Hearing alumni members of Puget Sound’s premier choral ensemble talk about what the group meant to them, it becomes clear that the choice in 1932 of the name Adelphians—an ancient Greek word for “brothers and sisters”—was both prescient and self-fulfilling. The recollections of these graduates, many of whom went on to careers in music, are peppered generously with words like “amazing,” “life-changing,” “magical,” and most frequently, “family.”

At Homecoming the 48-voice choir will celebrate its diamond anniversary with a special reunion and performance (see page 23). The following anecdotes, ruminations, and reflections are from alumni representing the last six decades of Adelphian history.

compiled by Stacey Wilson ’96
Peter L. Misner '55
Retired minister
Milton, Maine (population 123)

I had always sung in school choruses, and when the Adelphians posted trials for the choir in the fall of 1951 I felt comfortable giving it a try. Clyde Keutzer was the director of Adelphians, in his last year, and I felt honored that I was accepted.

In my junior year, Susan Rausch, a graduate of Connecticut College, arrived at the College of Puget Sound. She was a superb piano soloist and Bruce Rodgers invited her to be a member of Adelphians. As president of Adelphians that year, one of my privileges was to introduce the soloist, and that was the beginning of a wonderful life together. We were married in the old Gail Day Chapel, then in Jones Hall, on August 6, 1955, with Dr. John Phillips officiating. Guests included Dr. and Mrs. Thompson, and Dean and Mrs. John Regester. Our reception was in the music building.

We have supported Adelphians all through the years. We sponsored the first European tour, and on their return to the States we hosted the group’s first-ever concert at Carnegie Hall. We sang with the choir at the 50th anniversary and continue to stay in touch with lifelong friends from the group. Susan and I wish all the best on the 75th anniversary of the Adelphians!

Darryl Johnson ’60
American ambassador, retired
Burien, Wash.

I didn’t sing in high school, nor did I choose UPS because of Adelphians. But I was musically inclined my whole life and decided right away to audition. Dr. Bruce Rodgers asked if I had prepared anything. I had not. He asked if I knew the music in the Methodist Hymnal. I said I did. He then picked out a piece I had never seen nor heard before and asked me to sing it. Fortunately, I could sight read very well.

Dr. Rodgers was forceful but humorous, humiliating but generous, demanding but complimentary (when deserved). He had a clear vision of how he wanted the music to sound, and that vision did not waver. He knew the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the group and used that understanding to mold the ensemble to his wishes.

What I learned most about music was that 42 or so college students with better than average ability and outstanding direction could light up a church and light up an audience. We were the best judges of our performances and could be very critical of ourselves. But when we were on, we were the best there was.
Paul G. Dennis ’68
Retired high school choral music teacher
Walla Walla, Wash.

I’d never auditioned for a choir and suddenly to be standing in front of Dr. Rodgers all by myself and sight reading was very intimidating to say the least. In fact I didn’t make it into Adelphians my freshman year. Fortunately I sang in what was called the Chapel Chorus and took vocal lessons from Margaret Myles, and the next year when I auditioned I was much better prepared. I had also had Dr. Rodgers as my first-year theory professor, so I felt much more comfortable with him.

Throughout the 32 years of my choral music teaching career, my goal was to challenge my students to reach their full musical potential and never to accept less than their best effort. My time with the Adelphians made me want my own two children to have those “mountain-top” emotional and intellectual experiences that are only achieved by dedication to excellence in the arts.

Kathy Moles Gustafson ’70
Coordinator of Music, Puyallup School District
Puyallup, Wash.

When we gave a concert in Sheffield, England, all of the girls decided to switch wigs for the concert. (Because we all had long hair in the ’60s and it was difficult to dry our hair each day, we resorted to wigs for concerts.) “Rodg” never wore his glasses for a performance, but he knew where each of us would be standing in certain formations. That night the town lost power, and we sang by candlelight. Rodg would look to certain singers to give cues, and what would have been a serene setting turned out to be nothing but confusion for him as a conductor!

