THE ST. OLAF CHOIR
ANTON ARMSTRONG • CONDUCTOR

1912 • Centennial Tour • 2012
More than two decades after taking the reins of the St. Olaf Choir, Anton Armstrong ’78 jokes that he’s still “the new conductor.”

Never mind that later this year he’ll match the length of time his predecessor, Kenneth Jennings ’50, led the renowned ensemble. Or that, like Jennings, he has guided an organization steeped in tradition into a new era.

In its 100-year history, the St. Olaf Choir has had just four conductors. Each has built upon the foundational ideals of sharing choral music that stirs the souls of listeners. Each has worked tirelessly to expand the choir’s outreach and sound, globally and culturally. And all have been deeply beloved, legendary figures on campus.

So Armstrong can understand if some people, especially those who can recall the magic of singing under one of his predecessors, still think of him as “new.” After all, he wrote his doctoral monograph on the history of the St. Olaf Choir, a project that enabled him to closely study the repertoire and pedagogy of the first three conductors of the St. Olaf Choir and the ensemble’s impact on the world of choral singing. Doing that research meant that when Armstrong was invited to lead the choir, he knew he was inheriting a finely tuned instrument with a firmly rooted legacy.

“Yet it’s an instrument that is constantly changing,” Armstrong says. “One of the things I gathered from my own research and study of the choir is that each conductor has built on the traditions of those who had preceded him, and then worked to open new doors.”

In recent years, the St. Olaf Choir has been flinging those doors wide open. The ensemble has become a leader in the international music community, performing at the White House in 2005, touring extensively abroad, and regularly collaborating with ensembles such as the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, VocalEssence, Cantus, the American Boychoir, and Magnum Chorum. Some of the best music schools in the country, Armstrong notes, look to the St. Olaf Choir as a pacemaker in repertoire and vocal pedagogy.

While F. Melius Christiansen established the ensemble’s standard of excellence when he founded the St. Olaf Choir and his son, Olaf Christiansen, cemented its legacy, it’s the work of Jennings and Armstrong that has taken the St. Olaf Choir into a modern age.

In the Beginning

F. Melius Christiansen came to St. Olaf in 1903 with the task not of establishing a choir, but of leading a band. He quickly shaped a group of instrumentalists on campus into a remarkable performing organization that toured Norway in 1906. “It’s just really quite amazing that he achieved that in such a short time,” says Joseph M. Shaw ’49, professor emeritus of religion at St. Olaf and the author of The St. Olaf Choir: A Narrative.

While conducting the St. Olaf Band, Christiansen also was asked to lead the choir at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Northfield. In addition to his extensive musical training — he had studied music at Augsburg and the Eastman School of Music in Rochester — Christiansen was able to study the history and organization of choirs in the United States and Europe, which informed his approach to leading choirs.

The choir prepares to board a military transport plane on its 1957 tour to Iceland. The tour to Iceland became a matter of foreign relations, as the U.S. wanted to renew its contract to operate the air base at Keflavik and the Russians, also eager to lease the site, had sent the Red Army Chorus and the Russian Ballet to perform.
Those early tours were part of the genius of F. Melius Christiansen.

Few schools at the time toured nationally or internationally, and doing so helped the St. Olaf Choir become a national sensation.

G. Schmidt sent copies of their glowing reviews ahead to venues along the East Coast. "By the time they got to places like New York and Washington, the people out there had already heard something about the choir," Shaw notes.

The ensemble’s rich sound did not disappoint the sophisticated listeners who gathered in cities like New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. In some of the country’s greatest performance halls, the St. Olaf Choir impressed audiences and critics alike. “It was a great success, and it certainly did put the choir — and the college — on the map,” says Shaw.

By the time the choir toured Norway again in 1930, an estimated 40,000 people gathered to welcome the ensemble to Trondheim.

**A Lasting Legacy**

F. Melius Christiansen remained at the helm of the St. Olaf Choir until 1943. Several years before he retired, he chose his successor: his son, Olaf Christiansen, who had built a career of his own as a conductor at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

The younger Christiansen left Oberlin to become his father’s assistant conductor in 1941, a postion he held for two years before taking full leadership of the St. Olaf Choir. And while it’s tempting to say that Olaf Christiansen simply continued what his father had begun, Shaw says that’s not entirely true. Olaf Christiansen was an accomplished musician in his own right, having studied sacred music at Union Theological Seminary and founding the a cappella choir at the Oberlin Conservatory, where he taught for several years. “It wasn’t just that he was riding on the reputation and fame and the practices of his father,” Shaw says. “In having studied voice extensively, he was actually more broadly trained as a singer than F. Melius was.”

While Olaf Christiansen remained deeply committed to ensuring the St. Olaf Choir retained the purity of tone it had become known for, he also began to explore new genres and interpretations of music.

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In addition to expanding the ensemble’s repertoire and using instruments, Jennings also favored a “freer tone,” Shaw says, that allowed the choir to really soar. Under Olaf Christiansen, members of the choir sang tightly and close together, standing on U-shaped risers.
that meant most of them sang toward other members of the ensemble. Jennings ordered wider and deeper risers that enabled singers to hear themselves better, sing more freely, and direct their energy toward the audience. “I opened it up because I thought we needed to sing to the people, not to ourselves,” he says.

