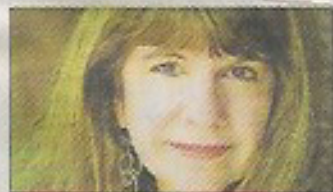


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**SOUTHERN OREGON  
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# Rogue Valley Youth Choruses bring glad tidings



PEGGY DOVER

Some say the human voice is the ultimate musical instrument. From a simple thought, music may follow. When several vocal instruments combine, especially those of children, a seasonal bouquet blooms. I discovered this again recently.

My friend, Denise Fleming, enlarged my world in a most satisfying way by treating me to a delightful afternoon of holiday music at North Medford High School. It was the annual Christmas performance of the Rogue Valley Youth Choruses, a young people's division of the Rogue Valley Chorale. We sat, allowing the gifts of a small army of dedicated folks help us stop, think and listen for 90 blessed minutes.

They began with the Discovery Chorus, which is made up of a talented collection of third- and fourth-graders, moving up in age groups to Children's Chorus, Cantare and, finally, Youth Ensemble for 10th through 12th graders. These are choral groups for which the student must audition — and they are heartily encouraged to do

I watched each precious face, wondering about the story inside. Not all narratives could shine merry and bright, I knew. But for these moments they gave their all for us.

I noticed there weren't as many boys in the choruses, especially in the older choirs. Even though it was all lovely, I so missed the strong support of male voices. I figured peer pressure may be the culprit. Maybe today's boys have little idea that in many European countries it's the men's choirs that reign supreme and set the bar for some of the most stirring concerts in the world. A hunch tells me there are basses, baritones and tenors out there walking around, wanting to let it out, but they're afraid. Some gifts take courage to express. It's easier to do in numbers, and that's where Rogue Valley Youth Choruses extends an opportunity to be heard.

The mission of the RVYC is to inspire and enrich all members of our community through great choral music performed by choruses of all ages. Not a bad mission. They are always open to donations to help keep the music flowing.

Denise invited me to dinner at Cicely's, where I found myself in the

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pleasant company of the chorus director and, in fact, founder of the Rogue Valley Youth Ensemble, Pam Nordquist and her husband, Pete Nordquist, assistant conductor for youth ensemble. Joining us at our table were Dave and Carmen Adams. Carmen is president of the RVYC Steering Committee. Later, lo and behold, I happened to notice Denise's name on the program as corresponding secretary.

There was another young member of the group, a perfect example of why this is such a great program. His name is Geo Betus, and Geo sings bass with the Youth Ensemble. When life threw some tough challenges in his path, the chorus provided a healthy outlet. He shared his thoughts with me.

"I feel it is very important for young men to join choir because it helps find a sense of self confidence and is an

excellent way to vent from a stressful school day. The first time I heard my voice blend with a full choir singing loud and proud it made me feel something that music hadn't given me in quite some time. While most guys in the junior high/high school age group often feel that joining choir is to be quite frank, "lame," there is honestly nothing more powerful and rewarding as singing with a choir. Music is one of those things where no matter where a person is in their own walk of life, it will impact them in some way."

Auditions for new singers for spring season will be held from 4:30 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 9, at South Medford High School. For more information, call 541-414-8309 or email [info@roguevalleychorale.org](mailto:info@roguevalleychorale.org). And if you have a boy who loves to sing, encourage him to give it a shot.

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