



GOSPEL NOTES

Newsletter of the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir

Winter 2001

Old Tyme Gospel Concert

Benson Great Hall rang with praise the night of 29th, as the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir performed selections from their latest CD, "Thank Ya". This project was the brainchild of TCC's director, Robert Robinson. The album features Minnesota composers and was co-produced by Robinson and F. Darnell Davis, who also wrote five songs for the project. Darnell, who previously played piano with the Choir, was "really excited about working with the group again and (was) expecting great things from this CD." He sees the TCC Choir as quite different from other gospel groups because of its diverse makeup of individuals from all walks of life and wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds.



The Choir was also blessed to work with several special guests on the recording, including Germain Brooks. Germain performed with the Choir at their Mother's Day 1999 concert, and is the soloist on "Your Wondrous Love", written by choir member Patricia McKernon. Germain enjoyed working with the group again because "...the people are so friendly and supportive."

Also joining the Choir on this CD were David Hughes and Rachel Hurst. David co-wrote two of the songs and sang one of them "Awesome" with choir member Christine Rimpson at the concert. This project would not have been complete without the talented assistance of the people at Holy Cow Productions recording studio. Brian Ricke, studio engineer, says "Thank Ya" is his favorite song off the album and that "It was a real pleasure working with the choir."

The evening was truly a success due to the contributions of many individuals. If you missed the release concert, be sure to purchase your "Thank Ya" CD online at the Choir's web site or at Electric Fetus or Northwestern Bookstores.

Robert's Corner

After lots of hard work and many rehearsals, our 2000 CD project "Thank Ya" is finally completed. On Friday, September 29, we debuted the music from the project at Benson Great Hall (on the campus of Bethel College). It was a wonderful musical experience. We were fortunate to have residents from local homeless shelters and several youth from St. Joseph's Home for Children at the concert. I can't tell you how fun it was to look out into the audience and see the kids dancing and moving in their seats. That was a blessing for me!

I want to thank our producer, Darnell Davis, along with the writers, singers and musicians who helped to make this project a success. I have to admit there were times when I didn't think it was all going to come together, but it did; and in my opinion, it sounds really good.

I don't often talk about the choir, but I do want to say how wonderful it is to work with the members of the TCC Gospel Choir. They are the most kind and considerate people I have ever worked with in my musical career. They give and they give and they give. I am grateful that God placed each one of them in my life. The diligence and dedication of each member made "Thank Ya!" a reality. Thank ya, TCC!

- Patricia Nott

continued on page 3

The Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir

Founded and directed by Robert “Eddie” Robinson, the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir gathers more than 90 singers of various degrees of musical experience, ethnic backgrounds and religious creeds to celebrate the rich tradition of African American gospel music. Backed by a talented ensemble of musicians, the choir strives to share the joy and the power of praise music, ranging from inspirational spirituals to cutting edge contemporary gospel.

Board of Directors

Karen Mueller, Chair
Florence Francis, honorary
Patricia Jesperson
Kevin Lynch
Joy Marsh
Ellen McVeigh
Craig Neal
Caroline Hall Otis
Melinde Scott
Gregory Washington

Staff

Robert Robinson
Executive/Artistic Director
Darryl Turner
Merchandise coordinator/office
assistant
Mary S. McNeive
Bookkeeper

Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir

PO. Box 29174
Brooklyn Center, MN 55429-0174
Phone: (651) 224-1718
Fax: (651) 224-1731
Email: info@tccgospel.org
Website: www.tccgospel.org

Photos

Charissa Uemura
Steve Hong

Newsletter

Lucinda Plaisance
Molly Anderson

Meet the Choir

Say Amen Somebody!

Karen Mueller sang in school and church choirs growing up, and had always been interested gospel musical. “I was particularly drawn to gospel music, though, after seeing a popular documentary film, *Say Amen Somebody*, in the mid-‘80s that showcased gospel legends Willie Mae Ford and Thomas Dorsey. The passion of the music and the talent of those singers opened my heart and touched my spirit, and I was hooked. That soundtrack is still my all time favorite collection of gospel music - next to those by Robert and the choir, of course.”



Karen joined the choir in 1991 and, with Robert, wrote one of our first grant applications for funding. When the choir formed a separate non-profit organization in 1997, her experience with non-profit arts organizations made her a perfect person to lead the newly formed Board of Directors as its first president. “Stepping out on our own was a leap of faith that Robert undertook.” says Karen, and luckily he had recruited a great group of volunteers to

serve as board members.

The Board was eager to help establish good business practices for the organization, to support Robert and the choir’s musical mission and to help shape a longer term vision for the group. “The financial picture wasn’t always rosy, but I’m happy to say that this year, we not only ended the year in the black, but with a small financial cushion to carry us through months when the choir learns new work and performs less.” Karen attributes the improvement to better planning, to Robert’s good fiscal management, to receiving grant support from several funding organizations, and to increased donations from choir members and the public.

Karen has accomplished the work that she set out to do three years ago, and retired from the Board in September. “I’m happy with the work we’ve all been able to do, and see new opportunities ahead for the choir,” says Mueller. “Our plan is to expand our audiences by touring more through greater Minnesota and the midwestern region. One of our greatest challenges is to continue to balance our commitments as a community-based organization while constantly improving our professionalism and musicianship. I know that is already happening and will continue.”

