



**PACIFIC
COLLEGIATE
SCHOOL**

A Public Charter School

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Santa Cruz, California

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Community Choir Brings Singers of All Backgrounds Together in Harmony

On Monday evenings, after most of the students, faculty and staff have gone home, the empty parking lot in front of Pacific Collegiate School's west side campus begins to fill up again. A multigenerational mix of working parents, teachers, retirees, recent graduates, and local residents make their way to Alice Hughes' classroom on the second floor and take their places on the risers to sing for the next hour and a half.

"It's a come one, come all choir," says Alice Hughes, the choir's founder and director and Chair of the Visual and Performing Arts department at PCS. "Many people are nervous at first. They think they can't sing, because at some point, they were told they couldn't. I tell them, 'Yes you can!' And it's true - I have never met a person I cannot teach to sing."

Since it began in 2010, the choir has become so popular it now has members who come from all over the county. Participants need not have any association with PCS – the only prerequisite is enthusiasm and a desire to sing. Pianist Ben Dorfan, a PCS alumnus (2005) who is also the Musical Director of the Jewel Theater, is the accompanist at rehearsals and performances.

"What Alice Hughes is able to achieve with this choir is nothing short of a miracle," says longtime member Mary McConnell. "We have people singing together from a wide range of experience and ability, and we always make beautiful music. It is such a wonderful example of the community working together; those new to singing are encouraged and assisted by the more seasoned singers and *everyone* has a wonderful time."

The PCS Community Choir performed at the Christian Life Center on October 3, 2017 as part of a larger PCS student choir production. In keeping with the concert's theme of music around the world, they performed *Yemaya* (an Afro-Cuban ode to the Goddess of the Ocean) and the rhythmically intricate *Honey, Pepper, Leaf-Green Limes* (based on a poem about a Jamaican marketplace in the 19th century). For the finale, the Community Choir joined

the student choirs onstage for a boisterous African folk song in 5-part harmony, *Babethandaza*. The Choir's next performance will be on December 5, 2017.

For some members, the Community Choir has reignited a love of singing, which may have been drowned out by the demands of work and everyday life. "I was delighted to discover the PCS Community Choir last year! I had been missing the joy of singing with a choir for several decades," says member Craig Chatterton. "The Choir has filled that void and expanded my appreciation of new and different types of music."

Ms. Hughes sees the Community Choir as one of the engines in Santa Cruz that encourages lifelong participation in the arts. "You do not need to be a professional artist to keep music and drama in your life," says Hughes, "you just have to get out and do it."

About the Visual and Performing Arts at Pacific Collegiate School

PCS's Visual and Performing Arts program consists of 25 classes in Music, Theater, Chorus, and Visual Arts, 3 Advanced Placement courses. The well-regarded PCS Spring Musical brings together students, local musicians, and a county-wide audience. Ms. Hughes directs the choirs and is the Visual and Performing Arts Chair. This is her fourteenth year as a teacher at PCS.

About Pacific Collegiate School

Pacific Collegiate School (www.pacificcollegiate.com) is an independent public charter school open to any student seeking a rigorous college preparatory education in Santa Cruz County. PCS has consistently earned top honors for its outstanding college preparatory program from US News and World Report and other leading news and educational organizations, consistently ranking among the top public schools in the nation. PCS, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, accommodates up to 535 students in grades 7-12. As part of the school's commitment to pupil diversity, PCS has a multifaceted diversity outreach program, as well as a unique admissions program for students who will be the first in their families to attend college. Admission to PCS is through a public, random lottery, as required by California law.

For additional information about Pacific Collegiate School and its educational program, please contact the school's principal, Simon Fletcher at 831-479-7785 or simon.fletcher@pcsed.org

Additional photos available upon request.

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