

Art Town: CONCORA goes out ‘On the Town’

Sunday, January 17, 2010 9:58 PM EST
by Stacey Grimaldi and Christine Laird
Special to the Herald

CONCORA (Connecticut Choral Artists), New Britain's professional choir, has two significant events scheduled in the month of February.

On Saturday, Feb. 21, at 7:30 p.m. at TheaterWorks, 233 Pearl St. in Hartford, the cabaret ensemble CONCORA On The Town! will present "If you ask me..."

The cabaret is a spin-off of TheaterWorks' production of David Rambo's "The Lady with All the Answers," which plays at TheaterWorks Friday to March 7. CONCORA On the Town!'s program takes place directly on the set of "The Lady with All the Answers" and takes its inspiration from the play about America's most famous, no-nonsense advice columnist.

Not surprisingly, the cabaret will include songs about those highly-charged issues Ann Landers covered in her column: maintaining healthy family relationships, husband and wife interactions, finding or losing a boyfriend, resolving issues with co-workers, and more.

Featured songs are "You Better Shop Around" (the Miracles), "Route 66" (Nat King Cole), "You've Got to be Carefully Taught" (South Pacific), "Children Will Listen" (Into the Woods), "Accentuate the Positive" (Johnny Mercer), and other selections by Paul Simon, Charlie Chaplin, Irving Berlin, and Burt Bacharach.

Upon arriving at the theater, audience members who have a problem or issue with a family member, co-worker, car pool buddy, the little league coach, etc., are invited to jot down their problem (anonymously, of course) and send it backstage to the On the Town! "team of advisers." They will quickly consult backstage and emerge with the perfect advice to resolve these "challenging situations."

Brian Patton, Artistic Director of CONCORA On the Town!, is the pianist and will lead the instrumental ensemble that backs up the group of talented vocalists from CONCORA. A former Connecticut resident and CONCORA singer, he has performed throughout the Northeast and in New York City for over 20 years, performing, arranging, and directing the vocal group 16th and Savoy, and also led a series of musical revues, regularly appearing at Scullers Jazz Club in Boston.

The On the Town! cabaret series, which debuted in October 2009, to rave reviews, was established to demonstrate CONCORA's versatility, provide its singers an opportunity to sing repertoire beyond standard classical choral works, and to create jobs for local musicians. The series is supported by the City of Hartford Arts & Heritage Jobs Grant Program. CONCORA On the Town! returns to TheaterWorks on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 9, 2010, with an entirely new program, "Sing Out, Louise!" on the set of Stephen Temperley's "Souvenir" and again Sunday, June 27, with "But Beautiful" on the set of "Reasons To Be Pretty" by Neil LaBute. Both programs begin at 7:30 p.m.

CONCORA's second February event will take place Sunday, Feb. 28, at 4 p.m. at Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford.

The BACH! Motet Madness concert will feature all six of Johann Sebastian Bach's impressive and beautiful choral motets.

Members of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra will join the professional chorus, conducted by Richard Coffey, CONCORA's artistic director.

"Singing all six motets in one concert is an incredible challenge, and I'm really hoping we'll all survive it!" said CONCORA soprano Christine Laird.

CONCORA and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra are well known throughout the region for their interpretations and presentations of Bach's music.

The six motets, all true masterpieces of musical creativity, originality, and vocal technique and virtuosity, are: "Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden" (BWV 230) ("Praise the Lord, all you nations"); "Komm, Jesu, Komm!" (BWV 229) ("Come, Jesus, Come"); "Fürchte dich nicht" (BWV 228) ("Fear thou not"); "Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf" (BWV 226) ("The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness"); "Jesu, meine Freude" (BWV 227) ("Jesus, my joy"); and "Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied" (BWV 225) ("Sing to the Lord a new Song").

Bach! Motet Madness takes place at Hartford's Immanuel Congregational Church, 10 Woodland St., at the corner of Farmington Avenue, Sunday, Feb. 28, at 4 p.m. The snow date: Monday, March 1 at 7:30 p.m.. This concert is supported by the Greater Hartford Arts Council, the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, the Robert C. Vance Foundation, and the Aetna Foundation.

Get your tickets

Motet Madness tickets are \$45 Preferred Seating, \$25 General Seating, and \$10. Students. 2-for-1 general tickets are available with a Let*s Go! Arts card. All tickets to "If you ask me..." and any On The Town! performances are \$30. Tickets for any performance may be ordered online at www.concora.org, or through the CONCORA office at (860) 224-7500. Members of the Greater New Britain Arts Alliance receive a \$2 discount to any one CONCORA concert.