



# *The Joy, a community newsletter*

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## Welcome to Issue #5 of The Joy!

Welcome to the fifth issue of The Joy, the Essence of Joy Alumni Singers (EOJAS) community newsletter. Founded in 2005 and comprised of alumni from Pennsylvania State University's Essence of Joy Choir, the Essence of Joy Alumni Singers® perform sacred and secular music from the African and African-American tradition in an effort to entertain, inspire, affirm and unify the worldwide community.

This newsletter is available on our website, [www.eojas.org](http://www.eojas.org), and via email subscription to our 'Friends of Essence' email list. We welcome your comments on what you'd like to see included in this newsletter. In the meantime, this issue includes a review of the choir's activities in the final six months of 2011 and some information about our plans for the next six months.

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## EOJAS Performs

### Upcoming Events

Here is the latest information on upcoming EOJAS events in early 2012. We hope you will be able to join us. As always, please consider this information tentative until formally announced by the VP of Business Management.

- **New York City, NY** – EOJAS will perform Saturday Jan. 21st with NY-based choir, The Salvatones. The choir will provide music for the 11:00am service at First AME Church Bethel, 60 W. 132nd St., New York, NY on Sun Jan 22nd.
- **Central, PA** – The choir will present a concert on Friday, February 24 at Montoursville High School, 100 North Arch St., Montoursville, PA at 7:00pm. On Saturday the 25th, the choir will lead a workshop at Faxon Kenmar UMC, 1301 Clayton Ave, Williamsport, PA at 1:00pm. The choir will present a concert that evening at Zion Community Church, 3261 Zion Road, Bellefonte, PA at 6:00pm. On Sunday the 26th, the choir will provide music for the 10:15am service at Faxon Kenmar UMC in Williamsport, PA.
- **Philadelphia, DC** – Details for this weekend are still being negotiated, but EOJAS anticipates performing as part of another ACDA Urban Coalition invitational and workshop on Saturday Nov. 24 at Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. The choir will also provide music for a church service on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> at Arch Street.

## About EOJAS

- Founded in 2005 and comprised of alumni from Pennsylvania State University's Essence of Joy Choir, the Essence of Joy Alumni Singers perform sacred and secular music from the African and African-American tradition in an effort to entertain, inspire, affirm and unify the worldwide community. Under the artistic direction of Dr. Anthony T. Leach, the group has performed extensively in the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean. The choir is a non-profit corporation registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt organization.

## Joy - Our First CD

Looking for a nice gift for Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Festivus, Winter Solstice? After years of recording and fundraising, EOJAS recently released our first CD, "Joy."

Physical copies of the CD are available at all EOJAS events for \$20 cash/check (incl. PA sales tax). For those of you interested in a digital version of the album, we are also selling Download Cards for \$15.

These cards allow anyone to download one copy of the album for enjoyment on their computer or MP3 device.



For those who can't join us in person, you can purchase your copy today at [www.eojas.org/audio](http://www.eojas.org/audio). From this storefront, friends, family, and fans will have the opportunity to order CDs for home delivery or permanent digital downloads. All profits from the CD project go back to the choir to use in funding our future activities.

## The Business of the Choir

As many of you know, the EOJAS Board is always busy with the business side of the choir. Since the last issue of The Joy, the EOJAS Board has passed ten new policies. Many of these policies are based on guidance issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations, Chorus America, and most importantly the Pennsylvania Association of Non-profit Organizations (PANO). As a non-profit organization committed to openness, the following policies are available for inspection by members of the public through requests made to [secretary@eojas.org](mailto:secretary@eojas.org).

- Policy 1.6 – EOJ Scholarship
- Policy 1.7 – Board Agreement
- Policy 1.8 – Political Advocacy
- Policy 3.2 – Donor Privacy and Intent
- Policy 3.3 – Donor Bill of Rights
- Policy 4.2 – Event Policy
- Policy 7.2 – Unrestricted Current Net Assets
- Policy 7.3 – Purchasing Policy
- Policy 7.4 – Investment Policy
- Policy 7.5 – Internal Controls

The EOJAS Board has also voted to make several changes to our organizational bylaws to better comply with recommendations from PANO and also clean up some inconsistencies. The Board is working now to update the job descriptions for each Board member to more accurately reflect their responsibilities. After five years of growth, these descriptions now longer meet the needs of the choir.