Say Amen somebody!

- Kathy Ward



In the coming year, we are planning quite a few things that we hope will be musically stimulating to you.

In February of 2001, we will host our first concert of music in celebration of Black History Month. The concert will be called "Olde Tyme Gospel" and will feature an evening of traditional gospel and spirituals – no contemporary and no rap! We have a couple of special guest vocalists that will be with us that evening, so watch

for details in upcoming newsletters and on our website.

In the spring and fall of 2001 we are planning a couple of short tours. The spring tour will include Minnesota communities such as Moorhead, Willmar and Alexandria. The fall tour will be to cities outside Minnesota – Des Moines, Iowa; Madison, Wisconsin; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. More details will follow in future newsletters.

In the summer of 2001, we are going to host our annual gospel music choral workshop. It will begin in August and culminate in September (after Labor Day) with a concert and silent auction. Finally, in the fall of 2001 we are planning a special collaboration of gospel music with interpretive dance featuring the Gospel Choir and the expressive dance talent of Cathy Young Dance. That's right! It will be an evening of gospel music and dance. We are planning several performances of this production at the Southern Theatre some time in October of 2001. Our goal is to take the show to a larger stage and bring in junior and senior high school students from Twin Cities schools to experience and discuss the collaborative production.

In closing, I want to thank each of you for your support of the Gospel Choir by allowing us the opportunity to share our joyful sound with the world. However, it's getting close to the end of the year, and, as usual, we will be mailing out letters to each of you asking for your financial support of the Choir for the coming year. I understand that there are literally thousands of causes that are important in our world and need support. But I am hoping that you will remember the Gospel Choir and what our music and message has done to lift your spirit. When the mailing arrives, please consider a generous donation in support of our work.

We encourage the support of the community as we expand and continue to "make a joyful noise" in schools, churches community, centers, prisons, and homeless shelters. All donations are greatly appreciated and tax-deductible. Does your company have a matching gift program? If so, you can double any contribution to the Choir. Check with your human resources department to see if your gift or volunteer time qualifies for a match.

For the first time in many years, the Choir is not performing public holiday shows. Although we are performing at several private events, we won't be performing publicly until after the first of the year.

If your office or employer is planning holiday celebrations, consider making the TCC Gospel Choir a musical part of your company's event. Call us at the office to discuss details.

2001 Performance Schedule

Monday, January 15

Mayo for the Arts: Performance honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Christ United Methodist Church
400 Fifth Avenue S.W.
Rochester, MN
Time: 7:30 p.m.
For information call (507) 252-8427

Monday, January 29

Community Workshop & Concert
Mora High School, Mora, MN
Time: TBA
For information call (320) 679-6260

Sunday, February 25

Olde Tyme Gospel Concert
Benson Great Hall
3900 Bethel Drive, Arden Hills, MN
Time: 7:30 p.m.
See upcoming newsletters for details.

Wednesday, February 28

Workshop Concert
North Hennepin Community College
7411 - 85th Avenue North
Brooklyn Park, MN
Time: 1:00 p.m.
For more information call Ricardo Byron
(763) 424-0939.

Sunday, March 4

Bridgewood Church Worship Services
(Inside Eagle Ridge High School)
13955 Glendale Road
Savage, MN
Services: 9 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Sam Davis



Sam Davis passed on to a better place in October 1998 but his spirit continues to live in the hearts and memories of us all. Sam was a singer, composer, clinician, and an ordained Baptist minister. He was blessed with the gift of music and shared it with everyone he touched.

Born in Taylor, Texas, in 1943, to a Baptist preacher, Sam grew up singing gospel and became a choir director in his early teens. He moved to the Twin Cities in the 1960s to attend the University of Minnesota and pursue his music. Soon, Sam was singing with many of the big bands and jazz ensembles in the area, but his real passion was traditional Gospel music. He conducted workshops on the history of black religious music and founded the Sam Davis Gospel Ensemble to ensure that his music was presented with the authenticity he required. The Ensemble recorded three albums and toured the U.S., Canada, and Europe. Our own Robert and Sandy Robinson were members of the Ensemble.

Sam believed in performing spirituals a cappella, the way they were sung by the slaves, his ancestors. Since the slaves were not allowed to own musical instruments or drums, they used their voices to imitate those sounds. To Sam, the singers themselves were the instruments, God's instruments. A simple but profound idea. This was performed by a multinational group of singers and dancers from Russia, Latvia, Switzerland, Brazil, France, and his own group, the Heritage Chorale. Four current TCC Gospel Choir members – Andrea Tennis, Karen Johnson, Andi Scott-Dumas, and Pat Faunce – were part of the chorale and performed in Chatouange in Switzerland. During this time, Sam also taught classes on Gospel music at the University of Minnesota and was director of City Songs Kids, an inner-city youth choir sponsored by the University.

Sam was one of the first musicians to bring spirituals to the attention of the Twin Cities, and left us the rich legacy of the music of his ancestors. He wrote them down and orchestrated them so that we would know their sadness, their joy, and their unwavering faith in God – the experience of a people torn from their families and homelands and brought to this country as slaves. Thank you, Sam. — *Andrea Tennis*



P.O. Box 29174
Brooklyn Center, MN 55429

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #27713
Minneapolis, MN