

Issue I
November 2021



Fol-de-Rol

The newsletter of the
Yale Glee Club
Associates

Letter from the Director

Dear friends,

I am overjoyed to be able to say that the Yale Glee Club is back!

After a most challenging year in which nearly all of our activity was virtual, our return to in-person singing as a full ensemble began with this year's Opening Assembly, held outdoors on Cross Campus to launch the fall semester. We sang a hymn by Mark Miller along with our traditional Opening Assembly song, "Raise Your Voices Here," welcoming the largest entering class of Yale College students since World War II.

A few days later, we began in-person auditions. It was a phenomenal audition cycle in both number and quality, and we welcomed 23 wonderful new singers into the Glee Club on Sep. 6. Our first rehearsal back in Hendrie 201 with all 93 singers was on Sep. 8, and we enjoyed an idyllic day-long retreat at the Norfolk Summer Music School Shed on Sep. 11.

We are singing with masks this semester, but we are fortunate not to have to distance while we sing indoors, and we do not have to limit the size of our ensemble or the length of our rehearsals. Our first rehearsals back together were quite emotional as you can imagine after so much time apart, but the level of talent and dedication in the ensemble is stronger than ever, and I am very proud of what the students have achieved already. Under the guidance of our amazing officers, led by President Aria Falcone '22 and Manager Sarah Grube '22, the sense of community that has so long characterized the YGC experience is also flourishing.

Our first performance experience was a collaboration with the Yale Symphony and Yale Bands – [Project XIV](#). Together we commissioned ten new works by composers of color. Chamber ensembles comprised of singers and instrumentalists from all three organizations performed the premieres (along with four historic works also by composers of color) in each of Yale's 14 residential college courtyards in late September, and the entire suite was [premiered online in early October](#) to coincide with Yale's Family Weekend. YGC was involved in the premieres of new works by Derrick Skye, Angelica Negrón, YGC alum Ayanna Woods and Yale School of Music student Joel Thompson, and also sang a piece by the 18th century Afro-Brazilian composer José Maurício Nunes Garcia.

We sang our first live concert in Woolsey Hall at the end of October, a collaboration with the Harvard and Princeton Glee Clubs we called Hand in Hand III (the third installment of the joint benefit concerts we inaugurated last year). Although we couldn't travel as we normally do, all three ensembles sang in front of live audiences in their home concert halls and live-streamed in real time to one another and to the public. Hundreds of alums watched online. Donations benefitted Save The Music, a non-profit supporting public school music programs across the country and here in New Haven.

We are now gearing up for our first full concert in Woolsey this week. The concert will feature more premieres of works by School of Music alum and former YGC assistant conductor Arianne Abela, Isaav Lovdahl, and Shruthi Rajasekar. In all, we will have presented eight world premieres this semester!

Much about the future remains uncertain, but we look forward to the gifts of sharing space, building community, and making more beautiful music together next semester. And we very much look forward to the time when we can welcome all of our beloved alum family back to New Haven to celebrate!

Yours in song,



Notes from YGCA President

It's hard to believe so much time has passed without an in-person singing gathering! I am sure you are missing our gatherings as much as I am, and we are holding out hope that our gatherings can resume before too long. Rest assured that the YGCA board is working closely with Jeff and Sean and Yale to plan for our next big reunion, whenever we can finally make it happen. What a joyous occasion it will be!

For me, I am so grateful that that my own children bring music into my house whenever they are home from college, and that I have been able to join several "Sip and Sings" via Zoom and capture just a bit of the feeling of singing songs like "Raise Your Voices" with all of you. I was looking at some music recently, and found a photo of a typewritten (yes, typewritten!) postcard someone shared with me from the original Yale Alumni Chorus created by Bill Flanders back in 1986 in Washington DC in preparation for a visit to DC by Fenno and the Yale Glee Club. We rehearsed at Bill's home as well as at a nearby church, and I remember being so impressed by the many generations who took part, by Bill's booming bass voice and by the knowledge that he had sung under Barty as well as Fenno. What a feeling of connection it was, even just to rehearse, not to mention perform at the Glee Club concert.

