



gospel notes

TWIN CITIES COMMUNITY GOSPEL CHOIR NEWSLETTER

Holly Collison Performs for 2003 Mother's Day Concert!



The 2003 Mother's Day Concert promises to be an extraordinary event this year, with not only specially commissioned music through a project with the American Composers Forum, but because the choir will have the honor of singing with the critically acclaimed Holly Collison. Trained at Northwestern University and the Eastman School of Music, Ms. Collison has performed lead roles in numerous musical theater productions ranging from "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat" and "Jesus Christ Superstar" to "Hello Dolly" and the role of Kate Smith in "1940's Radio Hour". Her ability to incorporate diverse musical styles has led her to performing at major government and political

functions, the 2002 Minnesota Music Awards, National music festivals and numerous churches and non-profit settings. Also, the TCC choir was very fortunate to work with Ms. Collison this past summer in vocal coaching seminars.

Ms. Collison has also produced two CD's with her first release in 2000 entitled "Watching the World", and her most recent project "Center Stage", a collection of popular musical theater music, was just released in 2002.

Ms. Collison, who previously directed a city-wide gospel choir in Kalamazoo, Michigan, is extremely excited to be able to perform an original commissioned piece with the choir, and she "always looks forward to performing with Robert Robinson". From working with the TCC choir this past summer, Holly is inspired by the "spirit and the positive attitude" that the choir exudes through its mission and song. The Choir is certainly looking forward to performing with Holly as well!

2003 Mother's Day Concert Showcases Collaboration with American Composers Forum

By Patricia Nott



The 2003 Mother's Day Concert, which will be an evening performance held on Saturday, May 10, will mark the premiere of a joint project between the TCC Choir and Continental Harmony Project/American Composers Forum. Through a grant from the American Composers Forum, TCC Choir Director, Robert Robinson was able to select and commission composer Geoff Stanton of Ann Arbor, MI, to create an original work for the TCC Gospel Choir.

Geoff Stanton, a seasoned composer and musician, has been working on creating a piece for the choir that brings together a wide range of musical styles, including African American gospel, hip-hop, jazz, salsa, middle eastern and classical idioms, to name a few, "and skill levels to create a work that soars and uplifts listeners from various walks of life". The themes of joy, hope, love, reconciliation and unity are woven throughout the piece with emphasis on celebrating the wonderful diversity that makes up the American people.

A 25-piece orchestra, the choir's band, and a workshop choir will join the TCC Gospel Choir in performing this commissioned piece at the 2003 Mother's Day Concert. It is Robinson's and Stanton's hope that this project will "capture the improvisational joy and flexibility interwoven in African American music...and produce an ecstatic experience for the groups involved as well as for the audience".

Geoff Stanton resides in Ann Arbor, MI where he teaches theory, composition and electronic music at Marygrove College, and is also the Director of Music for a large church in downtown Ann Arbor, MI. He received his doctorate in composition from the University of Michigan, has served as composer-in-residence at Aspen, Tanglewood and Atlantic Center for the Arts, and has received numerous grants to develop original compositions.

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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 New Year is underway, and I am excited to say that the Gospel Choir has a full year ahead of us. This spring the choir will present another community workshop. Brochures will go out the first week of March and rehearsals will begin Tuesday, April 1, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The workshop will culminate in a Mother's Day Concert. However, this year we're going to perform the concert on the Saturday night before Mother's Day – Saturday, May 10. More details will be available in the brochure. If you're on the choir mailing list, you will automatically receive a brochure. If you're not on the mailing list and you're interested in receiving a brochure, call the choir office and leave your name, address, city, state and zip code along with a contact telephone number on the voice-mail

and we'll make sure your name is added to the list and that you receive a brochure.

Also scheduled for this year is the release of the Choir's third album project and our 3rd Silent Auction and Benefit Concert. The album is scheduled for release in the early fall and the Silent Auction and Benefit Concert is scheduled for Saturday, September 20. More information will be available in the Spring/Summer newsletter.

