. Vivaldi: Concerto Grosso, Op. 8, n. 1 | 2016 |
| 13 | Canti Natalizi per il pianista principante | | Piano | 15 Christmas melodies for the beginner pianist | 2013 |
| 14 | C'era una Volta (Once upon a time) | Italian | SA voices & piano acc. | Original setting for 2 voices of an Italian Children's folk rhyme | 2009 |
| 15 | Chi di Notte Cavalca (He who rides by night) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Contemporary Madrigal (text: Michelangelo Buonarroti) | 1991 |
| 16 | Christmas at the Piano | | Piano solo | Christmas tunes (In Dulci Jubilo-My Dancing Day-Low How a Rose-With Merry Heart) | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|---|-------------------|--|--|------|
| 17 | Christmas Far Away | English - Italian | SSS Children's Choir with hand percussion & keyboard | Canon for Christmas (original text) | 2000 |
| 18 | Christmas Gifts (I Doni di Natale) | English - Italian | Unison Children's Choir & keyboard | Short Christmas song (lyrics: J. Yakkey) | 2014 |
| 19 | Christus Natus Est Nobis (text: Psalm 94, Christmas Matins) | Latin | SA voices & keyboard | Christmas motet on music by A. Vivaldi: Concerto Grosso, Op.8, n.1 | 2004 |
| 20 | Creating (Creando) | English - Italian | SSA voices & piano | Song for 3 voices. (Lyrics: Canary Burton) | 2008 |
| 21 | Creating (Creando) | English | SATB voices & piano | Song for 3 voices. (Lyrics: Canary Burton) | 2009 |
| 22 | Giubilo del Core (My Heart is Jubilant) | Italian | SSAA voices a cappella | Contemporary Madrigal (text: Jacopone da Todi, 13th c.) | 1988 |
| 23 | Hail the Day (poetry by Wesley, 1739) | English | SATB voices with opt. keyboard | Contemporary Hymn, Easter or Ascension | 2015 |
| 24 | Hodie Christus Natus Est (Christ is Born Today) | Latin | SATB & SSMA voices a cappella | Antiphon from Magnificat on Christmas Day | 2015 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|------|
| 25 | In Dulci Jubilo | Latin - German | SSAA & SATB voices a cappella | Contemporary Christmas carol (text: H. Suso) | 2015 |
| 26 | In Dulci Jubilo | Latin | SAB, SAT, SSA voices a cappella | Contemporary Christmas carol (text: 12th c.) | 2015 |
| 27 | In Natali Domini | Latin | SAB, SAT, SSA, SATB voices a cappella | Contemporary Christmas carol (text: anon. 15th c.) | 2015 |
| 28 | In Vernali Tempore | Latin | SATB voices a cappella | Contemporary Christmas carol (text: Piae Cantiones, 1582) | 2016 |
| 29 | Jubilare Domino | Latin & English | SMA voices a cappella | Contemporary Motet based on a Gregorian Chant, Psalm 99 (Gradulae Triplex) | 2002 |
| 30 | Language of Music (Albums) | solfege syllables | Unison, 2/3/4 part a cappella exercises | Sight-Singing Method in 16 small volumes of 6 pdfs | 2001 |
| 31 | Laudate Dominum | Latin | SMA chorus & piano | Contemporary Motet based on a Gregorian Chant, Ps.116 (Gradulae Triplex) | 2002 |
| 32 | Layla's Puppies (1 Cuccioli di Layla) | English - Italian | Unison Children's voices & keyboard | Christmas Cantata (7 songs and narration) | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|------|
| 33 | Learn to Fly (Impara a Volare) | English - Italian | SA voices & piano | Song on poetry found in San Gimignano | 2005 |
| 34 | Magic Music Cards | Italian-Korean-English - Spanish | | Teaching Method Rhythm 1&2 cards, Melody 1,2,3 | 2000 |
| 35 | Magnum Nomen Domini | Latin | SATB - SSA - SAT - SAB voices a cappella | Contemporary Christmas Motet (text: Piae Cantiones, 1582) | 2015 |
| 36 | Mass for Three Voices | Latin | SSA voices | Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Benedictus, Agnus Dei, Dona Nobis | 1988 |
| 37 | Medley: Two Lullabies for Christmas | English | Unison choir or soloist & keyboard | Setting of "Away in a Manger" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem" | 2012 |
| 38 | My God, Thy Table Now is Spread | English | SSAA & SATB voices a cappella, with opt. keyboard | Communion Anthem for 4 voices (text: P. Doddridge, 1755) | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|--------------------------------------|---------|--|---|------|
| 39 | Piano Books | | Pianoforte | Piano Method in 4 volumes (scales, exercises, short pieces) | 2016 |
| 40 | My Voice is the Color of Love | English | SA Children's choir, flute or violin, keyboard | 2-part song with poetry text by a child from The Ellis School, Pittsburgh, PA | 2005 |
| 41 | New Repertory for Organ: five pieces | | Organ solo | Prelude, Offertory, Elevation, Communion, Postlude: easy - medium level | 2005 |
| 42 | No Truer Friends | English | SSAA voices a cappella chorus | Song on original lyrics by J. Yakkey | 2012 |
