

Traditions of Christmas at the Opera House

December 1, 2024

Greetings from the Barton Organ: It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas
Kent Jager, Barton Organ
Meredith Willson

Greetings from the Pella Opera House Executive Director
Cyndi Atkins

Audience Sing-Along: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Soloists, Audience and Barton Organ; Kent Jager, organist
Felix Mendelssohn

Pella Children's Choir

Deck The Hall with Holly
Harvest Round
Christmas Is Coming
Minka
Night of Silence
Sonja and Berta Poorman
Traditional Round
Traditional English Round
arr. Jill Ann Jones
Daniel Kantor, arr. John Ferguson

Joseph Tangen, conductor; Barb Nunnikhoven, accompanist

Comfort Ye My People . . . Every Valley Shall Be Exalted (*Messiah*)
Sean Stephenson, tenor
G. F. Handel

March from *The Nutcracker*
Kent Jager, Barton Organ
P. I. Tchaikovsky

Audience Sing-Along: Angels We Have Heard on High
Soloists, Audience and Barton Organ; Kent Jager, organist
Traditional French carol

Scholte Strings

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming
Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella
Pastorale on "In Dulci Jubilo"
arr. Kevin Hildebrand
arr. Douglas Smith
arr. Kevin Hildebrand

He Shall Feed His Flock . . . Come unto Him (*Messiah*)
Mary Hannah Keith, soprano
G. F. Handel

INTERMISSION (15 minutes)

Audience Sing-Along: Santa Claus Is Coming to Town (Mary Hannah Keith, intro) J. F. Coots, H. Gillespie
Soloists, Audience, and Barton Organ; Kent Jager, organist

My Favorite Things (from *The Sound of Music*) Richard Rodgers
Mary Hannah Keith, soprano

Pella Barbershop Chorus

Songs of Christmas

Mary Had a Baby

Beautiful Star of Bethlehem

Jingle Bells

Bruce Groenendyk, director

arr. Jim Clancy
arr. David Wright
Adger Pace, Fisher Boyce
James Pierpont

Winter Wonderland

Sean Stephenson, tenor

Felix Bernard, Dick Smith

Audience Sing-Along: White Christmas (Sean Stephenson, intro) Irving Berlin
Soloists, Audience, and Barton Organ; Kent Jager, organist

Sleigh Ride

Kent Jager, Barton Organ

Leroy Anderson

Audience Sing-Along: Joy to the World G. F. Handel, arr. Mason
Soloists, Audience, and Barton Organ; Kent Jager, organist

Acknowledgements and Appreciation

Cyndi Atkins

Farewell from the Barton Organ: It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year
Kent Jager, Barton Organ

Eddie Pola, George Wyle

PERFORMERS

Organist

Kent Jager is currently the organist and choir director at St. Paul's Congregational United Church of Christ in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Prior to St. Paul's, he was Director of Music at Queen of Angels Catholic Church in Chicago, overseeing the extensive choral program and playing the Möller organ. He completed his graduate studies at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, where he studied with Grigg Fountain. He studied with Davis Folkerts at Central College during his undergraduate years.

Kent is a native of Eddyville, IA. His piano studies began at age ten, studying first with Mary Baldwin and then Marthana Newland. Organ studies started in high school on electronic instruments in the theater organ genre but switched to classical organ at Central. Kent's first encounter with an instrument similar to the Barton was during the 1975 Iowa FFA Convention, where he was one of the organists. If memory serves correctly, that convention was in Sioux City and the organ was possibly the Wurlitzer at the Orpheum Theater. He is thrilled to come back to his roots and have the opportunity to get to know the Pella Opera House Barton.

Vocalists and Vocal Ensembles

Pella Children's Choir: Claire Avitt, Jovalie Bell, Molly Ellis, Gracie Heesch, Lily Heesch, Meredith Hinshaw, Atlee Hoover, Sophia Lee, Alivia Lehr, Clara Rauch, Eva Reyes, Mariel Ryerson, Hayden Van Zante, Konrad Wilkening, Caroline Zylstra, Paul Zylstra.

Joseph Tangen is in his eighteenth year as director of the Pella Children's Choir, an outreach choir of the Iowa Youth Chorus. His full-time job is at Pella Middle School as the 6th- through 8th-grade choir director, with close to 300 students involved with choral activities. He plays french horn in the Pella City Band and is often featured as a vocal soloist. He and his wife, Bethany, live in Pella with their three children, Thomas, Tabetha, and Theodore.

Barb Nunnikhoven, from Leighton, studied piano with Carol Van Engelenhoven, Zoe Ann Abrahamson, and Helene Dockendorff, and organ with Laurence Grooters. She is the accompanist for the Iowa Youth Chorus in Des Moines and Pella Children's Choir. She serves as the accompanist for both show choirs at Pella High School and the show choir at Pella Middle School. She is an organist/keyboardist for First Baptist Church, Pella, and First United Methodist Church, Knoxville. She works for Vermeer Corporation as a senior credit specialist.

Pella Barbershop Chorus: Bruce Groenendyk (director), Silas Harris, Charlie Rus, Isaac Green, Kenton Woollums, Alex Foley, Paul Pippel, Eli Westra, Shale Chapel, Logan Smith, Dalton Chapman, Brayden Duinink, Warren Van Wyngarden, Tim Carlo, Frosty Van Voorst.