## Our Mission

- The Essence of Joy Alumni Singers is a family of singers whose purpose is to learn, present, and promote African and African-American sacred and secular music in an effort to entertain, inspire, affirm and unify the worldwide community.

## EOJAS Wins Penn State Award



2010 was a year of incredible growth for EOJAS. The choir added 93 new members to our organization. The Penn State Alumni Association recently recognized this growth and awarded EOJAS the 2010-11 Membership Growth award. The Alumni Association presented this award to our President, Brandon Miller, this October in a reception at the Nittany Lion Inn.

## From the EOJAS - Matthew Ascah



This issue we speak with Mr. Matthew Ascah (shown here with a pig abandoned by a previous owner and now a resident at a VA animal sanctuary). As you'll see below, he's had an interesting life journey that includes Canadian Permanent Residency status. Matt took some time from his busy schedule at Queen's University to chat with Tom.

**1. What made you choose PSU?** For my post-secondary education, I knew I wanted to have as much control as possible over my areas of study, and to work in a seminar-context with the very best teachers/researchers in their respective fields, regardless of whether I was majoring in a particular area. I also did not want to take on any financial debt.

The situation that best fit what I wanted at the time was the honors program (now the Schreyer Honors College) at PSU, which, as a person who was born and raised in State College, and who was very interested (at that time) in leaving State College, was the institution that I was initially least-inclined to attend. In the end, I'm pleased with the decision I took.

**2. What did you study and what have you done since graduation?** I began in the Fall of 1996 as a Music Education major, with voice as a primary performance area, eventually switching to the B.A. Music degree for both pedagogical and ideological reasons; I was a singer and bassist who loved heavy metal more than any other music and was committed to excelling academically in areas outside of music...not typical for a PSU music ed. student at that time.

## The Joy

- The Joy is published twice a year. Its mission is to inform and to entertain. Contributions are always welcome. Please note that contributions become the property of EOJAS and may be edited for length or clarity.

I also earned a minor in Theatre Arts and wrote my honors thesis in Theatre and Women's Studies. Due to the flexibility of the SHC, I was able to enroll in graduate classes, and enjoyed many musicology seminars.

In the summers, I lived and worked in Dublin, Lillehammer and Belfast on various projects related to the intersections of music, youth and social justice. I spent a lot of time performing in orchestras for musical theatre productions.

In 2001, I went to graduate school at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. My research focused on violence and masculinity in popular music. I really enjoyed teaching, especially the use of service learning pedagogy. I met the woman who has been my partner for nearly a decade. I spent a year in the Americorps program (after I determined that pursuing a PhD in musicology was not what I wanted to do), which was the first time I worked formally in university administration and educational development.

I immigrated to Canada in 2004 and settled in Toronto, where my partner was working on a doctoral degree. I was a researcher on a documentary film about heavy metal music called "Global Metal." I worked at a university doing educational development. I cooked and delivered food.

I left Toronto in 2007 to work in academic administration and educational development at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Much of my work these days involves mobilizing the resources of the university for various social justice causes, specifically those related to sustainable food practices and ending men's violence against women.

**3. *What made you decide to audition for EOJ? Tell us about your audition and/or when you found out you were in the group.*** The experience of attending my first EOJ concert in 1996 changed me in a way that non-metal music never had before. I had very little previous experience with the music the group performed, but the energy moving in that room was so powerful...I desperately hoped to be a part of it. Thus began a unique path wherein I auditioned for EOJ three times for three different reasons.

Audition #1: I was not a Bass II, but that's what was needed at the time, so I auditioned. ATL figured out pretty quickly that I was not qualified. I told ATL that I had noticed the lack of a bass player at EOJ's most recent concert, and that perhaps he might consider letting me audition for that job. He asked me to show up for a rehearsal with my gear.

Audition #2: ATL pretty much plays what would be considered "the part the bass player usually plays" on the piano. As such, during my first rehearsal with the group, I had no idea what to play. Add to this the fact that I had never heard any of the songs before...disaster. Nevertheless, he let me stay (I don't know why), and I played bass with the group for the next few years. After my first year, I also started singing with the group as a Bass I (my actual voice part).

