



gospel notes

TWIN CITIES COMMUNITY GOSPEL CHOIR NEWSLETTER

Reconciliation & Joy on Mother's Day

The 2003 Mother's Day Concert was a glorious experience, challenging and moving the choir and audience alike with the world premier performance of "Reconciliation", an oratorio composed and conducted by Dr. Geoffrey Stanton. The choir was joined by an 82-voice spring workshop choir, and accompanied by a 30-piece classical orchestra for the Reconciliation portion of the program,

Stanton composed the oratorio, "Reconciliation" for the choir as part of the American Composers Forum's Continental Harmony community outreach project, after first spending time with Robert and the choir to understand its musical and spiritual strengths and community outreach efforts.

The piece is about people gathering together from different cultures, ethnic and religious backgrounds and musical experience, according to Stanton. "In order to achieve unity we must be willing to search for and find common ground. Then diversity will add great depth to a shared vision of unity filled with hope." The piece itself embodies diversity, combining African American gospel influences with elements of pop, hip-hop, jazz, blues, Middle Eastern, salsa, and classical music, with text from sources as diverse as scripture and Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

The 600 people in the audience were attentive and enthusiastic, and impressed with the beauty and variety of musical pieces. The first half of the concert featured hand-clapping gospel tunes such as "Prayer of Jabez", "I Believe", "I See a World" and "We Worship You" featuring guest soloists Helen Thul and Holly Collison. The second half was devoted solely to Reconciliation, which audience members described as "moving" "uplifting" and "powerful."

Learning and performing all the pieces was a challenging 'growth experience' for both choir members and the 82 spring workshop participants, many of whom have little or no experience learning music



from printed scores. Singing from written music in four-part harmony rather than three parts, and learning all new music in six weeks, the workshop participants rose to the challenge, and did a wonderful job.

Despite the challenges, workshop participants were unanimously enthusiastic in evaluating their experience of learning and performing with the choir. Here are a few quotes from their written evaluations:

"I was sincerely touched and rejuvenated by the workshop experience...this has been very healing and blessed."

"Singing in the workshop is one of the highlights of my year. The music engages my heart and the message touches my soul."

"Mind, body and spirit are all nurtured and stretched by the power of gospel music. Thanks TCC for opening your arms and hearts."

"I am 17 years old and I enjoyed this experience more than I can express. There is nothing like singing with angels. I think this experience has changed my ways for a long time. It's one of the best things I've ever done."

Words from Geoff Stanton:

"I was absolutely delighted with the performance. The choir was magnificent! I know how hard everyone worked to learn this huge piece and I think the work paid off. The energy was excellent."

"I found the group to be so warm and receptive right from the start! It was very easy to bond with everyone."

"I think we have all done a remarkable thing together. I'd like to think of the project as somewhat "cutting edge" in that it involves so many different styles and is a single unified work in the gospel genre (not usual for gospel). I sincerely hope we can work together again in the future!"

Geoff Stanton

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TCC Gospel Choir

Founded and directed by Robert Robinson, the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir gathers more than 70 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.

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Director's Corner



The Gospel Choir has been really busy this summer working to develop our skills and abilities individually and collectively. Our time with facilitators Libby Turner and Holly Collison has been invaluable. We are currently working on music for a new CD project that we hope to record right after Labor Day. If all goes well, the project should be ready for release in late October. The new CD will feature selections written by our music director, Sam Reeves, long-time choir member and songwriter Patricia McKernon Runkle and local composer and musician, Tanabe Gatlin. We'll keep you posted on when the album will be available for purchase.

This fall the Choir will be hosting its third Silent Auction and Benefit Concert. Silent auctions have become very popular, and a number of nonprofit agencies are using them as a means to help raise money for their organizations. However, our event, which is set for Saturday, September 20, 2003 at Benson Great Hall (at Bethel College) is going to be great. Our guest MC and vocalist will be radio personality and seven-time Minnesota Music Award winner, Patty Peterson. The spring workshop participants that performed with us for our Mother's Day concert will also join the Gospel Choir. It's going to be an unforgettable evening. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$17 at the door and will go on sale Tuesday, September 20, 2003. For more information or to purchase tickets call the Gospel Choir office at (612) 521-0800.

We Need Your Help!

I'm sure you're aware of the financial "crunch" that has been placed on nonprofit organizations due to our slow economy. In spite of this, the Gospel Choir is still moving forward by providing a message of encouragement and reconciliation to audiences everywhere through song. We continue to perform concerts and workshops in prisons and homeless shelters, for it is our belief that people everywhere need a message of hope during this difficult time in our world. We need your support. Please consider becoming a patron of the Choir. For more information about becoming a patron, call the Choir office or e-mail us at tccgospel@uswest.net.

Have a great summer!

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL GOSPEL MUSIC MONTH

TCC Gospel Choir would like to let you know that September is National Gospel Music Month. We encourage you to use this opportunity to find out more about Gospel music. Check out the following web sites!

