

From Our Homes to Yours, “Georgia’s Home for the Holidays” Delivers Festive Music of the Season Directly to You

The familiar Christmas song, I’ll be Home for Christmas takes on a whole new meaning this year as we celebrate the holiday season. Without a risk-free way to sing or play in groups, or host audiences in traditional concert venues, choral and instrumental artists in the time of COVID-19 have chosen to be creative and keep the spirit in the season. One of the silver linings of the COVID-19 “cloud” is the innovative spirit of collaboration that emerged among some musical arts organizations in Georgia.

Georgia’s Home for the Holidays is a collaborative musical venture involving hundreds of singers and instrumentalists from the Metropolitan Atlanta area and beyond. Organized by leaders of the Georgia Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Atlanta Master Chorale, and The Michael O’Neal Singers, this project is a 35-day series of seasonal musical videos to be presented ‘virtually’ through YouTube, Facebook, and other social media between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day. Each 5-7-minute video features one choral or orchestral group from the area, sharing artistic content related to expressions of the winter holiday season. Timothy Verville, music director and conductor of the Georgia Symphony Orchestra, is the creative force behind the project’s extensive audio and video editing. Marietta-based businessman Ira Jackson, Jr. lends his bass voice to introduce each day’s video.

The project originated during an August 2020 Zoom meeting among leaders of Georgia choral groups who were struggling with choral programming concerns. This group, an informal choral roundtable called Choral Music of Metro Atlanta (CMMA), exists to foster support and collaboration among the Georgia choral community and raise collective awareness of the diverse vocal music organizations available in central and northern Georgia. During the COVID-19 situation, volunteers and staff members of these organizations have met via Zoom to exchange information on critical topics such as scenario planning, participant and audience engagement, scientific resources on safe singing, and options for virtual choral programming.

The Georgia’s Home for the Holidays project was first intended to provide a virtual performance opportunity for Atlanta-area music organizations who have limited options for sharing their art at this time, but other purposes came to light. Furthering collaboration among Georgia’s smaller, diverse musical arts organizations IS something that can be accomplished in this pandemic, when the safety of singing and playing wind and brass instruments is in question. Recognizing that audiences are also missing live musical programs during the 2020 holidays, the video series will help fill the void of in-person concerts by sharing December holiday music with at-home audiences in our region and beyond.

The daily videos feature choral and instrumental musicians from 32 ensembles based as far north as Gainesville and as far south as Peachtree City. Beginning the morning after Thanksgiving, episodes will premiere daily, then be available for viewing anytime thereafter. Episodes are available on the Georgia Symphony Orchestra's Facebook and YouTube pages, and at holidays.georgiasymphony.org where viewers may also register to have the videos delivered to them directly via email.

For a full list of participating organizations, visit holidays.georgiasymphony.org