

Events Calendar:

Benefit for Renovation of Lake Harriet Bandshell

Sunday, September 19, 2004
Lake Harriet Bandshell
1300 West 42nd Street
Minneapolis, MN
9:30 a.m.

ELCA Youth Service

Wednesday, October 6, 2004
Minneapolis Convention Center (New auditorium)
1201 Second Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN
6:30 p.m.

Benefit for HCMC Research Foundation

Saturday, October 9, 2004
Hyatt Hotel (Main ballroom)
1300 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN
7:00 p.m.

Benefit for Rebuild Resources

Sunday, October 10, 2004
The University Club (Main ballroom)
340 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN
3:00 p.m.

Assn. of Christian Schools Int'l.

Friday & Saturday,
October 21-22, 2004
Minneapolis Convention Center (Hall A)
1201 Second Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN
8:00 a.m.

For more info. on any of these events, please see our website at www.tccgospel.org.

TCC Youth

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threatening environment... but also to build his musical resume.

"The BEST part of joining TCC is the LOVE and ENCOURAGEMENT from so many people who made me feel welcome," says Luther. "I always feel such a sense of accomplishment when the parts and words I sing finally come out correct and naturally. Of course, this means coming to rehearsals regularly. It also means working on the music on your own time. Yeah, it's work, but work I love!"

Luther's advice to any other young people who love to sing is:

- "Start young."
- "Take any chance you can get to sing and perform."
- "Follow your heart."
- "Follow your dream."
- "Don't get discouraged and give up."
- "Look for GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES and never take them for granted."
- "Share the music in you."

Who will join TCC in the upcoming fall? Perhaps you know of an aspiring teen singer. Perhaps that aspiring teen singer is you. Opportunities await the young and the young at heart. Give your voice a venue. Answer this knock at your heart's door and begin to allow the "TCC Gospel Experience" to enrich your life.

The Twin Cities Gospel Choir gratefully acknowledges the Minnesota State Arts Board Institutional Support Program.



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gospel notes

Summer/Fall 2004

TWIN CITIES COMMUNITY GOSPEL CHOIR NEWSLETTER

"Love Brings Unity" CD Release Concert

To the beat of African drums and the sound of Robert's solo a cappella voice, the "Love Brings Unity" CD Release concert began. The concert was Saturday, July 24th, at Brooklyn Park Evangelical Free Church and featured songs from the Choir's new CD plus a few selections from our prior CD projects -- "Thank Ya!" and "Make Me an Instrument".

My perspective of the concert was from front and center of the tenor section in the middle of the choir. So I was basically in the eye of the storm. The entire choir was energized from the start. This concert was our last concert together in our current formation and we all wanted to go out with a bang. Months of rehearsals -- polishing every song to ensure that our live performance would equal or surpass the recording -- culminated in a strong, solid evening of song. Every choir member -- soloists, backups, directors and band members really threw themselves into it. The audience was with us from the start, responding enthusiastically to every song.

A special climax of the evening for me was "A Gift of Song" (from the "Make Me An Instrument" CD). The song begins with a very complicated piano solo that was expertly and beautifully played by Lisa Olson. Lisa is always so modest about her abilities on

the piano. But she can be extremely proud of her virtuoso performance at that concert. Several of us in the choir were moved to tears. Then we began to sing and it seemed that we were all lifted to a new level. The atmosphere was electric. Nobody was ready to let the song end. So we didn't.

We held onto those last notes for as long as we possibly could. Then Robert started up again, the band slid in beneath him, and Sandy brought the choir back in softly. At which point we slammed it home with all our might. Whew! It is a powerful, powerful song and one of my top favorites among all the songs we perform.

It was an emotion-filled night on many levels and will be fondly remembered, as we move forward into new formations and new challenges, as one of the major

highlights of the time I have been with this group.