Many years later, I remember walking with a small group of current YGC singers in China as part of their tour (a wonderful fringe benefit of being YGCA president is being invited to attend the international tour). As we walked along, several of the students wanted to sing "Raise Your Voices," but noticed they were missing a tenor. I told them I knew it, and at first they seemed a little surprised. But we walked and sang, and the generations melted away. I could only swell with gratitude that Jeff had created such an extraordinary song, and that I had had the privilege of singing it so many times at alumni gatherings that it was fully in my memory banks.

I know you all feel the same way about the music we share, and the importance of continuing to connect across generations. We are so fortunate to be able to sing under Jeff when the opportunity arises, and to sing under David and Jeff at reunions. In our recent survey, YGC alumni expressed great interest in returning to campus as soon as we can, so we are busily working on plans to make that happen, and to find other opportunities for alumni gatherings across the country. In the meantime, we are also working on some "big ideas" for the future, including ways to extend the harmonious influence of the Glee Club and choral singing as far as we can. Here's to our next chance to gather!

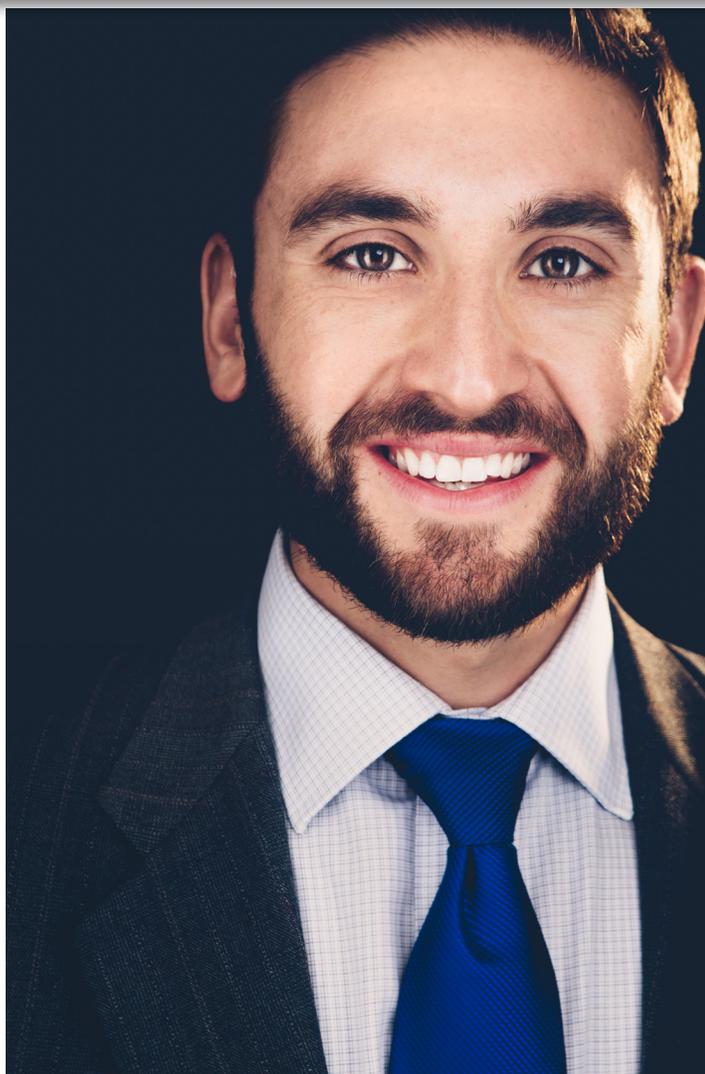
Yours in Song,

Clay Kaufman

YGCA President, 2021-22

Seeking Ways to Connect

A Conversation with Nate Widelitz, YGC Assistant Conductor



Nate Widelitz, D.M.A. Choral Conducting '26, joins the Glee community this year as our Assistant Conductor. Born on a farm in Perkasio, Pennsylvania, he graduated from the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music as a Voice major. He spent a year in Bulgaria as a Fulbright Scholar and earned his Masters at Yale in 2012. He has taught at Blair Academy, served as an assistant conductor for the Pacific Chorale, and sung with the Los Angeles Master Chorale. We spoke with Nate to learn more about his background and musical journey, and how he's feeling going into this unusual year. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Fol-de-Rol: When and how did you get involved in music?

Nate WidELITZ: My whole family is musical. My parents actually met in a folk music group and my brothers are musicians; we're all musicians. I started going to choir in high school, and that was my first formal musical experience. Then I started taking voice lessons and then did the voice major.

FdR: At what point in your musical endeavors did you become interested specifically in choral conducting?

NW: Probably from the time I joined high school choir. My high school choir teacher was my hero, like so many high school choir teachers are. We all loved him. He was amazing. At first, I didn't think about it very seriously, but I definitely thought, I'd like to be him someday. My vision has grown a bit since then. I really enjoyed teaching high school for the years that I did – I just love teaching in general – but the more I've done it, the more I've been really convinced that I want to teach college. It's the right demographic and age group for me, and I think it's where I'm most comfortable and happiest and most fulfilled.

