

Chorus Notes

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A Little "Renewed," a lot "New" at This Year's Auction

The annual GRWC auction has become a winter favorite with many of our audience members, and this year will be no exception! We're moving to a live auction-only format that will include many of your favorites from past years:

- Wendy's Favorite Toffee
- Tazzia Lawn Care Gift Certificate
- Sara's Award-Winning Quilt
- Sharon's Sailing Adventure
- A week-long stay at Lynn's Pentwater Cottage
- GRWC Dinner with Chef Lynne
- A Weekend Cottage in Glen Lake
- A 1-year Membership to Shaggy Pines Dog Park

We're also excited to announce a new twist this year. We're teaming up with Vandenberg Jewelers (6779 Cascade Rd. SE) to give you a chance to win three Vandenberg-designed and crafted pieces. These one-of-a-kind, "crumple" sterling silver pieces include a large-sized ring valued at \$95 (adjusted for size at no cost by Vandenberg's), a stone-enhanced pendant on a leather cord valued at \$155, and a "necktie" pendant (three pieces of silver with stones hung vertically) on a leather cord valued at \$225. These unique art items will be locked in a chained case - one that you can open by purchasing the winning key from us before or after



our winter concert! At the appointed time during our reception, we'll have everyone who purchases a key line up for their attempt at opening the lock on the chain. Will your key be the one that works?

This auction is shaping up to be as enjoyable as ever! Ask your chorus friends for more details in the coming weeks, or contact us on our website at grwc.org. Also, a number of community partners are helping us make this happen. Please help us show our appreciation by giving them your business: Spirit Dreams and other

- Eastown businesses
- Vandenberg Jewelers
- Janet Tazzia Lawn Care
- Elaine Dalcher Studio
- Shaggy Pines Dog Park

Fun with Nuns!

Having departed from our beloved Khardomah Lodge for practical reasons, the GRWC set its sites on the Franciscan Life Process Center in Lowell for our annual retreat and membership meeting. This educational and counseling center, set on a 230-acre farm, was a great setting for the chorus to rehearse and refocus for the season.

The group gathered on Saturday, September 27th, with our voices, minds, and souls to learn about this season's music, and to learn about each other. After finding spaces for our overnight accommodations, we began with proper warm-ups! Then it was time to sing, and sing we did.



Chorus members' Cultural Dinner presentation

One successful tradition we have now is the cultural dinner, in which "cross-sectional" groups form to collaborate on a dinner representing the culture of one of the pieces from our repertoire. We present foods to consume, with the story behind them, and also make posters, show books, bring artifacts, and dress to tell the culture's story. It is a fun way to open us all up to the richness and soul of the world.

After a welcoming of new and returning members, we began a great sharing meeting



"No Talent Talent Show" Skit

during which we discussed what it is we do and why - in other words, our mission. We had small group discussions and whole group "voicercize" (sounds like a word). Then it was on to the "No Talent Talent Show!"



Mr. Chin makes an appearance at the "No Talent Talent Show."

To unwind later, some of us joined in a drumming and percussion and dancing and anything goes circle, while others joined in a lively book discussion. Then it was off to bed in various locations. One of the most unique dwelling spots was in one of the two yurts the Sisters have very nicely set up on their property. Sunday the Board members held the annual business meeting during lunch, where all the members discuss and



Inside one of the Yurts at the Franciscan Life Process Center

vote on decisions the group needed to make regarding the upcoming year. Such things discussed were the budget, voting board members in, and the goals of the chorus for years to come.

What a fine weekend to be in beautiful natural surroundings and get a head start on learning the music for the season! During our final rehearsal, some of the nuns joined us at the back of the room. From their grins, we could tell that our energy was a match for their space!

Building Community through Music

The Grand Rapids Women's Chorus and the Signature String Quartet will join together to benefit the American Cancer Society's "Hope Lodge" of Grand Rapids by performing *Where I Live* on Saturday, February 28th at the First United Methodist Church

Where I Live (a Breast Cancer Oratorio) composed by Diane Benjamin*, is a compelling musical composition that provides a direct glimpse into the inner emotions of women survivors of breast cancer through seven choral pieces performed with an orchestral ensemble and spoken word.



"In 1998, one of my closest friends was diagnosed with breast cancer... (She) graciously allowed me to become part of her journey, as she found a path of healing and courage through this life-threatening condition. A year later, the Denver Women's Chorus commissioned me to write an oratorio about breast cancer...I wanted to create something beautiful and healing for all of us."

-Diane Benjamin

The National Cancer Institute estimates there are 2.4 million women survivors of breast cancer living today. The American Cancer Society "Hope Lodge" is a 24-hour, temporary, free residential facility that provides a comfortable, nurturing environment and access to quality care and support for cancer patients traveling away from home for treatment.