I have been involved in music all of my life, beginning with piano lessons at age 8. When I was still in high school, my brother, Bob, who was attending UPS, invited me to a Christmas Madrigal concert and told me that Adelphians had the same kind of choral sound, only magnified by more voices. My father and my uncle were UPS grads, so it was pretty much destined that I would choose UPS. I intended to major in piano performance, and I was also a member of the UPS band. But when my freshman year ended, I was so impressed by the Adelphians that I auditioned for the choir at the beginning of my sophomore year. Rodg told me that he could mold my voice into an Alto 1 sound that he needed for choir that year. Thus began my career as a singer and secondary choral director.

Adelphian 75th Anniversary Reunion and Concert at Homecoming

Encore! Encore! Alumni who would like to sing in the 75th anniversary concert have three mandatory rehearsals before the final concert on Sunday. A $50 registration fee includes a recording of the concert, a commemorative T-shirt, and required sheet music. Don’t want to sing in the concert? You can still attend and get reacquainted with old friends! More information at www.ups.edu/x18174.xml.

75th Anniversary Events
Adelphian alumni concert rehearsals:
Fri., Oct. 12, 4:30–6 p.m.
Sat., Oct. 13, 11:30 a.m.—1:30 p.m. and 3–5:30 p.m.

“Adelphian Idol”
Sat., Oct. 13, 8:30 p.m.
Dust off that favorite solo, duet, or small ensemble piece and share in the fun of entertaining each other.

Adelphian Brunch
Sun., Oct. 14, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Adelphian 75th Anniversary Reunion Concert
Sun., Oct. 14, 2–4 p.m.

Homecoming organizers are collecting Adelphian photos and memorabilia to share throughout the weekend. Send submissions to adelphianreunion@ups.edu or the Office of Alumni and Parent Relations, 1500 N. Warner, CMB #1078, Tacoma, WA 98416. (No later than Sept. 26, please.)

Reunions, too, for Repertory Dance Group and Underground Jazz

Two other student-run performing arts groups, Repertory Dance Group and Underground Jazz, celebrate anniversaries during Homecoming/Reunion Weekend. Don’t miss these groups’ performances commemorating 10 years on campus:
Java Jive: Underground Jazz performs at Diversions Café (the café also turns 10 this year), Fri., Oct. 12, 4 p.m.
Repertory Dance Group Dessert Reception and Performance, Sat., Oct. 13, 8:30 p.m.
Dr. Rodgers was part conductor, boot camp instructor, motivational speaker, father, confessor, and storyteller. He had been a fine singer in his youth, and we have some recordings to prove it. He also studied under Schoenberg when he was at UCLA and had a wide and varied background in all aspects of music. The discipline and musicality I learned from him were beyond price.

I also learned that having a voice is only the beginning. It’s how you train it and then how you care for it, often having to sing when you’re not feeling well or you’re tired after a long bus or train trip. As a performer you have a huge responsibility to honor the composer’s intentions and deliver them to the audience with love.

The 1973 Vienna semester abroad was a peak experience. The entire choir went for three months, and we toured Europe and the British Isles. In Vienna I had the opportunity to coach at the Music Academy, and every night I would stand at the opera, for $2, and hear the greatest singers in the world. An amazing education.

Many memories of touring: singing in small church halls up and down the West Coast every spring, sometimes for fewer people than our numbers, but always giving it all; trying not to talk too much on the bus, saving our voices; seeing Bryce Canyon at sunset, going to Disneyland; observing romances develop that either did or didn’t work out—years later even singing for a few choir alumni weddings.

I marvel continually at the power of music to bring people together, to inspire and to give a sense of order and purpose to life. The Adelphians experience was like being on a steady ship, with an experienced pilot. Not only did it give my life a sense of purpose, but we gave pleasure to thousands of audience members. What could be better?

I will never forget the day I auditioned: There was Dr. Rodgers, sitting in the room with Michael Delos, who was a senior at the time. They had spent the previous term in Vienna together with the choir and spoke lovingly about a singer who sang “Voi che sapete” with the most amazing dynamics. It was a piece I was using to audition, rather nervously, and, after being amazed at their story, I realized how very much I had to learn. Then came that first day of choir—and the incredible vibe in the room! This was a group of people who loved each other, respected one another, knew how to laugh and how to work hard. We learned that making music demands absolute concentration and commitment—listening and responding with unwavering energy and never losing sight of the composer’s intent. The way Dr. Rodgers worked with such detail on a particular phrase; how we never knew when he might call us out to sing the most difficult passage by ourselves; how he made me want to sit on the edge of my seat with pencil in hand at each rehearsal. There was joy in making music together. And then there were the tours, with beautiful concerts and sights. (Who could forget Rodg yelling to the back of the bus, “PYLE!!!!”)