FdR: How are you feeling about being part of Glee this year, especially since we're in this weird liminal transitional time with COVID?

NW: I'm extremely glad to be back to some kind of normal, singing and conducting and making music with other people. I wanted the Glee Club job eight years ago because I knew I was going to have a lot of fun with this organization and it's pretty great so far. I'm very happy to be where I am.

FdR: What are you excited or nervous about with Glee?

NW: First, just the experience of working with a real college choir. Everyone here is just extraordinarily bright and talented and that's a real gift, to be working with folks like that – truly. And secondly, it's very clearly a collection of fun-loving people. I love the intersection of the family atmosphere and the casualness, and the high level music-making, so it's the best of all worlds.

FdR: Can you speak about the projects that you have planned for the chamber singers this year and why you chose those specifically?

NW: I, like so many other choral conductors, have done a lot of reevaluation of the music we program. It's a well-worn admission by this point, but most of the music that all of us had programmed until very recently was by dead white guys and I really think for the better we've all been forced to come to a reckoning with that and to think intentionally about how we program and the kind of activities that we do. I want my approach to working with choirs to be simply

putting good music in front of them and teaching it to them, and having that music represent the good music of a broad array of people. In chamber singers, this semester and next semester, we're doing almost all music by women and composers of color because it's all good music, and it reflects a broader array of composers than we have traditionally programmed in the past.

One of the pieces that I am most excited about is a setting of Psalm 86 by a composer named Eunice Lea Kettering, who was a 20th century composer from Ohio. Her music is not done anywhere, basically. I had never heard of her until a couple years ago, when I stumbled across this piece in a library, and it's a fantastic piece of music. I'm hoping that this will be the first of several pieces by her that we get the chance to do. I don't know that she is at the forefront of anyone's mind, but she's just a really good composer.

I'm also excited about the set that Kettering's piece is going to fit into in the spring. One of my DMA cohort-mates, Udi Perlman, is writing us a piece, and he's setting the same text, Psalm 86. And Fahad Siadat, another composer whose work I've done in the past, wrote this piece called "Not Infinite If Not God," and it sets an old Muslim text about the infinitive of God. Udi is Jewish, he's Israeli, and so my idea is to present these three pieces as a set and it's going to be a Christian, Jewish, and Muslim perspective on God.

FdR: Do you have a favorite composer?

