

Masterpiece *maestra*



Joseph Marchio is pastor and music director at First Congregational Church of Chatham and choir director of Chatham Chorale and Cape Cod Community College. He teaches the history of composers and their masterpieces at various venues with a passion for both the subjects and teaching itself.

CHRISTINE HOCHKEPPEL/CAPE COD TIMES

Joseph Marchio already is what he wants to be when he grows up.

BY SARA HOAGLAND HUNTER

When Joe Marchio, the compelling director of the Chatham Chorale, expounds on his musical heroes, his voice is electric. Not only does he love the works of the classical masters, his real passion is in sharing the high points of their lives and their music so that you will love them too. Minutes into an interview with the buoyant, supremely well-versed conductor and teacher, I am ready to enroll in his fall Majestic Musical Masterpieces class at the Snow Library, audit his music history course at Cape Cod Community College, or listen to his choir or next sermon at First Congregational Church, Chatham, where he serves as both pastor and director of music. A bundle of kinetic energy, whose enthusiasm seems to keep him perpetually on the edge of his seat, Marchio shares highlights of the Chatham Chorale's upcoming 43 season. The group of 100 voices strong, auditioned from all across the Cape, is already hard at work on the opening piece of their Nov. 17 concert, Haydn's "Lord Nelson Mass." Marchio's three-part lecture series, presented by the Friends of the Snow Library in Orleans, will tackle this piece

Marchio's music

www.friendsofsnowlibrary.org

Joseph Marchio's Lifetime Learning lecture series, "Majestic Musical Masterpieces," sponsored by the Friends of the Snow Library begins Oct. 21.

www.chathamchorale.org

Concert schedule and ticket information for Chatham Chorale

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in depth as well as other works featured in the concert. The final lecture will be highlighted by a performance of the Chorale's 30-member chamber group.

"This is profound music...generally considered one of Haydn's top five pieces," Marchio says, dark eyes flashing. "It's a fabulous piece the chorus will love to sing and the audience will love to hear."

A natural teacher, Marchio embarks on an engaging explanation of the cultural, political and socioeconomic backdrop of Haydn's masterpiece, which was originally titled by Haydn in Latin: "Mass for Troubled Times" or "Mass In A Time of Fear."

"As a music history teacher, the first thing I teach is that music doesn't exist in a vacuum...It is fair to say that much of music is a result of the environment one is living in."

Marchio explains that the mass was written at a time when Napoleon was wreaking havoc. "In the opening Kyrie, you can hear the tone of uneasiness and that there is a storm brewing. Afterwards, comes the Gloria, the joy. Then the clouds come back. [The piece] alternates between a mood of fear and great hope...much as our own lives do in times of fear and strife."

To bookend the concert, Marchio has chosen Handel's Coronation Anthem, a piece he will draw on not only in his library lectures but as a kick-off for his fall semester college students. He calls Handel the "Simon Cowell of his day," and says the German-educated, Italian-influenced composer who settled in London was "always auditioning singers, trying to find prima donnas for his operas."

For Marchio, who has degrees in organ performance, conducting and a Master of Divinity from Yale Institute of Sacred Music, the power of choral music backed by an orchestra is incomparable. "The greatest musical marriage is vocal with orchestral...[It has] power to stir the soul... When I am conducting the chorus in Mahler's Second Resurrection and the Cape Cod Symphony is playing, I can look around the audience and see people crying."

When I ask if he, himself, tears up while conducting, he says he is usually too engaged in the work of leading the music and all the parts. Singing with a choral group is another matter. In that situation, he says he often has to fight tears and the lump

in his throat that would constrict his breathing and thus hamper singing.

"All great composers know the power of music to change lives," Marchio says, whose own life was changed by music he learned in church as a child singing in the choir under the direction of an inspirational youth choir director. Although his hometown of Charleston, West Virginia had "great symphony and theater," the schools taught no music whatsoever. All of his early music education, including reading music, came through singing in church.

Perhaps his most transformative church musical experience was hearing the church organ as a child. "I wanted to play the pipe organ when I was six years old."

Although far too young to even reach the pedals, Marchio harbored his dream, studying piano all the way through high school to prepare. In tenth grade, he began organ lessons, continuing through college, where he majored in organ performance at The College of Wooster in Ohio.

His enthusiasm for the beloved instrument, which he plays to accompany his congregation on Sundays when he's not preaching, does not appear to have waned. "I agree with Mozart that the organ is the king of the instruments! To be in a room with the floor shaking..." His voice trails off in awe. "The organ can be overpowering one moment and quiet and ethereal the next."

A few years ago, Marchio had the tender experience of consulting with former fellow West Virginia church members of his childhood on the construction and purchase of their new pipe organ. In April of 2012, he played the organ's dedicatory recital at his old church in front of his parents and extended family of aunts and uncles.