TCC YOUTH

Members of the TCC Gospel Choir come from many cultural and religious backgrounds to learn gospel music from the heart and voice of a master, Robert Robinson. The broad age range from 16 - 66 enhances the "family experience" when we gather together. Teen membership (ages 16-18) is welcomed and encouraged. The requirement for teen participation is that an adult who is responsible for their wellbeing must represent the teen at all rehearsals and concerts.

Currently the choir has two teen members that are soaking up the gospel experience. Alexandra Young, age 17 (unavailable for interview) joined the choir at age 16 as a soprano.

Luther Eskridge (age 16) first heard the TCC Gospel Choir when he was just 3 or 4 years old. His mom, Annette Hardy (Assistant Director) has been a TCC member since his early childhood. In K - 6th grade he performed with the "Sunshine Band" at He Is Risen C.O.G.I.C. Later instrumental lessons on saxophone and clarinet introduced new styles of musical expression to Luther's repertoire. Today, if you were to lift the earphones from his head you would find him listening to a diverse mixture of artists that

stir the music within. His "fav's" are the R & B stylings of Aaliyah, the words and rhythms of various rap artists, and Dorinda Clark's gospel expressions.

It has always been Luther's dream to make music his full-time career. This may take the form of writing music, writing lyrics, singing, playing instruments, traveling, performing, entertaining, storytelling, or all of the above. He wants to reach out in melody, harmony and message to millions.

This year he requested the opportunity to join TCC as a tenor, not only because it is a great learning experience in a non-

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TCC Gospel Choir

Founded and directed by Robert Robinson, the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir gathers more than 65 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



SUMMER TRIP TO THE KANSAS CITY, MO AREA

This summer, members of the choir traveled to the Kansas City, Missouri area to perform and promote our new CD project, "Love Brings Unity". It was an exciting opportunity to share our music and ministry with a new audience.

We left Minneapolis on Saturday morning, August 7 for Lamar, Missouri to perform a full two-hour concert at their community auditorium. Then we packed up and drove to Kansas City for some rest. On Sunday morning, August 8, we

did special music for First Baptist Church of North Kansas City at both their 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services. Later that day, we performed a full concert for the Seventh Day Adventist Church of Kansas City. Then on Monday evening, the choir performed for the national convention of the Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA). The convention draws more than 20,000 people every year. It was a busy weekend, but we enjoyed the challenge. It proved to be a great opportunity to meet new people, share our music and expand our audience.

NEW MEMBERS FOR COMMUNITY CHOIR

It's right around the corner! The first rehearsal for the new community gospel choir is Saturday October 2 at 10 a.m. Membership information will be on our web-site – www.tccgospel.org and available for you effective September 7. You can also call the office (612.521.0800) to have membership information mailed to you.

As I mentioned in our last newsletter, we are very excited about developing this new community choir. For the past five years the choir has hosted 6-week community workshops which always end with a concert presentation. After each workshop and concert experience, many workshop participants have expressed how much they enjoyed the workshop experience and wishing for greater involvement with the choir. This is an opportunity! The first 100 people who send in their registration can be a part of this new group.

Rehearsals for the community choir will be held every other Saturday morning. I realize that Saturday mornings can be pretty hectic, so we'll discuss whether a different day of the week would be better for everyone. If we can come to a consensus, we'll change the day of the week for the rehearsal. But to get things started we'll begin rehearsing on Saturday mornings.

I will be the artistic director for the new community choir and will attend most all rehearsals when I'm not touring or doing solo appearances. In my absence, my sister Sandy Hodges will be directing the choir.

Most of the following information was listed in the last newsletter, but a few things have changed, so here's the update.

1. Rehearsals will be held twice a month on Saturday mornings from 10am-12 noon.
2. Rehearsals will begin Saturday, October 2, 2004.
3. All rehearsals will be held at He Is Risen Church, 1530 Russell Avenue North, in north Minneapolis.
4. There are **no auditions** to become a member of the community chorus.
5. Each person who desires to join the community chorus is asked to sign a one-year contract, which will be made available at the first rehearsal. At the end of each year, you have the option of renewing.
6. Membership fees for one year is \$125 (nonrefundable).
7. The performance schedule for community choir members will be less intensive – approximately four to five performances per year.

