

Just entertainment

Portland Gay Men's Chorus sets holiday concert

"Strike the Harp and Join the Chorus" will feature harpist J. Scott Grimes

BY PEGGY McMANN

A Christmas tradition of the gay community continues when the Portland Gay Men's Chorus sings its ninth annual holiday concert in the Intermediate Theatre on Sunday, December 4. There will be two performances, at 4 pm and 7:30 pm.

"Strike the Harp and Join the Chorus" will feature harpist, J. Scott Grimes. Some of the music has been created especially for the unusual combination of men's voices and harp.

Grimes, who has bases in Paris and Hollywood, is a leading proponent of the harp as a solo instrument. He has studied with the great harpists of Europe and is internationally renowned as a recitalist, lecturer and judge at music competitions.

Many familiar carols are woven into the music to be performed. The concert will open with the premiere of a new composition based on old English wassail songs, written for PGMHC by Eugene composer Harold Owen. It is a bold, boisterous piece, specially tailored for the sound of Portland's chorus.

The program also includes Chanukah music composed by Samuel Adler for the New York City Gay Men's Chorus.

An element of musical fun will again be present in selections like "Baby, It's Cold

Outside" and a Santa medley that includes some surprises.

Sign-language artist Kevin Gallagher will interpret the concert for the hearing-impaired. He appeared with the Chorus in last summer's Gay Pride concert, "The Movies." He also acts as interpreter for the Seattle and New York choruses.

"Strike the Harp and Join the Chorus" is one of only a few events booked in the Intermediate Theatre during the run of Portland Center Stage, the new wing of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. PGMHC, because of its special status as a major tenant of the hall, can take advantage of a provision in the theater company's contract requiring that a few dates be made available for concert bookings.

PGMHC's first holiday concert took place in the back room of the Embers in December 1980. In 1981 there were performances at the Embers and the Northwest Service Center. In subsequent years the concert took place at the East-side Performance Center, Benson High School and other informal halls before the Chorus moved into its new home at the Intermediate Theatre last season.

Tickets for last year's holiday concert were sold out a week in advance.

Tickets, at \$15, \$12 and \$8, are available at the Performing Arts Center box office and from



Chorus members. The price includes a \$1 box-office charge.

Telephone orders may be placed by calling

248-4496. Mail orders should be sent, with check, to PGMHC, PO Box 3223, Portland, OR 97208.

PGMHC getting noticed

They're noticing. The Portland Gay Men's Chorus production of the opera *Young Caesar* and its composer, Lou Harrison, were the subjects of feature articles in the September 13 issue of *The Advocate*.

Although the production drew mixed reactions here last April, *The Advocate's* reporter found it "thrilling and sensuous... music about youth, loss, sex, and sadness — and levity."

The Chorus is also mentioned in the October issue of *Sunset* magazine, that bastion of Western middle-class values. An article about the Portland Park Blocks and the Performing Arts Center mentioned PGMHC along with the Oregon Symphony and the West Coast Chamber Orchestra.

And David Stabler, music critic for *The Oregonian*, wrote in his "Fall Preview": "Portland Gay Men's Chorus, Dec. 4: The Chorus gives a traditional concert with noted harpist J. Scott Grimes. Traditional, in this case, does not mean stodgy. These guys really know how to throw a Christmas concert."

"The Fox" stalks ART stage

D.H. Lawrence is liberal with animal images in his story *The Fox*, so they're not hard to sniff out in Allan Miller's dramatic adaptation, now being performed at Artists Repertory Theatre. The story itself could be

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almost too simplistic if it were not for the great depth Lawrence gives it, the careful and consistent manner in which it was adapted, and the warmth and vibrance with which ART has brought it to the stage.

Henry, a charming but selfish young man, comes into the house of two women who have a strong commitment to each other. He practically forces himself on Nellie, the stronger of the two, and asks her to marry him. After much vacillation and help from her lover, Jill, Nellie finally says "no," at which point Henry becomes destructive.

Add to that conversations about hunters and their prey, and it becomes more a battle of wills than a picture of an indecisive woman. Don Alder portrays Henry as physical and demanding, and Marilyn Stacey shows us a woman frightened and hypnotized by a hunter — the fox that she had been having nightmares about.

Alyson Ayn Osborn plays the practical and perceptive Jill, who smells what's going on perhaps a little too late.

Lawrence also gives us plenty of foreshadowing. The two women's difficulties have been increased by a fox that has been stealing their chickens. In the midst of this and Nellie's drama, Henry arrives at the door. As he is preparing to leave, the barking of dogs heralds another fox. Henry goes after her and misses, giving us the signal that the fox is still on the loose and there is still danger. Then Henry begins to talk about aiming with one's will and pulling the trigger at the proper moment. At this moment we are poised with the hunter waiting and the prey hypnotized.

Rather than literary with ideals and morals about lifestyles, this play is naturalistic and earthy. Henry, like the fox, is a wood spirit as incapable of stopping himself from "hunting" as Nellie is. He is not so much judgmental of the women's life together as he is desirous of having Nellie and the farm to himself.

Technical elements are well designed and executed, although the shoes that Jill wears in the first act squeak miserably, and the use of one color for frontlighting and its complement for backlighting makes Henry blue at such close range.

Do catch this play. Prepare yourself to feel unsettled. At closing curtain I promptly ran home to make sure that there were not any other beasts in bed with my girlfriend besides our two plump cats.

— Ej Westlake

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