Local singers in spotlight at upcoming concert

Singing in a choir is all about “enjoying music with other people,” said Karen Roberts, the director of the Women’s Chorus of the Livingston County Chorale Family, a private vocal teacher and professional singer.

“There is something about being in a large group and joining with voices of different qualities and abilities and then be able to combine into one sound,” Roberts said.

The three choirs of the Livingston County Chorale Family are preparing for the start of their 2015-2016 concert season, which will kick off with a large concert and special guests.

Local high school and middle school choirs will help them ring in the new season.

The concert, called United in Song: Bach to Basics, will be held at 5 p.m. Oct. 11 at Howell High School, 1200 W. Grand River Ave.

The family of choirs includes the Livingston County Chorale, which is made up of male and female adult singers; a Youth Choir; and the Women’s Chorus, along with a few small ensembles.

The concert will also feature choirs from Howell High School, Hartland High School, Brighton High School, South Lyon High School and Parker Middle School.

It is a free event. However, any donations will help fund the Dr. Marilyn S. Jones Vocal Scholarship Competition, which is for high school singers to use for college, music summer camps or private voice lessons.

Students in school choirs will get a special treat. Each choir will work with accomplished choir director and Michigan State University professor Dr. Jonathan Reed, the guest conductor for the concert. He will run short clinics with each choir before the show.

“It will be an educational opportunity for the students to work with a choir director of high caliber,” Roberts said. “He is kind of a guru for his expertise in Baroque and Renaissance music.”

Reed is a professor of music and associate director of choral programs at the Michigan State University College of Music. He conducts the State Singers and Men’s Glee Club groups at the school and is involved with numerous festivals and state honor choirs across the county as an adjudicator, clinician and conductor.

Sarah Hunt, the director of the Youth Choir, said the concert would provide experiences that go beyond what young people learn in school music programs.

“They have opportunities to work with guest conductors, like Dr. Reed, which is not usually an option at schools. We provide other enriching activities outside of what they are already doing,” said Hunt, who is also a founder of Livingston County Christian Musicians.

Hunt said she also tries to “tap into the home school community.”

“I think we’ve gained a bigger audience through that because these are kids who don’t have organized music classes,” she said.

Kelli Falls, the director of Livingston County Chorale, said the music the choirs perform throughout the year is “all over the map.”

“Our fall concert focuses on Renaissance and Baroque music,” whereas Christmastime concerts in early December will feature “music from around the world” and recognizable carols the audience can join in on, said Falls, who is also the choir teacher at Parker Middle School.
We do really contemporary music, too,” like at a spring concert tentatively scheduled for mid-May that will feature “music from the movies,” she said. The choirs do songs “like from ‘Pitch Perfect’ or we’ve done ‘Jai Ho’ from ‘Slumdog Millionaire,’ or music from ‘Into the Woods.’” she noted.

Falls said that people who audition for the adult choir have “often been away from it for a while and are missing it in their hearts.” Joining a community choir is a way to bring it back.

The upcoming United in Song concert aims “to promote singing as a life-long experience,” she said.

Visit www.livingstoncountychorale.org (http://www.livingstoncountychorale.org) for updates on what the choirs are up to.

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