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RWU A Cappella Group to Open for Comedian Jay Leno at PPAC

Hawkward will take the stage in Providence before an audience of up to 3,000 on Thursday, March 22



Hawkward, an a cappella group at RWU, performs during RWU's Winter Illumination in December. Image Credit: Roger Williams University/Juan Siliezar

March 20, 2018 | Edward Fitzpatrick

BRISTOL, R.I. – A Roger Williams University a cappella group, Hawkward, will open for comedian Jay Leno at the Providence Performing Arts Center on Thursday, March 22.

The former “Tonight Show” host, who is a fan of a cappella groups, also chose Hawkward as the opening act for his performance at PPAC’s 2015 Annual Gala.

“He and we were so happy with their performance that Jay and the theater extended the invite for them to return for this engagement,” said Caitlyn DiPompo, PPAC’s marketing projects specialist. “They were amazing.”

Hawkward, which has 19 members, usually performs before crowds of 100 or so, but on Thursday the group will take the stage in a theater that holds up to 3,000 people.

“We are so excited to be doing something like this,” said Marissa Papapietro ’18, Hawkward’s business manager. “The fact that he asked us to perform again is an extreme honor.”

The group is stepping up its practice schedule in preparation for the show. “We are running through our songs until we get them down perfectly,” Papapietro said. “We want to impress this audience, which is going to see this well-known comedian. We want them to realize how hard students can work and how they can perform in a professional show.”

Members must audition to be part of Hawkward, which is one of two a cappella groups at RWU. The other group is named Drastic Measures.

"They get invited to invitationals at other schools, but this is a big stage, which is really fantastic for them, and they are so excited," said Danny DiCamillo, Hawkward's adviser and RWU's assistant director of residence life. "It shows RWU's willingness and desire to be part of the larger community, and it shows how we are doing great things here and being recognized – not just with music and clubs but with academics."

Papapietro said the group expects to perform for about 20 minutes and is preparing to sing up to five songs: "Don't Stop Me Now," by Queen; "Lionheart," by Demi Lovato; "Greedy," by Ariana Grande; "River," by Bishop Briggs; and "Dancing On My Own," by Calum Scott.

In addition to Papapietro, the members of Hawkward are Adam Caezza '19, Jake McVey '19, Devin Ciuci '19, Galen Shrand '18, Kelly Scammon '18, Manny Colon '19, Melissa Rodriguez '19, Megan Willgoos '20, Rebecca O'Rourke '20, David Micale '20, Daniel Cano '21, Emma Cappadona '21, Emma Rasmussen '21, Grace DePalma '21, Jill Houle '21, Keryn Presutti '21, Nick Kolb '21 and Merrick Carroll '21.

"We all just love what we do and have become close after spending so much time in rehearsal," said Papapietro, who grew up in New York City and is majoring in marine biology, with a minor in theater. "It's something I've loved being a part of. I'm a senior with two months left, and I'm going to miss it."

The show starts at 7:30 p.m. Thursday. Tickets are available at the PPAC box office (220 Weybosset St., Providence, R.I.); by phone at (401) 421-2787; and online at www.ppacri.org. Ticket prices range from \$45 to \$125.

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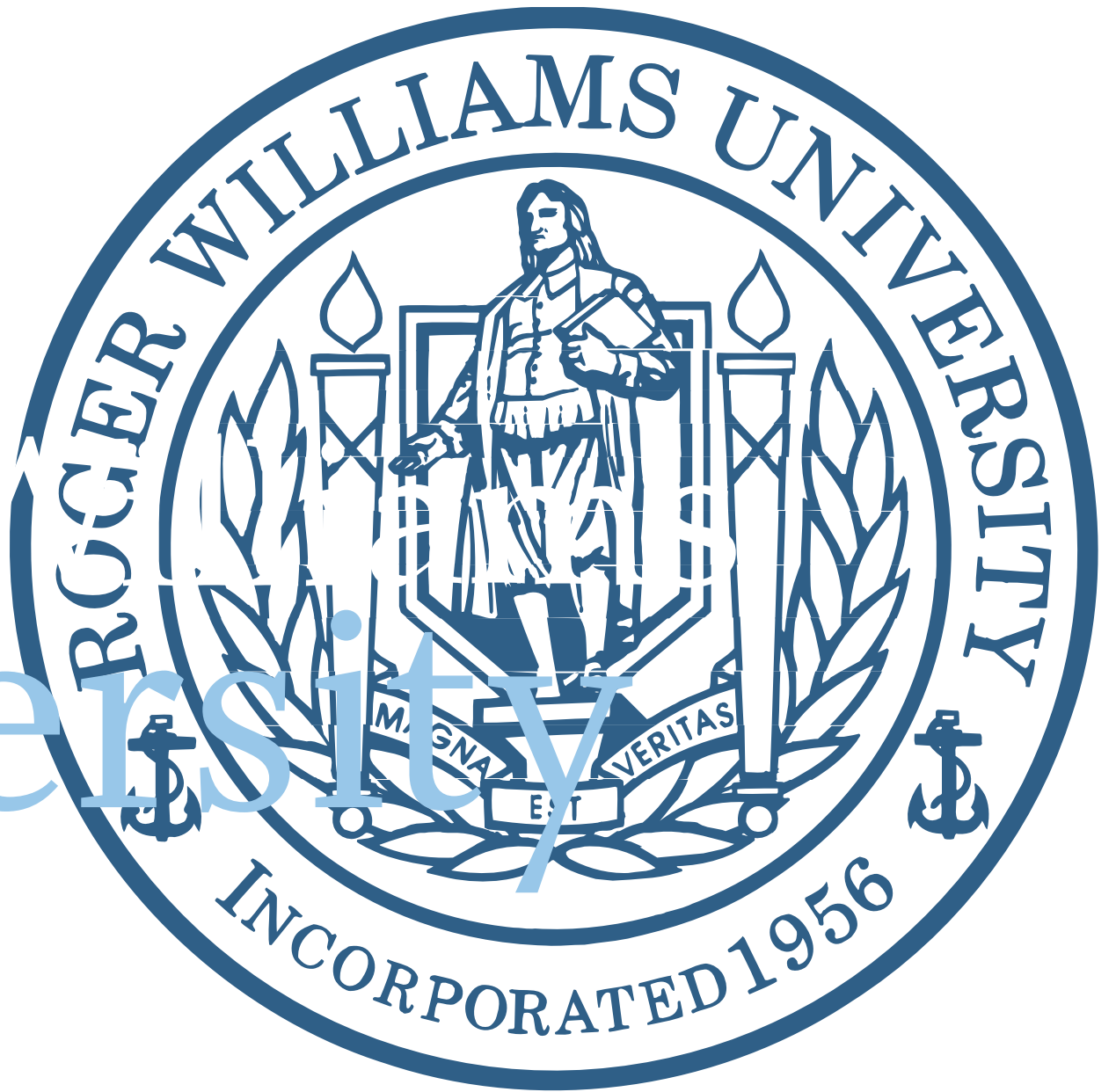
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