Grand Rapids was selected as the location for Michigan's first "Hope Lodge" and opened its doors in early 2008. The Grand Rapids "Hope Lodge" is located on the corner of Jefferson Ave. and Cherry St. The Lodge is within walking distance of St. Mary's Hospital and Lacks Cancer Center, and minutes from Spectrum Health. Transportation is provided to all area cancer centers. Holly Polinac, a Hope Lodge coordinator and childhood cancer survivor, shares what brought her to Hope Lodge,

"...a strong desire to give back and to say 'thank you' for all I've been given throughout my journey with cancer. What I treasure most is the opportunity to offer hope, support, and encouragement, and to be a part of such an invaluable resource for cancer patients and their families."

Thanks to Debra Denherder for reaching out to the GRWC to inspire this community building effort on behalf of Hope Lodge, Grand Rapids. Debra is the assistant manager for Hope Lodge and was one of the speakers at the GRWC debut performance of the Oratorio at the St. Cecilia Music Center in 2001.

The Denver Women's Chorus commissioned *Where I Live* in 1999 in hopes that the work would, "...speak to all

breast cancer survivors, their families and loved ones, and to all of us that wonder what measure of courage we would be able to muster in the same situation."

Please join us this February, as we sing in support of our community, our loved ones, and our lives.



The American Cancer Society of Grand Rapids' "Hope Lodge".

***Diane Benjamin** is a musician and composer living in Minneapolis. A self-taught composer who wrote her first piece at age 8, she took up composing again in 1992. Her breast cancer oratorio *Where I Live*, is still receiving extensive performances across the country, and has raised over \$20,000 for local women's cancer organizations.

Iraqi Peace Song

This year marked the addition of a new song to the catalogue of Santa Barbara Music - the publisher of many of the songs that the GRWC performs. *Iraqi Peace Song*, based on the vocal setting of a traditional Iraqi lullaby by Knut Reiersrud, was arranged for chorus by Lori Tennenhouse, artistic director of the GRWC. The chorus first performed the piece in the 2006-2007 season and will be performing it again this year.



Iraqi Peace Song begins with a hauntingly beautiful solo sung in Arabic. The chorus joins in, singing "Peace to the world, peace to my country, my love". The Arabic theme and the English one intertwine in a moving testament to the universal desire for peace.

The song was one of many on a recording called "*Lullabies from the Axis of Evil*" that contains lullabies from Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan and Cuba. The producer of that recording, Erik Hillstad, points out that lullabies are a universal culture. They "lead us into the deepest and most fundamental way of communication between human beings."

When two countries are at war it is easy to focus on the differences that make those countries distinct. If you look a little deeper, however, you can see the similarities between the citizens that make us all the same—all human beings who long for peace for our families and loved ones; all human beings who are victims of war in one capacity or another. *Iraqi Peace Song* is a haunting and poignant reminder that we are not so different after all. We all want our children to grow up in peace and freedom.

GRAND RAPIDS
Women's Chorus

MEMBERSHIP

Artistic Director

Lori Tennenhouse

Accompanist

Blithe Brouwers

Director, Small Ensemble

Martha VanderEyck

Associate Directors

Brenda Baker

Blithe Brouwers

Soprano

Brenda Baker

Kristin Bauer

Janet Bradley

Liz DeBraber

Lynne Homeyer

Cathy Howe

Wendy Kuenzel Kapolka

Hilary Mol

Martha VanderEyck

Jeanne Welch

Alto

Gabrielle Calkins

Donna Clark

Linell Crampton

Ann Erhardt

Megan Grimm

Carol Kountz

Toni Perrine

Chris Sales

Pam Sandberg

Lynn Weaver

Tenor

Cheryl Beatty

Sue Brown

Sharon Burtrum

Sarah Gillman-Burkhart

Denise Joseph

Sheryl Mase

Nadine Miller

Janice Scalza

Carol Wilson

Bass

Cathajane (CJ) Galante

Sara Homeyer

Leslie Kohn

Barb Pitcher

Janet Thering

Linda Troyer

Ida VanDunk

Connie Winter-Troutwine

Paula Wurm

GRWC Continues to Go Green



Last year Grand Rapids Women's Chorus participated in a cell phone recycling project through CharitableRecycling.org. Chorus members collected old cell phones from friends, family and co-workers. The phones were shipped to the recycling center, and hundreds of batteries were kept out of landfills while many of the phones in good condition went on to emergency shelters. The Charitable Recycling Program, in turn, paid the GRWC one dollar for every phone we recycled.

This year we will continue to participate in the program, but in a different way. In this newsletter you will find a

copy of the pre-printed, postage paid label to the Charitable Recycling Program. Just glue this label to any envelope, enclose a phone (or two) and send off in the mail. The Program does not want packaging, adapters, chargers, etc. - they just want/need the phones with the batteries.

