

## For Immediate Release

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### HMC Sings of Social Justice in New Concert and Regional Tour

Kansas City, MO—Throughout history, oppressed people have turned to song to express their struggles and their joys, their hope and their vision. This spring, Heartland Men's Chorus examines the issue of civil rights through the music of the movement in *And Justice For All* (March 28 and 29, 2009 at the Folly Theater).

The struggles of African-Americans, women, gays and lesbians will come to life in HMC's latest "musical documentary." Combining music, narration and other media, the Chorus will explore the work that's been done and the work still to do as our nation strives to provide justice and equality for all.

Audience members can expect to hear music spawned from the various civil rights movements ("We Shall Overcome"), music inspired by iconic historical events ("Elegy for Matthew") and songs that resonate on the theme of social justice ("You've Got to be Carefully Taught").

Included in the program will be "Freedom Suite," a medley of four traditional spirituals commissioned by HMC and arranged by Kansas City composer Mark Hayes. The Chorus will trace the struggle of the GLBT community with songs such as "Singing for Our Lives" and "Everything Possible." A humorous look at the quest civil rights, "Color Out of Colorado" uses double entendres to illustrate a world without the contributions of gays and lesbians.

The women's suffrage movement will be commemorated with "The March of the Women" by Dame Ethel Smyth. Written in 1911 and premiered by a chorus of Suffragettes at a fundraising rally in London, the song became the battle cry of the suffrage movement.

Its most famous performance occurred in London's Holloway prison in 1912. More than 100 suffragists, including Ethel Smyth, were arrested and sentenced to two months' imprisonment. Ethel Smyth found her time in prison an exalting experience of communal determination and sacrifice by women of all ages and classes. One day, while the prisoners were taking their outdoor exercise, she appeared at a window overlooking the prison yard, and conducted their singing of the suffrage battle anthem by waving her toothbrush.

The narration for the concert, written by Chorus member Bryan Van Osdale, will highlight heroes such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Harvey Milk, but will also tell the stories of lesser-known figures in U.S. history, such as Mary McLeod Bethune. The child of former slaves, Bethune established a one-room school for black children in 1904 which eventually became the present-day Bethune-Cookman University.

Narrating the concert will be local actor Walter Coppage. Perhaps most recognized as the national television spokesman for Children International, Coppage got his start as an actor at the Missouri Repertory Theatre while attending the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He has hosted programs on KCUR-FM, been featured in commercials, film and television, and has graced the stages of Heart of America Shakespeare Festival, Unicorn Theatre, Coterie Theatre and the St. Louis Black Repertory Theatre.

(more)

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In addition to the performances at the Folly Theater, *And Justice For All* will mark the first regional tour for HMC. The group will travel to Oklahoma City in early March to present three special outreach performances, and present a daytime performance for Kansas City youth.

"Reaching out to diverse audiences is an integral part of our mission," artistic director Dr. Joe Nadeau said. "This particular concert, combining our music with an important social justice message, was the perfect vehicle to bring 'the HMC experience' to those who may not have had a chance to hear us perform before."

A free concert performance at Oklahoma City's Village Christian Church (9401 Ridgeview Drive) will benefit the BritVil Food Pantry. More than 100 singers are expected to make the trip as HMC makes its Oklahoma City debut. The performance will be at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 3, 2009.

The following day, the men will perform two hour-long concerts at the American Choral Directors Association conference in Oklahoma City. "Being invited to perform at the ACDA conference is quite a coup," said Joe Nadeau. "We will be only the second gay men's chorus invited to perform at a national conference during the group's 50-year history." Highlighting the music of the civil rights movement is the *raison d'être* for the performance, but Nadeau hopes that his fellow conductors will also learn about how to blend music performance with social justice issues.

"Our 'musical documentary' format may be entirely new for many of the attendees. I'm so proud to present this program and really highlight what HMC does best. Although a room packed with chorus directors is going to be an intimidating crowd."

The outreach performances associated with *And Justice For All* will continue back in Kansas City, with a special daytime performance at the Folly Theater geared especially for middle and high-school students (Friday, March 27, 2009 at 9:30 a.m.). "Because the music of the civil rights movement gives such an intimate and personal insight into the fight for racial and gender equality, this program seemed the perfect opportunity for educational outreach," said development director Cliff Schiappa.

The performance will be presented in conjunction with The Folly Kids Series, although targeted toward students older than the series usually serves. HMC first partnered with The Folly Kids Series in 2003 with a matinee presentation of *A Country Angel Christmas*.

For more information about the outreach programs, call the Chorus office at 816-931-3338, or email Rick Fisher at [hmc@hmckc.org](mailto:hmc@hmckc.org). Tickets for the Folly Theater performances of *And Justice For All* are available now at [www.hmckc.org](http://www.hmckc.org).

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