

Issue II
April 2023



Fol-de-Rol

The newsletter of the
Yale Glee Club
Associates

Letter from the Director

DEAR FRIENDS,

It is hard to believe that we are only weeks away from the end of our academic year and the Glee Club's 162nd season. It has been an unforgettable year and I'm delighted to share some of the highlights with you here.

Since the last edition of Fol de Rol, we hosted the Princeton Glee Club in Woolsey and traveled to Harvard for our first in-person joint concerts since 2019. We also renewed our annual tradition of holiday concerts at the Yale Club of NYC and caroling in Grand Central Station and performed our annual Messiah Singalong with the Yale Symphony and an audience chorus of over 500 singers.

In January, we traveled on Winter Tour, performing to packed houses in Alexandria and Richmond, VA. We also had the very special privilege of singing in Reston, VA, at the memorial service of Carol Monroe Thomas '53, who in 1951 became the first Black student to sing in the Glee Club before going on to a distinguished career in government, including time as Peace Corps director for Sierra Leone, Director of Civil Rights for the EPA, and Secretary of the Federal Trade Commission. It was a moving experience and we are very grateful to the Thomas family for the kind invitation.

We kicked off our spring semester with our long-awaited joint concert with the phenomenal Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble – led by Arianne Abela – and world premiere of Joel Thompson's virtuosic *Prayer for Deliverance*. In March, we welcomed Yale School of Music alum and visionary choral leader Craig Hella Johnson to campus for a weeklong residency, culminating in a concert in which the Glee Club sang works by contemporary American composers Kevin Puts, Marques Garrett, Jake Runestad, and Alex Berko.

A week later, we embarked on our first international tour since 2019! We traveled to Kenya for ten days, performing with the Kenyatta University Students Choir, the Nairobi Chamber Chorus, the Coast Chorale, the choirs of the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa, and the Art of Music Foundation chorus and orchestra in the Korogocho neighborhood. We also saw the amazing landscapes and wildlife of this beautiful country, made lots of new friends, and ate some incredible food. Huge thanks to our two extraordinary student tour managers, Tavi Wolfwood and Awuor Onguru, without whom this trip would not have been possible.

Before our season comes to an end and we offer our traditional commencement weekend performances, we will team up with the Yale Symphony for a performance of Beethoven's

Symphony #9 as well as a new work for choir and orchestra, *Words for Departure*, by Yale School of Music alum Hilary Purrington.

I want to express my sincerest gratitude to all of our students, to our wonderful YGC officers, to the ever-indispensable Sean Maher, to our incredible YGCA board, and to our dedicated alumni community throughout the world. Together, you have sustained the Glee Club through some of the most challenging years in its long and storied history. We have emerged stronger than ever, and I cannot wait to see what the future holds.

Yours in song,
Jeff

20 Years of Jeff and Sean!

THIS YEAR, we celebrate the 20 years that Jeff and Sean have dedicated to the Glee Club.

Jeff and Sean, who began their work with YGC in 2003, have spent the last two decades working tirelessly to maintain the excellence of choral singing within the Glee Club and foster the tight-knit community that we share as singers. Without the countless hours that both Jeff and Sean have put into the Glee Club, we certainly would not be where we are today.

We are so lucky to have such a kind, thoughtful, and compassionate team at the helm of our group – the Glee Club would not be the same without them! Please join us in extending a warm congratulations to Jeff and Sean for their wonderful work in YGC – here's to 20 more!



Jeff and Sean at the Alumni Singing Dinner in October of 2022. Cheers to both of them!

Kenya Tour: A Recap

THIS MARCH, YGC returned to international touring after a four-year hiatus! We spent eleven days traveling around Kenya to Nairobi, East Tsavo National Park, and Mombasa. Student tour managers Awuor Onguru '24, who grew up in Nairobi, and Tavi Wolfwood '23 planned a jam-packed trip that included singing in five concerts and experiencing Kenya's culture and abundant wildlife.

A highlight of the tour was our very first concert in Nairobi. We spent an afternoon with members of the Ghetto Classics Choir and Orchestra in Korogocho, a neighborhood in Nairobi, and performed a beautiful joint concert in an open-air amphitheater. Members of Ghetto Classics taught YGC members a Swahili song traditionally sung to welcome visitors, and both ensembles joined in song for a rendition of Jeff's own "Raise Your Voices Here." In addition to YGC's collaboration with Ghetto Classics, other musical highlights included joint concerts with Kenyatta University Choir, Aga Khan Academy Mombasa Staff and Student Choirs, Coast Chorale, Nyali Singers, and Nairobi Chamber Chorus. YGC members loved meeting so many singers their age, and many have remained in touch!