NW: It's kind of a cop-out to say Bach, but it's kind of Bach. Everybody says that but there's a reason for that. I love Mozart. It's clean. It's orderly. It's ambitious. I also love Waldo. He's got such a wild story, and he wrote wild music.

FdR: What other hobbies do you have?

NW: I love riding my bike, I go on long bike rides. I like cooking. I'm very passionate about my two cats; their names are Boots and Mayla.

FdR: Anything else you wanted to add?

NW: I'm super psyched to be here. I'm looking forward to this year of being back together and making great music together because it's my life blood.

New Member Profiles



Carson White (he/him)

College: Franklin '25

Voicepart: Alto 2

Why are you excited to be singing in person again?: "It's amazing to just be in the middle of such a powerful sound again!"

Jack Purdue (he/him)

College: Saybrook '25

Voicepart: Tenor 1

Why do you like singing?: "Singing with other people is such a beautiful experience and allows me to be a part of something larger than myself."



Nicole Lam (she/her)



College: Stiles '25

Voicepart: Alto 1

Why do you like singing?: "I love to be submerged in a wall of colorful sound, while being surrounded by amazing people!"

Alex Hawley (they/them)

College: Branford '24

Voicepart: Soprano 1

Why do you like singing?: "The voice is a beautiful and portable instrument—I'm so excited to use it in harmony again!"





Quinn Evans (he/him)

College: Morse '25

Voicepart: Bass 1

Why are you excited to be singing in person again?: "I'm so glad to be singing in person with such a large group — nothing beats the energy and sound of everyone's voices interacting with each other!"

Sophie Dvorak (she/her)

College: Trumbull '25

Voicepart: Soprano 2

Why are you excited to be singing in person again?: "I love being a part of something bigger than myself! There's something so uniquely special about the choral experience — dozens of individuals uniting as one to create something beautiful, and sharing that beauty with the world in order to spread joy."



Anya AitSahlia (she/her)



College: Silliman '25

Voicepart: Alto 1

Why are you excited to be singing in person again?: "I love feeling like my voice is melting into the sounds of the choir."

Will Salaverry (he/him)

College: Silliman '22+1

Voicepart: Bass 2

Why do you like singing?: "I've been legally blind since birth so singing was one of the few activities that was easily accessible to me. It's a way to express myself past boundaries that are put in my way due to my disability. Also it's just super fun."



Hannah Han (she/her)



College: Hopper '25

Voicepart: Alto 2

Why are you excited to be singing in person again?: "It's really wonderful to be surrounded by people who similarly appreciate music and to listen to our harmonies resonate in a space as gorgeous as Hendrie Hall."



Stuart Baker (he/him)

College: Davenport '25

Voicepart: Tenor 1

Why do you like singing?: "Singing is something I've always had in my back pocket, a therapy of sorts in times good and bad. I'm excited to sing in a large group (gleeful, one could say!). After a year and a half of silence, singing is just what the world needs to energize and revitalize! I'm so excited to be a part of Glee Club to once again engage in this activity."

Rory Latham (he/him)

College: Morse '25

Voicepart: Bass 2

Why are you excited to be singing in person again?: "I love hearing the different voice sections working together and I think you can't hear in that detail online."



Yara Chami (she/her)

College: Saybrook '25

Voicepart: Soprano 1

Why are you excited to be singing in person again?: "Singing in a choir allows me to experience the emotions each piece intends to convey with an energy that fills up a room and is shared between everyone singing and listening."

Violet Barnum (she/her)

College: Saybrook '25

Voicepart: Soprano 2

Why are you excited to be singing in-person again?:

"It's such a privilege to be singing in person in Glee Club — the full sound of all eight voice parts in one room is beautiful, and I love that the rehearsals are professional but also fun!"



Lila Schweinfurth (she/her)

College: Timothy Dwight '25

Voicepart: Soprano 1

Why do you like singing?: "I love singing because it speaks to what is truly human in all of us."