Under Jennings, the choir developed what one reviewer described as “a more vibrant, warm tone—a resonant, lively, brilliant sound that rings with vitality and conviction.” Jennings coaxed his students to reach their highest musical potential with a graceful form of conducting that almost looked like he was “sculpting the sound with his hands,” Shaw says. “He was a soft-spoken conductor. You had to be almost silent to hear what it was he wanted from you,” says former choir member Martha Kunau ’90. “He was able to bring very young voices together, knowing what it was we could do and then inspiring us to a higher level, producing a sound as a choir that perhaps none of us thought was possible.”

Jennings also expanded the choir’s global reach. The St. Olaf Choir celebrated its 75th anniversary with a tour of Asia in 1986, and in 1988 it was one of only five choirs in the world invited to participate in the Olympic Arts Festival in Seoul, South Korea. Throughout his tenure, Jennings affirmed his belief that art does not stand still. He exposed the choir to the oral-based musical traditions of Asia and the cultures of Eastern Europe at a time when the Berlin Wall was coming down.

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The first of the St. Olaf Choir’s four conductors to actually apply for the position and compete with others for the honor of leading the ensemble, Armstrong’s interview—which included leading the choir through several pieces—actually got off to a rocky start. The choir had already had a long week of singing under several other candidates by the time Armstrong stood before them for his audition. Members of the ensemble went through the motions of the first piece with little emotion. Then Armstrong handed out copies of Ralph Manuel’s “All为了更好,” and members of the choir struggled to sight-read the unfamiliar piece, the singing faltered and Armstrong worried the audition was heading toward failure. He stopped the choir and asked an alto what the word “allerdings” meant. “A word exuding praise and joy,” she answered.

“Well, you could have fooled me by the way you all are singing this,” Armstrong told the students before him. He knew he needed a better connection with these young singers in order to elicit the sound they were capable of, and he took a few moments to give them a pep talk and encourage them to put their full energy into the song of praise he had chosen. It was a gamble, and it paid off. “The choir took hold of the piece, and it leaped off the page,” Shaw wrote. Not only did that experience propel Armstrong to the top of the search committee’s list, but it illustrated one of the fundamental principles of his leadership: his belief that it’s not enough for audiences to simply hear and understand the lyrics. They have to feel them. And that means the singers must understand and feel them first.

Although he expects his singers to strive for excellence, “it’s not about being perfect,” Armstrong says. “It’s about eliminating the distractions so that the infinite power can shine through and transform the lives of those who make and hear it.”

Armstrong offers his singers the mantra he learned from mentor Helen Kemp, professor emerita of voice and church music at Westminster Choir College: “Body, mind, spirit, voice—it takes the whole person to sing and rejoice.”

“When I first began conducting and teaching, I had a take-charge attitude, the notion that the young people in front of me were there to do my bidding,” Armstrong says. “I see myself as a catalyst now, someone who helps bring out the best in them, as musicians and as individuals.”

Armstrong’s vast knowledge of the music he works with and his ability to articulate his vision to singers and audiences alike has enabled him to take the St. Olaf Choir to the next level. “He gets beyond what’s on the page, what the texts are, and elevates it so that you’ve made art,” says Karin Lane McMillen ’94, who sang in the choir for three years under Armstrong. Like Olaf Christiansen and Jennings, Armstrong is a product not only of the St. Olaf Music Department, but also the choir itself. He sang in the ensemble for two years under Jennings before moving on to graduate school at the University of Illinois and, later, Michigan State University. He returned to Northfield in 1990 to lead the St. Olaf Choir after a decade at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The choir’s repertoire under Armstrong has become increasingly multicultural. He has included music of the Pacific Rim, Africa, and Latin America in the choir’s catalog and added Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Ireland to its tour annals, while also emphasizing a more historically informed interpretation of musical origins. At the same time, he maintains the cultivation of the choir’s rich traditions, most notably with a 2005 tour to Norway, during which the PBS special A St. Olaf Christmas in Norway was filmed.

“The palate is more colorful and broader now,” Armstrong says. “It retains the characteristic sound it had under the Christiansens, but now it’s not just salt and pepper. There are a lot of spices in it.”

Under Armstrong, the St. Olaf Choir has also begun to move. “I mean, they really move,” says Shaw, describing how members of the ensemble sway back and forth with the music during certain pieces. Sometimes it’s choreographed, and other times it’s simply an expression of what they’re feeling. “If Kenneth freed up the voice, maybe Anton freed up the body,” Shaw notes.

With its annual national tour and trips abroad every four years, the St. Olaf Choir continues to bring its message of hope and faith to listeners around the world. Armstrong acknowledges that while he is the current link in a chain of strong leaders who have guided the choir and shaped its sound, it is really the students who have carried the ensemble’s legacy from one generation to the next.

“The conductor gives inspiration, but also receives it from the choir. You hear no sound from my hands,” he says, waving them in the air. “It comes from all those wonderful souls who have been part of the choir and who have contributed in some way.”

