

City Bar Chorus: A Unique Public Service

The City Bar Chorus has a special place in the hearts of many of New York City's residents as both a welcome sound of joyous voices and as a unique form of public service by the Association. Since making its debut at St. Vincent's Hospital in 1993, the 50-member chorus has entertained hundreds in hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted-living facilities with selections ranging from Broadway's *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Chicago* and *Les Miserables* to jazz, pop, and gospel music.

Kathryn Schneider, the Chorus' volunteer Musical Director since 1996 (and a securities lawyer at AXA Financial by day), said that all Chorus members (who include three judges) work in some aspect of the legal profession. "This group was founded specifically to do public service, and nearly all of our shows are in community venues," Schneider said. "The outreach mission attracts people to the Chorus who are team players and find inspiration in entertaining others who are so in need of musical cheer."

Balancing high standards of musical quality with members' fast-paced professional schedules has been the key challenge Schneider has faced. Schneider and the Co-Chairs of the Talent Outreach Project, Lucia Swanson and Bill Burke, use the Internet to give musical and logistical direction to the group efficiently. "While some choruses impose rigid requirements on members," Schneider said, "we must be flexible and mindful that our members have great talent but little free time. We rehearse every other week—only half as frequently as most other choruses—and must make significant progress at each session."

As for the Chorus' effect on its audiences, Schneider pointed to a recent show at Bellevue Hospital's pediatric psychiatric facility. "This venue is particularly challenging since some of the children have undergone a significant trauma but do not have family members nearby to support them," Schneider said. "Our shows there are intense and even

magical because the children are so eager to interact with supportive adults. We must always approach them on their terms, making them feel comfortable and safe."

Chorus shows are structured to encourage audience participation. In adult venues, Chorus members lead audience sing-a-longs, accompanied by Chorus pianist Matthew Grieco, while, at pediatric shows, Schneider invites the children to help her conduct the Chorus. Members find the Chorus provides a

unique outlet to fulfill a love of performing while doing service through the Association. "It's important that, given the daily pressures our members face, the Chorus be fun and relaxing for our members," Schneider said.

Along with its ongoing outreach performances, the Chorus will present a special show for its supporters at the House of the Association on Thursday evening, June 14. For more information about the show or the Chorus, email them at citybarchorus@aol.com.



At a December 19 Holiday Concert at the Cateri Senior Citizens' Residence on Manhattan's Upper West Side, the Chorus was joined in welcoming their audience by Association President Evan A. Davis and his family. Kathryn Schneider conducted the group.