

CSO GOSPEL CHOIR

CONTACT: Allison Savicz, Publicity
Publicist, CSO Gospel Choir
(919) 923-2791 asavicz@w5insight.com
www.csogospel.com



Charleston Symphony Orchestra Announces New CSO Gospel Choir Music Director and Associate Director for newly formed Vocal Ensemble

July 18, 2008 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Sandra Singleton Barnhardt of Adams Run and Nathan L. Nelson of Charleston have been appointed as the CSO Gospel Choir’s new Music Director and Associate Director of a newly formed CSO Gospel Choir Ensemble respectively as announced today by Lee Pringle, President and Founder of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Gospel Choir.

Sandra Barnhardt takes over the helm as Music Director from Glenn R. Nixon, acting director for the past year. After a national search Mrs. Barnhardt was selected for her extensive experience in vocal performance and choral conducting and will assume her new role immediately. “We are thrilled to have Sandy lead the Choir, who also performed as a member of the Choir for two years prior to assuming her new role,” said Pringle. “The Gospel Choir has become such an exciting and integral part of the Symphony’s team, and we are grateful to have such a skilled director come from within our choir family. Mrs. Barnhardt will continue the momentum that Glenn R. Nixon shepherded this past season.”

Jan Newcombe, Executive Director of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, called Barnhardt “a wonderfully ideal director to guide the Gospel Choir’s growth. She is an accomplished leader with a vast array of talent and experiences perfectly suited towards nurturing this vibrant group and bringing its artistic talent to a new level of excellence.”

Barnhardt notes that Charleston is very fortunate to have such a great resource. “The Gospel Choir plays a vital role in the low-country’s artistic heritage. With the devotion of the singers and the loyalty of supporters, the Choir has become a truly world-class chorus. I enthusiastically look forward to building on its remarkable success.”

Born and raised in New Jersey, Ms. Barnhardt has an extensive career in vocal education having served as Director of Vocal Music for the Cicely Tyson School of Performing and Fine Arts in East Orange, NJ and Program Director of the After School Center for Performing Arts South Orange Middle School. She has served as Coordinator of Music and Music Specialist for the School District of South Orange-Maplewood, Maplewood, NJ where she taught grades K-6 and grades 5-8.

Currently Ms. Barnhardt is Assistant Minister of Music at the Ebenezer AME Church, in Charleston. She holds an M.A. in Music Education from Montclair State College, Montclair, NJ and a B.F.A. in Voice from Stephens College in Columbia, MO.



CSO Gospel Choir Ensemble

The CSO Gospel Choir is also pleased to announce the formation of a select vocal group: the newly formed *CSO Gospel Choir Ensemble* comprises 24 vocalists with a focus on traditional African-American spirituals. Nathan L. Nelson has been chosen to lead this group who will perform throughout the area.

Pringle said, "My vision of a smaller chamber group has been on my list of changes I wanted to see implemented for years. With the new organization structure of the Choir, I felt an ensemble, modeled after the acclaimed Fisk University Jubilee singers, would foster opportunities for the Choir to go places where the large group would not be ideally suited to perform. Mr. Nelson's experience working with some of the most noted leaders of gospel and spiritual music throughout his career has prepared him for his new position. The entire choir enthusiastically welcomes his experience and vision for this new group."

"It is indeed an honor and a privilege to work with such an elite organization like the CSO Gospel Choir," noted Mr. Nelson. "The Ensemble will focus on preserving the authenticity of spirituals while integrating classic gospel music and various classical genres in its core repertoire."

A native Charlestonian, Mr. Nelson has served as Minister of Music for the Tri-County Chapter of the Gospel Music Workshop of America and is a member of the Gospel Music Workshop of America, founded by the late Rev. James Cleveland, where he studied how to organize a music department and direct audio technology and music productions.

Currently he teaches in the public school system and has served as a vocal trainer and choir director for many renowned gospel singers. He has shared the stage and worked with the late Rev. James Cleveland, Shirley Caesar, Dorothy Norwood, Daryl Coley, Hezekiah Walker, Donald Malloy and Larnell Harris.

Nathan holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in Choral Music and Secondary Education from Charleston Southern University. He currently serves as a vocal coach for studio singers, local choirs and volunteers with various community choirs. Mr. Nelson is the Assistant Director of Music at Charleston's Mount Zion AME Church.



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CSO Gospel Choir 2008-09 Concert Season

Now celebrating its eighth year, the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Gospel Choir performs gospel, spirituals and sacred music for annual concert events including a Palm Sunday performance, CSO Gospel Christmas and Piccolo Spoleto Festivals in Charleston, South Charleston and regional performances throughout the Southeast. www.csogospel.com

As the largest full-time performing arts organization in South Carolina, the Charleston Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is a central component in the rich cultural foundation of the region and attracts an audience of over 100,000 people annually. The CSO has been a partner in weaving the cultural fabric of the City of Charleston since 1936. The mission of the CSO is to promote the enjoyment and appreciation of music among visitors and residents of the Tri-County region and to make music a vital part of the area's cultural life. www.charlestonsymphony.com