

For the Payson Civic Chorale, The Next Stop Is Carnegie Hall

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By GABRIELLE BIRKNER

Carnegie Hall is the next stop for the 80-member Payson Civic Chorale, whose most recent performance brought more than 300 people to the Payson High School auditorium in central Utah. The Chorale is scheduled to sing Sunday at the celebrated 57th Street music hall, as are nearly 9,000 amateur musicians from more than two-dozen community, church, and school choirs.

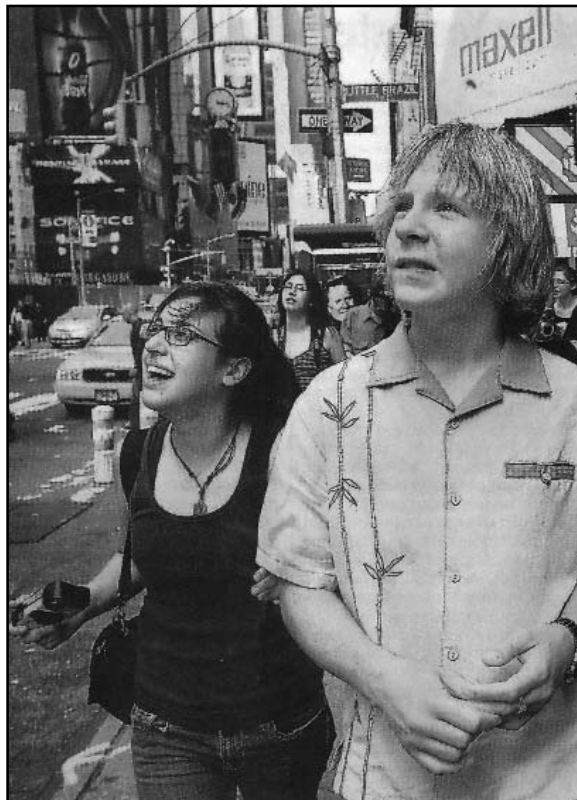
"We're small-town, homegrown folks here," a founding member of the Chorale, De Hill, said during a telephone interview from Payson. "I expect this will be one of the most rewarding musical experiences in my entire life."

Under the direction of celebrated composer and conductor John Rutter, the Chorale will perform Mr. Rutter's "Gloria" in Latin and Leonard Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms" in Hebrew. They will be alongside musical ensembles from Shenandoah, Iowa, Midland, Texas, Decatur, Ga., and elsewhere. Mr. Rutter will go on to conduct several other amateur choruses that will be performing gospel melodies he composed.

The mayor of Payson, Burtis Bills, is traveling to New York to hear the Chorale's Carnegie Hall performance.

At an evening performance Sunday, eight other out-of-town choirs will perform classical melodies, lead by several other conductors.

"To have performed at Carnegie Hall, I don't really know if they'll understand the significance - except in retrospect," the choir director of South Milwaukee High School in Wisconsin, Wolfgang Calnin, said. Mr. Calnin is accompanying 33 of his students to New York.



'Homegrown Folks' Members of a choir from Del Rio, Texas, get their first look at Times Square yesterday

An 18-year-old recent graduate of South Milwaukee High School, Lauryn Bigley, said that years from now she'll be able to tell her grandchildren that she sang at Carnegie Hall, but for now she is more focused on seeing the city and meeting New Yorkers. "We only have four days, so I'm going to try to smush it all in," she said. "I went to Alabama once, and everyone was so helpful there, and hopefully they'll be friendly in New York."

One of 13 members of the Del Rio High School choir in Del Rio, Texas, Rebecca Smart, 17, said she hoped her school chorus ready for Carnegie Hall. "It's not just some little theater in the middle of nowhere," she said. "I know

really good performers go there."

The performances were organized by MidAmerica Productions, a 22-year-old group that produces amateur and semi-professional classical music concerts at Carnegie Hall.

"New York is the center of the cultural universe in so many regards, but we don't live in a vacuum," MidAmerica's director of program development, Sara Bong, said. "Those performers who come to New York from elsewhere can remind us that we are part of the United States of America,

and that there's a lot of good music-making going on in other places."