Audition #3: Because ATL already had "the bass part" covered, and because we rarely played with a drummer during those years, I developed a bass style that was very percussive. One summer during undergrad, I bought an inexpensive drum set and started playing. At the beginning of my final year at PSU, I had stopped playing bass almost entirely, and since I was already playing "the drum part" on the bass...you can guess where this is going. I mentioned to ATL that we could/should have a drummer. He asked me to bring my gear to rehearsal. He waited until the last five minutes of rehearsal to ask for me to play. I played

## The Big Caveat

- The views expressed in this newsletter are the views of the authors alone and not necessarily those of the Essence of Joy Alumni Singers Board, its membership, or the Pennsylvania State University Alumni Association. Please don't sue us!

about fifteen seconds of two different songs, and then for the rest of my senior year.

**4. You've performed frequently at home and on the road with Essence and with other groups. Can you share a memorable experience with our readers?** The vibe of the first concert of the 2009 EOJAS France tour was and is something beyond my understanding.

**5. Many members of the choir have mentioned a favorite Dr. Leach quote and/or bit of advice. Can you share your favorite?** "Such as it is."

**6. Do you have a favorite EOJ song? Why is that one of your favorites?** No, though recently the song that has resonated with me the most is "I Speak Life."

**7. What do you wish now that you had known when you joined EOJ?**

"I'm not a monster. I'm just ahead of the curve."  
-The Joker, from the film "The Dark Knight"

**8. I've often felt that Essence is like a family. Can you share a time when you felt the family dynamic?** For me, family is about the subtleties of shared experience...that which is unspoken, yet understood. I've been involved with this music with these groups (EOJ and now EOJAS) for almost half of my life. There are times when, in performance, I'll catch the eye of another member, and the connection is just that...unspoken, yet understood.

There is a type of conversational dexterity and casual banter within this organization that seems much more like a family dynamic than a friend/professional colleague dynamic. In my limited experience, it seems to be present in folks from each edition of EOJ.

**9. Jim Harrison or Jim Henson - who has taught you more about life?** I've learned the same lesson from each of them; "Normal" is an illusion that must be ignored, lest one adopt a lifestyle of self-deception and self-destruction.

**10. What is the difference between a drummer and a percussionist?** I wish I had an answer for this that was clever and/or good. As I do not, I'd like to take this opportunity to speak briefly about a different topic! I would strongly encourage folks involved with EOJAS to deeply consider, and learn as much as possible about about:

- The specific social, political and historical complexities associated with the music we perform
- The various cultural contexts that inform(ed) the creation of said music, and
- What our unique (perhaps unusual) ensemble could/should/must, be(come), considering these contexts and complexities.

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## EOJAS fan?

Join us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/EssenceofJoyAlumniSingers](http://www.facebook.com/EssenceofJoyAlumniSingers)

## From the EOJ - Courtney Lope

This issue we speak with Courtney Lope (at left in photo) in the EOJ Resident Choir. Members of EOJAS were pleased to welcome Courtney's older sister, Kelsey (at right in photo), to the choir and look forward to another Lope joining us in a few years. Courtney took some time from her busy schedule to chat with Tom – thanks Courtney!



**1. What made you choose PSU?** I am a "townie." My family moved here when I was fairly young, so State College has been home to me for a while. I really liked that Penn State was big – that meant plenty of opportunities and plenty of people to share them with. I also really like football...

**2. What is your Major? When do you graduate?** I am currently a sophomore Elementary Education major with a minor in Special Education. I will graduate in the spring of 2013.

**3. What made you decide to audition for EOJ? Tell us about your audition and/or when you found out you were in the group.** My sisters and I had the opportunity to see Essence perform as we were growing up. We knew many members to go through the choir and eventually, I was able to watch my sister, Kelsey perform with the group as well. When I got to campus, she didn't give me much of a choice as it came time to audition. At the actual audition, I was slightly intimidated to sing in front of these people that I had been admiring from the audience for years. Needless to say, I am extremely thankful for Kels' push.

**4. You've performed frequently at home and on the road. Can you share a memorable experience with our readers?** Our most recent trip, our trip to Chicago just a few weeks ago, is still fresh in my mind. Like other members of the choir, I found the experience unlike any other and one that I just cannot stop gushing about. Although the entire weekend was meaningful to me, I truly appreciated our Sunday worship services. It is an incredible experience to sing and to worship with such a passionate congregation. It felt like Essence was 'home.'

**5. Many members of the choir have mentioned a favorite Dr. Leach quote and/or bit of advice. Can you share a particular favorite?** Well- we've all heard the infamous "Take care of your business" reminder from Dr. Leach, but to say that it's a favorite quote would be quite an understatement. Somehow, this simple phrase has snuck its way into so many other aspects of my life, both inside and outside of the choir. It's a constant reminder that people are depending on me, in the same way that I am depending on them.