Sam Brock (he/him)

College: Jonathan Edwards '25

Voicepart: Bass 2

Why are you excited to be singing in-person again?: "Choir is amazing to me because it unites individual voices to create something tremendously greater than each singer on their own. It's hard to put into words, but whenever I sing in a choir, I feel an intense feeling of kinship with my fellow singers as we all strive towards the same goal. Choral singing is a process that takes the dreams from a composer's mind, ushers them out of the pages, and releases them into the air. Being a part of that process brings me more joy than anything else in this world.

I am especially excited to be singing in person again because one of my favorite parts of choral singing is blending with my section. Virtual choir meant the absence of the constant feedback loop between making sound and listening to sound. Having that relationship with my bass section once again makes music-making far more nuanced and gratifying."

Ben Kramer (he/him)

College: Franklin '23

Voicepart: Tenor 2

Why do you like singing? "Nothing feels like belonging more than being one voice out of many."



Ines Gilles (she/her)



College: Silliman '25

Voicepart: Soprano 2

Why are you excited to be singing in-person again?: "I love singing for the grounding and encouraging community that choir creates! I am so excited to sing with others again for the feeling of being a part of something beautiful that's bigger than myself.

Ava Dadvand (she/her)

College: Stiles '25

Voicepart: Bass 1

Why are you excited to be singing in-person again?: "I find it so invigorating to be surrounded by all these beautiful singers. This is the largest group in which I've ever rehearsed; the raw sound is overwhelmingly gorgeous."





Tesse Okunseri (she/her)

College: Jonathan Edwards '25

Voicepart: Alto 2

Why do you like singing?: "I like to sing because it gives me a chance to express myself and empathize with other people."

College: Morse '25

Voicepart: Alto 2

Why are you excited for in-person singing again?: "I love being around talented people who are working together to create art we couldn't create alone!"

Ruthie Weinbaum (she/her)



Eduardo Pagliaro-Haque



College: Franklin '24

Voicepart: Bass 1

Why do you like singing?: "When I sing, it feels as though a mug filled with the most comforting beverage overflows somewhere inside of me and begins leaking out of me wherever it can. As opposed to singing at home (in the shower or elsewhere), singing with other people means I get to share in another's singing metaphor that may very well be distinct from mine."

Noah Stein (he/him)

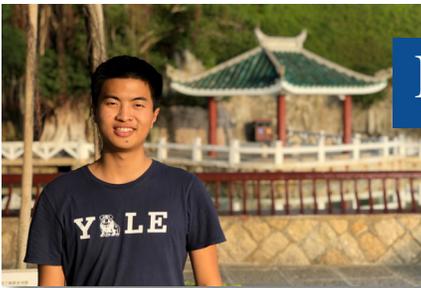
College: Silliman '25

Voicepart: Tenor 2

Why do you like singing?: "I love bonding with other people by singing awesome music together!"



Bobby Xiao (he/him)



College: Saybrook '25

Voicepart: Tenor 2

Why do you like singing: "Man - when those chords lock in and resolve..."

A busy semester so far...

Tap Night 2021!



Retreat!



Our Project 14 repertoire

Joel Thompson - "Meditation" - Saybrook College
José Mauricio Nunes Garcia "Alleluia, Alleluia" - Berkeley College
Angélica Negrón "Paradise" - Davenport College
Ayanna Woods SM '14 "Ode to Passersby" - Silliman College
Derrick Skye "Glimpse Elation" - Pauli Murray College

As part of our mission to become a more conscious and intentional musical ensemble, we have delved into our repertoire not just musically but also textually, to understand the pieces and the context behind them on a deeper level. We've had the privilege of having many of the composers of the pieces in our repertoire visit (both in-person and on Zoom) and speak to us about their own experiences in music-making and share their thoughts on our interpretations of their works.