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New Members for Community Choir

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8. The maximum size of the community choir will be 100 members. Membership forms will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
9. Registration forms for membership will be available September 7. If you are interested in becoming a member, you can call the office and have a membership form mailed to you, or you may download a membership form from our website – www.tccgospel.org and send it in along with your membership dues. The forms will not be sent out or available on our website until September 7.
10. Current members of the Gospel Choir who don't join our new ensemble will be given first consideration for membership in the community chorus. New registrants will then fill remaining membership openings.

Please feel free to e-mail me at the choir office if you need or desire additional information. My e-mail address is tccgospel@uswest.net. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

I hope to see you this fall!



Meet the Choir: Patricia McKernon Runkle

Like most choirs, the TCC Gospel Choir always seeks music that is beautiful, meaningful, and expresses the spirit and philosophy of the choir. Unlike most choirs, TCC is blessed in having a couple of wonderful composers in its ranks. So many people have been inspired by such soaring, inspirational songs as "We Seek the City", "Your Wondrous Love" and "Make Me an Instrument" that we've decided to highlight Patricia McKernon Runkle, the talented composer who created them.

Patricia grew up near New Haven, Connecticut and lived on the east coast until 1986, when she moved to the Twin Cities with her husband because of his work. Patricia and her husband David have two children: Anne, who is 15 and learning to drive ("aaaagh!"), and Sarah, who is 11 and loves animals. She has had her own business as a writer and editor, and is now focusing on writing music and poetry, and takes great joy in directing the youth choir at her church, which beautifully connects her love of music, words, and kids.

Reflecting those loves, Patricia says "put words and music together and you get songs" and she's been writing songs for over 20 years. Although music was her first love, she obtained degrees in psychology and history of religions, and over time, took courses in music theory, composition, piano, sight reading, ear training, vocal training, conducting, and history.

In creating her inspirational compositions, Patricia said she often finds herself humming a melody, usually with a phrase of lyrics attached, and builds a song around that seed. "We Seek the City" was inspired by her church, which was searching for ways to serve the needs of people in its neighborhood, with the guiding principle of "We seek the city that is to come" from Hebrews, Chapter 12. She wove in passages from that chapter, from parts of chapter 21 of Revelations, and from the spiritual "Twelve Gates to the City." When the melody and lyrics were complete, TCC's talented keyboard player and band leader Sam Reeves wrote a wonderful piano accompaniment and band members helped create the mood, Patricia said. "Once assistant director Sandy Hodges brought the solo vocals to life, and the choir took the song to heart, it was a thrill to hear it all come together."

Patricia joined the choir in August 1994, after going to a choir performance to hear friends Steve and Karen Watson. After hearing the choir, especially Robert, she felt touched on such a deep level she knew she had to join.

"The choir has given me so much: friendships, spiritual support, and a way to share our relationship with God through music," Patricia said. "I'm so grateful that the choir has received the songs I've written and performed them with such a beautiful spirit. I hope to go on writing and give back some of the treasures I've received."

We hope so, too, Patricia, and we thank you for the spirit, inspiration, and talents you've shared with the choir.



Are There Angels in Our Midst?

The Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir is now recruiting volunteers to assist with special events and projects. If you would like to help usher at events, distribute flyers, help call our fan base to tell them about upcoming concerts, help sell CDs, assist in the office, or help with other special projects, we'd love to hear from you! If you would like to discuss your availability and interests, please call our Board Vice President, Darolyn Gray, at 612-554-1314 or e-mail darolyngray@aol.com. She will add your name and phone number to the Volunteer Resource list. We'll look forward to your participation!

Thank you!