For many of those students, singing in the St. Olaf Choir served as a transformative experience that will remain with them for a lifetime.

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— JOSEPH M. SHAW ’49

“Under Jennings, the choir developed what one reviewer described as ‘a more vibrant, warm tone—a resonant, lively, brilliant sound that rings with vitality and conviction.’”

The choir’s 75th anniversary tour of Asia in 1986 helped expand its global reach.
For as long as there has been a St. Olaf Choir, there has been a manager who makes it all come together by taking care of the details.

When the St. Olaf Choir receives an invitation to perform in one of the country’s finest concert halls or entertain audiences halfway around the world, it’s up to the conductor to accept. And then it’s up to the choir’s manager to make it happen.

For more than three decades, that manager has been Bob “B.J.” Johnson, who takes care of everything from figuring out how to pay for tours to making travel arrangements for the ensemble to negotiating the contract details for venues. He often has to plan two or three years in advance to book concert sites while simultaneously putting the finishing touches on performances taking place next week.

It’s important work that has enabled the conductors of the St. Olaf Choir to focus all of their energy on making great choral art. “With his leadership, I am able to achieve something much bigger, much more significant than I could otherwise,” St. Olaf Choir Conductor Anton Armstrong ’78 says of Johnson.

This partnership between conductor and manager has been a key component of the St. Olaf Choir’s formula for success since the founding of the ensemble. Standing beside St. Olaf Choir founder F. Melius Christiansen for many years was Paul G. Schmidt, a St. Olaf mathematics professor who became the first manager of the choir in 1912. Schmidt planned and executed every tour and concert, traveled with the choir as its manager, and even sang in the bass section.

In 1948, his son, Frederick Schmidt ’31, who sang in the St. Olaf Choir while majoring in chemistry and biology, took over the management of music organizations at St. Olaf and worked closely with the St. Olaf Choir’s new conductor, Olaf Christiansen ’25. This second-generation Christiansen-Schmidt team provided distinguished leadership until Christiansen retired in 1968. Because of Fred Schmidt’s efforts, the St. Olaf Choir was the first college choir to appear on the concert stage of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and the first college choir to perform in Philharmonic Hall in New York City.

Sigurd Frederickson acted as manager during the choir’s tour of Vienna and Rome in 1975. Frederick Gonnerman, managed the choir on top of his other duties for several years, and music faculty member Sigurd Frederickson acted as manager during the choir’s tour of Vienna and Rome in 1975.

In 1978, at the suggestion of St. Olaf Choir Conductor Kenneth Jennings ’50, the Music Department appointed Johnson, who had been on the staff of the University Musical Society at the University of Michigan, as the full-time manager of the Office of Music Organizations.

Johnson has encouraged the leaders of the St. Olaf Choir to think big. He was instrumental in getting St. Olaf into the recording business, contracted for the St. Olaf Choir to perform one of the first choral concerts in Philadelphia’s Verizon Hall, and has led the choir on tours to nearly every corner of the world. His work has ensured that the St. Olaf Christmas Festival is aired on Twin Cities Public Television every four years, and he has been the driving force behind simulcasting the event in movie theaters across the country.

“In many ways, this is an entrepreneurial enterprise,” says Johnson. “We can only live on our history and tradition for so long before it becomes a dinosaur. Our musical legacy is only as good as the next concert.”

And for 100 years the choir’s manager has made those concerts happen, seeing to all of the details and sharing the conductor’s vision of a final production.

“While we have guided the choir artistically, it’s because of Bob’s entrepreneurial sense that many of the innovations in the last 34 years have come about,” Armstrong says. “He’s always pushing us, always asking what we can do not just to advance the St. Olaf Choir, but what great choral music can do in the lives of other human beings.”

When streams of water join together it calls to mind something almost primordial — the first words of creation, turbulence and chaos becoming orderly and purposeful. Water is the essential element of all life, necessary for bodies and land. Water is the gift of baptism, our strong identity carrying us through this world like the powerful flow of a river that has emerged from many streams.

When different streams of thought, associations, or loyalties convene, often, like water turbulence occurs. And in this time in our history, turmoil and division feel like the general way of being. So confluence is a prayer, a longing to be gathered from our separate places, to come together in communion with Christ and with one another, as God’s whole, cherished people.

