

Vassar College Night Owls A Cappella Group

To help celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Writer's Tea and Benefit Auction, AAUW Poughkeepsie wanted to add something special to this year's event. We think we have found a perfect match in a performance by the Vassar College *Night Owls*.

The all-women *Night Owls*, are the oldest of the twelve Vassar a cappella groups and one of the oldest in the country and, in so many ways, mirror our organization's history. AAUW, founded first under the name of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae in 1881, had a mission of breaking educational barriers for women and addressing career options for college-educated females, rare in those days. They eventually merged with the Southern Association of College Women, as well as some independent organizations such as the Western Association of Collegiate Alumnae (their first fellowship being awarded to a Vassar alumna!), to become AAUW. Vassar College was founded in 1861 as the first degree-granting institute of higher education for women in the United States and is still consistently noted as one of the premier liberal arts colleges in the USA as well as being a great supporter and partner of AAUW, including as a College/University member.

A cappella as a form has been around a long time but has been, and still is, a fairly male-oriented genre. In fact, the oldest college/university all-male a cappella group, Yale's *Whiffenpoof*, accepted its first female member just this year! We are so fortunate then to have one of the nation's premier groups, from one of the nation's premier colleges, right in our own backyard and coming to entertain us at the Tea.

According to legend, the *Night Owls* were founded during a polio epidemic of 1942, when the entire student community was quarantined. No one was allowed to leave her dorm except to attend classes with everything else, including long standing traditions, abandoned. Amid all this turmoil, sixteen intrepid women, dressed all in black, snuck out of their dorms, met secretly in the basement of the library where they sang late until the night, and traveled all around the campus to serenade their ailing classmates. Now, 75 years later, the *Night Owls* still dress in black for each performance to commemorate those founding women.

The group performs a variety of music, but are known for their arrangements of jazz standards and jazzy renditions of more contemporary songs with influences ranging from Ella Fitzgerald and Aretha Franklin to Ray Charles and Bobby Darin to Beyonce and Adele. Some highlights of their history range from having Meryl Streep as part of their group, to a CBS broadcast, to their performance at Bill Clinton's inauguration! How pleased we are to have them now join us as part of their 75th Anniversary celebration as we celebrate our 10th Anniversary of the Tea...both in support of AAUW's long-standing celebration of women and education. Join us!!!!