



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact
Tom Lancaster, CircConcepts
Phone: 816-471-1120
Email: hmc@circconcepts.com

A Chorus Comes of Age: Heartland Men's Chorus Turns 21

Kansas City, MO— For most, a 21st birthday is a milestone event: a rite of passage marked by taking risks, exploring boundaries and a developing sense of maturity. As Heartland Men's Chorus enters its 21st year, these same hallmarks are evident. The Chorus has announced an ambitious and varied season, and increased its performance schedule. HMC's 2006-2007 subscription series, sponsored in part by Bank Midwest, runs the gamut from popular programs filled with splashy spectacle, to challenging works featuring new commissions, to topical issue-oriented concerts. After performing to sell-out crowds last year, the Chorus has added an additional performance of its holiday program for the upcoming season.

Everything's Coming Up Christmas (December 1-3, 2006) rings in the holiday season Broadway-style. "Show tunes have crept into our holiday repertoire over the past several years," notes Joe Nadeau, artistic director. "Audience response to these numbers has always been phenomenal, so we're doing an entire holiday concert with a Broadway theme. I was amazed at how much wonderful holiday music has come from the stage."

"This concert has such a wide variety of styles," says Nadeau. "We'll be doing songs that will be unfamiliar to our audience and re-imagining traditional favorites." Even that old chestnut "The Christmas Song" will be reinvented with close jazz harmonies reminiscent of The Manhattan Transfer. Other holiday songs will get the Broadway razzle-dazzle treatment in big, brassy

(more)

arrangements. “It’s one production number after another,” says Nadeau. “We’ve got Broadway elves, dancing pansies...even our own version of the ‘Rockettes’ will make an appearance.”

For *Everything’s Coming Up Christmas* the Chorus will be joined by local favorite Nancy Nail. Best known for her work at Quality Hill Playhouse, Nail appeared as a special guest of the Chorus in *Jerry’s Boys*, a tribute to Broadway composer Jerry Herman. In this latest collaboration, Nail will get the chance to revisit the Jerry Herman songbook with “We Need a Little Christmas” and will show off her comic chops in a somewhat risqué version of “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus.”

Heartland Men’s Chorus has become known for its increasingly theatrical concerts, miles away from the typical stand-and-sing protocol of other choral groups. “Our singers responded so well to the production elements of this concert,” says Nadeau. More than 50 of the chorus’s 140 singers auditioned for dancing or specialty roles. Their talents will be on display in such numbers as “Favorite Son” from the Tony Award®-winning hit, *The Will Rogers Follies* and “I Want to Be a Rockette” from *Kicks: The Showgirl Musical*.

Global Destinations: A Non-Stop Flight (March 24-25, 2007) will bring audiences on a musical journey to faraway cultures and exotic sounds. Nadeau views this world music program as a natural extension of HMC’s mission. “Two important parts of our Mission Statement are ‘advancing men’s choral music’ and ‘reaching out to diverse audiences.’ This program achieves both, through new commissions and truly unique choral sounds.”

“It’s a concert that will stretch not only our singers, but our audiences as well. We’re asking them to travel outside the box of the usual Western European choral repertoire, and that’s exciting. With unusual music from other cultures, it’s going to be a thrill ride.”

(more)

Currently completing his doctorate in choral conducting at the University of Kansas, Nadeau looked to his colleagues to provide many arrangements for *Global Destinations*. New commissions and arrangements will be provided by fellow doctoral students Douglas Helvering and Dan Forrest. Helvering's new work is a collection of African tribal songs arranged for men's chorus, and Forrest will arrange "Amen," a piece from a larger work originally performed by the KU Chamber Choir. Paul Tucker, associate professor of choral studies at KU, will also be represented with a new arrangement of "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

Included in the program will be a repeat performance of "Past Life Melodies," a piece HMC performed at the GALA Festival, a quadrennial convention of gay choruses from around the world. Originating from aboriginal chant, "Past Life Melodies" features overtone singing that weaves a hypnotic effect on the audience. Other highlights will include "Naduri," an Eastern Russian work that utilizes a singing technique similar to yodeling. "It's going to be a visceral thrill for our audience," says Nadeau.

The Pink Carpet: Gays and Lesbians in Hollywood (June 9-10, 2007) is the latest in a line of "musical documentaries" created by HMC. It follows the success of two other issue-oriented concerts: *The Few, The Proud*, which examined gays in the military, and *All God's Children*, which explored the spiritual experiences of the GLBT community. *The Pink Carpet* will trace 100 years of Hollywood history as it reviews the contributions and portrayals of gays and lesbians in film.

The songs performed in *The Pink Carpet* will illuminate the narration in a number of ways: some will be songs from films, while others will illustrate an issue or establish a particular time period. The narration for the concert was drawn from several sources, including the book and documentary *The Celluloid Closet*. Chorus member Ames Hall penned a script that takes

(more)

audiences from the silent film era to *Brokeback Mountain*. “We’re hoping to have a celebrity narrator for this concert,” hints Nadeau. “I can’t say anything yet, but expect a big announcement soon.”

“This type of topical concert has really become our niche. Gay and lesbian choruses have often been called ‘cultural warriors’ as a positive voice for the GLBT community. Topic-driven concerts like this prove we are still a relevant voice.”

Heartland Men’s Chorus performs each of its concerts at the Folly Theater, 300 W. 12th Street. Friday and Saturday performances begin at 8:00 pm and Sunday performances begin at 4:00 pm. Season and single tickets are available online at www.hmckc.org or by calling 816-931-3338.

#