

2010

## Inspiring Art and Science

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### Recommended Citation

Halpern, Andrea R., "Inspiring Art and Science" (2010). *Other Faculty Research and Publications*. 131.  
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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

## Inspiring Art and Science

To the Editors:

I read Ralf Dahm's article "Finding Alzheimer's Disease" (March–April) with interest for two reasons. First, as a cognitive neuroscientist I have studied the effect of early-stage Alzheimer's disease on memory and on the appreciation of music and art. In addition, I am a member of a community chorus here in Pennsylvania, the Susquehanna Valley Chorale, which recently commissioned and premiered a choral work on the topic of the ailment, called *Alzheimer's Stories*.

The librettist Herschel Garfein and the composer Robert Cohen used the interview between Dr. Alzheimer and Auguste D. (*right*), which Dr. Dahm reproduced in his article, as material for the piece's first movement. The dialogue is sung first by soloists. Later the chorus takes up the plaintive refrain of Auguste's "*Ich hab mich verloren*" (I have lost myself). The setting of this text is hymnlike at first and is then repeated over and over in simpler form later in the movement as the orchestra sounds increasingly dissonant, reminiscent of the disorganization of the mind that accompanies the disease.

I found it interesting that the factual record, seen through the lens of what we know about the disease today, can be affecting enough to inspire contemporary art. Such art can bring further understanding of this condition to the performers, who become the voice of the patient, and to the audience.

The work's lyrics and audio files of the chorale's performance are online [here](#). Video of the performance can be found [here](#).

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You can find this online at <http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/num2/2010/4/inspiring-art-and-science/1>

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