

Community Chorale bringing gift of song to Trinidad

It has been a beautiful tradition for more than 20 years. Sometime in each early December, 35 to 40 adult citizens from the greater Trinidad area blend their voices together in beautiful harmony to offer free Christmas concerts to the communities from which they have traveled weekly during months of rehearsals.

It's also something of an ongoing miracle, because to have a chorus this large from a town this little is unique in southern Colorado. And to have professional directors and accompanists capable of bringing 40 amateur voices to a performance level, from a population base this small and scattered, is something quite amazing that speaks well of the type of people attracted to living in Trinidad.

Year after year from the 1990's until today the voices of Trinidad have never been silenced, and this December, as always, our communities are receiving the gift of song in celebration of the Christmas season.

With director Denis Hawley waving his baton and pianist Joan Beaumont weaving her nimble fingers through the piano keys, sopranos, altos, tenors, baritone and bases will merge



Cynthia Berresse-Ploski/Special to The Chronicle-News

Sopranos Sara Ferguson and Deb Padilla inspect the official vest and tie worn by every Community Chorale member in concert.

voices together in harmony to offer the public "Christmas for Everyone," this year's holiday concert. It will be presented first in Walsenburg at the Colorado State Veterans Home, at 3 p.m. on Sunday. At 7 p.m. that same day, the Chorale will sing again, this time at the Mt. Carmel Health, Wellness and Community Center in a private concert.

Then the Community Chorale will present its traditional two free concerts for the Trinidad community at the United Methodist church, at 7 p.m. on Monday and at the same time on Tuesday evening.

A famous German poet and author, Berthold Auerbach once wrote, "Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." What better time, then, in the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations, to take time to wash out the dust of Christmas jostle, let in inspirational joy, and by listening to the harmony of your friends and neighbors' voices experience the true meaning of this beautiful occasion!

Program choices reflect the title "Christmas for Everyone," with songs people of all ages will enjoy, as well as a traditional holiday

sing-along with the audience mid-way through the concert.

Of course there will be traditional carols such as "Carol of the Bells" and well-loved songs like "White Christmas," but new to the audience will be the opening number by John Williams, "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas." Also new this year is "A Christmas Fanfare" by Linda Spivey. A repeat from last Christmas (brought back by popular demand) is a moving Negro Spiritual, "Sweet Little Jesus Boy."

Jean Beaumont will perform a solo piano piece,



Cynthia Berresse-Ploski/Special to The Chronicle-News

Denis Hawley directs the Trinidad Community Chorale at rehearsal in the United Methodist Church.

"Behold that Star" arranged by Larry Shackley, Bob Giordano will bring out his guitar to sing a Willy Nelson hit "Pretty Paper," and the Noteables will present two numbers, "Way down in Bethlehem" by Jay Althouse and "Jamaican Noel," arranged by Roger Emerson.

Of course, the program will end with that magnificent piece from Handel's "Messiah," the famous "Hallelujah Chorus," bringing the audience to its feet and filling the Methodist church to the top of its dome with holy energy and grandeur.

Yes, the Trinidad Community Chorale is a treasured part of Southern Colorado Holiday tradition, and has been for over two decades. The concerts are free, but generous donations by those who have

been inspired by their music have been keeping this treasure supplied with music for next Christmas, and next spring's concert, and next Christmas....

Speaking as a member of the chorale for many years, I can tell you honestly that we receive as much happiness as we give others in presenting these gifts of music to our friends and neighbors.

And we thank you for your enthusiastic support.

Come share our joy by hearing us sing on Dec. 12 and 13 at the United Methodist Church, the one with the round gold dome by the Massari theater at State and Broom streets. We'll be in full concert attire and ready to entertain and inspire you at 7 p.m. each evening.

Submitted by Cynthia Berresse Ploski
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Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

Minnesota a cappella marvels Home Free return to Raton's Shuler Theater with a Christmas show Saturday night.

Home Free returns to Shuler Theater for a cappella Christmas performance

By Tim Keller
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — When the nationally-touring Minnesota a cappella group Home Free took the Shuler stage last year and leaped into its opening notes, the first thought was, "They're playing recorded bass and drum tracks ... that's cheating!" But it wasn't so.