If you are interested in the history of Gospel, or just like the older style of music, the Smithsonian Institution (www.si.edu/) has a wealth of information, articles, pictures and music samples, as does The Gospel Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Detroit (www.gmhf.org/), The Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College in Chicago (www.negrospirituall.com), and History of Spirituals (www.negrospirituall.com).

For information on the current state of Gospel music visit The Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA) (www.gmwa.org), ContempoGospel.com – the People's Gospel Music Resource (www.contempogospel.com/), 'N'Time Music (www.ntimemusic.com/home.htm) or The Gospel Train (www.gospeltrain.com/).

There is Gospel music on the Internet at Gospel Music Network (gospelsinging.com) and Gospel on the Net (www.tcnb.net/gosdir.html) as well as on line magazines like GospelCity (www.gospelcity.com/index.php).

Finally, don't forget your local Gospel connection, such as Twin City Gospel News (www.twincitygospelnews.com) and our own TCC Gospel Choir web site (www.tccgospel.org), where you will find links to all of the above web sites on our links page.

Enjoy the month and spend a little extra time exploring more of what is out there in this wonderful world we call Gospel music.

2003 Silent Auction and Benefits Concert Set for September 20th

With Special Guest Artist Patty Peterson

An exciting evening is in store for all who attend the TCC Gospel Choir's third Silent Auction and Benefit Concert which will be held Saturday, September 20 at Benson Great Hall on the campus of Bethel College. The Silent Auction will open at 5:30pm and the concert will begin at 7:30pm.

The TCC Gospel Choir and their musical and artistic director Robert "Eddie" Robinson will be joined for this event by the 2003 Workshop Choir and by special guest M.C. and soloist Patty Peterson of WCCO's "Midday Live" fame. Ms. Peterson has performed to sold out audiences all over the country and has been described by Bream of the Star Tribune as "a musical chameleon" and someone who "can cover anything from Chaka Kahn to Cole Porter with equal authority, exhibiting star quality and drive!"

An evening of soul-stirring music is certainly in store for all who attend the evenings gala, and the wonderful deals on everything from vacation getaways to original art, jewelry, clothing, sporting memorabilia, event tickets and more make this event one you will not want to miss.

The choir has hosted silent auction/benefit concerts every other year in an effort to raise funds to enable the choir to continue its outreach mission in prisons, shelters and community programs. Many generous artists and sponsors come together for this event to donate a diverse selection of auction items. Everyone is sure to find something they just can't go home without! Tickets for this event are \$15 in advance or \$17 at the door. To purchase advance tickets call the choir office at 612-521-0800 between 9:30-6:00 or leave a message.

MEET THE CHOIR

Being part of one of the most outstanding groups of people in the world has afforded me the opportunity to get to know Kristin Johnstad. Kristin has always loved gospel music, and then after taking a class led by Robert Robinson on the "History of Gospel Music" at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College, her interest in gospel was definitely sparked.

Kristin became a choir member in 1991 and has not since looked back. Not having a church home to sing God's praises makes Kristin work harder to sing in the choir. She is quoted as saying "Gospel music helps me to live a better life, be a better mom, wife, neighbor and strive to live my life in line with the ministry of the choir." Kristin views life as a challenge as she endeavors to live the Word of God every day to the best of her ability.

It is Kristin's belief that as a choir member, she should model love and generosity. She believes that we should not wait to be proactive in sharing what God has given to us. Kristin says that she has experienced God's presence more in the choir than any other place, and to feel that God is alive in the basement of a church at the corner of 16th and Russell Avenue North (where the choir rehearses each week) is surely a gift.

In 2001, Kristin had an accident. While crossing a local street, a car hit her and threw her in the air leaving her alive but barely able to walk. She feels that she was given a great gift that day. Although she is still undergoing therapy, Kristin has vowed that she will never stop singing praises to our Lord.

Just to let you in on a secret: Kristin was the first person to introduce me to homemade corn chowder, and it was absolutely delicious. The Choir is fortunate to have Kristin as a member and a supporter of its work!



**Kristin Johnstad
& daughter Ella**

By Toni Daniels

Events Calendar

**Sunday,
September 7, 2003**
*United Negro College Fund
Gospel Extravaganza
Emmanuel Tabernacle
Church
2501 East 22nd Street
Minneapolis, MN
Event Begins: 7:00 p.m.*

**Saturday,
September 20, 2003**
*TCC Gospel Choir Silent
Auction & Benefit Concert
(Guest Vocalist and MC:
Patty Peterson)
Benson Great Hall
(Bethel College)
3900 Bethel Drive
Arden Hills, MN
Silent Auction: 5:30 p.m.
Concert: 7:30 p.m.*

**Saturday,
November 22, 2003**
*"The Spirit of Thanksgiving
is Giving"
Benefit Concert for ICA
Homeless Shelter
Minnetonka Arts Center
and High School
18301 Highway 7
Minnetonka, MN
Concert: 8:00 p.m.
For more information call:
952-938-0729*



Mother's Day Concert May 2003

The Twin Cities Gospel choir under the direction of Dr. Geoffrey Stanton.



Soloist Helen Thul.



Soloist Sandy Hodges at the Mother's Day concert.



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