| 43 | Nostalgic Moods (chamber music) | | Violin, Bb clarinet, Pianoforte | I Moderato & Allegro Agitato - II Andante (duet) - III Allegro Maestoso | 1994 |
| 44 | O Pecorina (O Little Lamb) | italian | SSA voices a cappella | Original choral setting of a Tuscan folk song text | 1993 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|--|---------|--|---|------------------------|
| 45 | Omnis Mundus Jocundetur (text: anon. 14th c.) | Latin | SAB or SAT or SSA chorus or trio a cappella voices | Contemporary Latin Christmas Motet for Christmas Day | 2015 |
| 46 | Personent Hodie | Latin | SSA or SAT or SAB voices a cappella | Contemporary Christmas Carol (txt: anon 12th c.) | 2015 |
| 47 | Piano Books | | piano - keyboard | Four volumes, piano method for chords and scales with original short pieces | 2017 |
| 48 | Psalms 84 (How Dear to Me) | English | SAB voices a cappella | Motet for Vespers | 1997 |
| 49 | Puer Nobis Nascitur (Today is born unto us) | Latin | SA choir & keyboard | Contemporary Christmas Motet for 2 voices (text: Gregorian chant) | 1994 REVIS. 2013 |
| 50 | Puer Nobis Nascitur (Today is born unto us) | Latin | SSMA or SATB voices a cappella | Contemporary Christmas Motet for 4 voices (text: Piaie Cantiones, 1582) | 2015 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|--|-------------------|--|--|----------------------|
| 51 | Quando Nasceste Voi (When You Were Born) | Italian | Solo voice or Duet or 2-part chorus & piano acc. | Original song to a Folk text, verses from Tuscany and Umbria | 1995 |
| 52 | Resonet in Laudibus (Let Praises Ring) | Latin | SATB or SSAA Children's / Female choir or 4 soloists a cappella | Contemporary setting, Latin Christmas Medieval (text: 14th c.) | 2015 |
| 53 | Signs and Sounds Solfege (I Segni e i Suoni) 5 books | English - Italian | Melodies in unison and parts, coloring books; written and sung exercises | Yakkey Method in 5 volumes to learn musical notation and interpretation | 1992 1995 1997 |
| 54 | Silent Night (Stille Nacht) | English - Italian | SSA voices & piano acc. | Easy 3-part Christmas canon in two languages | 2000 |
| 55 | Sonata for Piano (dedicated to Prof. Paul Zweifel) | | Difficult level. Performed in 1995 at Virginia Tech Univ. | Sonata in 3 movements: Allegro Marcato - Allegro ben Ritmato - Adagio cantabile | 1993 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|------|
| 56 | The Animal Café (Narrated Cantata) | English | 3 young violinists, piano | Cantata with original narrative by Mouse, Puppy and Cat | 2006 |
| 57 | The Comet (La Cometa - Der Komet) | English - Italian | Narrator, soloists, 2 Children's choirs, hand percussion, handbells, organ, keyboard, violin or flute | Contemporary Oratorio for Christmastide or Epiphany, for young people and instrumentalists | 1999 |
| 58 | The Dancer Prances | English | Soprano or Tenor solo & piano | Contemporary setting of a poem by Peter Caruso | 2014 |
| 59 | The Harp (L'Arpa) | English - Italian | SA chorus or soloists and harp | Duet inspired by a drawing & poetry by Canary Burton | 2008 |
| 60 | The Hill (La Collina) | English - Italian | SA Children's choir and piano | Poetry developed by the children in the Fiesole School's Choral Workshop | 2005 |
| 61 | Tornado (Interpretation of a drawing) | | 2 pianos or synthesizers in adv. contemporary style | Inspired by a drawing "Tornado" by Canary Burton | 2009 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|---|--------------------|--|---|------|
| 62 | Toy Factory (La Fabbrica dei Giocattoli, Die Spielzeugfabrik) | English - Italian | Full orch, 5 soloists (adults and/or children), Children's Chorus, opt. ballet dancers | Opera for young people based on the story "The Sword and the Stone." Original Libretto by J. Yakkey | 2011 |
| 63 | Trees (poetry: Joyce Kilmer 1886-1918) | English | Duet for Soprano and Alto voices with piano | Keyboard music based on the Adagio of Sonata 38 (1773) by F. Haydn | 2004 |
| 64 | Two Psalm Quotations | Latin & English | SSA voices & keyboard. Jubilate Domino - Laudate Dominum | 2 psalms based on a Gregorian chant - Easter season. Commissioned by FIU University | 2001 |
| 65 | Venite, Adoremus (Psalm 94) | Latin | SA chorus or soloists, piano accompaniment | Arrangement of music by A. Vivaldi: Concerto Grosso, Op. 8, n. 1 | 2004 |
| 66 | Vocalise on Goldberg Variation XIX (J.S. Bach) | nonsense syllables | SSA Children, Female or solo voices & opt. keyboard acc. | Bach's 19th Goldberg Variation arranged as a Vocalise | 1993 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| ARRANGEMENTS - SETTINGS | | | | | |
| 67 | A Gesù Nato nel Presepio (To Jesus born in a manger) | Italian | Unison or 2-part & keyboard | Early Italian Christmas Carol (17th c.) - Lauda Spirituale | 2013 |
