Westminster’s varied choirs sing their hearts out for the holidays

By Dana Lynn Flatekval
Managing Editor

For a festive time, Westminster Choir College (WCC) will be performing various concerts for the holiday season during the upcoming weeks.

The most popular of the performances is “An Evening of Christmas Carols,” according to Catherine O’Neill, director of concerts.

“Most people choose to attend this event because there is such a diverse group of singers involved,” said O’Neill. “The audience usually likes to get involved in singing the holiday carols.”

“The Colors of Christmas” combines spiritual and gospel music, performed in the melodic voices of the Jubilee Singers, with literature from African-American writers.

“The Jubilee Singers are the greatest,” said O’Neill. “They are phenomenal.”

The Jubilee choir is one that is auditioned and the conductor, J. Donald Dumpson, is also on the Sacred Music faculty.

“A Holiday Homecoming” features 12 full-time faculty members from WCC, including Diane Crane, Margaret Conick, Tom Farace and Laura Brooks Rice. The mellow performance is a showcase of Christmas music and will include monologues and jingles.

Following “A Holiday Homecoming” is “A Christmas Mandala,” that features readings and carols performed by the Solid Brass Quintet, which uses brass, timpani and percussion instruments.

“An Evening of Readings and Carols,” held at the Princeton University Chapel, uses the melodic voices of three main choirs.

The freshman Chapel Choir, sophomore Schola Cantorum, directed by Heather Buchanan, and the Symphonic Choir, which consists of upperclassmen, will perform with Solid Brass. Rider President J. Baron Luedeke and other guests will do the readings.

Two performances will take a look at music from different periods in history and of different places in the world.

“Christmas in Old Amsterdam and Versailles” will take the sounds from the Renaissance period as well as Holland and France. Their concert will feature chamber music performed by faculty from the WCC conservatory, using a variety of string and wind instruments, such as recorders (John Burkhalter), flutes, cellos, organ, harpsichord, (Eugene Roan) and violin, (Patrick Wood).

“A Modern & Ancient Christmas” will be performed by Fuma Sacra which consists of an eight-member group of alumni, directed by Andrew Megill.

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A Winter Memory

Fresh-fallen snow, untouched by man, tops bushes fence and tree:

The strong, gusty wind, whirling it ‘round, improves and enriches its beauty.

It sauntered down in the silence of night, leaving a scenic delight.

Now, in the sun, it dances and winks as we drink in the wondrous sight.

This is a picture-post-card scene - winter at its best; it leaves a mark etched in our heart of when winter was our guest.

— Adams Burchell,
Holiday poems.com

Westminster Choir College Holiday Concerts

Friday, Dec. 6
The Colors of Christmas,
Bristol Chapel, 8 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 8
A Holiday Homcoming,
Tickets: $20 adults, $15 students/seniors, 4 p.m.

A Christmas Musicfest
Tickets: $20 adults, $15 students/seniors, 8 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 15
A Christmas Celebration
Tickets: $7 adults; $5 students/seniors, 8 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 21
A Christmas Concert
Tickets: $7 adults; $5 students/seniors, 4 p.m.

Christmas in Old Amsterdam & Versailles
Tickets: $20 adults; $15 students/seniors, 8 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 13
An Evening of Readings & Carols,
Tickets: $35 preferred seats, $25 reserved seats, $15 students/seniors, 8 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 22 & Monday, Dec. 23
A Modern & Ancient Christmas
Tickets: $20 adults; $15 students/seniors, 8 p.m.