If you know of an office or group who may be replacing their phones and may be interested in recycling several phones, please contact us at info@grwc.org and we will pick up the supply, package and ship.



The Grand Rapids Women's Chorus has created a memorial fund to commission new choral works for women's voices. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation in memory of your loved one, their name will be added to the Memorial Fund and recognized in our spring concert program, newsletters and on our website, www.grwc.org. Notification will be made to family members as requested by the donor.

We will be premiering the first commissioned Memorial Fund piece during our May 9, 2009 Concert at St. Cecilia Music Center.

Family and friends being honored in Memoriam

Marge Carlson	Catherine Carey Hobart	Shirley Tennenhouse
Claudia Chittenden	Robert W. Howe	Maxine Thompson
Patricia Ann Cusick	Horacio Salinas	Maria VanderEyck
Irene Dalcher	Candelora and	Margaret E. White
Paul and Dorothy Geis	Fiorentino Scalza	Ceci and Gene Winter

Beloved pets

Daly Piers and Cosmo

Ovations

by Janet Thering

On Monday afternoons, Brenda Baker leads vocal warm-up exercises for her middle school students. On Mon-



Brenda Baker warming up the women's chorus at the Annual Fall Retreat.

day nights, she leads them for the rehearsing members of the Grand Rapids Women's Chorus. She tells both that singing is an athletic activity involving the whole body. "Athletes who train

well always warm up before running", Brenda explains, "Proper vocal warm ups reduce vocal chord abuse and make for better over-all performances. They help singers focus and help their transition to rehearsal time."

Brenda has taught music in the Forest Hills Public Schools for 17 years, currently directing the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade choirs at Forest Hills Northern. Teaching and conducting the nearly 190 students enrolled in her choirs is a job Brenda finds challenging and also one that she immensely enjoys.

Along with a bachelor's degree in behavioral disabilities from the University of Wisconsin, Brenda earned both a B.A. in vocal performance and a Masters degree in Teaching from Aquinas College. She also studied vocal performance at Western Michigan University under the tutelage of the reputed Marian Pratnicki. While studying with Pratnicki, Brenda won the coveted first place adult division NATS award in the state of Michigan.

This season will be Brenda's fifth with the GRWC. In addition to leading vocal exercises, Brenda sings as a first soprano and will be directing a piece titled "*The Voice*" for the Spring concert. A Celtic inspired song by novelist and composer Brenden Graham, "*The Voice*" features what Brenda describes as dynamic and engaging rhythms. "The Irish flavor in the melody and arrangement of this piece is invigorating to the soul," she comments.

Brenda feels fortunate to be part of the GRWC, a group she defines as a community of fun, smart, talented, and very diverse women. She is humbled and excited about the opportunities to direct and to perform as a soloist. A sampling of Brenda's lucid soprano voice can be heard on the exquisite recording "*Amor de mi Alma*", performed with Cathy Howe on the CD "*Underneath the Whispering Trees*", offered for listening on the GRWC website (grwc.org).

Many Thanks

Each Spring there are several local businesses and individuals who advertise in the GRWC Spring Concert Program. Their advertising makes our printed program possible and also helps offset some of the costs of our "after glow" reception.

Our thanks go to:

Actor's Theater
Bobby J's Downtown Restaurant and Catering
Cottage Bar/One Trick Pony
Double Dee Repair Services
Julie Gottlieb, ACSW
Grand Rapids Singing Telegrams
Bob Hardin, Photographer
Dan Kantorowski of Handyman Dan Home Services
Holistic Care Approach
Holy Cross Episcopal Church
Mark Kehoe of Mika Meyers Beckett and Jones
Martha VanderEyck, Voice Teacher and Coach
North Kent Guidance Services
Presto Print, Inc.
Spirit Dreams
The Octagon House Counseling Services
Thornapple Veterinary Medical Center

Please help the GRWC thank these businesses and services by shopping locally in the coming months.

GRWC To Perform at the Dogwood Center in Fremont

GRWC is announcing a second performance of our annual spring concert in May of 2009. The first performance will be at St. Cecilia Music Center in Grand Rapids on Saturday, May 9, our 13th annual spring event.

In addition, we've been invited to perform our concert at the Dogwood Center for the Performing Arts in Fremont. This performance will be Saturday, May 16.

The Dogwood Center's theater, which features a 400-seat venue, opened in 2002. Garrison Keillor of Prairie Home Companion, Terry Gross from National Public Radio, along with many musical and theater groups have performed in this community center.

In addition to Fremont, the Center supports interest in the arts in many other communities, including Whitehall, White Cloud, Newaygo and other nearby towns. The Chorus is honored to accept their invitation to perform here in May.



