



The North Shore Choral Society

Choral society strikes up the band for holidays

BY DOROTHY ANDRIES

Contributor

The North Shore Choral Society just may be the first musical organization holding its holiday concert this season, and their program includes another first. The Arlington Heights-based Prairie Brass Band will perform brass arrangements of seasonal music in the opening of the chorale's 76th season.

"We've never done anything like this before," said Julia Davids, who has been music director of the 140-voice singing ensemble since 2009 and is director of choral activities at North Park University in Chicago.

Davids, who lives in Skokie, heard about the Prairie Brass Band from a band member who attends Trinity United Methodist Church in Wilmette, where she is director of music ministries. She quickly began doing research and liked what she discovered. "I went to the Web and found out that they are a remarkable group," she said.

"They invited us, so we accepted," said Dallas Niermeyer, conductor of the Prairie Brass and resident of Arlington Heights.

Array of horns

"We are a British-style band," he explained. "We limit the number of players to 35, and we use cornets instead of trumpets. We have flugel-horns, baritones, tenor and brass trombones, French horns, tubas and percussion.

"The band tradition in Britain goes back to the early 1800s," he continued, "so there is all kinds of great music for a band like ours."

Choral works to be performed include "Magnificat" by American composer Mark Gersham, arranged to highlight the talents of choral accompanist Sharon Rich Peterson on piano, and Julie Brueck, organist, and the Joyful Ringers Handbell Choir of Glenview Community Church.

There will be carols arranged for the Chicago Master Singers by Paul Langford, as well as Giovanni Gabrieli's "Gloria" and Robert Shaw's "Many Moods of Christmas."

Holiday favorites

"You'll hear all kinds of your favorite holiday music," Davids said, mentioning Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride," as well as music from the score written by Hollywood composer John Williams for "Home Alone." That 1990 Christmas comedy was shot on the North Shore and features the exterior of — guess what? — Trinity United Methodist Church in Wilmette.

The Prairie Brass was established in 1997 and Niermeyer was one of the founding members. "I played in a brass band when I was in high school," he said. "Then I played trumpet during my years at Northwestern University," he said. "When the idea of forming a brass band came up, some people knew I had experience and invited me to be part of it."

On the principle that you can never have too much Christmas music, the North Shore Choral Society's next concert will also be holiday-centered. At 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4, they will take part in "An Evanston Symphony Christmas" at Evanston Township High School, 1600 Dodge Ave. in Evanston.



Julia Davids

A HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

North Shore Choral Society and the Prairie Brass Band of Arlington Heights
Glenview Community Church, 1000 Elm St., Glenview

3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 20

General admission \$25; \$22 seniors; \$15 students

Call (773) 956-8400 or visit www.northshorechoral.org