The Choir really appreciates your support this past year. The economy has made things difficult for nonprofits from many perspectives. However, the undying support of our fan base has made it possible for us to continue our work.

Through a generous grant received from American Express, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Center (MRAC), and Medtronic, the Choir will be able to continue its work in prisons and homeless shelters. In addition to everything else we have going on this spring, we will take a full four-week workshop into the women's correctional facility in St. Paul with the help and cooperation of Bill Nelson and Volunteers of America.

With the help of choir volunteers (Jeanne Lee and Lucinda Plaisance) and website designer, Diane Gamm our website is finally updated. Check it out and send us an email with your comments – www.tccgospel.org.

Special guest vocalist for the TCC Gospel Choir Holiday Show: Latonia Hughes

As an added treat to their 2002 holiday show, the TCC Gospel Choir invited Latonia Hughes, one of the Twin Cities' most talented gospel artists, as special guest vocalist. In addition to being a featured member of the national recording group Minneapolis Gospel Sound (MGS), Latonia has established a prolific solo career. Some of Latonia's accomplishments include: singing background vocals for Mary J. Blige, Shirley Caesar and Judith McAlister; lead vocals for Excelsior Chorale Ensemble and performances with the Sounds of Blackness, the Steele Family and Robert Robinson.

Born and raised in St. Louis, MO, Latonia started singing at the age of two. She began her career performing at family gatherings, school activities and weekly church services. She moved to Minneapolis in 1995 and joined Minneapolis Gospel Sound. Latonia has traveled across the United States and Canada leaving the masses mesmerized by her powerful, soulful and heartfelt singing.

Latonia is currently involved with MGS on a CD project slated for release in the spring of this year. She is also working on a solo project that she hopes to release by the end of the year. She has been working on it about a year and a half. She initially started on it with her husband David Hughes before he passed away in September of 2001. The project will include original compositions by Latonia, Elder Chico Cockrell, Billy Steele and F. Darnell Davis. The project is being produced by herself, all of the song writers and Levi Ceacer, former guitar player for Prince.

Latonia wants people to know that she's here to put the word out about Jesus Christ, that He lives! This is not an entertainment thing. It's about living the life she sings about, which is a rich and fulfilling life.

2002 Holiday Concert – “Remember the Reason for the Season”

TCC Gospel Choir presented its 2002 Holiday Show “Remember the Reason for the Season” on December 15, 2002 at the Benson Great Hall, on the campus of Bethel College.

Rehearsals for the holiday concert began in October, under the direction of Assistant Director, Sandra Robinson Hodges. Her brother, Robert Robinson wasn’t able to be a part of the concert as he was on his annual tour with Lorie Line and her Pop Chamber Orchestra.

The rehearsals were rigorous, with many new songs. Sandy (and Robert) challenged the choir to learn not only the notes and words, but to also focus on the feeling of the songs, its dynamics and our attack. Sandy also created small group ensembles to highlight portions of some songs. Needless to say, everyone worked very hard and excitement was high by the time December 15 rolled along, 9 weeks and 11 rehearsals later.

The TCC Gospel Choir Band, with Pastor Stanford Robinson on drums, Lisa Olson on keyboards, Robert “Speedy” Pittman on bass and band leader and keyboard player Sam Reeves, was augmented for the holiday show by Ron Garnett on Saxophone and Allen Nott on percussion. The band attended all of the choir rehearsals and maintained a rigorous rehearsal schedule of its own.

Special guest singers for the concert were Latonia Hughes of Minneapolis’ Gospel Sound and her 12 year old son Cameron Hughes.

The concert was held at Benson Great Hall on the campus of Bethel College in Arden Hills, Minnesota. The staff at the hall, led by Becky Bennett and Kerry Baker was very helpful with tickets, ushers, stage and lighting. ASL Interpreter Sara Modderman beautifully and expressively signed the songs.

