

3 Rivers Chorale is headed to Carnegie Hall

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Ten Illinois Valley choir singers, members of Southern Oregon's 3 Rivers Chorale, will perform on one of the world's most prestigious stages. Imagine that!

Twenty-six members of 3 Rivers Chorale will join 21 other choral groups (that's about 200 singers) from around the world to perform Ola Gjeilo's "Dreamweaver" music at Carnegie Hall in New York City (NYC) April 15.

"Ola Gjeilo is a young Norwegian composer currently in residence at Carnegie Hall," said choir director Kate Campbell. "Usually a performance at this level requires an audition process. This is such a tremendous honor!"

A talent scout sifting through hundreds of small choirs from around the nation discovered the music of 3 Rivers Chorale on their website and called choir director Kate Campbell in August with the unexpected invitation - sending waves of excitement throughout the region's musical community.

3 Rivers Chorale had performed Gjeilo's music several times, and Campbell said this is "probably what interested" the talent scout. "Then the audition judges listened to some of the music we posted on our website and gave the thumbs-up."

"Dreamweaver is Gjeilo's grand new work," she added. "It's based on a medieval Norwegian folk poem, and really, it sounds like it should be a sound track for an epic film."

3 Rivers Chorale is a membership-supported community choir which draws singers from the Applegate, Rogue and Illinois valleys and is dedicated to bringing fine



(Courtesy photo for the Illinois Valley News)

The 3 Rivers Chorale choir performed Ola Gjeilo's "Sunrise Mass" in Grants Pass in January 2013.

concert music to Josephine County audiences. They perform a lot of classical choral music, mostly from the last 500 years, up through present-day contemporary music.

Making the trip to NYC is a costly venture for the choir, so fundraising efforts are underway. A March 17 concert at the Southern Oregon Guild Gallery and Art Center in Kerby, from 3 to 5 p.m., will showcase the "Songbirds," a trio of 3 Rivers Chorale members, Jeni Foster, Alissa Barry and Campbell. They'll perform Celtic songs, plus music from Wailin' Jennys. Also, a "cakewalk" display of sumptuous cakes to bid on and take home will be offered.

One Cave Junction resident making the trip, Sue Lily, who became involved with the 3 Rivers Chorale in 2012, is thrilled to return to her home state for such an honor.

"It'll be really fun to visit family and old school mates back in New York with the wind in my sails because I'm singing at Carnegie Hall with my choir!" said Lily, who began singing in choirs when she was just 5 years old.

"It's really exciting - what an opportunity," said another longtime choir member, O'Brien's Joann Gillyatt, who is making the trip with her sister, Ruth Gillyatt McBride. Their mother, Mary, who died in March, had also been a dedicated choir member.

"We didn't think about it much," Gillyatt said about the invitation. "Carnegie Hall is the Mecca of music, so how could we say no? We're thrilled! And now it's only a month away and we're working on 130 pages of music. It's a big undertaking. Plus, it's our first trip to NYC and it feels like we're going on a flying carpet!"

Another well-represented Illinois Valley family in the choir are the Hansons. There's husband and wife Maureen and Paul Hanson; and Paul's brother, Eric Hanson, who for many years, was a professional opera singer in NYC. Ironically, the one place Hanson hadn't performed at was Carnegie Hall, so now, he's thrilled to cross that off his bucket list - and to top it off, he'll get to perform with his wife, Vicki Hanson. Therefore, the Hansons are all

planning an epic road trip to NYC.

Rounding out the Valley's choir contingent headed to Carnegie Hall is Joe Armstrong from O'Brien, along with Campbell and her partner, Karen Chase.

Carnegie Hall, a National Historic Landmark, is one of the most prestigious venues in the world for both classical and popular music. The large performance venue, with three halls that seat 3,671 people, was built in midtown Manhattan by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1891 and is one of the last large buildings left in New York built entirely of masonry.

"We'll be singing in the main hall, the Stern Auditorium, which seats 2,804 people on five levels," Campbell said. "It's very high. Visitors must climb 137 stairs to reach the top tier balcony."

After the choir returns to Oregon, JoCo residents will have the opportunity to hear the Dreamweaver music as the choir will perform it with a string orchestra and piano in both Cave Junction and Grants Pass, May 5 and 6, respectively.

"We all really love this music," Campbell said. "Beyond work and other life obligations, this is what we live for: singing together and creating harmony out of nothing." She paused, considering this, before adding, "It's like one minute there's this silence, and then, in the next moment, there's this eight or 12 part harmonic magic coming from within us. As a choir, we open our mouths and this amazing sound happens. Music is universal language and vocal harmony is like a sublime balancing act that counteracts the darkness in the world."

Learn more about the choir at <http://3riverschorale.org> and learn more about the Carnegie Hall performance: <https://www.dcnyc.org/concerts/dreamweaver>.

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