

More local choirs sign on for world games



Written by

Janelle Gelfand
jgelfand@enquirer.com

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Anticipation is building among area choirs for the World Choir Games, the Olympics-sized choral event scheduled to take place in July 4-14, 2012.

"The world is coming to Cincinnati," said Robyn Lana, managing artistic director of Cincinnati Children's Choir, one of the first eight choirs to sign up so far for the 2012 World Choir Games.

Cincinnati Children's Choir, The Cincinnati Boychoir, Cincinnati Kolping Saengerchor, Cincinnati Men's Chorus, MUSE Cincinnati's Women's Choir and the Fairfield High School Choraliers are warming up their vocal cords.

And the Southern Gateway Chorus (the first choir officially to register) and the Cincinnati Sound Chorus will be harmonizing in the Games' new Barbershop category. All were announced in a Music Hall event this morning.

The all-volunteer choristers hope to showcase the best of the region's choral music for an estimated 20,000 participants and up to 200,000 visitors from all over the world.

"It means we are part of a huge, beautiful choral fabric. How could singers from around the world actually be here in Cincinnati? I guess we really are the heart of it all," said Catherine Roma, director of MUSE Women's Choir.

Lana pointed out that those competing will be experiencing the best of the best.

"The choirs will interact, hear each other, support each other, and learn from each other. It is a unique opportunity for our community to experience a wide variety of choral traditions, many of who will perform in outfits that represent their country," she said.

Cincinnati Boychoir will have as many as 75 singers competing in two choirs: Its Tour C choir (the top treble ensemble, ages 10-

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14), and the Men's Glee Club, made up of former Boychoir members, ages 14 to 64.

"This is our chance to show these groups, who often don't think of Cincinnati as a primary touring destination, that this is a world-class choral town," said Christopher Eanes, director of the Cincinnati Boychoir.

"While the boys and I are excited about competing in the games and participating in all the great events, we are just as excited for the legacy that will continue here in the years following the games. Cincinnatians can be a bit modest in advertising our great music scene to the rest of the world, and hopefully the World Choir Games will give us an excuse to brag, just a little."

Cincinnati was chosen over 20 competing cities to be the first North American host city because of its variety of venues and longstanding German choral tradition. For the 68 members of the Kolping Saengerchor, that tradition goes back to 1849 - Cincinnati's first public Saengerfest. That developed into the Cincinnati May Festival, founded in 1873.

The Kolping Saengerchor sings mainly German folk music, and performs in regional and national saengerfests with other German choirs.

"We are the only German choral group left in town that preserves this tradition," said Carolann Mary Slouffman, director and co-founder (with her husband, Jim) of the Kolping Saengerchor. "We have been told that Cincinnati was known as 'the city of

singers' and we are extremely proud to uphold this noble tradition."

Children will be well-represented among the choirs. Cincinnati Children's Choir has registered to present its advanced Bel Canto choir, 80 voices in grades 5 through 12. Normally, said their director, the choir doesn't compete.

"However, the World Choir Games is different than any other competition. The process is meant to build up choirs (and) to promote amateur choral singing," Lana said. "All who perform at a high level are recognized for their accomplishments and artistry."

The event is expected to attract competitors from about 70 countries and have a local economic impact of \$73.5 million. Procter & Gamble is the first Presenting Sponsor of the World Choir Games.

Last summer, MUSE's Roma traveled to China with SingCincinnati to lead that chorus in

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the 2010 World Choir Games in Shaoxing. They came home with two silver medals. Learning from that experience, local participants can expect to see "the excitement and beauty of diversity - young people, young adults, men and women, sharing their joyful music," she said.

"The singing art will resound and capture all who attend, and people should take the time to see, listen, celebrate this once-in-a-lifetime happening in our city," Roma said.

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