**6. Do you have a favorite EOJ song? Why is that one of your favorites?** I have to pick just one? Essence music can speak incredible things to my heart. The song that really hit home for my family and me this year was "We've Come This Far By Faith." Every time we sing that, it is a reminder of *why* I am here and *how* I will get through tomorrow.

## Contact the Board

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EOJAS Board  
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**7. EOJ (and now EOJAS) have a history of siblings in the choir. What is it like to share the EOJ experience with a member of your family?** Ohh, Chelsey! I really do miss our time together in the choir. Not only was it convenient to have someone ALWAYS willing and able to answer EVERY question that I had, but it was also a great way for me to merge my way into the Essence Family. To have each other to support, to encourage, and to experience everything with was such a blessing. Now we're working on getting the littlest Lope into this choir!

**8. Congrats on the great work with the EOJ Thon team. Can you share any highlights from the weekend?** We had an unbelievable weekend. I am so so so proud of everyone that was a part of EOJ THON this year and I cannot even begin to tell you how much I appreciated everyone's time and commitment to this amazing event. Our dancers did wonderfully and we had another awesome opportunity to spend the weekend with our THON family. So thankful.

**9. If you had the opportunity to meet with any of the composers in the EOJ repertoire, who would you select and why?** *Glenn Burleigh* is a composer that has had such an impact on Dr. Leach's career as an educator and as a musician. To be able to meet someone who has shared so much with the music industry as well as influenced someone so valuable in our lives would be a true gift.

**10. Aside from joining EOJAS, what are your plans after graduation?** I'm hoping to find a good teaching job...fingers crossed!! We will see where those plans take me!

## EOJ - FTK

Please take a moment to review the message below from the EOJ Thon Team



For those of you who are alumni or affiliated with Penn State in any way, we are more than certain that you are aware of THON. For anyone that may not know, THON, the largest student run philanthropy in the world, is a 46-hour no sleeping, no sitting dance marathon that raises millions of dollars annually for children and families suffering from pediatric cancer.

A few years ago, EOJ became an official organization recognized by THON, and it has continued to grow, attracting more members and raising more money each year. This year, as we continue in our fundraising efforts we would like to extend the invitation for the rest of our EOJ family to participate in such an amazing event. Be on the lookout for an email with more information on how you can get involved in THON 2012. For more information right now, contact Meredythe Kimmel at makimmel310@gmail.com.

## Do you Tweet?

Follow us on Twitter:  
<http://www.twitter.com/EOJAlumni>

## Life News

Got married? New baby on the way? Just graduated? The Joy would be happy to include your news and a photo in an upcoming issue. Just email [vpampr@eojas.org](mailto:vpampr@eojas.org).

## Welcome New Members!

Please join The Joy and the EOJAS Board in welcoming all of our new registered members. Did you know that EOJAS added 26 new members in 2011? This is a 15% increase over 2010. As of press time, we are now up to 199 registered members, but we're still reaching only 66% of our eligible membership. We are working now with the Penn State Alumni Association to reach out to the 101 EOJ alums that have not yet registered. EOJ alum who have not yet registered can visit <https://members.eojas.org> to register today.

## Chorus Management Institute

In September, four members of the EOJAS Board attended Chorus America's Chorus Management Institute in Rochester, NY. Now on our third year of membership with Chorus America, this was the second time we attended their training program for choir boards. Seven members of our Board have now completed the three-day training session. The CMI is focused on four main topics: Strategic Planning, Governance, Communications, and Fundraising. These sessions, led by professionals in their respective fields, provided EOJAS with an excellent opportunity to learn best practices and begin to incorporate them into our organization. This event provided excellent networking opportunities for EOJAS with the course leaders and also with other participants. The Board is working now to implement ideas from this session and continue to improve the operations of the choir.

*Proud member of*



## Recent Performances



Things are as busy as ever for EOJAS. We hope you will enjoy a short summary of some of our engagements from the second half of 2011. The photo to the left shows EOJAS and EOJ performing in October 2011 at the PSU Homecoming concert. Photo courtesy of Gene Miller.

### Performances

**October** – October was a busy month for the choir. EOJAS joined EOJ for a Homecoming Concert at Recital Hall in University Park. EOJAS also performed at Zion United Methodist Church in York, PA and at a benefit concert for the State Street Academy of Music in Harrisburg, PA.