Sean Robert Stephenson, tenor, is a lifelong performer whose career has spanned the genres of jazz, musical theatre, a cappella, choral, and his greatest musical passions: opera and early music. Combined with a teaching career that has been evolving for over ten years, Sean feels at home teaching most singing styles to all ages. As a singing professional, Sean has populated ensembles and opera companies throughout the Midwest and Colorado. Recent performances include the following roles: Don Basilio (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) with Boulder Symphony, Tonio (*Daughter of the Regiment*) with Opera Fort Collins, Slender (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*) with Loveland Opera Theatre, Candide (*Candide*) with UNCO Opera Theatre, and Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*) with Arapahoe Philharmonic. Other notable appearances include tenor soloist in Bach's *B Minor Mass* with the American Bach Soloists, tenor soloist in Bach's *St. John Passion* with Seicento Baroque, and soloist in Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri* with Musikanten of Montana, as well as all of J.S. Bach's major works with Colorado Bach Ensemble.

Sean holds the Doctor of Arts in voice performance from the University of Northern Colorado. When not engaged in music or teaching, Sean enjoys the outdoors, exercise, reading, gardening, studying the French language, and the art of coffee making.

Mary Hannah Keith, soprano, is happy to be back welcoming in the Christmas season at the Pella Opera House. She was recently seen as a soloist in *Seicento Baroque Ensemble: In Your Court; A Royal Tour*, where she performed under the baton of soprano Amanda Balestrieri; and as Papagena in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with the Arapahoe Philharmonic. While obtaining an Artist's Certificate at the University of Northern Colorado (UNCO), she sang the saucy Paquette in Bernstein's *Candide*, and was a regular soloist with the university's early music ensemble, The Ursa Consort, with which she performed works by Schütz, Bach, Buxtehude, and Purcell. Ms. Keith was an ensemble performer of early music in the Northern Colorado area, singing with the Colorado Bach Ensemble and as an apprentice artist with the Boulder Bach Festival. As an Opera Fort Collins (OFC) apprentice, Ms. Keith performed Clorinda in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, and First Soprano (Sophie) in the Pop-Up Theatre/OFC collaboration of Terrence McNally's *Masterclass*. As a chorister for Opera Omaha, she sang in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Bizet's *Carmen*. Favorite roles include Lucy in *The Telephone* by Gian Carlo Menotti, Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*) and Papagena. Ms. Keith received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Conservatory at the University of Missouri - Kansas City, and her Master of Music from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She currently works at Central College planning the tours and concerts for the music program.

Instrumentalists

CharLee Eekhoff (Violin, Scholte Strings) is in her third year as the 5-12 Orchestra Director for the Pella Community School District. This is her second stint with the Pella Schools after staying home to raise her family. In that time she also subbed extensively for the district. She is a longtime member of the Central College Community Orchestra as well as the Scholte Strings. She is married to Dan Eekhoff, an engineer at Pella Corporation, and has two daughters—Giovanna, in her third year at Iowa State University, and Lennon, a junior at Pella High. In her free time, CharLee enjoys making music, working out, reading, and spending time with her family watching sports and movies.

Elizabeth Van Gorp (Violin, Scholte Strings) is a Pella native and has been playing violin for over 20 years. She has been a member of the Scholte Strings for almost four years now and thoroughly enjoys playing whenever she has the opportunity to do so, including with the Central College Community Orchestra. Liz was a high school English teacher for seven years, then began working as the assistant director for the Pella Historical Museums this past February, a role she loves.

Mackenzie Biggs (Viola, Scholte Strings) grew up in Bloomington, IL, and came to Central College to study music education, where she also played on the women's golf team. She has been playing the violin for 15 years, recently transitioning to the viola, and has participated in the Central College Community Orchestra for the past four years. This year, she joined Scholte Strings and also began teaching K-4 Music at Pella Christian Grade School. Mackenzie enjoys sharing her love of music with others, spending time with family and friends, and cooking meals for others.

Kris DeWild (Cello, Scholte Strings) is the collaborative pianist for the Central College music department, working with college students and faculty. She is a founding member of Scholte Strings and a member of the Central College Community Orchestra. A native of the Pella area, she enjoys music-making and small-town life with her husband Dale, friends, and family.

Barb Nunnikhoven (Piano, Scholte Strings)—see above, “Pella Children’s Choir”

Technical Services

Sound and Lighting: Sara Aguilar first learned about audio/visual tech in high school. She used and improved those skills as a work study job in college. Now, she continues to work as the audio/visual technical coordinator at the Pella Opera House.

Assistant Coordinator: Anne Petrie retired from Central College in 2017 after thirty-one years of teaching voice in the Music Department. Anne earned a copyediting certificate from the University of California-San Diego in 2018 and is available for copyediting projects.

Barton Organ Service: Founded in 1983 by Jeff Weiler, JL Weiler, Inc., has been engaged in pipe organ restoration, maintenance, voicing, and tonal finishing since 1983. The workshop, at 329 West 18th Street in Chicago’s South Loop district, is itself steeped in history, having formerly served as a warehouse for the venerable department store Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co. Using techniques often associated with the conservation of historic artifacts, skilled artisans work to return voice and function to organ pipes and components. They specialize and take great passion in the restoration of vintage E.M. Skinner, Wurlitzer, Kimball, Casavant, Aeolian-Skinner, Robert-Morton and other high-quality symphonic organs.

With a staff of artisans, their workshop offers organ restoration, technical, voicing and tuning services, consulting, and organ relocation for churches, concert halls, academic institutions, theatres and homes. Their facility is also open for internships, hands-on technical sessions, classes, seminars and tours. JL Weiler, Inc. is a supplier of restored artist-quality heritage pipe organs for the musically discerning buyer worldwide.