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## MEDIA FACT SHEET

### **Inland Children's Chorus Preservation Project InlandChorus.com™ and Wright State University**

InlandChorus.com works with Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio to preserve and make widely available the history and music of the Inland Children's Chorus, an original and historically unique contribution by American industry to young people, the community, and the performing arts.

#### **Materials available at InlandChorus.com**

- ◆ Feature articles, photo essays, news clippings and concert reviews (over 150 in PDF format)
- ◆ Playable music files from live-in-concert and studio recordings (over 350 MP3 and WAV files)
- ◆ Concert programs from 1937 to 1970 (100 many with autographs and reviews included)
- ◆ Professional concert chorus photos (37 from 1936-1965)
- ◆ Original news and personal photos and images of mementos (87 including slideshows)
- ◆ Forum-page comments from former members and visitors (73 current postings)

#### **Brief History of the Inland Children's Chorus**

The Chorus was sponsored from 1936 to 1970 by the Inland Manufacturing Division of General Motors Corporation to give 8-16 year old children of employees "a musical education and training which they otherwise might not be able to obtain, and to make a contribution to the cultural life of Inland employees and the community." Inland's history: [http://history.gmheritagecenter.com/wiki/index.php/Inland\\_Manufacturing\\_Division](http://history.gmheritagecenter.com/wiki/index.php/Inland_Manufacturing_Division).

Supported enthusiastically by community institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Dayton Art Institute, the Chorus has been described as "one of Dayton's greatest by-products of industry" (from DPO history at <http://www.daytonphilharmonic.com/files/uploaded/DPO70AnnBk.pdf>).

The Chorus became well known through its widely popular and critically acclaimed concerts, national radio broadcasts, and television performances. Milton J. Cross, known as "the voice of the Metropolitan Opera," called the Chorus "one of the most unique and inspiring programs of its kind in the country."

Raymond Sovey, a two-time Tony Award nominee and long-time Broadway technical and costume designer staged the concerts, and he returned to Dayton frequently to refine the staging and address audiences at several concerts. The Chorus often performed with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, as in the world premiere stage production of Benjamin Britten's "Saint Nicolas" with guest conductor Hugh Ross of New York's *Schola Cantorum* and tenor David Lloyd of the New York City Opera.

#### **Educating Young People through the Performing Arts**

The Inland Children's Chorus represents how industry can make—in a single project—a substantial and multi-generational contribution to young people, the performing arts, and the community. Formed in the heart of the Great Depression, the Chorus demonstrates the courage and vision of the far-sighted individuals and a leading corporation who worked and invested generously to reach that goal.

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*CBS Sunday Morning* reported on a Chorus America study finding that children who sing in choruses achieve academic success and develop valuable life skills. The history of the Inland Chorus offers a model for providing such opportunities to young people. See <http://inlandchorus.com/PDFs/2009-ca-study.pdf>.

As a 1966 graduate stated, "From my participation, I learned a love of good music, I acquired self-discipline, and I learned to sacrifice my wishes to do the best for the Chorus." This statement describes the education that thousands of young people received through the Inland Children's Chorus.

Another former member of the Chorus is Stephen Roddy, who now directs the Houston Children's Chorus which has performed for U.S. Presidents, at Carnegie Hall, and worldwide ([www.houstonchildren.org/](http://www.houstonchildren.org/)). Roddy writes that the Inland Children's Chorus was "an incredible influence on my life and career."

### **Inland Chorus Preservation Project**

Gerald Alred, a former Chorus member (1951-1959) and professor of English and professional writing at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, began digitizing Inland Children's Chorus records from his family's collection for himself and his cousin Fred Moore, also a Chorus member (1941 to 1947). Through a rare-music blog site (<http://musicyouwont.blogspot.com/>), he connected with other former Chorus members.

In 2009, he organized a lunch with former Chorus members that included himself; Fred Moore, his cousin and long-time member of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra; Paul Thomas, a 35-year member of the Kim Kelly Orchestra; Jim Thomas, a retired sales executive, and their sister Diann (Thomas) Brown. They exchanged materials and considered how to preserve the music and history of the Chorus.

Based on his thirty years of teaching technical communication, publishing historical bibliographies and authoring widely-acclaimed textbooks in business and technical writing, Professor Alred developed the website <http://inlandchorus.com/> aimed at preserving and making widely available the history and music of the Inland Children's Chorus. His other goal was to find a permanent institutional home for these materials. For Alred's profile, see <https://people.uwm.edu/alred/professional-profile/>.

Professor Alred conducted substantial research and received support for the project from Jane Brock Woodall and Craig Orr at the Smithsonian Institution as well as Christo Datini, Lead Archivist at the General Motors Heritage Center. Mr. Datini praised the project for "documenting this portion of GM's history."

Those and other contacts led to enthusiastic interest from Special Collections and Archives, located in the Wright State University Libraries in Dayton, Ohio. Special Collections agreed to partner with Gerald Alred and InlandChorus.com to collect and to preserve materials related to the Inland Children's Chorus. InlandChorus.com will become a permanent part of the "Inland Children's Chorus Collection."

An excellent front-page article describing this project appeared on August 11, 2013 in the Sunday *Dayton Daily News* (D1, D4). Written by staff writer Meredith Moss with photos by Peter Wine, the article is available at <http://inlandchorus.com/PDFs/2013-A11-DDN-Feature.pdf> and follows this fact sheet. The website include additional recent articles about the Chorus and the preservation project.

Professor Emeritus Alred continues to urge former members and others to help complete this history by (1) sharing their comments and memories of Chorus at [InlandChorus.com](http://InlandChorus.com), (2) contributing photos, recordings, or other materials to the website, or (3) donating original materials to Special Collections and Archives (<http://libraries.wright.edu/special/>). For questions or interest, write to [alred@inlandchorus.com](mailto:alred@inlandchorus.com).