I ended up at UPS because my church youth choir had attended a weeklong Chorister’s Guild Workshop there when I was in 7th grade. We stayed in the dorms and rehearsed in the Adelphians’ choir room. My twin sister was at the same workshop, and we both ultimately attended UPS, earned the same degree, and sang in Adelphians and Madrigals together. What an amazingly rich experience!

What I wanted the most when I entered the school was to find a place that I could call home and feel safe and be accepted for who I was. I knew that was what Adelphians was all about. Being selected meant everything to me. I had found my community; a group that was about so much more than just one “self.”

The greatest joy that has come my way since I finished singing with Adelphians was last fall when my son, Dustin, called me and announced that he had walked through the same doors that I had walked through so many years before. I can’t express how excited I am to be able to sing with Dustin at the anniversary concert. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would have a son who would sing in the Adelphians!

Getting kicked out of Adelphians for a semester was definitely memorable. People still get a kick out of finding that out. At the time, I guess I had a different idea of my responsibilities.

Coming back to the group, things could sometimes be a bit tense, but Dr. Schultz and I actually grew to have a wonderful working relationship. He gave me some of my first performances of standard rep. After graduation I sang quite a few concerts with him and the Civic Choral. Years later, when he was teaching at Tacoma School of the Arts, I came and sang for his classes. It was a wonderful time of sharing music and memories.

This year I debuted with the San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, and the Opera Orchestra of New York in Carnegie Hall. Next season I sing in Tel Aviv and Warsaw, and I will make my Metropolitan Opera debut. It can be a hectic life, but if Adelphians taught me anything it’s that we are only truly done when we quit and “what does not kill us, makes us stronger.”
Danielle Munsell Howard ’94
Oratorio singer and private voice instructor
Guilford, Conn.

Tour tape was always my favorite thing. Every year just before we went on tour a bunch of us would get together and sing parodies of all the songs we were doing on tour. One year we did it as a newscast. I remember coming in with perfect diction and a lovely forte during a tour concert and singing “Dude, I’m hungry,” instead of the Nordic text I was supposed to be singing.

I went to grad school and became a professional singer, but I don’t know if I could separate what I gained in Adelphians into “career” and “personal” categories. I made wonderful friends, many of whom I still keep in touch with despite being thousands of miles apart. It’s hard to feel any closer to friends than you do when you sing together. I think that forges a bond that is difficult to replicate and impossible to break.

Phil Edry ’04
Computer programmer
Seattle

I came to UPS for the choir, the music program generally, and the academic rigor of the school. It felt great being selected for the Adelphians. It was awesome coming in as a freshman and quickly making 40 close friends. I will always remember late afternoons in autumn in Kilworth. The way the sun set through the windows as we rehearsed will forever stay with me and remind me of the Adelphians.

Jess Smith ’05
Education associate, Seattle Repertory Theatre

I remember being selected for the group and not knowing another soul. I remember being incredibly nervous, mostly for the unknown, like sight-singing and tonal memory tests. I remember singing “Lux Aeterna” in Kilworth Chapel and crying. It was more than music that we were creating in that moment. I learned that music is bigger than us. Being a part of something so large gave me the space to feel both empowered and humbled.

Emily Miller B.M. ’05, M.A.T. ’07
Choral instructor, Bethel Junior High
Tacoma

I’ve been singing since I could make sound, and Adelphians was a big part of my choice to attend UPS. As soon as you’re accepted, you’re in a family. Being in Adelphians affirmed my belief that music connects people forever. A choir sings music, which is important, but the secret to the Adelphians is the relationship within the choir.

I learned that I want to be a part of a community like that forever, which is why I’m going to teach choir. Dr. Yonkman gave me leadership opportunities and my co-Adelphians were friends, musical colleagues, and inspirations. I’ll be in music education for as long as I can.