| 68 | A Sta Grama | Venetian Italian | Soprano solo & vln, vla, vlc, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 69 | A Virgin M+B79ost Pure (XVI) | English | SSA voices a cappella | Medieval Christmas Carol | 1998 |
| 70 | Adeste Fideles fantasia SA / Adeste Fideles | Latin - English | SA accompanied two versions - SSA - SSAA / SSAB a cappella | Traditional Latin Carol | 1998/ 1998 - 2012 2015 |
| 71 | Adieu, Sweet Amaryllis (Addio, Dolce Amarilli) - John Wilbye | English - Italian | 4 equal voices with keyboard acc. | Canon for 4 voices | 2006 |
| 72 | Ah, Holy Jesus (Johann Crüger) | English | SSA voices a cappella | Motet from a German tune (1640) | 2015 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|------|
| 73 | All and Some | English | SSA voices a cappella | Medieval Christmas Carol (1450) | 2003 |
| 74 | All Glory Laud and Honor (Theodulph of Orleans, 820) | English | SATB voices with organ | Palm Sunday Anthem | 2013 |
| 75 | Amazing Grace | English | SSA voices a cappella | Traditional Spiritual Anthem commissioned for Memorial Day services in Florence | 2004 |
| 76 | Amen, See the Little Baby | English | SSA voices a cappella, with opt. piano acc. | Traditional Christmas Carol | 2012 |
| 77 | American Lullaby | English - Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Setting of a melody by Canary Burton | 2009 |
| 78 | An die Freude (Ode to Joy) | German | SSA voices a cappella | Choral theme from L. von Beethoven's 9th Symphony (text: F. Schiller) | 2017 |
| 79 | Angels We Have Heard on High (Les Anges dans Nos Campagnes) | English - French - Italian - German | SSA voices a cappella or accompanied | French Christmas Carol | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|--|-------------------|--------------------------------------|--|------|
| 80 | Anima del Cor Mio (C. Monteverdi, 1567-1643) | Italian | SSA voices & harpsichord or keyboard | Madrigal originally written for SSATB voices | 2007 |
| 81 | At Day's End (Al Cader della Giornata) | English - Italian | SAB voices a cappella | Alpine folk song setting | 2012 |
| 82 | Au Claire de la Lune | French | SSA Children's a cappella chorus | French folk song | 1981 |
| 83 | Auf, Freue Dich | German | SA chorus or Duet & keyboard | Aria from JS Bach Cantata 15 arranged for 2 voices | 2006 |
| 84 | Ave Maria (P. da Palestrina) | Latin | SSAA voices a cappella | Music: verse 12 Magnificat Quarti toni | 2000 |
| 85 | Ave Maria (Caccini-Vavilov) | Latin | SA voices & keyboard | Sacred Song set for 2 voices | 2012 |
| 86 | Ave Maria (S. Rachmaninov) | Latin | SSSA voices a cappella | Vespere, Op. 37, n.6, originally for mixed voices | 2006 |
| 87 | Ave Maria (F. Schubert) | Latin | SA choir or Duet with piano/organ | Sacred song | 2014 |
| 88 | Ave Verum (William Byrd) | Latin | SSAA voices a cappella | originally for SATB voices | 1993 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|----|--|-----------------|--|--|-------------|
| 89 | Ave Verum (William Byrd) | Latin | Soprano or Tenor solo & piano or organ | Sacred Aria for Communion or Easter Week, music originally for SATB voices | 2014 |
| 90 | Ave Verum Corpus (W.A. Mozart, K.618) | Latin | SSA voices & keyboard | Sacred Motet for Communion or Easter Week | 2003 |
| 91 | Away in a Manger (Kirkpatrick) | English | SSA voices & keyboard | Traditional Christmas carol | 2016 |
| 92 | Ay! Linda Amiga | Spanish | SSA & SSAA voices a cappella settings | Spanish 16th c. folk song | 2004 & 2013 |
| 93 | Bambino Divino (Divine Child) | Italian | SAB voices a cappella, 2 verses | Early Italian Canticle (Lauda) for Christmas | 2000 |
| 94 | Bambino Divino (Divine Child) | Latin | SSA chorus, optional violin & keyboard | Sacred Motet adapted for Christmas (Psalm 111) | 1990 |
| 95 | Beatus Vir - (G. G. Arrigoni, XVII) | Latin | SMA Chorus & keyboard | Originally for Alto-Tenor-Bass voices (Psalm 111) | 2016 |
| 96 | Benedictus qui Venit (J.J. Fux, 1660-1741) | Latin | SSA voices & keyboard acc. | Mass extract : Canon at the 5th | 2003 |
| 97 | Benedictus qui Venit (G.P. da Palestrina) | Latin - English | SA voices & keyboard | Mass extract | 2015 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|-------------------|---|--|-------------|
| 98 | Bone Pastor (W.A. Mozart) | Latin | SSA voices with opt. accomp. | Sacred Motet based on the Bundeslied tune | 2013 |
| 99 | Bongiorno Eleonora | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Italian folk song from Tuscany | 2010 |
| 100 | Can You Count the Stars? (Weisst du wie viel Sternlein stehen? La grande armonia) | English - Italian | SA children's chorus & keyboard | Traditional German Lullaby | 2016 |
