



PRACTICES, PERFORMANCES, and PARTIES

by Elaine Martin

How much practice and planning does it take to prepare for EIGHT performances in November & December while also learning two new songs for regional competition in May? Lots! In addition to our weekly rehearsals this fall, we added an extra Saturday rehearsal on our holiday repertoire, rehearsals with Great Lakes Men's Chorus (GLC), guest coaching with Ann Jarcow, new member classes, and extra rehearsals on choreography. And the agendas for our weekly rehearsals were jam packed and super focused! So much new learning!

Our first fall performance was at Harmony Inc. International Competition opening ceremonies in Grand Rapids in November where we debuted one of our new songs. We received two standing ovations! Shows for Sentinel Pointe, Sunset Manor, and Amsterdam Gardens senior living communities in November and December were highlighted by some super jingle bell ringers recruited from the audience!

Two new venues for us were the downtown Grand Rapids Christkindl Markt and the live nativity at the Critter Barn in Zeeland in December. What a thrill to see so many smiling faces singing along with us to favorite carols! And singing at the Toys for Tots distribution was a chorus favorite again this year.

GLC joined us for A Simple Holiday themed show on Dec. 2nd. Nearly 300 people came to Forest Hills Presbyterian Church for this two hour show which also featured performances by quartets Five Star, Chime In, Clefhanger, and our own VLQ! More standing ovations, a smiling audience, and a great "after-glow" party really capped the day!

With all the practices and performances, we needed a few more fun parties for balance! There were Halloween costumes, a baby shower, a SAI Watch Party, our GRSA Christmas party, and a party for VanAndel Arena non-profit volunteers! What a way to sing in the new year!



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TOYS FOR TOTS

Written by Janet Mason

It's December 16, Toys for Tots distribution day in Greater Grand Rapids. This is a special day for the Grand Rapids Chorus of Sweet Adelines because it means we get to go caroling. The singers form two Very Large Quartets called Jingle Bells and Mistletoe. We dress up in our favorite holiday sweaters, scarves, and Santa hats and head to four distribution centers to sing Christmas songs for families and volunteers. As the parents pick out toys for their children, the Chorus creates a festive atmosphere.

"I love it," says WZZM 13 On Your Side Vice President, Catherine Behrendt, who is one of the key organizers of this toy campaign. Catherine looks forward to our performances each year. "It's fun for the volunteers, but more importantly it gives the parents, the recipients who are there shopping for their children, the joy and dignity of the season," says Catherine. "I saw people singing along and I saw people go up and thank them (singers). It is just so joyful!"

It's a joy for the singers too. "I'm humbled to be asked to sing again this year," says Judy Herrick, a Bass Section Leader. "It's an honor to offer strength and encouragement to families and keep the sense of wonder alive."

Toys for Tots provides toys and stocking stuffers to 13,000 needy children in Kent County each year and 25,000 kids in nine other West Michigan counties. The toys are donated by area residents and companies and volunteers collect, sort, and distribute the donations.

The Chorus started singing for Toys for Tots in 2021 as a way to give back to the community. We look forward to sharing our JOY again next year.



COSTUME CORNER

Don't you think that these pretty red and white ruffled dresses from 1985 would make great holiday show costumes? Maybe they are packed away in a very special corner of our storage unit and we can give them an encore performance in 2024!



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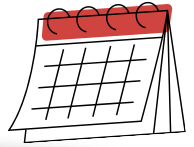
IN THE SONGLIGHT

Written by Colleen Pierson,
with Intro by Elaine Martin

With nearly 60 members, it can be difficult for all of us to get to know each other, our histories, our special skills and interests, and what we each bring to the chorus. To help with this, Colleen Pierson, Marketing Team Co-leader, started up the "In the Songlight" series on our Members Facebook page again in April 2023. Every few weeks, she interviews one of our amazing members and shares her story with us. We will now be sharing their stories with our newsletter readers! Just follow this link to read about this quarter's Songlight ladies: Marielle Levert, Colleen Ball, Betty Franklin, Cyndy Sherfick McAtee, and Marie Koltvedt, newly appointed Assistant Director, Penny Hock!

[Click here for In the Songlight Articles](#)

COMMUNITY EVENTS



- 1/26-27 Winter Harmony Weekend
- 5/9-12 Region 17 Convention
- June: - date TBD - Festival of the Arts
- 6/25 - Meijer Gardens Tuesday Music Club
- 9/20-30 Performing tour in Ireland
- Oct 30 SAI International in Kansas City, MO



GRSA finishes 2023 in strength and song!



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