Our tour would have been incomplete without a visit to East Tsavo National Park, where we embarked on safari game drives. Our group saw elephants, giraffes, zebras, lions, cheetahs, baboons, hippos, ostriches...the list goes on. It was an unforgettable experience all around!



Photos from Kenya Tour!

Highlights from Spring Concerts

Joint Concert with Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble

YGC began its spring concert season with a joint performance with Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble, a professional vocal ensemble that focuses on celebrating racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. Founded by former YGC Assistant Conductor Arianne Abela '10 M.M., Kaleidoscope includes many singers who attended Yale School of Music, as well as one Yale College alum, Michele Kennedy '01. The concert was the world live premiere of *Prayer for Deliverance* by Joel Thompson, a doctoral candidate in composition at Yale School of Music.



Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble

Three Choirs Concert with Craig Hella Johnson

The annual Three Choirs Concert with Yale's Camerata, Schola Cantorum, and YGC was conducted this year by Craig Hella Johnson, Grammy-winning and world-acclaimed composer and choral conductor. YGC performed several of his own compositions, including "All of Us" and "Gitanjali Chants."



Craig Hella Johnson

Spring Concerts: Highlights

High School Music Festival

FOR THE FIRST TIME since before the pandemic (in 2019), the Glee Club welcomed students from New Haven Public Schools to sing at Yale in our annual High School Music Festival. Students from Wilbur Cross High School, Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School, Hill Regional Career High School, and High School in the Community spent a day singing together in Woolsey Hall and rehearsing with visionary choral conductor and associate artistic director of Vocal Essence, Dr. G. Phillip Shoultz III. It was wonderful to bring back such a time-honored tradition and connect with other young singers who are as passionate about music as we are! We look forward to singing with them next year, and we can't wait to see how far they will go.

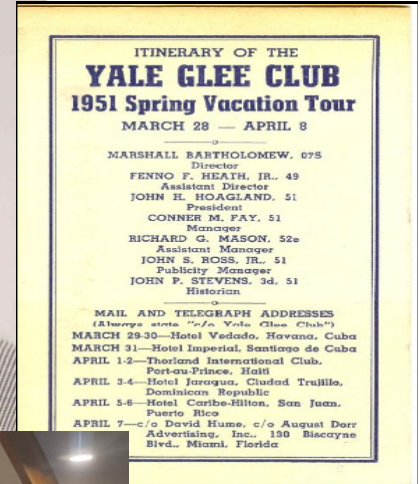
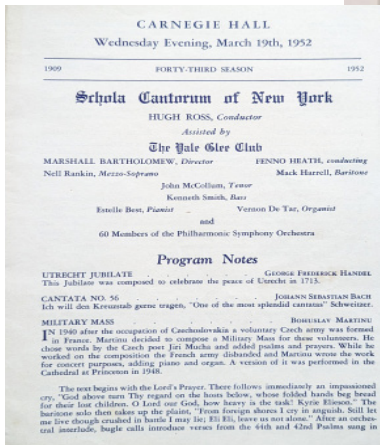


Annual High School Music Festival, April 2023

Upcoming Concerts

THE GLEE CLUB has several upcoming concerts, starting with our joint concert with the Yale Symphony Orchestra (YSO) on Friday, April 28th at 7:30 pm in Woolsey Hall. Tickets for this event are available [here](#). Additionally, the Glee Club will have its annual Commencement Concert on Saturday, May 20th from 8-10 pm in Sprague Memorial Hall. Tickets are available [here](#). We hope to see you at a Glee Club concert soon!

A Tribute to Carol Thomas '53



Left: Carnegie Hall Concert Program 1952. Top: Portrait of Carol Thomas '53. Right: Itinerary from YGC's Caribbean tour. Bottom: YGC 162 singing at Mr. Thomas's service in Reston.

THE YGC COMMUNITY mourns the loss of Carol M. Thomas, who passed away in Reston, Virginia on December 14, 2022 at the age of 91. Carol was the first Black member of the Yale Glee Club, singing with the ensemble from 1951-53. His three-year tenure as second bass in YGC marks an important milestone in the Glee Club's history.