| 101 | Canzona di Bacco (Song of Bacchus) | Italian | Easy SSA Children's, Female or Mixed voices | Florentine Carnival song, 7 verses. Easy to add percussion accomp. | 1995 |
| 102 | Christmas Oratorio (J.S. Bach) | Italian | SSA voices, soloists, narrator, organ acc. | Approx. 80% of the Oratorio arranged, Arias shortened | 2008 - 2009 |
| 103 | Ciceronella (Italian folk song) | Italian | SA or SB voices a cappella | Neapolitan folk song set for 2 voices | 2000 |
| 104 | Clara Young (Canary Burton, 1976) | English - Italian | SA voices accompanied | Ballad with Italian lyrics & piano acc. added by J.Yakkey. Recorded on "Women in Harmony" CD | 2008 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|------------------|---|--|------|
| 105 | Coventry Carol (1591 tune) | English | SSA voices a cappella | Early Christmas Carol | 1998 |
| 106 | Cradle Song (C.M. von Weber) | English | SSA voices & keyboard | German lullaby on anonymous 19th c. lyrics | 2016 |
| 107 | Danza, Danza Fanciulla (F. Durante) | Italian | SA voices & piano | Italian aria set for 2 voices | 2000 |
| 108 | Drop, Drop Slow Tears (O. Gibbons, 1623) | English | SA voices & keyboard | Easterime motet, originally set for 3 voices | 2015 |
| 109 | Dulces Laudes Tympano (1360) | Latin | SAB arr. voices a cappella | Medieval Christmas song | 2012 |
| 110 | Ecco Donne La Befana | Italian | SSA voices a cappella, with opt. piano acc. | Tuscan folk song | 2010 |
| 111 | El Batelo | Venetian Italian | Baritone solo & ob, fl, bsn, vla, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 112 | Era di Notte (It was at Night) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song | 2004 |
| 113 | Et Exultavit Spiritus Meus (J.S. Bach, BWV 243) | Latin | SA voices & keyboard | Originally an Alto Aria from the Magnificat | 2014 |
| 114 | Facciam la Ninna Nanna | Italian | SMA voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song, contemporary version | 1992 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| 115 | Festa Dies Agitur (codex Montpellier, 13th c.) | Latin | SSAA or SSA voices a cappella | Medieval Christmas Carol | 2006 - 2017 |
| 116 | Fior Vezzoso | Venetian Italian | Tenor, fl, vln, vla, vlc, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 117 | Gaudete, Gaudete (1582) | Latin | SATB or SSMA voices a cappella | Renaissance Christmas Carol | 2015 |
| 118 | Gloria (A. Vivaldi, RV 589) | Latin | SSA voices & keyboard acc. | Original is for SATB voices. Complete work has been rewritten for female/youth voices | 2001 |
| 119 | Gloria Patri (G. Palestrina) | Latin | SSA voices a cappella | 16th c. easy motet, originally for SATB voices | 1998 |
| 120 | Hallelujah Chorus (G. Handel) | English | SSA or SA voices and organ/keyboard | Choral extract from Oratorio "The Messiah" (in D) | 2003 |
| 121 | Hallelujah Chorus (J.S. Bach) | German (English) | SSAA voices with keyboard acc. | From a cappella motet BWV 230 (Psalm 117) | 1992 |
| 122 | Il Pecoraio (The Shepherd) | Italian | SA voices & keyboard | Tuscan Lullaby | 2010 |
| 123 | It was Poor Little Jesus (Spiritual) | English | SSA voices a cappella | Afro-American spiritual set for 3 voices | 2017 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|--------------------|--|--|------|
| 124 | Italian Christmas Carols | Italian | 71 unison melodies | Collection of carols 13th - 19th centuries | 2015 |
| 125 | Italian Christmas Songs | Italian | 42 unison melodies (titles also in English) | Collection of carols and chants from Italy | 2013 |
| 126 | Italian Folksongs in Easy 2-part settings | Italian | SA voices a cappella | Album with 10 songs | 2013 |
| 127 | I've Got Peace like a River (Spiritual) | English | SSAA voices a cappella or with keyboard acc. | Harmonious quartet for 4-part choir or 4 soloists | 2016 |
| 128 | Jazzy Little Bethlehem | English or Italian | SA voices & keyboard, Bb clarinet | Christmas jazzy arrangement | 2009 |
| 129 | Jingle Bells - canon | English - Italian | 3-part original canon & keyboard acc. | Original music on famous words for children's choir | 2000 |
| 130 | Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho | Italian | SSAA chorus & Soprano solo, a cappella | Afro-American Spiritual, 19th c. | 2006 |
| 131 | Joyful, Joyful - Inno alla Gioia | English - Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Transcription directly from the Choral of Beethoven's 9th Symphony | 2017 |
| 132 | Kumbaya | English | SSA voices a cappella | New Guinea folk song | 2010 |
