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A Silver Anniversary Season for Heartland Men's Chorus

Kansas City, MO—Heartland Men's Chorus, Kansas City's gay men's chorus, has announced a "sterling" lineup for its silver anniversary season. Guest artists highlight the concerts in the 25th season, but the focus is rightly on the Chorus and the unique entertainment it provides.

According to Artistic Director Joe Nadeau, the vitality of the Chorus says a lot about Kansas City's thriving arts scene.

"From a group of fewer than 20 singers, the Chorus has grown to more than 150 active members," Nadeau says. "But back in 1986, no one could have anticipated how our audience would grow." Nearly 7,000 audience members attended the group's subscription concerts last season, and Nadeau estimates an equal number experienced the Chorus in various community outreach performances.

"It proves that we are a unique voice with a relevant and resonant message—not only as an arts organization, but as a voice for the gay and lesbian community. I often say we're 'cultural warriors' with a musical message of social justice for all people."

The Chorus begins its subscription concert series with the holiday program, **Twelve Divas of Christmas** (December 3-5, 2010), a blend of traditional Christmas music and the outrageous humor for which it has become known. Renowned female impersonator Christopher Peterson returns to assume the guises of Judy Garland, Madonna, Bette Davis, Eartha Kitt and more.

"Christopher's a brilliant female impersonator," Nadeau says. "When he performed with us two years ago in our concert, *Divas!*, the audience was amazed at his versatility. He does all the big divas, but the most astounding thing is that he sings the songs live in the same keys as the women he's impersonating. It's really quite impressive."

For its spring offering, the Chorus will celebrate Kansas City's part in the birth of jazz with **Misbehavin'** (March 26 & 27, 2011). Living legend Marilyn Maye will join the men on stage as guest artist.

"Marilyn's long been a fan of HMC," Nadeau says. "She's often in the audience for our concerts and events. I've been

(more)

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waiting for the perfect opportunity to have her perform with us, and our 25th anniversary proved to be it!" The Chorus and Maye will perform selections made popular by Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Glenn Miller, among others.

In summer, HMC salutes the year of its founding, 1986, with **Metro Retro** (June 11 & 12, 2011). The concert will be half flashback—with songs from the decadent 1980s—and half “flash forward” as the Chorus looks to the future. PerformOUTKC, a new performing group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight youth will take the stage with the Chorus in the concert’s second act. “I don’t want to give away all the surprises,” Nadeau says, “but there won’t be dry eye in the house.”

Immediately following both performances of the summer concert, audience members will be invited to a party on the streets of downtown. A champagne and dessert reception will await fans in this celebration dubbed “The Grand Finale.”

In addition to its subscription concert series, the Chorus will continue the outreach efforts so important to its mission. The group has taken its civil rights-themed program, **And Justice for All**, to middle schools, churches and rural communities in the past year. They will reprise that program throughout their 25th anniversary season in a series of outreach concerts beginning with a performance at John Knox Village, at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 7.

“Cities with a thriving arts community must include the gay and lesbian community in a significant way,” Executive Director Rick Fisher says. “HMC is proud to contribute to the vitality and diversity of Kansas City. Our city should be proud that it boasts a gay men’s chorus on par with those in cities twice its size.” Fisher cites Boston, Chicago and New York among the cities with gay choruses of comparable size and audience support.

Heartland Men’s Chorus 2010-2011 season performances will take place at the Folly Theater, 300 West 12th Street. Season tickets, ranging from \$56 to \$81, are available online at www.hmckc.org or by calling (816) 931-3338.

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