

Gospel concert will have ‘something for everybody’

‘Make a Joyful Noise’ slated for Sunday at LMC’s Hanson Theatre

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
HP Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR — After months of preparation — and a change in plans — organizers of Sunday’s “Make a Joyful Noise: A Gospel Explosion” concert are hoping it becomes a permanent local showcase for the genre.

“We feel like there’s going to be something for everybody,” says Lisa Peeples-Hurst of Delta Sigma Theta, which is organizing and promoting the concert. “We’re hoping this event will grow on a yearly basis, so we wind up in the Mendel Center (Mainstage Theatre).”



PEEPLLES-HURST

Sunday’s lineup features an array of local talent, including the First Presbyterian Church Choir; the Second Baptist Church Jubilee Singers; the Union Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Sanctuary Choir; the All God’s Children Teen Ensemble; and Inspirational Voices of Benton Harbor, a group of high school students.

An Indiana group, A Capella Experience, is also expected to perform, while the mistress of ceremonies is missionary Christine Sharene, who also hosts the “Morning Manna” radio show on Benton Harbor’s WVBH-LP (105.3 FM).

Two mystery guests — whom Peeples-Hurst will only identify as major national and regional gospel recording artists — may also appear Sunday. Both artists figured in Delta Sigma’s original plans for a gospel music competition, which began more than a year ago, Peeples-Hurst recalls. So Delta Sigma began sending out applications, spreading the

word and lining up the judges — including the mystery guests — until events took a different turn.

“Our community members didn’t take to the word ‘competition’ well, even though we offered them a \$1,000 grand prize,” Peeples-Hurst says. “So we listened to them, even though we thought we had this idea in the bag. We just got people who want to sing about the Lord — and they don’t want it to be judged.”

Peeples-Hurst grew up at Second Baptist Church — which her mother and aunt still attend, her father served on its board, and her grandfather was a deacon. She’s now a member of Refreshing Fountain Church of God in Christ.

“Many of our members are regular church attendees, and we have just had a lot of fun getting the word out at different churches about this event,” she says.

Peeples-Hurst is also historian and chairman of the Ways and Means Committee for Delta Sig-

IF YOU GO

What: “Make a Joyful Noise: A Gospel Explosion”

When: 4 p.m. Sunday

Where: Hanson Theatre, Lake Michigan College Mendel Center, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor

How much: \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door

Contact: 369-8750, 927-1221 or lisa.peeples.hurst@gmail.com

and develops programs around them. The organization also provides scholarships.

In that respect, Sunday’s concert is an extension of that mission, says Peeples-Hurst, a Michigan State University alumnus who will celebrate her 20th year of membership on Wednesday.

“Our work as a sorority did not end at the college level,” Peeples-Hurst says. “We went on to our respective communities to provide public service. We come together once a month, and on outside activities, to say, ‘What can we do better in our community?’”

All in all, it’s taken about a year to reach Sunday’s event, but Peeples-Hurst feels that the response will more than make up for any complications.

“We’ve actually passed two previous production times, but we changed plans so Sunday is going to be a good celebration,” she says. “But we anticipate that it will just get better and better, and we won’t have to do as much legwork — if you will — next year.”

ma’s Benton Harbor chapter, founded in 1967. She also served as chapter president from 2001-03, and again from 2005-07.

The sorority itself began in 1913, at Howard University, and has grown to roughly 900 chapters in the U.S. and worldwide. As an organization, Delta Sigma focuses on five priorities — including economic, educational, international and political awareness, and physical and mental health —