| 133 | Kyrie (H.L. Hassler) | Latin | SSA voices & keyboard | originally for SATB voices | 1995 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|------------------|-------------------------------|---|------|
| 134 | La Befana (The Old Witch) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Italian folk song from Lucca | 2010 |
| 135 | La Betulla sul Prato (Russian folk song) | Italian | SSATB mixed voices a cappella | Russian folk song arrangement | 1977 |
| 136 | La Biritullera | Italian | SA voices & keyboard | Folk song from Tuscany, Italy | 2010 |
| 137 | La Note di Natale (Christmas Eve) | Northern Italian | SA chorus a cappella | Traditional Christmas Carol | 2000 |
| 138 | La Villanella (The Country Girl) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Italian folk song from Alto-Adige | 2005 |
| 139 | Laudate Dio (G. Animuccia) | Latin | SSA voices & keyboard | Renaissance motet, added keyboard accomp. | 2005 |
| 140 | Laudate Domino (M. Charpentier) | Latin | SSA voices & keyboard | Motet originally for mixed voices and orchestra | 2007 |
| 141 | Laudate Domino (W. A. Mozart, K.339) | Latin | SMA chorus & piano | Aria from Vesperae Solennes de Confessore arranged for 3 voices | 1992 |
| 142 | Laudate Dominum (C. Monteverdi, Sv 287) | Latin | SA chorus & keyboard | Originally for Tenor or Soprano solo, arranged for 2 equal voices | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|------------------|----------------------------------|---|------|
| 143 | Laudate Pueri Dominum (D. Buxtehude, BUXWV69) | Latin | SA voices & keyboard | Motet for 2 voices and Orchestra on Psalm 113 | 2011 |
| 144 | Le Gatorigole | Venetian Italian | Soprano solo & ob, fl, bsn, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 145 | Let Thy Love in Mercy Poured (J. Crueger, early 17th c.) | English | SAB voices & opt. keyboard acc. | Hymn for Communion on the tune "Jesus, Meine Zuversicht." (English lyrics: J. Brownlie) | 2016 |
| 146 | Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming (Es ist ein Ros'entsprungen) | English - German | SSA voices a cappella | Christmas Carol from Cologne Germany (1599) | 1993 |
| 147 | Lord, In This Thy Mercy's Day (tune: J. Crueger, 1640) | English | SB voices & keyboard | Lent or Communion Anthem, English (text: I. Williams, 1842) | 2016 |
| 148 | Lord, In This Thy Mercy's Day (tune: J. Crueger, 1640) | | Organ solo | Lent or Communion piece | 2016 |
| 149 | L'Uccellino quando Imbruna | Italian | SATB voices a cappella | Italian lullaby from Tuscany | 2010 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|-------------------|---|---|------|
| 150 | Lullaby from Lucca (Ninna Nanna Lucchese) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Italian lullaby from Tuscany | 2017 |
| 151 | Maggio Serenata | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Italian folk song | 2000 |
| 152 | Magnificat (W.A. Mozart, K.321) | Latin | SMA voices & organ or keyboard | Extract from the Vesperae de Dominica | 2002 |
| 153 | Magnificat (A. Vivaldi, RV 610) | Latin | SSAA voices a cappella / SSA & keyboard | Opening chorus in Dorian mode on C / Complete nine sections with keyboard | 2005 |
| 154 | Maremma | Italian | SMA voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song traditional setting | 2003 |
| 155 | Maremma Amara | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song contemporary setting | 2010 |
| 156 | Matona Mia Cara (O. di Lasso) | Venetian Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Renaissance madrigal originally for SATB voices | 1990 |
| 157 | Mattinata Fiorentina | Italian | SA voices & piano | Originally a solo song by G. D'Anzi (text: M. Galdieri) | 2014 |
| 158 | May Serenade (Maggio Serenata) | English - Italian | SSA or SAB voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song. (English lyrics: J. Yakkey) | 2000 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|----------------------|---|---|------|
| 159 | Me Brila | Venetian Italian | Tenor solo & guitar, ob, bsn, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 160 | Me Ralegro | Venetian Italian | Soprano solo & fl, vlc, vla, vlc, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 161 | Mi Credeva d'Essar Sola | Venetian Italian | Soprano solo & guitar, bassoon | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 162 | O Holy Jesus (O Bone Jesu) | English - Latin | SSA or SAB voices a cappella | 16th c. Motet set to Jacob Arcadelt's Ave Maria | 1994 |
| 163 | O Little Town of Bethlehem | English - Italian | SA chorus, keyboard, Clarinet in Bb, vibraphone | Jazzy version, traditional Christmas carol | 2009 |
| 164 | O Occhi Manza Mia (O. di Lasso) | Italian | SSAA voices a cappella | Renaissance canzonetta "What eyes, my dear loved one" | 1993 |
