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GospelFest Sets Spirits Soaring (PHOTOS)

Gospel choir lends spiritual, personal touch to community performance



December 13, 2013 | Public Affairs Staff

BRISTOL, R.I. – The reputation for an inspirational musical experience drew more than twice as many people to this year’s second annual GospelFest.

Thanks to the buzz generated from last year’s inaugural event, GospelFest’s message of hope through song enticed hundreds of people from RWU and the greater community to witness the powerful singing chops of the [Prism of Praise Community Gospel Choir](#) and the RWU Chorus at the Global Heritage Hall Atrium.

“That kind of singing is so fabulous. It truly just goes all the way up to the ceiling of the atrium – over the top and to the roof. When the sound comes out of Prism of Praise, it just takes your breath away,” said concert co-organizer Rev. Nancy Soukup, director the University’s Spiritual Life Program.

For the RWU Chorus, the day included an opportunity to learn gospel-style singing. Before the concert, Prism of Praise held a workshop with chorus members to teach them the art of gospel music and practice a song to perform together at the show – a feature of the evening that many called a showstopper.

Part of what makes the concert so unique is the personal and spiritual touch injected into each performance by Prism of Praise, a multiethnic Christian group that celebrates diversity. During the evening of spirited singing, Michael Évora – director of the Prism of Praise Choir – took a moment to talk about how people find comfort and peace in gospel music; and each soloist shared a story about a hardship in which they managed to find hope before kicking off a song.

According to RWU Law Director of Diversity and Outreach Deborah Johnson, this concert demonstrates the importance placed on including diverse perspectives at the University via providing a venue to hear these intimate stories alongside an original American musical art form more prevalent in southern states.

“I think learning comes not just from the classroom, but also experiences in life. Programming like GospelFest allows us to gain new life experiences we might not otherwise have,” said Johnson, a concert co-organizer.

This second iteration of the concert was funded by a President’s Inclusive Excellence Mini-Grant and was a collaboration of the Roger Williams University School of Law, the RWU Music Department and the University’s Spiritual Life Program. And to ring in the true spirit of the season, \$700 in donations to Habitat for Humanity’s rebuilding efforts for the victims of Typhoon Haiyan was collected at the conclusion of the event.

Listen below to Prism of Praise perform their version of “Let It Be” while watching a photo slideshow from the concert:

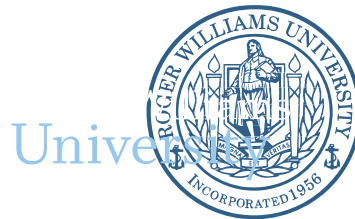
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