Some we welcomed back as returning guests, like Derrick Skye, composer of "Glimpse Elation: Anthems of a Crowd 5," and Angélica Negrón, from whom we commissioned "Paradise," which we will be premiering November 19th (a year and a half overdue, but we are so glad to finally get a chance to share it!). Others were familiar faces to the Glee Club, like Ayanna Woods, a YGC alum and composer of "Ode to Passersby," Arianne Abela, a YSM alum and composer of "Now We Can Begin" and "Because You Sang," and Shruthi Rajasekar, who composed "A Heart in Port" for the wedding of two Glee Clubbers (congratulations, Erika and Daniel!). Finally, we were incredibly honored to talk with Joel Thompson, current YSM doctoral student and composer of "Meditations" (and an Emmy-award winner for his piece "Seven Last Words of the Unarmed"!), and Sydney Guillaume, world-renowned composer of "Tchaka" (and "Dominus Vobiscum," one of our tour favorites in the 2019-2020 season).

Each composer shared their own life experiences and interests with us, which was both illuminating in terms of the music and inspirational on a human level. Hearing their stories let us connect with the pieces and understand their motivation in an even deeper way. We will be presenting thoughts on the pieces in our repertoire throughout every concert as "spoken program notes," so that we can share with our audiences some of the awe we have of the music we sing and the story behind it.

Visiting composers



Alex Whittington ('21) conducts "Paradise," with Angélica Negrón visiting on Zoom



Joel Thompson (DMA '25) visits Hendrie to speak with the Glee Club

Hand In Hand Benefit Concert



On October 29, we filled Woolsey Hall with song for the first time this season, and indeed for the first time since spring 2020! Every year, the opening performance is a special one for all of us because it is the first time we get to sing on stage with our new members. After a year of socially distanced singing, and with two new classes Glee babies, the energy and excitement was running especially high.

The concert was also special because it was the third installation of the Hand in Hand concerts that we have performed in collaboration with Harvard and Princeton, to raise money for local organizations that promote musical accessibility in our communities. Though we were unable to host our fellow singers, due to ongoing COVID restrictions, we each live-streamed our performances, so it was the closest we've come to a joint concert for the past two years.

Jeff kept our set short and sweet, but still managed to pack in a variety of new and old pieces. We opened with an Ave Maria by R. Nathaniel Dett, premiered "Because You Sang," a piece that YSM grad Arianne Abela composed with text by YGC alum Ruthie Prillaman, and brought back "Tchaka," by Haitian composer Sydney Guillaume, to name a few. All in all, it was amazing to be back on stage in Woolsey with a live audience, and we are looking forward to our next concert on November 19!

The Song You Raised Will Ring:

Yale Glee Club Fall Concert

JEFFREY DOUMA, MUSIC DIRECTOR

WOOLSEY HALL

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2021

7:30 PM

*Featuring world premieres by Abela, Negrón,
Lovdahl and Rajasekar, choral works by Pärt
and Rachmaninoff, and others*

*Vaccinated Yale students, faculty and staff are invited
to be in the Woolsey Hall audience for the concert*

Admission is free — Yale ID required



**LIVESTREAM LINK: [https://gleeclub.yalecollege.yale.edu/
yale-gee-club-livestream](https://gleeclub.yalecollege.yale.edu/yale-gee-club-livestream)**

Note from the Alumni Coordinators

Hi everyone!

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of the Fol-de-Rol! Again, our names are Sam and Emily, and we're so excited for this year of fostering connections between the current Glee club and the broader Glee alumni community. We're thankful to you all for staying tuned to and invested in our community as we transition back into in-person singing once more.

Keep an eye out for information from us soon about our signature Alumni Mentorship Program! Alumni will be able to sign up and provide their personal and career interests, and we'll match alumni with students based on that information for a year (or more!) of mentorship and conversation. Get excited!

And as always, please contact us at sam.ahn@yale.edu and e.lau@yale.edu with any comments and suggestions about the newsletter, as well as any photos, memories, or other content for us to include.



Much love,

Emily and Sam