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Heartland Men's Chorus Announces Its 22nd Season

Kansas City, MO– Variety is not only the spice of life; it is the key to the Heartland Men's Chorus 22nd Season. “I like to apply the ‘TLC rule’ when I’m programming a season,” says Dr. Joe Nadeau, artistic director. “I want audiences to think, laugh and cry.”

All three emotions will be amply sampled in the upcoming season, as the Chorus presents three concert programs as diverse as its audience. Spanning dozens of different styles, and as many eras, the season ahead truly offers something for everyone.

The season kicks off with country flair, as Walton’s mountain meets “Brokeback Mountain” for the Chorus’s annual holiday concert, *Christmas Down Home* (November 30, December 1-2).

“So many of us grew up in communities with a strong rural base,” Nadeau says. “I wanted to do a holiday concert that celebrated Christmas in small town America, along with the homey, cozy feelings that suggests.”

Audiences will hear a variety of music, including a gospel-style rendition of “Go Tell it on the Mountain,” traditional favorites, like “Over the River and Through the Woods,” and less-familiar selections, such as “The Road Home,” based on an old Shaker tune. One piece Nadeau most looks forward to performing is “The Appalachian Carols,” an arrangement of traditional carols, including “I Wonder as I Wander” and “Jesus Christ the Apple Tree.”

The first act centerpiece will be “Not in Our Town,” a moving and powerful song based on real life events in the town of Billings, Montana. The song tells the story of how residents of Billings

(more)

responded to an upsurge in hate violence by standing together for a hate-free community. In 1993, hate activities in Billings reached a crescendo: KKK fliers were distributed, the Jewish cemetery was desecrated, the home of a Native American family was painted with swastikas, and a brick was thrown through the window of a six-year-old boy who displayed a Menorah for Hanukkah. Rather than resigning itself to the growing climate of hate, the community took a stand, declaring, “Not in Our Town.”

*One moment of conviction, one voice quiet and clear,
One act of compassion, it all begins here.
No safety now in silence, we've got to stand our ground.
No hate. No violence. Not in our town.*

In the second act of *Christmas Down Home*, the mood changes, although the “down home” atmosphere continues, as the Chorus kicks up its heels in a one-of-a-kind holiday hoedown.

“I don’t want to give away any of the surprises,” Nadeau says, “but it’s going to be outrageous and a lot of fun!”

Audiences will be treated to line dancin’, two steppin’ and square dancin’ as HMC goes a little bit country. Songs in the second act include “The Jalapeno Chorus,” “Cowboy Dreidel” and a Kenny Rogers-Dolly Parton-influenced duet, “With Bells On.”

Christmas Down Home features all the elements that have made HMC’s holiday concert an annual must-see tradition for many in the Kansas City region. As in previous years, the Chorus will invite the audience to join in for one number as a sing-along. Another tradition continues as a different “guest conductor” each concert takes the stage to direct a number. To win this honor, attendees at HMC’s Dinner of Note fundraiser may bid for this special opportunity.

HMC’s popular Wine Raffle returns for the holidays as audience members may purchase raffle tickets for \$5.00 each, both before the show and during intermission, to win the “Wall of Wine,” a collection of five cases of assorted fine wines.

In the spring, HMC will welcome Wichita’s Heart of America Men’s Chorus to the Folly Theater

(more)

stage for *Exile: The Journey Home* (March 29-30, 2008). The joint concert will feature each group performing separately, then joining for the Kansas City premiere of “Exile,” a major work by GALA composer Robert Seeley and lyricist Robert Espindola.

In their set, the men of HMC will give audiences a preview of selections they will take to the GALA Festival in Miami this summer. Every four years, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses produces an international festival bringing together GLBT choruses from around the globe. In preparation for the festival, HMC will present some of its most unique, challenging and beautiful music in this spring concert.

Nadeau is still narrowing down the selections, but knows that he will include “Here’s Where I Stand,” from the motion picture *Camp*, and a new commission by the court jester of GALA composers Eric Lane Barnes.

Then the men of Wichita take the stage for their set to introduce themselves to the Kansas City audience. The concert culminates with the two choruses joining to present “Exile,” a work premiered by the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus in 2000.

“An enormous amount of repertoire has been created for gay men’s choruses by gay composers,” Nadeau says. “But a lot of these works, including ‘Exile,’ have never been published by a major music publisher and have never been archived. I’m hoping to keep this amazing music alive.”

Written for brass, percussion and men’s chorus, “Exile” weaves the threads of hope and new ideals with the distinctive strands of our lives as gay people. “Exile” sings of renewal, reconciliation, love and the journey towards a sense of community. Creators Seeley and Espindola are expected to attend the Kansas City premiere of their powerful and emotional work.

Rounding out the HMC season, *Divas!* (June 14-15, 2008) celebrates the fabulous, glamorous, iconic women of song. From Whitney to Britney and all the sequined glamour goddesses that came before, audiences will shake their “groove thing” all night long with HMC’s summer concert spectacular.

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“A lot of GALA choruses have presented entire concerts devoted to one particular icon – Cher, Barbra Streisand, Liza Minnelli,” Nadeau says. “I wanted to take the very best of those concerts and combine them into a single evening of amazing music.”

Divas! features the very best of popular music, including tributes to Madonna (“The Immaculate Medley”), Tina Turner (“Proud Mary”), Bette Midler (“Miss Otis Regrets”) and Barbra Streisand (“My Name is Barbra Medley”). The women of Motown get their due in a medley of “My Guy,” “Heatwave” and “I Will Follow Him.” From Carol Channing to Karen Carpenter, HMC leaves no diva unexplored in this high-energy concert.

Joining HMC for *Divas!* will be Christopher Peterson, a performer whose one-man show “EyeCons” has sold out houses in Key West, Provincetown and Las Vegas.

“Christopher is really unique,” Nadeau says. “He’s a brilliant female impersonator, doing all the big divas, but the most amazing thing is that he sings the songs in the same keys as the women he’s impersonating. It’s really quite impressive.”

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 p.m. and Sunday performances begin at 4:00 p.m. Season tickets are available online at www.hmckc.org or by calling 816-931-3338.

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