| 165 | O Ragazzina dalla Treccia Bionda | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song set for 3 voices | 2005 |
| 166 | O Sacred Head (Passion Chorale, H.L. Hassler, 16th c.) | English | SSA voices a cappella | Anthem for Holy Week (text: R.S. Bridges) | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|-------------------|---|---|------|
| 167 | O Salutaris (G. Rossini) | Latin | SSMA voices accompanied or a cappella | Anthem for Communion orig. SATB | 2017 |
| 168 | O Tannenbaum (O Christmas Tree) - a Christmas Fantasy | German - English | SSA voices a cappella | Traditional German Carol in contemporary harmonization (lyrics: E. Anschutz) | 1993 |
| 169 | O Vergin Gloriosa (Anonymous Florentine 18th c.) | Italian | Unison treble voices, violin, viola & cello | Originally for SSA voices a cappella. In the L. Cherubini Library Collections of unpublished Florentine songs | 2016 |
| 170 | Of the Father's Love Begotten (Corde Natus ex Parentis) (M. Prudentius, 4th c.) | English - Italian | SA or SAB voices a cappella | 11th c. Trope for Christmas, originally for unison voices. (English translation: J. Neale) | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|------------------|--|--|------|
| 171 | Orff Schulwerk in Italian | Italian | Unison, 2-part chorus with piano accomp. | Italian folk songs and rhymes (texts adapted to a selection of 23 Orff songs and rhythmic exercises) | 2002 |
| 172 | Perché Steu (Venetian 18th c.) | Venetian Italian | Baritone solo & vln, vic, guitar, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 173 | Personent Hodie (16th c. tune) | Latin | SSA or SAB voices a cappella | Latin Christmas Carol originally published in the Piaie Cantiones | 1997 |
| 174 | Pleni Sunt Coeli et Terra (G.P. da Palestrina) | Latin - English | SA voices with keyboard accomp. | Extract from Missa Spem in Alium (Heaven and Earth are Full of Thy Glory) | 2015 |
| 175 | Presso la Culla di Gesù (Near the Cradle of Jesus) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Tuscan Christmas carol originally for solo voice | 2004 |
| 176 | Puer Natus in Bethlehem (14th c. melody) | Latin | SSA voices a cappella | Medieval Christmas hymn: new setting on 12th c. text | 2014 |
| 177 | Puer Natus in Bethlehem (14th c. melody) | Latin | SSA voices a cappella | Medieval Christmas hymn: classical setting 12th c. text | 2003 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|---------|---|---|-------------------|
| 178 | Pueri Hebraeorum - The Hebrew Children (G.P. da Palestrina) | Latin | SSAA voices a cappella in Ab / SS voices & keyboard in F | Palm Sunday Anthem; originally for SSAT voices | 2013 |
| 179 | Quando Nasceste Voi | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song, traditional harmony | 2017 |
| 180 | Quando Nasceste Voi | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Tuscan folk song, contemporary version | 1992 |
| 181 | Quant'è grande la Bellezza. (text: Lorenzo il Magnifico, 15th c.) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella (music: Anonymous Florentine 17th c.) | Song of Praise (Lauda) to the Virgin Mary, from the Fra Serafino Razzi collection originally for SAT voices | 2002 |
| 182 | Riu, Riu, Chiu (Spanish 1556) | Spanish | SSAA voices a cappella | Anonymous Spanish Villancico for Christmas | 2005 revised 2012 |
| 183 | Riu, Riu, Chiu (Spanish 1556) | Spanish | SMA Bar voices a cappella | Anonymous Spanish Villancico for Christmas | 2012 |
| 184 | Santa Lucia (Neapolitan Folksong) | Italian | SSA or SAB choir | Folk song from Campania | 2017 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|-------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| 185 | Schlafe, Mein Liebster (Sleep, My Beloved) (J.S. Bach, BWV 248) | German - English | SA voices & keyboard | Aria from Bach's Christmas Oratorio arranged for two voices | 2014 |
| 186 | Shalom Chaverim (traditional Hebrew) | Hebrew - English | SA or SSA Children's or Women's voices & piano acc. | Variations on a traditional Hebrew melody in canon form | 2014 |
| 187 | Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly (traditional American tune, 1855) | English | SAB or SATB or SSA voices & opt. keyboard acc. | Anthem for All Saints Days or general anthem | 2016 |
| 188 | Su Pizzineddu (The Little Baby) | Sardinian Italian | SATB voices a cappella | Christmas carol from Sardinia | 2011 |
| 189 | Suscepit Israel (G.B. Pergolesi) | Latin | SA chorus or duet with keyboard in D | Extract from Magnificat, originally a duet for Tenor and Bass in F | 2015 |
