

Living A Dream With The SCG Music Club

Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition, there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born.

The dream begins as residents drive into Sun City Grand and experience the colorful beauty of the desert scenery, the cascading waterfalls and the well-designed community facilities. It is immediately apparent to one and all that this is a neighborhood that takes pride in itself. But beyond its visual beauty and architecture is another delight for the senses – the sound of music. Friends and neighbors gather in small and large groups to join their voices in song. They dust off long-neglected band instruments and rehearse swing tunes and '50's doo-wop. And whether they are seasoned musicians or just looking for a fun experience to sing with others, the SCG Music Club offers a spot for everyone interested in renewing their musical dreams.

The SCG Music Club started in 1998 with its first meeting held in the living room of Ken Pierick. Ken, who still serves on the Executive Board, recalls how he and then President-Elect Pat Martin started the club. "Pat was rehearsing a chorus of around 15 people at her house and called me to ask about starting a choral club. I had been jamming with some other musicians and we decided to form a club that would cover all aspects of music, both vocal and instrumental." From these humble beginnings, the Music Club has now grown to 250 members. In fact, Pat Martin's idea for a choral club has blossomed into the 135-voice Grand Singers, directed by Marilyn Duea, a mixed chorus that puts on a Spring concert each April, and a Christmas Concert in early December.



Marilyn Duea directs the Grand Singers

"It only took seventy-eight years but I now appreciate music at a level I never before knew was possible."

--- Paul Kemmerling, Singer



Kay Jeffers and Illa Donaldson, Grand Singers

Sadly, Pat Martin passed away November 24, 2001. In her memory, the Music Club purchased a new Kawai Grand Piano and uses this instrument for club concerts as well as for outside musicians performing in the Sonoran Ballroom. The Music Club has purchased not only this grand piano, but other pianos for rehearsals as well as microphones, mixers, stage lighting, choral risers, computer software and equipment to run audio and lighting, costumes, props and assorted other items to put on shows. Much of this equipment must be stored outside of SCG, an annual expense that the Music Club also shoulders.

Unlike other SCG clubs such as the Art Club, the Computer Club or the Stitchers, the Music Club has no dedicated rehearsal space or meeting room. In order to coordinate the many rehearsals and performances, Judy Snedeker, the Club's Scheduling Coordinator, spends countless hours working with CAM to organize rehearsal times and spaces for the many singing and instrumental groups. From bluegrass and swing tunes, to small select

vocal groups and classical pianists, Judy manages to juggle the requests for all on-going and special rehearsals.

On November 10-13, the Music Club will present its major annual production, *The Celebration of Music*. This show has been a Club tradition since Ken started the first production in 1999. Director Anne Scott is looking forward to another fun and exciting show and says of her cast and crew, "I am amazed at all the talent we have right here in our community and the amount of hard work everyone is willing to put in for the show. I look forward to seeing all our friends and neighbors and other clubs come out for an evening of fun and music in supporting our Music Club."

Speaking of crew, the Music Club couldn't put on any of its shows or concerts if not for the dedication of all its volunteers: backstage tech crews, lighting and sound tech, ushers, set designers and construction, music librarians and rehearsal accompanists. Sets for the shows are frequently built in members' garages, with painting taking place in the early morning cooler hours. Last year, Anne designed multiple backdrops for the Las Vegas inspired *Celebration of Music* complete with the Sahara and Paris hotel, Bellagio stained glass lights, and a revolving stage. In the process of pounding nails, sweating over hot glue guns, renting trucks, loading equipment and numerous meetings, friendships are formed and a lot of laughter and doughnuts and cups of coffee are shared.

In addition to covering its own expenses, the Music Club has also contributed tens of thousands of dollars to CAM for the use of our community's facilities. In 2010 alone, the club contributed over \$13,000 to CAM. Over the past eight years, the club has provided over \$90,000 to CAM and that's on top of covering all its own expenses. As Bob Doles, the club's treasurer explains, "Every time you attend one of the Music Club's shows, you are not only supporting your friends and neighbors, but also helping with CAM's revenues." Bob also points to the scholarship fund set up by the Music Club seven years ago at Glendale

Community College. Since its establishment, the Club has donated \$37,500 to this endowment fund which helps pay for tuition, books and fees for a student majoring in music.

"I have not had an opportunity to sing since the Junior Choir of my church, around age 10. I belong to the portion of singers that Marilyn Duea (director of Grand Singers) refers to as the "y'all come down" group. I have no formal training or experience, but I can carry a tune.

Singing does two things for me. First, it fills my soul. I am surrounded by beautiful voices, beautiful melodies and beautiful words, among a beautiful group where every person is committed to the end goal: beautiful music. I almost melt when the words and sounds blend around me.

Second, I learn something at every rehearsal. I chose Grand, in part, to be a life-long learner. I learn new musical terms and techniques to improve my own singing and that of the choir; both challenge my brain."

--- Nancy Henderson, Alto

"I enjoy being with the Music Club because it allows me to get back to doing something I enjoyed and hadn't done since I was nineteen or twenty. I also enjoy the new people I've met and the friends I've made."

--- Joe Piekarski, Bass



The Music Club is also responsible for the Cimarron Nightclub, a venue known for its relaxed atmosphere and up-close performances. The Cimarron Nightclub offers small tables for four, a cash bar, complimentary snacks and a range of musical soloists and groups. With one or two shows each month, and with less than 90 seats, tickets sell out quickly. Shows featuring instrumental jazz artists, small bands, and singers performing country western songs or Broadway ballads provide a range of entertainment options at the cabaret-inspired nightclub.



IS MUSIC BRAIN FOOD?

Want to keep your brain sharp as you age? Try music lessons.

Researchers from the University of Kansas Medical Center divided 70 healthy adults ages 60-83, and who had similar fitness and education levels and were free of Alzheimer's disease, into three groups based on their amount of musical experience: no musical training, one to nine years of music lessons, and at least 10 years of musical study.

The participants were then given several cognitive tests. Those with the greatest amount of musical experience scored highest on these tests of mental acuity, followed by those with less musical study and those who never took music lessons. Compared to non-musicians, those with a high degree of musical experience had much higher scores on the cognitive tests. The benefits of musical study were still apparent even in those who no longer played an instrument, the researchers said. The study was published in *Neuropsychology*.

by Michelle Glicksman

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For members and audiences alike, the Music Club offers plenty of opportunities for untapped possibilities and dreams. Zelda Peterson perhaps expresses it best: "My husband and I have been living a dream in Sun City Grand for six years. I have been privileged to be part of Grand Singers the past four seasons. Through the Music Club, I have met many lovely people and once again discovered tremendous joy in raising my voice with others in song. Rehearsals are a weekly bright spot for me." Zelda may be happy to know that music not only helps us meet new friends, but can keep us sharp as we age. (See sidebar article: *Is Music Brain Food?*)



Wendy Fentiman (lower left), director of the Desert Divas, chills out with the backup band and Master of Ceremonies at the Divas' 2011 Spring Concert celebrating the music of the Sixties.

If you are interested in finding where your dreams and untapped possibilities are within the Music Club, please contact Marv Myhre, President, at 975-2701, or visit our club's website at www.scgrandmusicclub.com.

--article contributed by Katie Iverson