The Dogwood Center for the Performing Arts in Fremont, Michigan.

Tickets for the May 16 performance can be purchased by calling the Center's box office at (231) 924-8895 or by visiting www.dogwoodcenter.com.



Visit Goldenrod Music - your only online source of the Grand Rapids Women's Chorus new CD *"Celebrating Time Together"*

via the  link

at www.grwc.org or (517) 484-1712

Remember, anything you buy, anytime, from Goldenrod's extensive catalog of music and music merchandise returns a percentage of that purchase to the chorus.

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM:

The Grand Rapids Women's Chorus (616) 459-2655
Spirit Dreams • 1430 Lake Drive SE (616) 456-9889

On **Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008** the **Grand Rapids Women's Chorus** will hold its **Annual Winter Concert and Live Auction**.

This season the chorus is exploring our community as the product of our ancestors' migrations, and the process of leaving one's home to make community in a new place. We sometimes forget how diverse the West Michigan area has always been, and that many residents are first, second, and third generation immigrants. Many of our families have stories of escaping persecution or devastation, traveling far away from loved ones, and sacrificing to build new lives in a strange land.

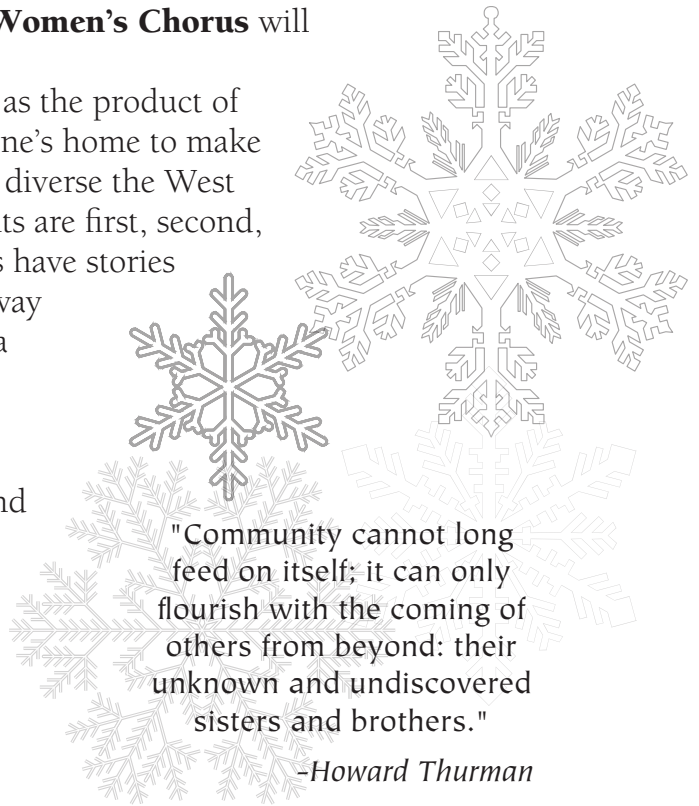
We will be singing songs in Polish, Spanish, Arabic, Finnish, as well as songs from Celtic and African American traditions. In light of our current political and economic environment, we will also be singing songs in the spirit of openness and change by peace activist and composer, Holly Near.

Doors open at 6:30pm for the **7:00 pm event** at **St. Cecilia's Music Center**.

Live Auction and refreshments to follow concert.

Suggested donation at the door \$10-\$20.

Please join us!



"Community cannot long feed on itself; it can only flourish with the coming of others from beyond: their unknown and undiscovered sisters and brothers."

-Howard Thurman

GRWC Auditions

GRWC is a diverse group of women of all different backgrounds and musical training. The Chorus "season" runs from September-May each year, and new members are invited to join for full seasons only. Auditions for each season are typically in the month of August.

If you are interested in auditioning for the Grand Rapids Women's Chorus in the future, please go to <http://www.grwc.org/auditions.php> for more information.



SAVE THE DATE

WINTER CONCERT 2008

Annual Winter Concert and Live Auction

Live Auction following the Concert

When: Saturday, December 13, 2008 at 7pm

Where: St. Cecilia Music Center

24 Ransom Street NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Suggested donation at the door \$10 - \$20

See you there!



Grand Rapids Women's Chorus

PO Box 68486
Grand Rapids, MI 49516

Phone: (616) 459-2655
Email: info@grwc.org

~ Mission Statement ~



The Grand Rapids Women's Chorus is dedicated to singing culturally diverse music that promotes appreciation of women composers and arrangers. Established for the education, enjoyment and enrichment of both members and audiences, we seek to create and inspire meaningful experience through musical expression.

We welcome your comments, suggestions, compliments, questions, letters and tax deductible donations.

Please feel free to contact us.

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