| 190 | Te Deum (W.A. Mozart, 1769, K.141) | Latin | SSA chorus with keyboard (or strings); optional solos or small ensemble | The original is for SATB voices and orchestra (keyboard reduction) | 2003 revised 2014 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|------------------|---|---|------|
| 191 | Tempus Adest Floridum (It is Time for Flowering) | Latin | SSA voices a cappella | 16th c. Christmas melody published in "Piae Cantiones" | 1999 |
| 192 | The First Nowell (traditional) | English | Solo Soprano or Tenor or ob, vln or fl, tbn or bsn, Children's or Women's Chorus with organ or piano acc. | Traditional 18th century lyrics and melody | 1992 |
| 193 | The Glory of these Forty Days | English | SA or SB or TB voices accompanied | Palm Sunday Hymn on a 6th century Latin text, Spires English version. Melody by J. Klug, 1543 | 2013 |
| 194 | The Man I Love (G. & I. Gershwin) | English | SA chorus or duet & pianoforte | Solo song set for 2 voices and easy accompaniment | 1990 |
| 195 | Toco Beta (Venetian 18th c.) | Venetian Italian | Duet Tenor & Soprano, guitar, vla, vlc, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 196 | Tu Scendi dalle Stelle - Italian Carol (A.M. de Liguori) | Italian | SA chorus & pianoforte | Traditional Italian Christmas carol (1754) | 2011 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|-------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| 197 | Tu Scendi dalle Stelle - Italian Carol (A.M. de Liguori) | Italian | SSA chorus a cappella | Traditional Italian Christmas carol (1754) | 2000 |
| 198 | Two Tuscan Folksongs | Italian - English | SSA voices a cappella with opt. keyboard acc. | Traditional folk tunes: "Cinquecento Catenelle d'Oro" & "Ninna Nanna Sette e Venti." (English lyrics developed by J. Yakkey) | 2008 revised 2012 |
| 199 | Una Puta | Venetian Italian | Baritone solo & oboe, vln, vlc, perc | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 200 | Va Godendo (G.F. Handel) | Italian | SA chorus & piano acc. | Aria from the opera Xerxes, 1783 set for 2 voices | 2014 |
| 201 | Va Godendo (G.F. Handel) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Aria from the opera Xerxes, 1783 set for 3 voices | 2017 |
| 202 | Va Sossopra (G. Rossini) | Italian | SA chorus & piano acc. | Final Chorus, Act 1 opera "An Italian in Algiers" | 2008 |
| 203 | Vamos Pastorcitos (Spain) | Spanish | SATB voices a cappella | Colombian Christmas carol | 2014 |
| 204 | Ve Tegni molto | Venetian Italian | Baritone solo & flute, guitar, percussion | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--------------------------------------|------------------|--|--|------|
| 205 | Viva Maggio | Italian | SSA voices with opt. keyboard acc. | Tuscan folk song | 2010 |
| 206 | Vorrei Bellezza Mia | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Folk song from Campania (Naples) | 2017 |
| 207 | Vu saré | Venetian Italian | Duet Tenor & Soprano, ob, fl, bsn | Anonymous 18th c. Venetian Air | 1990 |
| 208 | Were You There? (American Spiritual) | English | SSAA voices a cappella | Afro-American Spiritual for Good Friday | 1995 |
| 209 | Were You There? (American Spiritual) | English | SA voices & piano accomp. | Afro-American Spiritual for Good Friday | 2015 |
| 210 | What Child is This? | English | SSA chorus a cappella | Original lyrics C. Dix, 1865, melody "Green-sleeves" | 2017 |
| 211 | What Child is This? | English | Duet for SA or SB voices, piano & opt. Bb clarinet | Original lyrics C. Dix, 1865, melody "Green-sleeves" | 2012 |
| 212 | Zion Hears the Watchmen Singing | English - German | SA chorus or duet & keyboard | Original aria from Cantata 140: "Zion hört die Wächter singen" | 2015 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|---------|---|--|------|
| 213 | Nardini Editions, Folksong arrangements, Music Books | Italian | Solos, duets, vocal ensemble, recorder, fl, sax, piano, perc | Marcondirondello - Girogirotondo - International Lullabies - Buon Natale - Italian Regional Songs - Rataplan - Primi Passi fra le note | 1987 |
| 214 | Auguri e Buon Natale CD - Scuola di Musica di Fiesole | Italian | Full orchestra, guitar, piano, soloists and vocal ensemble (SA - SSA) | 30 International Christmas songs arranged for children's chorus and soloists orchestrated | 2009 |
| | | | PERFORMANCE EDITIONS | | |
| 215 | Adoramus, te Christe (O. Di Lasso) | Latin | SSAA Baritone / SSAAA voices a cappella | Sacred motet for 5 voices | 1990 |
| 216 | Appariran per me le Stelle in Cielo (O. di Lasso) | Italian | SATB voices a cappella | Renaissance madrigal for four voices (incl. piano acc. for rehearsal) | 2013 |