When the five extraordinary vocalists return with their Christmas show Saturday night, the secret weapons will be "percussionist" Adam Rupp and "bassist" Matthew Tuey; audience members will devote disproportionate time trying to "see" how the rhythm section does it. That a full-size band emerges

from nothing more than these musicians' mouths is simply amazing.

The current tour, called "Home Free - Christmas," brings a show split between Christmas classics — one hopes to hear them produce some "jingle bells" — and their most popular year-round songs such as "Joy to the World," the Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There," Jason Mraz's contemporary hit "I'm Yours" (which brought loud squeals of delight from teens in the upper balcony last year), and the instrumental surf classic "Wipeout" complete with vocal guitar and drum solos.

Rupp's percussion anchors and propels Home Free's richly-layered vocal

harmony sounds. He's twice won the first place vocal percussionist title at the annual National Harmony Sweepstakes competition. When the band does the Beatles, Rupp actually sits at an imaginary drum kit and hits every skin and cymbal beat while Tuey plays along on an imaginary left-handed Harmony bass guitar just as Paul McCartney would accompany Ringo Starr. The other three singers — Rob Lundquist, Chris Rupp, and Matt Atwood — fill in the Beatle vocal harmonies.

Half the show's appeal is its comedy: the singers are laugh-out-loud funny. They've figured out that the key to the audience having fun is for the singers them-

selves to have fun. One humorous element is that the smallest member of the group is its "sub-bass" Tuey, and the biggest guy by far, tenor Lundquist, has the group's high voice: the incongruity adds to the evening's mirth. At last year's show, the packed audience laughed as much as it applauded.

Saturday evening's reserved seat Shuler Theater concert begins at 7 p.m. All tickets are \$20 each and can be purchased in advance from sponsor Raton Arts & Humanities Council at Old Pass Gallery, 575-445-2052, or at the Shuler door.

Shuler Theater information is available daily at 575-445-4746.

Girlfriend worried about violent toys man buys for son

DEAR ABBY: I recently met a man I love dearly, but I don't agree with the toys he buys for his 10-year-old son, "Dale." The boy plays violent video games and is obsessed with guns to the point that we can't leave the house without him bringing a toy gun along. The video games he plays (unsupervised) are violent and gory and rated M (17 and over).

Dale is not mature for his age. In fact, he often whines when he doesn't get his way. He's allowed on the Internet without supervision, and I have walked in and caught him surfing naughty pictures. When I told his dad, he laughed and said, "Boys will be boys!"

Abby, I'm afraid for my 6-year-old daughter. A few weeks ago, Dale decided he wanted to play "good guys/bad guys" with her. When he grabbed my daughter in a choke hold and held a toy gun to her head, she became hysterical. I have since had nightmares that Dale will find a real gun, think it's one of his play guns and shoot my daughter.

I think Dale's obsession is unhealthy, and I don't think it's healthy for my daughter to be around him. How do I handle this with my boyfriend? I love him and would like to spend the rest of my life with him, but I cannot marry him at the expense of my daughter. -- PARANOID AND PERPLEXED

DEAR PARANOID AND PERPLEXED: How did your boyfriend handle the "good guys/bad guys"

incident when you brought it to his attention? The answer to that question will provide you with insight into his ability to parent his son, and what your and your daughter's future will be like if you marry him. If his reaction wasn't to your satisfaction, then you must place your child's safety above your heart's desire, and you have assessed the situation correctly.

DEAR ABBY: I am a divorced, childless, independent and financially secure woman. I live happily in my upscale apartment.

How do I respond to family members, co-workers and friends who constantly ask, "Why don't you buy a house and quit throwing your money away paying rent?"

I don't want to buy a house and be tied to a 30-year mortgage. I'm perfectly happy the way things are. What is a proper response to those questions? Saying, "I don't want to" hasn't been enough. -- HAPPY RENTER IN HOUSTON

DEAR HAPPY RENTER: The responsibilities of home ownership aren't for everyone, and many individuals have realized it as bills for plumbers, electricians, roofers, insurance and property taxes mounted up. You might mention that to the inquirers, although your response to your well-meaning friends, relatives and co-workers should have been sufficient. A way to change the subject would be to say, "Now, let's talk about something else."

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.