

Douglas Kostner

Larchmont's Music Man

By Fran Snedeker and Rosanna Hansen



Westchester Children's Chorus with Douglas Kostner, Amanda Gundling and Sanae Miyazaki at left

Larchmont has long been recognized as a 'happening place' for music and the arts. One of the key people in the vibrant Larchmont arts scene is Douglas Kostner, music director at Larchmont Avenue Church—and passionate supporter of community music-making.

Douglas is best known as conductor of The Westchester Chorale, which was based in Scarsdale until he coordinated with its move a decade ago to become the Larchmont Avenue Church's chorus-in-residence presenting two concerts per year for the benefit of the community at large.

"I like the Chorale's programs to be open, accessible, and welcoming," says Douglas. This is why the Chorale often joins forces with other groups who delight in his leadership, such as the Westchester Children's Chorus, the Larchmont Symphonia, and Larchmont's Dave Brandom's jazz Quartet. For many in the Larchmont community, these concerts are the only local live music events they ever attend.

His widely acclaimed work as accompanist for Larchmont/Mamaroneck public school choruses has enlivened and uplifted these groups. Chatsworth School's music teacher Erica Zimmerman says that he is the most talented musician she has ever worked with.

Erica benefits from Douglas's inspiring musical leadership in two other settings: The Westchester Chorale with whom she sings and the Westchester Children's Chorus for which she is a conductor. She says further: "With his breadth of knowledge of all styles of music from Broadway to pop to classical to contemporary, Douglas makes rehearsals fun and effectively prepares the choristers for concerts which are enjoyed by the community at large."

Douglas founded the Larchmont Symphonia in 2007, working with Nicole Sharlow of the Larchmont Music Academy. The group got its start with three young string players, and today boasts a core membership of 15 adult and student musicians. The Symphonia now presents two Larchmont concerts a year, in addition to programs at Larchmont Avenue Church, the Larchmont Library and other community venues.

Douglas is also widely admired for his work as a vocal coach for such groups as the Soundettes, a Larchmont-based a cappella ensemble. Ellen Dungan, Soundettes' musical director, remarks, "It's remarkable how much Douglas has achieved to enrich our music community."

The Westchester Children's Chorus was founded in 2015 by Amanda Gundling,

choral conductor and music educator in Larchmont/ Mamaroneck public schools. Amanda says that her chorus has blossomed since moving to Larchmont Avenue Church at Douglas's invitation. The Chorus holds weekly rehearsals at the church, with Douglas and Sanae Miyazaki as accompanists. Thanks to Douglas' ability to draw from musical resources within the Larchmont community, the Chorus has swelled to 60 members (mostly Larchmont residents) consisting of three youth ensembles who present concerts and workshops and often join the junior choir at church services.

Amanda credits much of this growth in numbers and talent to Douglas's skill at helping the Chorus shape a wider vision of its capacity. To celebrate the Chorus's growing skill, Douglas has composed "Shropshire Lad," a work of ten movements variously dedicated to the group's choral conductors, the children and their families.

Stay tuned for the debut of this new masterpiece in a community workshop this fall and a concert next spring. Or stop by Larchmont Avenue Church on a Sunday morning to hear Douglas' glorious organ playing.



Chancel Choir, Larchmont Avenue Church



Douglas Kostner at the organ, Larchmont Avenue Church



Soundettes

Mark your calendar!

The Westchester Chorale featuring "Melodies from the Moldau," beloved folk tunes by Antonín Dvořák and Bedrich Smetana

Saturday, December 14 at 4 pm
Larchmont Avenue Church

For more information: 914-833-0350 or WestchesterChorale@gmail.com.

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