

# *New Award, Competitions Highlight Cantabella Plans*

By Carol Graham



Cantabella Children's Chorus experiences the joy of singing.

**I**t's nearly impossible to utter Cantabella without subtly singing it, which suits Pushpa Krishnan just fine.

"We want our children to love to sing," says Krishnan, President of the Cantabella Children's Chorus (CCC). "Our focus is on fostering choral artistry, music literacy, and healthy vocal technique through mastery of classical and contemporary musical compositions in a variety of languages."

Now in its 23rd year, Cantabella embraces growth through merit-inspired awards, advanced choirs, participation in international festivals, and the release of its first professionally-recorded album.

The Lynn and Joan Seppala Choral Education Award was introduced at CCC's winter concert "Make We Merry" on December 13th. The award will go to choristers who demonstrate commitment and dedication to the choir's program, a high level of musical proficiency, faithful participation and leadership attributes.

"Choristers will be encouraged to use the award to seek additional lessons to enrich their choral experiences and enhance their vocal skills," says Artistic Director Bee Chow. "By recognizing their talent and dedication, we wish to motivate our accomplished singers and nurture their interest so they may pursue a career in the discipline. The Seppalas have been avid supporters of the arts and education in the Tri-Valley. This

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award is a milestone for Cantabella and we express our deepest gratitude to Joan and Lynn for their support in making this award a reality.”

Although specifics are still being determined, the award will be distributed annually to high school choristers who have sung in Cantabella’s Performing Choir for at least three years.

The award-winning Cantabella Children’s Chorus is a non-profit organization committed to “Nurturing beautiful children through beautiful singing.” In fact, the name Cantabella comes from the Italian words *canta* and *bella*, meaning to sing beautifully. With more than 200 singers ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade, the CCC offers classes in Livermore, Pleasanton and Dublin. Choristers are placed in choirs according to age, maturity, music ability and theory knowledge. Performing Choirs, for grades 5 through 12, present larger choral works with other professional music organizations, such as Valley Concert Chorale and Livermore Valley Opera. They also have the opportunity to participate in choral festivals and competitions which introduce them to other choral groups and renowned clinicians.

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In November, 20 Cantabella choristers took the stage to accompany the

December People, a rock ‘n roll band of world-renowned musicians who put on classic rock Christmas concerts. Attendees are asked to bring food donations to support local food banks, in this case the Open Heart Kitchen.

“It was a very different and fun experience to perform with a rock band,” says Chow. “It was rewarding to perform for a full house at the Amador Theater knowing it was for a very good cause.”

Next July, after having been accepted via a CD audition, the CCC will attend one of America’s most celebrated gatherings of young singers, the “10th Golden Gate International Children’s and Youth Choral Festival.”

“The festival attracts some of the most amazing choirs from all over the world to perform, compete, and build international friendship,” says Cantabella Operations Administrator Becky Little. “What an opportunity to share the stage with international choirs without having to leave the Bay Area!”

Beginning July 12, the festival will offer an unforgettable week of rehearsals, public performances, friendly competition and cultural exchange. Founded in 1991, the festival is sponsored every three years by the Piedmont East Bay Children’s Choir.

“If we bring children together from distinctly different cultures, we can help them connect as real people to real people,” says Piedmont’s Artistic Director Robert Geary. “We can sidestep social conditioning and create bridges of understanding that make it difficult to harbor ill will.”

Additionally, Cantabella’s debut album, “The Pure, the Bright, the Beautiful,” was released this year, and is available for purchase on their Web site.

“The album was professionally recorded and produced within the acoustically optimal walls of the historic Mission San Jose and Livermore’s First Presbyterian Church,” says Chow. “It features nearly one hour of beautiful and diverse choral music by Cantabella’s Performing Choirs.”

The album’s selections include an arrangement of the Korean folksong *Arirang*, which the choristers learned while attending the World Vision International Children’s Choir Festival in South Korea in 2013; two pieces, *Bluesy and Hope*, written by Paul Shin especially for Cantabella’s appearance at the 2012 World Choir Games; Carlin Truong’s arrangement of *Gao Shan Qing*, a traditional Taiwanese folk song; and a Cantabella favorite: *Hope For Resolution, A Song For Mandela and de Klerk*, arranged by Paul Caldwell and Sean Ivory.

Cantabella is currently accepting applications for the spring session which begins on January 13th.

“Cantabella’s training choirs are growing rapidly, which means that families in the community are realizing the value and impact our choral teaching method is having on their children,” says Krishnan. “Cantabella strives to foster and promote the appreciation of choral music in the community.

For more information, or to hear a sample from Cantabella’s album, visit [Cantabella.org](http://Cantabella.org).