When we begin this conference at opening worship we are confluent, a collection of people from all across this church joining together for learning, listening, and nourishment. May it be so.
The St. Olaf Choir
ANTON ARMSTRONG, CONDUCTOR - B. J. JOHNSON, MANAGER

SOPRANO I
Katheryn Beker, Phoenix, Ariz.
mathematics/education
Maggie Burke, Lawrence, Kan.
music performance/education
Jane Buro, Coralville, Iowa
psychology/neuroscience
Rachel Dalham, Northfield, Minn.
economics/anthropology
Annie Deringer, University Place, Wash.
music performance
Heather Ekenberg, Waupeaca, Wis.
music performance
Eric Fox, Brownsburg, Ind.
writing
Joy Gandermer, Phoenix, Ariz.
church music
Sarah Kvale, Rochester, Minn.
music and multicultural studies
Maxim Wendahl, Chaska, Minn.
music education
SOPRANO II
Kerry Auer, Savannah, Ga.
music performance
Katie Burke, Lawrence, Kan.
music performance/education
Claire Devries, Taichung, Taiwan
music education
Julia Kuchanowicz, Junction City, Wis.
music/Israel education
Eric Schulte, Fargo, N.D.
music education
Sara Shirk, White Bear Lake, Minn.
music performance
corrine Ten, Columbus, Ga.
music
Margaret von Bibra, Pasadena, Calif.
biology/chemistry
Megan Wells, St. Cloud, Minn.
music philosophy
ALTO I
Jessica Ballard, Los Angeles, Calif.
history/American studies
and multicultural studies
Cassandro Bigh, Coralville, Iowa
physics/chemistry
Marcus Bubey, Mukilteo, Wash.
music education
Kirr Erensweyger, Dayton, Ohio
art history/studio art
Katharine Jenkins, Huntington, N.Y.
philosophy
Laura Kyle, St. Paul, Minn.
English
Kenne Newlin, Augusta, Ga.
music/women’s studies
Kori Sanderson, Export, Pa.
English/philosophy
Becca Tjon, Greenfield, Minn.
biology/English
Emily Vite, Tinwville, N.J.
music theory/composition
ALTO II
Amanda Belgard, St. Louis Park, Minn.
English education
Maren Bedman, Excelsior, Minn.
history
Alice Berry, Atlanta, Ga.
music education
Kelsey Faby, Gig Harbor, Wash.
physics/mathematics
Rose Haxton, Portland, Ore.
undeclared major
Allison Henney, Park Ridge, Ill.
music education
Sara Jochad, Golden Valley, Minn.
psychology/education
Katie Nadeau, Northfield, Minn.
psychology/education
Ethan Sneller, Fargo, N.D.
music education
TENOR I
Riley Renes, Wichita, Kan.
political science
Thaneus Brown, Salt Lake City, Utah
music/computer science
Gus Connolly, New Brighton, Minn.
thursday
• Nathan Doughtery, Lakewood, Colo.
music performance
William Gosforth, Vancouver, Wash.
music performance
Derick Hais, Prosper, Texas
music performance
James Hope, Chicago, Ill.
computer science
Bryan Wells, Cambridge, Minn.
political science
TENOR II
Ben Dalke, Red Wing, Minn.
music education
Sam Engelhardt, Sandal, Minn.
chemistry/mathematics
Aaron Helgerson, Willmar, Minn.
religion
Michael Jeffrey, Urband, Ill.
music
Robert Kelly, Menasha Heights, Minn.
music theory and composition/ management studies
James Marshall, Plymouth, Minn.
music education
Paul Moir, Bergen, Norway
political science/economics
Karl Robson, Baton Rouge, La.
music performance/church music
BASS I
David Anderson, Charlotte, N.C.
music performance/church music
Benjamin Andreasi, Marshfield, Wis.
music performance/English
Brett Eisenbeis, Fargo, N.D.
music
Zachary Frickman, Stillwater, Minn.
biology
Paul Henderson, Chicago, Ill.
physiology
Jeremy Krueger, Brandon, Minn.
biology
James Lawrell, St. Cloud, Minn.
English
Shawn Miller, St. Cloud, Minn.
biology
Zachrey Roppel, Fargo, N.D.
music performance/church music
BASS II
Jordan Becher, Overland Park, Kan.
music performance
• Andrew Bourgoin, Conway, Ark.
music performance
Mark Donlin, Andover, Minn.
psychology/neuroscience
Rudyard Davis, Mount Pleasant, Iowa
mathematics/economics
Will Eich, St. Cloud, Minn.
music
Jon Erik Haines, Golden Valley, Minn.
English
Chris Misur, Edina, Minn.
music/education
history/media studies
Benjamin Simon, Shadyside, Wis.
mathematics
Chris Southard, Eau, Pa.
music/computer science
Kurt Tarvin, Oconomowoc, Minn.
music performance/multidisciplinary studies
PIANO
Andrew Bourgoin, Conway, Ark.
music performance
VIOLIN
Gretta Barter, Minneapolis, Minn.
music/chemistry
Madeline Braunback, Blackburg, Va.
music performance/mathematics
Rebecca Hassan, Minneapolis, Minn.
psychology/psychology
Linda Kate, Boulder, Colo.
music performance
Catherine Menon, Austin, Minn.
music/religion studies
Emily Mullany, Colbert, Iowa
music performance
VIOLA
Atigal Enckowski, Fargo, N.D.
music/management studies
Charles Gery
St. Olaf music/academy
CELLO
Sara Gustafson, Lake Elmo, Minn.
English/management studies
BASS
David Meyers, Waveland, Iowa
music performance
OBOE/ENGLISH HORN
Ruthie Lee, Lincoln, Neb.
music performance
Hannah Fleming, Vancouver, Wash.
music performance
Katherine Helmam, Lutherville-Timonium, Md.
music theory/composition
BASSOON
Corey Mackey, St. Charles, Ill.
music performance/composition
PERCUSSION
Kate Burke, Lawrence, Kan.
music performance/education
Michelle Ramsey, Zephyrhills, Fla.
music performance
Shenandoah
The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want
My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord
The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want
A Hymn of the Nativity
Beautiful Savior