It is hard to empathize with the multi-talented Marchio when he worries aloud - "I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up" - par-

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Kathleen Baker of Brewster has been involved with poetry since she first held a crayon in her hand. She's been a performance poet live and on local cable, exhibited in mixed media and written word, published in monthlies, broadsides, chapbooks, anthologies and reviews, and is publisher of a monthly poetry newsletter both online and in print, and has been a long-standing member of Salt Wind Poets, a workshop and performance group directed by Jadene Felina Stevens of East Harwich. Kathleen lives and enjoys life with her dog, Skeeter. She is a dental hygienist on the lower Cape and an aromatherapist (K. Baker Aromatics/Vita Aromatica) who has studied with Dr. Daniel Penoel of La Drome, France. "Poetry is multi-dimensional and can be found everywhere. A poet simply translates as best he can," she says.

Kathleen Vogt retired to Harwich several years ago after teaching literature and writing for more than 30 years at Wheaton College, Norton, MA. Her Ph.D. was on the Irish poet and playwright W.B. Yeats, a concentration that led to a focus on modern poetry and Irish literature more generally, and to literary theory and criticism, in addition to an ongoing engagement with the teaching of writing. Since retirement, Kathleen has enjoyed participating in life-long learning programs at Harvard, Wheaton, and Cape Cod Community College. She has been especially impressed by what our community college offers to all its diverse constituents, including some recent immigrants whom she met through the Cape Cod Literacy Council's tutoring programs. The work of the Cape Cod League of Women Voters has also been of considerable interest. And less sophisticated activities, especially as they relate to gardening and dogs, have continued to provide great enjoyment.

Peter Saunders has completed his doctorate at Union Institute & University. His doctoral focus was the exploration of motivations that will stimulate older people to expand their intellectual and mental health through the creative writing of poetry, titled: "Silent No More – Older People As Poets." He holds a master's of fine arts degree in creative writing from Goddard College. He teaches "So You Want to be a Poet" at the Academy for Lifelong Learning at Cape Cod Community College. He's also been leading writing workshops at the Eldredge Library in Chatham and poetry workshops at Snow Library in Orleans for over a decade. He attends the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center each summer and does frequent tapings on WOMR's Poetry Corner. C17TV, Books & The World recently featured Peter's latest chapbooks of poetry, "Ask Any Frog." His latest manuscript, is entitled "Fifth Peter." Peter lives in Chatham with Linda, and together they share four children and seven grandchildren.

Winners will be published in the January 2014 edition of PrimeTime Cape Cod, available free of charge at over 150 locations.

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ticularly when many of us dream of dabbling in any one of the careers he seems to have already mastered.

He has plans for a doctorate in conducting, which he calls "his passion." In addition to the Chatham Chorale and his own church choir, Marchio conducts the Cape Cod Community College choir.

"My mom tells a story that when I was a baby I would always stare at a little Hummel figurine they had of a child standing on a barrel conducting," he says with a laugh.

He also tagged along with his father, a professional tenor, to rehearsals of everything from Handel's Messiah to "Guys and Dolls." But it was his high school

organ teacher's invitation to attend a concert of the touring College of Wooster chorus that truly set him on his professional path. He was so impressed with the conductor that he applied to the college in hopes of becoming a conductor himself. Not only did he achieve his goal, he met his future wife, fellow music major, Sarah Ford, a native of Harwich, on a field trip to the Cleveland Opera. Ford was at least as dedicated to her study of the bagpipes as Marchio was to his organ and conducting study. She won the National Bagpipe Championship her junior year. She, too, had chosen The College of Wooster for its unique musical offerings, in her case the college's commitment to Scottish arts.

I ask if their two sons, ages 7 and 5, are continuing in the family musical tradition. Marchio laughs and says that although he and his wife promised each other they'd never push the boys in a musical direction, their older son loves attending his mother's rehearsals for her Celtic programs, and enjoys his violin lessons at Chatham Fiddle Company and guitar at the Cape Cod Conservatory.

After one of the more enlightening hours I've spent on the Cape, I am grateful to hear Marchio conclude, "Teaching is what I want to do." That

teaching will always be through music. He says his three year training for seminary teaching at Yale cemented his conviction that he wanted to teach "through performance instead of lecture."

Since that time, teacher-conductor jobs have flowed in abundance. After earning a Master of Music in choral conducting from Boston Conservatory, he returned to his wife's home territory of Cape Cod to take a year off to pay off school loans. It wasn't long before he was discovered by his current church to take over as director of music. His religious training led to his subsequent hire as an associate pastor and, later, the ordained pastor of the church. Cape Cod Community College also found multiple

uses for Marchio's talent, hiring him as college chorus director and later adding an adjunct professorship in music history to his responsibilities. When Chatham Chorale's director of 25 years, Margaret Bossi, retired, Marchio was her chosen successor.

He says he is doubly blessed to be able to teach as well as conduct. "It is stimulating for me to help people figure out music. What I love more than anything is teaching."

What should he be when he grows up? Master teacher and masterpiece maestro Joseph Marchio has answered his own question. ♦

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JOSEPH MARCHIO, DIRECTOR

CHATHAM CHORALE, FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
CHOIR AND CAPE COD
COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHOIR

Sara Hoagland Hunter

Sara is the author of 10 books for children. Her previous articles for PrimeTime Cape Cod include "At School with the Barnstable Police" (April 2012) and profiles of mountain climber Chet Yacek (January 2013) and francophile Anne Toole (November 2012).