| 217 | Ave Maria (T. L. de Victoria) | Latin | SSAB or SSAA voices a cappella | Sacred motet | 2014 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|--|-----------------|--|---|-------------------|
| 218 | Bona Nox bist a Rechta Ox (W.A. Mozart, K.561) | multi language | SSSS voices with keyboard acc. | Canon for 4 voices, 1788 originally a cappella | 1999 revised 2014 |
| 219 | Bonum Est (It is a Good Thing) (G.M. Asola) | Latin - English | SSA voices a cappella | 16th c. Venetian motet for 3 voices (text: Psalm 92; English text set by J. Yakkey) | 2012 |
| 220 | Caligaverunt Oculi Mei (Easter Week) (F. Durante) | Latin | SAB voices, opt. keyboard & vcl or bsn | Motet for Easter week | 2016 |
| 221 | Cantate Domino (G. Pitoni) | Latin | SSAA voices a cappella | Motet on Psalm 95 | 2003 |
| 222 | Cantate Domino (O. di Lasso) | Latin | SAB voices a cappella | Motet on Psalm 95 | 2013 |
| 223 | Christus Resurgens (O. di Lasso) | Latin | SAT or ATB voices a cappella | Motet for Eastertide | 2013 |
| 224 | Da Così Dotta Man (G. P. da Palestrina, 16th c.) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Renaissance madrigal | 2007 |
| 225 | Domine, Pater et Deus (Francesco de Layolle) | Latin | SSA or TTB voices a cappella | 16th c. Motet based on a Medieval chant | 2000 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|------|
| 226 | Donna, s'i' fu' già degno (Anon. 16th c.) | Italian | STBar voices a cappella | Madrigal for 3 voices | 2013 |
| 227 | Exsultate Deo (A. Scarlatti) | Latin | SSAA voices a cappella | Christmas early Baroque motet | 2006 |
| 228 | Fia Mia Cara (V. Belaver) | Italian (Venetian) | SSA voices a cappella | Renaissance canzonetta | 2001 |
| 229 | Gloria Patri (G.B. Sammartini) | Latin | Alto solo & organ/ keyboard acc. | Aria for Passion Sunday, Feast Days. Part 4 of Magnificat, 1765 | 2014 |
| 230 | Il Mio Martir (C. Monteverdi) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Canzonetta for three voices | 2000 |
| 231 | Italian Folksongs and Rhymes | Italian | Unison only melody | Collection of 85 folk melodies | 2012 |
| 232 | Lieta Gioisca Ogni Alma (Let every heart rejoice) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Early Italian Christmas carol, 1710 - Lauda Spirituale | 2013 |
| 233 | Madre del Mio Gesù (L. Cherubini, 1776) | Italian | SSAA voices a cappella | Sacred motet for 4 equal voices | 2016 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|---------|---|---|------|
| 234 | Missa Beatae Mariae Virginis (G. Buonaugurio da Tivoli) | Latin | SSAA voices a cappella | Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei 1-2-3 | 2002 |
| 235 | O Domine Jesu Christe (A. Brumel) | Latin | SSAA or TTBB voices a cappella | 15th c. motet in 4 equal voices, Franco-Flemish style | 2013 |
| 236 | O Jesu mi Dulcissime (F. Anerio) | Latin | SSA or SAT voices a cappella | Renaissance motet in modern notation | 2013 |
| 237 | Ode alla Beatissima Vergine (D. Mazzocchi, early 17th c.) | Italian | SSA or SST voices with basso continuo or a cappella | A Song of Praise to the Most Blessed Virgin, for 3 voices | 2012 |
| 238 | Ohimè che far degg'io? (P. d'Aragona, 1616) | Italian | Soprano or Mezzo-Soprano, Alto, Tenor voices a cappella | Renaissance Villanella for 3 voices "Alas, What Should I Do?" | 2000 |
| 239 | Perché se M'odiavi (C. Monteverdi) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Renaissance madrigal, originally for TTB | 1990 |
| 240 | Pueri Hebraeorum - The Hebrew Children (G.P. da Palestrina) | Latin | SSAT voices a cappella in F | Palm Sunday anthem; original version | 2013 |

| # | Title | Lang. | Voicing/Instrumentation | Description | Year |
|-----|---|---------|-------------------------------------|---|------|
| 241 | Qual Paura (Luca Marenzio) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Madrigal published in 1586 (Diletto Spirituale, Rome) | 2000 |
| 242 | Questi Capelli d'or (G. Gorzanis, ca. 1569) | Italian | SSA voices a cappella | Renaissance canzonetta originally for SAT voices "This Golden Hair" | 2003 |
| 243 | Sopra il Fieno Colcato (Resting on the Hay) | Italian | SAT voices a cappella | Anonymous Christmas Canticle from 1591 | 2016 |
| 244 | Tenebrae Factae Sunt (M. Haydn) | Latin | SSA voices a cappella | A Classical short motet on the death of Christ, 1770 | 2007 |
| 245 | Tu Ridi Sempre (C. Monteverdi) | Italian | SAT voices & keyboard or a cappella | Canzonetta for three voices, 1584 | 2016 |

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ann C. Gaudino, Ed.D., is an Associate Professor at Millersville University. She is the Founder and Editor in Chief of The Excellence in Education Journal (www.excellenceineducationjournal.org).

She can be reached at eejeditor@gmail.com

