

About the Amidons

We know that you know that Mary Alice and Peter Amidon, of Brattleboro Vermont, have had a career leading dance with children, teaching dance workshops for elementary school music teachers, and publishing, with Mary Cay Brass and Andy Davis, *New England Dancing Masters* books, CDs and DVDs. Here is an opportunity, news, and a bit more about the Amidons.

THE OPPORTUNITY: Peter is teaching a week-long “mini-course” on teaching traditional dance to children and beginning adults, and on leading community dancing, at the Country Dance & Song Society’s “Harmony of Song & Dance”, a week Peter and Mary Alice helped start at Pinewoods Camp (outside of Plymouth, MA) six years ago, which they describe as “for singers who love to dance, and for dancers who love to sing.” About 25 of the 140 campers at the week will be taking Peter’s mini-course. Running Saturday to Saturday, **July 22 – 29, 2017**, each day starts with a 75-minute all-camp choral with all 140 campers and staff; 4-part harmony singing led alternating by the Amidons and the rest of the camp singing staff. Then Peter’s 25 mini-course campers will be in Peter’s 60-minute beginning English/ contra dance class, both for improving dance skills, and for learning dance-teaching tips and techniques from Peter. In the afternoon Peter will lead mini-course participants in a two-hour class of dancing and discussion on teaching dance to children and beginning adults, and on organizing and leading dances in your (school) community. After dinner there is a daily staff concert followed by an evening of dancing for all. There might be college credit available if there is enough interest. More info at cdss.org or contact the Amidons – amidonpeter@gmail.com

NEWS: Mary Alice and Peter love traveling around the country to lead music teacher workshops and conferences, but they have retired from doing multi-day elementary school residencies, and do only a limited number of day-long visits in elementary schools each year. This is partly because of their . . .

CHORAL ARRANGING, LEADING & PUBLISHING: Since Peter became a church choir director in a small Vermont UCC church in 1998, both he and Mary Alice have been increasingly active as choral arrangers, leaders, and composers. They have sold hundreds of their two collections of their arrangements: “Fifty-five Anthems for the Small Church Choir” and “Twenty-five Anthems for Interfaith & Community Choirs” to church, community, high school and hospice choirs across the United States and the United Kingdom. They have sales every day from the 100+ arrangements of their Online Choral Store. The reviews are coming in:

I can't express to you how moved I am by these songs and arrangements. They are astoundingly beautiful and expressive.

-Kathy Gross - Choir Director, Maple Street Congregational Church, Danvers, Massachusetts

The arrangements are absolutely beautiful and the performances are stunning.

-John Feierabend, Former president of the National Organization of Kodaly Educators, and founder of the Feierabend Association for Music Education

Peter's work is artistry at the highest level: not only a gift to singers in a wide variety of settings, but also a model worthy of study by songwriters and composers in any tradition.

Mark Simos, Songwriter; Associate Professor, Songwriting, Berklee College of Music Author of *Songwriting Strategies: A 360° Approach* (Berklee Press, Hal Leonard, 2014).

THE BOYS: The Amidons have two sons and daughters-in-laws who are all fulltime touring musicians. Sam Amidon and his wife, British singer-songwriter Beth Orton, live in London with their two children. Sam and Beth both tour the UK, Europe, the United States and Australia; Sam singing his re-worked folk songs, and Beth performing her own songs that range from acoustical to electronica. Percussionist/singer Stefan Amidon and his wife, singer Zara Bode, who live in Brattleboro with their 1.5 year old son, are founding members of the “Sweetback Sisters”. Stefan is also the percussionist for “The Devil Makes Three” and both Stefan and Zara sing in the extraordinary world-music a cappella group “The Starry Mountain Singers”.

LIFE AT HOME: Peter is Music co-Director and Mary Alice is a member of both the Guilford (VT) Community Church (UCC) Choir and of “Hallowell”, an a cappella SATB hospice choir formed fourteen years ago that has inspired scores of other hospice singing groups to form in Vermont, New England and throughout the United States. Peter and Mary Alice are both part of a local meditation group that meets at 7:00 am four mornings a week, and they are both grateful for a wonderful weekly yoga class. They are both taking an Irish tunes class (Mary Alice on accordion, Peter on fiddle). Mary Alice loves walking with her women friends, sometimes in twos, sometimes in groups. The weekly 3-hour writing class Mary Alice attends is a deeply satisfying part of her week. Peter takes his walks alone, which is when he works on his poetry-memorization project he started five years ago: Shakespeare sonnets and other poems from John Donne to Billy Collins. The Amidons are thrilled to live in a mecca of contra dancing and English country dancing. Of course Peter and Mary Alice get great joy spending time with their three grandchildren.

A FINAL NOTE OF GRATITUDE: Mary Alice and I are always inspired by these AOSA Conferences – by the creativity and enthusiasm and dedication of your AOSA community of music teachers. Thank you for your work; your students are very lucky to have you!

GOODBYE, WITH A BIT FROM MY FAVORITE NOVEL:

Mr. Cadwallader was a large man, with full lips and a sweet smile; very plain and rough in his exterior, but with that solid imperturbable ease and good humor which is infectious, and like great grassy hills in the sunshine, quiets even an irritated egoism, and makes it rather ashamed of itself.

- George Eliot, from *Middlemarch*

Post-workshop notes on all the Amidons' workshops at www.amidonmusic.com will be up by Sunday night.

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