The St. Olaf Choir • Centennial Tour • 2012
ANTON ARMSTRONG, CONDUCTOR - B. J. JOHNSON, MANAGER

Sicut cervus
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–94)
Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied (BWV 225)
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
For God Commanded Angels
to Watch Over You
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809–47)
Selig sind die reines Herzens sind
(Blessed Are the Pure of Heart)

the St. Olaf Choir Centennial Tour 2012
ANTON ARMSTRONG, CONDUCTOR - B. J. JOHNSON, MANAGER

Light Everlasting
Olaf C. Christiansen ‘25 (1901–84)
Ave Rosa (premier performance)
Rene Clausen ’74 (b. 1953)
A Hymn of the Nativity
Kenneth Leighton (1929–88)
Before I Go My Way
Peter Hamlin (b. 1951)
Antiphon (Spiritual Songs)
Kenneth Jennings ’50 (b. 1925)

A TAPESTRY OF FOLK AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

Norge, mitt Norge
Alfred Paulsen (1849–1936)
arr. Kenneth Jennings ’50
Shenandoah
arr. James Erb
The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want
arr. John Ferguson
It Is Well with My Soul
Philip P. Bliss (1838–76)
arr. Yu-Shan Tsai
My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lead
arr. Moses G. Hogan Jr.

FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION:
www.stolaf.edu/depts/music

OPTIONAL SELECTIONS

Beautiful Savior
arr. F. Melius Christiansen
Nearly 15 years ago, Anton Armstrong ’78 was conducting the St. Olaf Choir as they sang one of his favorite Bach motets, *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied,* when suddenly he lowered his hands.

As his students looked at him in confusion, wondering what would prompt him to stop conducting in the middle of a concert, he simply said “Sing.”

And they did, singing with a passion that carried the piece to a new level. “They didn’t need me at that point,” Armstrong says. “And it was exciting. That ability to recognize when to allow the ensemble to take control of the piece is one of Armstrong’s strengths as a teacher and conductor. While he meticulously ensures that the choir is technically accomplished on each piece they perform, he has always been aware of the important balance between precision and emotion. “It’s always technique and expression running parallel for me, “ he says. “At a certain point, when all the mechanics are basically in place, then that expressive element must take the lead.”

Armstrong always leads his singers to strive for excellence, but he stresses that it’s not about being perfect. “It’s about eliminating the distractions so that the infinite power can shine through and transform the lives of those who make and hear the music,” he says.

Now in his 22nd year of conducting the St. Olaf Choir, Armstrong offers his singers the mantra he learned from his mentor Helen Kemp, professor emerita of voice and church music at Westminster Choir College: “Body, mind, spirit, voice — it takes the whole person to sing and rejoice.”

And Kemp isn’t the only person who has influenced Armstrong over the years. He remembers being young, living in New York, and not being particularly excited about the prospect of seeing the ensemble that he would one day conduct in concert. “I had friends going off to a Moody Blues concert at Madison Square Garden,” recalls Armstrong. “And I was dragged off to a St. Olaf Choir concert at Lincoln Center by my assistant pastor, who said, ‘You’ll love this choir.’”

That concert, combined with a visit to the St. Olaf College campus, had a profound effect on Armstrong. He eventually enrolled at St. Olaf, which had a campus community warm enough to outweigh his distaste for Minnesota winters. A member of the St. Olaf Choir as a student, Armstrong knows both the commitment it takes to sing in the choir and the investment it takes to lead those singers as a conductor. He’s learned a lot since taking the reins of the ensemble in 1990. “When I first began conducting and teaching, I had a take-charge attitude, the notion that the young people in front of me were there to do my bidding,” he says. “I see myself as a catalyst now, someone who helps bring out the best in them, as musicians and as individuals.”

Armstrong strives to create whole musicians, not just musical moments. “People ask me if I wouldn’t rather work with ‘professional’ musicians,” he says. “I’d rather turn out 10,000 professionals than turn out 10,000 professionals.”

Achieving that goal won’t be hard. Armstrong’s work as a teacher, a teacher of teachers, a conductor, and a music editor influences thousands of singers every year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

A graduate of the American Boychoir School, St. Olaf College, the University of Illinois, and Michigan State University, Armstrong returned to Northfield in 1990 after a decade at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He teaches vocal pedagogy for the young singer and conducting classes at St. Olaf. He mentors students at Luther Seminary who are studying in the Master of Sacred Music conducting program. He conducts the St. Olaf Choir and the Collegiate Choir (a non-auditioned women’s ensemble composed of students, faculty, and in his 21st year as conductor of the Troubadours, the boys’ ensemble of the Northfield Youth Choirs. He serves as artistic director of the St. Olaf Christmas Festival, an event that involves year-round planning. In addition, Armstrong serves each summer as music director of the Stangeland Family Youth Choral Festival, an event that involves year-round planning. In addition, Armstrong serves each summer as music director of the Stangeland Family Youth Choral Academy (SFYCA) of the Oregon Bach Festival.

