



# Sotto Voce,

By Rebecca Brite

Guest artists have long been a feature of the ACP music program, with one of the most popular returning regular as clockwork: the renowned children's choir Sotto Voce, which for many years has joined ACP music groups in the church's annual Christmas concert.

Fred Gramann, the ACP music director, and Scott Alan Prouty, founder and director of Sotto Voce, go back some 30 years. So it is not surprising that Scott and Sotto Voce are among the guests who will be performing on Saturday, 4 June, at the gala concert celebrating Fred's 40 years as music director.

"I met Fred when I first came over to Paris as a student to study at the Sorbonne for six months," Scott recently recalled. "Feeling homesick, I went to the church to meet people and wound up singing in the choirs, playing bells, singing solos and even taking organ lessons from Fred. He was such an inspiration to me and a good friend during those days."

Scott, a New England native, had been a musician since a young age, singing in all his schools' choirs, barbershop quartets and other vocal ensembles, appearing in musicals and accompanying choirs on the piano.

After he completed his studies at the Eastman School of Music in New York, earning a master of arts in choral conducting and vocal pedagogy, he headed to France, where in 1986 he became assistant musical director of the Petits Chanteurs de Paris, a children's choir founded a few years earlier by the city of Paris.



He founded his now-famous children's choir, Sotto Voce, in 1992 with the help of composer Marc-Olivier Dupin, then head of the Paris Conservatory. Today, Sotto Voce and a preparatory choir of younger children count over 110 singers, ranging in ages from 7 to 18.

In 1990, he was appointed professor of musical expression and singing for the "Petits Rats" of the Paris Opera Ballet School, where in 2004 he became head of musical studies.

Today Scott is considered one of the leading specialists in children's choirs in France. He's often asked to work with young soloists and choristers for works presented at such prestigious venues as the Théâtre du Châtelet, the Paris Opera, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Cité de la Musique. He leads workshops on children's vocal music and choral directing throughout France and elsewhere in Europe and regularly works with the Paris Opera children's ensembles.

The group has long had "artists in residence" status at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. Sotto Voce often appears on French television and has recorded several CDs and appeared on

He founded his now-famous children's choir, Sotto Voce, in 1992 with the help of composer Marc-Olivier Dupin, then head of the Paris Conservatory. Today, Sotto Voce and a preparatory choir of younger children count over 110 singers, ranging in ages from 7 to 18.



*Fred, congratulations on this remarkable milestone. It's not often someone "hangs in there" for so long with so much for so many. Not bad for a kid from Enumclaw.*

*We recall with fondness your extraordinary spirit shared with congregation and staff during our stay at ACP (2003-04), a sometimes difficult transitional time for the church. Yes, your music-making is well celebrated in Paris and far beyond, and it was an inspiration and joy for us. Still, your centeredness in the gospel, your wise and thoughtful counsel, your light and humorous touch, and your obvious care for people are the heart of the matter. Hundreds of lives have been enriched because, when they had their moment in Paris, whether a day or a generation, you were there. Well done! -- and no reason to stop now. Thank you.*

**- Kathy and Greg Turner**

# vibrant voices



a variety of DVDs, not to mention touring in Europe and North America.

These dedicated youngsters rehearse twice a week, working not just on singing and vocal technique but also on physical movement and expression, dance, and drama. They do around 15 concerts or more per year.

“If you count things like the operas we do at the Paris Opera,” Scott said, “there are even more performances. Next year we go on three trips, including one to Italy.”

Behind the scenes, Scott is assisted by a team of five: assistant director Mathieu Septier (a Sotto Voce graduate who joined the choir at age 9); Californian Richard Davis, the choir’s chief accompanist since 2003, a familiar face to ACP friends from Christmas concerts (he will be there for the gala concert on 4 June); Fanny Le Nestour, also a pianist; Brazilian choreographer Evandra Martins; and vocal coach Caroline Meng.



Scott noted that he and Fred often meet for breakfast, “to talk shop and just talk about life.”

Calling Fred “truly one of the most inspirational people I know,” Scott said: “Fred has a great sense of humor, and I love to laugh as well. When I think of Fred, I always think of our laughing together.” He added, “I love the Christmas concerts because he is the only one that really understands what it feels like right before all the action begins.”

Sotto Voce is far from Scott’s only work. “I am tenured at the Paris Opera and I also direct 10 musicals and opera each year all over France. Sotto Voce is my passion, and those children are like my own kids, but it is only one part of my professional life in France.”

If you have a child who loves to sing and can read music, Sotto Voce has auditions coming up on 1, 3 and 4 June; for information, send an email via the contact form on the choir’s website ([www.choeursottovoce.com](http://www.choeursottovoce.com)) or call 06 85 56 22 26.

“We have eight American children in the choir this year – it’s terrific,” Scott said. “Most importantly, for the audition, is to sense that the child is passionate about singing!”

And, if you have the misfortune to miss the 4 June gala concert at the church, you will have another chance to hear Sotto Voce on 12 June, when they join other choirs in a concert at the Théâtre du Châtelet called “Paris in Song.” See <http://chatelet-theatre.com/en/event/paris-en-chansons> for more information.

**Chœurs d’Enfants Sotto Voce**  
Direction : Scott Alan Prouty



## The Movie Discussion Group

Thursday 16 June - 19h30 – room G2

This month’s movie listings: *The Nice Guys* by Shane Black, *Julieta* by Pedro Almodóvar, *Elle* by Paul Verhoeven, and *Krigen (A War)* by Tobias Lindholm. See any or all at your leisure and join the group for discussion. Contact: [movies@acparis.org](mailto:movies@acparis.org)