## Next Issue?

Look for the next issue of The Joy in your email mailboxes and on the EOJAS Website in December, 2011.

## Contact Us

Essence of Joy Alumni Singers, W356 Olmsted Building, PSU Harrisburg, 777 W. Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057. Phone: 717-546-4195 Email: [info@eojas.org](mailto:info@eojas.org)

**November** – In November EOJAS performed at New Bethel Baptist Church and Holy Comforter / St. Cyprian Catholic Church, both in Washington, DC. EOJAS also joined four other choirs for an Urban Coalition invitational sponsored by the Eastern Division of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA).

## EOJ Performs

### Upcoming Events

Here is the latest information on upcoming EOJ events. As always, check out the EOJ Website at [www.essenceofjoy.org](http://www.essenceofjoy.org) for additional details.

- **State College, PA** – EOJ will perform as part of the annual Celebration of African-American Music Festival at the Worship Hall of Pasquerilla Spiritual Center on Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm.
- **Western PA** – EOJ will travel to Western PA the weekend of Feb. 10-12. February 10 at Glendale HS, Glendale, PA (Larry Putorek, EOJ alum, host), February 11 at First United Methodist, Franklin, PA, 7 p.m., and February 12 at East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, PA 11 a.m.
- **Spring Break Tour** – 3/1 Church of the Brethren, Martinsburg, PA; 3/2 Mt.Olive Baptist Church; Hartford, CT, 3/3 Grace Church, Rutland, VT; 3/4 Essex Children's Choir, Burlington, VT; 3/5 South Burlington HS, Burlington, VT; Plattsburgh State University, Plattsburgh, NY.
- **University Park, PA** – EOJ 20th Anniversary Weekend, 4/13 Banquet, The Penn Stater; 4/14 Rehearsal and Picnic; 4/15 Concert, Worship Hall, Pasquerilla Spiritual Center

## Supporting EOJAS



EOJAS would love your support. Below are some ideas on how you can support EOJAS in our mission to learn, present, and promote African and African-American sacred and secular music in an effort to entertain, inspire, affirm and unify the worldwide community.

### Support EOJAS Financially

- The choir would greatly appreciate any financial support you are able to provide. EOJAS members are not compensated financially and we rely heavily on donations to grow as an organization. EOJAS is a tax-exempt organization as defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Federal Tax Code. All appropriate donations, contributions, bequests, transfers, devices, or gifts made to EOJAS on or after March 22, 2010 under sections 170, 2055, 2106, or 2522 of the Internal Revenue Code are fully deductible against federal income tax for U.S. residents and corporations registered in the U.S. While the choir prefers donations via check or money order, we gladly accept credit card or bank transfer donations via Click and Pledge using the link on [www.eojas.org/support](http://www.eojas.org/support). If you have a question regarding donations to EOJAS, please contact our Vice President of ODevelopment and Fundraising at [vpdf@eojas.org](mailto:vpdf@eojas.org).

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### **Come See About Us**

- Most EOJAS performances are open to the public. Our events are often ticketed, with tickets available for purchase at the door. Aside from subscribing to 'The Joy,' you can also check the News section on [eojas.org](http://eojas.org) for information about future performances.

### **Follow EOJAS Online**

- EOJAS is online at Facebook and Twitter.
- You can become a Fan of EOJAS on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/EssenceofJoyAlumniSingers>
- You can follow our Tweets at [www.twitter.com/EOJAlumni](http://www.twitter.com/EOJAlumni)

### **Tell Your Friends**

- If you enjoyed your EOJAS performance, please invite your friends and family to join you for a future performance. We'd love to hear from them too. Please encourage them to become a Friend of EOJAS by going to [www.eojas.org](http://www.eojas.org) and entering their email address on our mailing list.

### **Support EOJAS With Your Time**

- EOJAS is always eager for pro bono assistance. If you have skills in a particular field that you feel could be of assistance to the choir on a pro bono bases, please email [info@eojas.org](mailto:info@eojas.org). If you are a lawyer who can assist with 501 (c) 3 issues, contracts, etc. we can use your help! If you are a graphic designer who can assist with marketing materials, we would like to hear from you. Do you have skills in grant writing or fundraising? We need that help too! Professional photographer or videographer with some extra film? Accountants and tax lawyers are always in need. Instrumentalists? We'd like to hear from you too. Thanks!

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**Look for the Next Issue of  
The Joy in July, 2012**

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