Armstrong’s gifts as a teacher and mentor have been recognized by Baylor University in Waco, Texas, which awarded him the 2006 Robert Cherry Award for Great Teaching. It is the single largest monetary award given in the United States to an individual for teaching, and Armstrong was selected from a field of 118 distinguished nominees.
As Karin Laine McMillen ’94 took her place among the more than 700 St. Olaf Choir alumni who had gathered to sing as part of the ensemble’s centennial reunion last summer, she felt like she had been transported back in time.

Standing there with other members of the St. Olaf Choir, eagerly awaiting the instruction of St. Olaf Choir Conductor Anton Armstrong ’78, felt just as natural, just as familiar, as it had nearly two decades before.

And then, on cue, members of the massed ensemble began to sing.

“I was immediately pulled into the present as I heard the sound all around me of hundreds of voices singing the same vowel, with the same warm tone,” McMillen says. “It was miraculous.”

Alumni and friends of the St. Olaf Choir gathered on campus last June to kick off a two-year celebration of the internationally renowned ensemble’s 100th anniversary. The weekend’s events included smaller reunions of choir members grouped by decade, a centennial gala banquet, and, of course, a centennial reunion concert featuring hundreds of alumni singing together.

The centennial celebration will culminate with the choir’s June 2013 tour of Norway.

Yet for many St. Olaf Choir alumni who attended last summer’s reunion, that event itself was a culmination of everything that made singing in the ensemble such a special experience. “I stood next to some women that I had sung with in the choir and others from different generations, and at the concert we were able to drop our music as we spontaneously joined hands to sing together,” McMillen says. “I felt pure joy and gratitude as I sang that concert, and I was happy that we could all share it together with each other and with an audience.”

David Jorstad ’77 says singing great choral works at the reunion alongside his wife, Dede Hokanson Jorstad ’78, and daughter, Siri Jorstad ’13 — and under the direction of Armstrong, who he stood beside during his senior year in the choir — was an unforgettable experience.

“It was thrilling, in both rehearsal and performance, to join forces with generations of singers who share the compassion and commitment that have helped maintain the St. Olaf Choir tradition,” Jorstad says.

Jorstad notes how wonderful it was to also have former St. Olaf Choir Conductor Kenneth Jennings ’50 lead the massed ensemble. “To once again sing Beautiful Savior under his direction, and to follow one more time what are quite possibly the most elegant hands in the business, was an experience I’ll treasure for years to come,” he says.

As alumni and friends of the St. Olaf Choir celebrated the ensemble’s first 100 years, they also began making plans to support the next 100 years by establishing the St. Olaf Choir 100th Anniversary Fund. They aim to raise $1 million for the fund, which will allow the choir to accept prestigious invitations to perform across the country and abroad, continue its recording projects, and pursue special tours. (Visit stolaf.edu/giving to make your gift.)

Doug Greene ’88, one of the choir alumni helping to get the word out about the fund, says many of its members over the years found their experience with the ensemble to be both musically and spiritually rewarding.

“We made lifelong friends, toured all over the country and beyond, and experienced the height of choral singing with conductors who were able to draw out the best from each of us — culminating in extraordinary music,” he says. “What a gift we received!”
From one generation to the next

For some members of the St. Olaf Choir, singing in the ensemble is a family tradition.

When it came time for Rachel Dahlen ‘13 to choose a college, she made a point of leaving St. Olaf off the list. Both of her parents are alumni, and her mom sang in the St. Olaf Choir under Conductor Kenneth Jennings ’50. Everyone assumed that Dahlen, herself a talented vocalist, would follow the same path. But she was determined to find her own way.

“I visited many schools around the country, trying to find a St. Olaf in another state. Trust me, it can’t be found,” Dahlen says. “None could match the level of choral music offered at St. Olaf. This ensemble operates like a professional music group but does not require its members to be music majors.”

So three decades after her mom, St. Olaf Professor of Social Work and Family Studies Mary Carlsen ’79, sang her last song with the St. Olaf Choir, Dahlen sang her first.

And she’s far from the only member of the century-old St. Olaf Choir to carry on a family tradition of singing with the ensemble. This year nine members of the choir are continuing a legacy begun by a family member.

For Laura Kyle ’13, a second-year member of the choir, that legacy began nearly 90 years ago when her great-grandmother, Laura Stumley Mikkelson, joined the ensemble that was then led by legendary founder and conductor F. Melius Christiansen. Mikkelson sang in the St. Olaf Choir for three years before graduating in 1924, and Kyle is now following in her footsteps.

“I’ve wanted to sing at St. Olaf for as long as I can remember,” Kyle says. “I come from a long line of Oles and have been surrounded by CDs and recordings of all the St. Olaf ensembles. St. Olaf and music have always been a huge part of my life, and I feel so lucky to be able to experience it myself as a member of the choir.”

