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High Desert Chorale to perform holiday music

By Jim Anderson, Correspondent

It's the time of the year for the Sisters High Desert Chorale to make the jolly season jollier.

On Friday evening, December 16, at 7 p.m., and again on Sunday afternoon, December 18 at 2:30 p.m., all 50 voices of the chorale will try to lift the roof from Sisters Community Church with a variety of Christmas holiday musical numbers.

Lola Knox and her bell-ringers will add to the musical din, and the Sisters Children's Choir will share their sweet sounds. There will be 11 bell-ringers, 11 young voices in the Children's Choir, and 50 voices in the chorale.

The chorale will be performing 13 pieces — some old-timers everyone coming to past performances loves, and a few new pieces everyone will come to love. Among the old-timers are Vivaldi's "Gloria," and Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," the latter which concentrates on Paul's teachings of the resurrection of the dead and Christ's glorification in Heaven.

"Silent Night," sung at thousands of Christmases past, will be performed. "The Bleak Midwinter," is also on tap — a Christmas carol based on a poem by the English poet Christina Rossetti, penned around 1872, which became a Christmas carol after it appeared in the English Hymnal in 1906 with a musical setting by Gustave Holst.

"It's Christmas" is another new piece for the chorale, along with a Jewish hymn normally sung at Shabbat feasts: "Hine Ma Tov." Its lyrics are the first verse of Psalm 133, which reads: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Another new selection, "O Lux Beatissima," will be sung in Latin, its beautiful melodic lines conveying the traditional Latin text in an artistic setting. The piece opens with a mood of awe and mystery created by handbells, piano, and layered vocals, an artistic accompaniment that supports the chorale parts throughout.

In addition, the women will perform "All Through The Silent Night," and the men will sing "I Saw Three Ships." "Down In Bethlehem" is another great mix of music, as it's an up-tempo Christmas original in gospel style that will grab everyone's attention.

This performance will be Irene Liden's last time to appear with the chorale. She's going off to do what she wanted to do when she arrived in Sisters 11 years back: explore and enjoy the countryside she has come to love.

The chorale will still be here—guided by the talented and music-loving heart and hands of Connie Gunterman.

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