Carol went on to have a decorated career in the military and federal government. He held prominent positions in the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Federal Trade Commission. His love for choral music never faded, and, after he retired in 1985, he dedicated much of his time to singing in local choirs.

According to Carol's family, the Glee Club meant so much to Carol, and he was still singing tunes from the YGC songbook in his last days.

A Tribute to Carol Thomas '53

After his passing, Carol's granddaughter, Elisabeth (Lissie) Thomas '10, reached out to YGC with the news. By a lucky coincidence, YGC was scheduled to be on winter tour and traveling from Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Virginia on the day of Carol's memorial service in Reston. We arranged to sing at his service and performed Marshall Bartholomew's rendition of "Shenandoah," which prominently featured the second basses, Carol's voice part.

During Carol's first year with YGC, the group embarked on a spring break tour to the Caribbean, including stops in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Carol's family had kept a copy of the itinerary over the years, and memorabilia from the entire 1951 YGC season has been digitized in Yale's library collections!

One of Carol's favorite places to sing was at Carnegie Hall. His family shared with us a program from a YGC concert he sang there in 1952. According to Carol's granddaughter Lissie, Carnegie Hall was particularly special to Carol and his wife, his college sweetheart Laura Pedro. Laura would travel around locally following the Glee Club to their concerts, including concerts at Carnegie Hall. It was there that Carol first met Laura's mother (his future mother-in-law)!

In the 1950s, the Glee Club was closely linked with many acapella groups at Yale, including the Whiffenpoofs. Carol was no stranger to acapella; as mentioned in the YGC 1953 senior class notes, he formed a group called the Augmented Seven with six other singers. The group, pictured below, was described in the class notes as featuring "the mellow bass of Carol Thomas."



Craighill, Miller, Williams, Thomas, Peay, Thorne, Barrett, Prentiss

The Augmented Seven. Carol Thomas stands 4th from the left.

Alumni Mentorship Update

THANK YOU to all who signed up for the 2021-2022 YGC Alumni Mentorship Program!

For those unfamiliar with the program, Glee alumni and current students fill out an interest survey, and we pair people up based on interests, job history, majors, and experience. Mentors and students are then free to determine a relationship that works for them, whether that is meeting once a year, once a semester, or even once a month.

We enjoyed learning more about the professions and interests of the alumni who signed up to participate in the program! Here are some highlights from this year's program: There were 59 YGC alumni who signed up to mentor current Glee Clubbers. These members spanned the classes of 1951 through 2022! Alumni offered advice in several areas, including medicine, law, music, journalism, and finance. There were 41 current Glee Club members who expressed interest in the program, and each was paired with a former YGC member; these students spanned all class years, from 2023 to 2026.

If you didn't get a chance to participate, never fear – this is an annual program, so be sure to fill out the survey next year! We also have a list of Glee alumni for our current seniors, to help with the post-Yale life, so if you would like to be added to that list (and didn't fill out the survey), please reach out to us at maya.khurana@yale.edu and eliza.kravitz@yale.edu. Also reach out to us if you have any other comments, questions, or feedback – we love to hear from you!

A Survey from YGCA Board

WE ARE FORTUNATE to have one of the most engaged alumni groups at Yale. To better serve your needs, we would like to make sure we are sharing with you the right information, with the right frequency and through the right channels. We would appreciate your input through this very brief survey [linked here](#). You can also find this survey in an email from T Sean.

Thank you for your feedback!

Yours in song,

YGCA Executive Committee

Alumni Coordinator Note

DEAR FOL DE ROL READERS,

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Fol de Rol! This spring has been a busy and exciting semester for YGC, and we are grateful for all of the experiences we have been able to share as an ensemble. Kenya was certainly a highlight, but so too were the concert traditions we were able to restart after three years stunted by the pandemic, the beautiful moments we shared in rehearsals, and the friendships we have formed along the way.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share the experiences of the current YGC with you in our role as Alumni Coordinators, and we are also thrilled that so many of you have stayed engaged with our community through reunion weekends, singing dinners, and the alumni mentorship program. As always, we would love to hear your feedback; if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please feel free to email us at maya.khurana@yale.edu and eliza.kravitz@yale.edu. Best wishes for a happy end to spring!



Maya and Eliza looking out from their balcony in Tsavo, Kenya.

Yours in song,

Maya Khurana '24 &
Eliza Kravitz '24
YGC Alumni Coordinators
2022-2023

Thank you for reading!