Others followed the lead of family members who have more recently been a part of the choir. Kerry Auer ’13, a first-year member of the St. Olaf Choir, remembers watching her sister, Ellen Auer Salatino ’08, perform with the ensemble at a concert in Savannah, Georgia, less than a decade ago. “I was amazed at the musicianship and so jealous of my sister for being a part of it all,” she says. “It was then that I knew I wanted to be a part of the St. Olaf Choir.”

Marin Werdahl ’12
Family Members in the Choir: Her dad, Scott Werdahl ’82; mom, Kari Peterson Werdahl ’82; and aunt, Kristi Peterson Gerry ’84
Interesting Tidbit: Her favorite piece in this program — Bach’s Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied — is one that her dad also sang during his first year in the St. Olaf Choir.

Now that the younger Auer is herself a member of the ensemble, she says her sister offered her some sage advice: “Make sure you appreciate your time with the choir because you don’t realize how much you’ll miss it until you leave.”

Kristin Sandness ’12, a third-year member of the St. Olaf Choir, learned that lesson firsthand from her brother, David Sandness ’10. “They sang in the choir together for a year before he graduated, and she says she could feel his absence — and how much he missed singing in the ensemble — when he attended a concert in Denver last year. ‘I remember watching him when the audience was invited to sing the final verse of Ode to Joy with us and being absolutely overwhelmed with a sense of missing David,’” she says. “I realized that time is passing and I don’t have an infinite amount of time to sing in this incredible ensemble with my friends.”

What she will always have, though, is a unique bond with not only her brother, but all those who have sung in the St. Olaf Choir — a musical family as strong and steeped in tradition as any other — during its 100-year history.

Siri Jorstad ’12
Family Members in the Choir: Her dad, David Jorstad ’77; mom, Dede Hokanson Jorstad ’78; aunts, Mona Hokanson Grote ’73 and Cindy Hokanson Chapman ’76; and great-uncle, Curtis Jorstad ’47
Interesting Tidbit: Her great-uncle served as valet to St. Olaf Choir founder F. Melius Christiansen.

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One of the nation’s leading four-year residential colleges, St. Olaf offers an academically rigorous education with a vibrant faith tradition. Founded in 1874, St. Olaf is a liberal arts college of the church in the Lutheran tradition (ELCA). Committed to the liberal arts and incorporating a global perspective, St. Olaf fosters the development of the whole person in mind, body, and spirit.

Academic excellence informs St. Olaf College’s identity and characterizes its history. Through its curriculum, campus life, and off-campus programs, St. Olaf hones students’ critical thinking and nurtures their moral formation. The college encourages and challenges its students to be seekers of truth, to lead lives of unselfish service to others, and to be responsible and knowledgeable citizens of the world.

Widely known for its world-class programs in mathematics and music, St. Olaf is also recognized for its innovative approaches to undergraduate science education and its commitment to environmental sustainability as evidenced in such initiatives as the adoption of green chemistry principles across the science curriculum.

For nearly half a century, St. Olaf has been at the forefront of global education and a pioneer in study abroad. Today, with 110 distinct off-campus programs in 46 countries, St. Olaf students enjoy a world of opportunities when pursuing their studies.

St. Olaf is an inclusive community that welcomes people of differing backgrounds and beliefs, a community that embraces spirituality and cultivates compassion. Conversations about faith are part of campus life, and numerous opportunities are available for students to grow in their faith and discover how they are called upon to serve others.

St. Olaf takes pride in its record of academic excellence. A leader among undergraduate colleges in producing prestigious Rhodes Scholars, Fulbright Fellows, and Peace Corps volunteers, St. Olaf ranks ninth overall among the nation’s baccalaureate colleges in the number of graduates who go on to earn doctoral degrees, with top 10 rankings in the fields of mathematics and statistics, religion and theology, arts and music, medical sciences, education, service professions, chemistry, physical sciences, life sciences, engineering, and foreign languages.

**Summer Music Camps available at St. Olaf**

Young musicians who want to hone their performance skills under the guidance of some of the best music faculty in the nation don’t have to wait until the first day of college. The St. Olaf Summer Music Camp provides students who have completed grades 9–12 with conservatory-style musical training. The camp, which will be held June 17–23, 2012, is a performance-based experience that challenges participants to expand and improve their musical abilities. Everyone participates in at least one of the three large ensembles—band, choir, or orchestra—and takes elective classes each day. Serious young pianists also may enroll in St. Olaf College’s Summer Piano Academy, a camp-within-a-camp that offers renowned piano faculty.

More information about the Summer Music Camp and Piano Academy is available by calling 800-726-6523 or visiting stolaf.edu/camps.
Composed together for yet another collaboration.

of a major exhibit of Gimse’s bronze pieces. Working with Johnson’s piece, titled Horizon’s Brim instantly thought of Gimse’s poem, titled from St. Olaf Choir Conductor Anton Armstrong ’78, who my music stand to simmer,” Johnson says.

accompany a sculpture he had created for the Nobel Peace successful careers as composers the centennial of the St. Olaf Choir, including

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He has performed as a soloist with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, as a recitalist at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago, and as a chamber musician at the Aspen, Steamboat Springs, and Breckenridge music festivals in Colorado.