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Meet The Choir

Latonia Daniels, affectionately known as Toni, joined the choir about 10 years ago in July of 1992. Her sister is a former member and she decided one day to visit a rehearsal; she stayed and never looked back. She said that she joined because of her “desire to sing and her love for gospel music”. And being brought up in a Baptist church only fed her desire.

Toni grew up in Louisville, Kentucky with two sisters and a brother. She says life was hard with her mom being an alcoholic. She left home at 18 years old to get away from the mess. She said that she made a mess of her life in Kentucky. From age 18 to the time she moved to Minnesota, she said, “I really didn’t have anything to show for my life”. And in June of 1992 she moved to Minnesota to be near her younger sister and brother and to get a new start. In July of 1992, she quit smoking and joined the choir and God has truly blessed her ever since. The choir filled a void in her life since she left Kentucky. Toni keeps coming back because of the good music, good food (God’s Word) and good friends. “I love God, I love gospel music and I want to continue to learn more about gospel music; to interpret, read, and sing it better”.

A very special moment for her was meeting and getting to know her best friend, Jean Darden (a former member/director of the choir, now deceased). She first heard Jean sing “He Never Failed Me Yet”, and hearing her was truly a special experience. She got to know her better because a few years ago Toni got very sick and had to give herself injections. Since Jean also used insulin, she was able to help her. She said that Jean told her “I’m not gonna do it for you” but, she did show her how and they became best friends from that time on.

Toni serves on the Advisory Committee and the Accessibility Committee of the choir and helps out wherever and whenever she can. She works at Reuben Lindh as a pre-school supervisor and “loves kids”. She would like to finish her B.A. degree and teach at a junior college on how to care for kids.

Something we should know about Toni is that she is a “closet soloist”, and that one of her wishes is to sing a solo on at least one song. (I know we all heard that.) A dream of hers is to take the choir to Kentucky. Now that would be some trip.

Toni’s final comments were, “Love the Lord no matter what you do, no matter how hard times get, and don’t let anything stop you from loving Him”. Toni Daniels is living proof that God can take a little and turn it into a lot! She loves God, loves the Gospel and gospel music, and she can make a mean peach cobbler.



Latonia “Toni” Daniels

By Timothy Baynard

Events Calendar

Community Workshop & Concert

Friday, February 28, 2003
Memorial Auditorium
714 13th St.
Worthington, MN
8:00 p.m.

Mother's Day Concert

Saturday, May 10, 2003
Benson Great Hall (at
Bethel College)
3900 Bethel Drive
Arden Hills, MN
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Tickets will go on sale
April 7
For tickets call Benson
Great Hall ticket office at
651-638-6333.

ArtSoup Festival

Downtown Elk River
Elk River, MN
Saturday, June 21, 2003
1:00 p.m.



2002 Holiday Concert - "Remember the Reason for the Season"

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The concert opened with Richard Smallwood's "Anthem of Praise," with the band playing a stirring classical and jazz-influenced introduction as the choir processed on stage and mounted the risers, dressed in jewel tones as if each were an ornament on a tree.

The concert material included a variety of songs, some were traditional Christmas carols done with a Gospel twist. "Joy To The World" was sung in two different versions: one led by Kristin Johnstad and the other "He Has Come" by guest vocalist Latonia Hughes. "O Come All Ye Faithful" (as the song "Emmanuel") was led by Sandy Robinson Hodges. "Silent Night" was led by Cameron Hughes (think Tevin Campbell before his voice changed). "Go Tell It On The Mountain" was led by drummer Pastor Stanford Robinson. The concert also included praise and worship songs: "Worship The King" (written by Twinkie Clark and led by Latonia Hughes) and "Lord, You're Holy" (written by Eddie James and led by Frangena Shannon-Johnson), two songs from the Choir's "Thank Ya" CD: "Your Wondrous Love", "Holy", and more.



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