Grav has delivered solo performances at the national conventions of the American Choral Directors Association and the American Guild of Organists. He also has appeared on NBC’s Today show, National Public Radio’s Performance Today program, and on PBS as a soloist. In December 2007, a recording in which he played the violin and viola parts earned a Grammy nomination in the Rythm and Blues category. He recently performed a solo as part of the 2011 St. Olaf Christmas Festival that was simulcast live to nearly 300 movie theaters nationwide.

This is the 14th time Gray has toured with the St. Olaf Choir, with which he has performed more than 275 concerts as a violin/viola soloist.

MY SOUL’S BEEN ANCHORED IN THE LORD

This CD features a sweeping array of hymns, sacred songs, and spirituals sung with the passion and musicality for which the St. Olaf Choir is known. Songs include, ‘Babes, Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf,’ of St. Olaf’s distinct repertory is now available. This is a great way to stay connected without the need to check in to see new events. More information about how to sign up for the RSS feed is available on the multimedia site. Streamed events are available “on demand” online instantly after an event has concluded. These events will be archived on the site and available for viewing indefinitely. Some of the music events currently available for on-demand viewing include this fall’s Choral Festival and the home concert that concluded the St. Olaf Orchestra’s recent national tour. You can search the archives to find specific events. You can also subscribe to a RSS feed to receive updates when new streaming archives are available.

Shop online at stolafrecords.com

HARMONY: AMERICAN SONGS OF FAITH

The American Boychoir School (ABS) of Princeton, New Jersey; and the St. Olaf Choir have shared the common goal of presenting choral excellence. The conductor emeritus of the American Boychoir, James Lettos, has been a close colleague of ABS alumni and current St. Olaf Choir Conductor Anton Armstrong throughout the span of his career. The two have collaborated with Horizon’s Brim conductor Fernando Mazala Ruiz, in this recording project that includes songs from the ABS alumni choir, the American Boychoir, the ABS, and the St. Olaf Choir. Harmony: American Songs of Faith features choral arrangements of well-known hymns and spiritual songs featured in this little light of Mine, Amazing Grace, and America the Beautiful.

NEW

GREAT HYMNS OF FAITH: VOLUME I AND II

The repertoire for which the St. Olaf Choir is best known.

Volume 1 includes: Great Is Thy Faithfulness, Peace To The Lord, And Ever, O My Soul, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, O Come, All Ye Faithful, O Holy Night, Silent Night, Joy To The World, and Stabat Mater. Volume 2 includes: All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name, How Great Thou Art, Jubilate Deo, Joy to the World, Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.

NEW

REPETEROIRE FOR MIXED VOICES

VOLUME I AND II

A series of recordings from live concerts of the St. Olaf student ensemble is now available.

Volume 1: Missa Requiem in C Major, Schubert; Ave Maria, Mozart; Requiem, Mozart; Requiem, Mozart; Ave Maria, Mozart; Requiem, Mozart; Requiem, Mozart; Ave Maria, Mozart; Requiem, Moz
**Weekend Tour**

**Saturday, Jan. 21, 4 p.m.**
Fergus Falls, Minnesota
Life Church

**Sunday, Jan. 22, 3 p.m.**
Moorhead, Minnesota
Trinity Lutheran Church

**Main Tour**

**Saturday, Jan. 28, 8 p.m.**
Madison, Wisconsin
Luther Memorial Church

**Sunday, Jan. 29, 3 p.m.**
East Lansing, Michigan
Michigan State University
Wharton Center for Performing Arts

**Monday, Jan. 30, 7:30 p.m.**
Indianapolis, Indiana
St. Luke’s United Methodist Church

**Tuesday, Jan. 31, 7:30 p.m.**
Charleston, West Virginia
Clay Center for the Performing Arts

**Wednesday, Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m.**
Charlotte, North Carolina
First United Methodist Church

**Thursday, Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m.**
Raleigh, North Carolina
Meymandi Concert Hall

**Friday, Feb. 3, 8 p.m.**
Newport News, Virginia
Christopher Newport University
Ferguson Center for the Performing Arts

**Monday, Feb. 6, 7:30 p.m.**
North Bethesda, Maryland
Music Center at Strathmore

**Tuesday, Feb. 7, 7:30 p.m.**
Cleveland, Ohio
Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church

**Wednesday, Feb. 8, 7:30 p.m.**
Grand Rapids, Michigan
Calvin College
Covenant Fine Arts Center Auditorium

**Thursday, Feb. 9, 7:30 p.m.**
Urbana, Illinois
University of Illinois
Krannert Center

**Friday, Feb. 10, 7:30 p.m.**
Chicago, Illinois
Fourth Presbyterian Church

**Saturday, Feb. 11, 2 p.m.**
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

**Sunday, Feb. 12, 3 p.m.**
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Orchestra Hall

**Monday, Feb. 13, 7:30 p.m.**
Northfield, Minnesota
St. Olaf College
Boe Memorial Chapel

Ticket information available at stolaftickets.com