

A SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY – WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM FRIENDS

Spirit of the Streets Choir at Perth Concert Hall, with Perth Male Voice Choir and Working Voices Choir

In a Nutshell

Name: The City of Perth presents
"Spirit of The Streets Choir in Concert"
with Perth Male Voice Choir
and Working Voices Choir

Where: Perth Concert Hall, 5 St
Georges Terrace, Perth

When: Tuesday 14 October, 8.00pm

Tickets: General - \$25 A Reserve; Concession \$14.95 Seniors card holders,
unwaged, Full Time Students, Children 16 and under.

B Reserve; \$19.95 Concessions - \$9.95.

Accompanying Carers Free

Group bookings discounts available.

Bookings: www.bocsticketing.com.au; BOCS 9484 1133 or BOCS outlets.

Description: To celebrate International Mental Health week and National Carers week, The Spirit of the Streets - a choir comprised of people normally regarded as the forgotten section of our society - have pride in presenting a concert in this major venue.

With the same idea as the Choir of Hard Knocks (as seen on ABC TV), The Big Issue newspaper sellers of Perth have assembled this choir, which is led by music director Bernard Carney.

The concert will be hosted by Sonia Vinci of Channel 9.

After the initial formation in late 2006, the Spirit of the Streets choir found more members among other disadvantaged people, outside the reach of the mainstream community - the homeless, those with a mental illness, the disabled, those affected by drugs or alcohol - and now have regular gigs within the community.

Tonight they are joined by the Perth Male Voice Choir (in its 82nd year and dedicated to fundraising for the community) and Working Voices Choir (directed by Bernard Carney). With around 100 voices in total to present a fully-produced concert that will fill the heart, and hopefully the coffers of The Big Issue organisation, to help keep the choir viable.

With numbers like 'With A Little Help from my Friends', 'Imagine', 'Help', 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door' and 'Streets of London', the audience will not only sit back and appreciate, they'll want to join in the spirit and sing along.



Music Director: Bernard Carney

Producer: Rachel Moorhead

Administration: Ruah Community Services.

Sponsored by Perth City Council
The WA Dept of Health (Mental Health Division)
ADG Global Supplies
Healthway
Relationships Australia's "Make Time To Talk"

MORE INFORMATION FOLLOWS...

Background

It's a chilly Tuesday afternoon in Northbridge, inside a rather beautiful church hall, when the door opens and a man with an elbow crutch and a big black dog make their way in.

It's rehearsal time for The Spirit of the Streets choir and Henry, the percussionist, sits down at his set of drums. His dog, Storm, sleeps patiently somehow while Henry gets rid of any stormy feelings he might have on those drums during the next hour and a half rehearsal period.

Henry, Sally (bongos and vocals), who is a busker in the city, and Devo (bass guitar) are providing the backing for the choir - comprised of disadvantaged folk, keen to make music and be part of the community many are not that connected with any more.



The door swings open frequently during the mustering period and about 30 people eventually enter – some with obvious disabilities, some not so obvious, plenty of The Big Issue newspaper sellers ("a hand up, not a hand out") and some good souls who come in to help and sing along with the rest, all with an air of bright enthusiasm and pleasure in being there.

The epitome of enthusiasm is Richard, who has a voice like Joe Cocker, a schoolboy cap like Angus Young and plenty of energy. He is involved with bringing puppetry to young people in an effort to help them stay out of prison, drugs and whatever other demons are waiting in the wings. If Richard has demons, they are invisible on this day, as he paces at the back, singing along, encouraging. His impressive solo is "I'll Get by with a Little Help from My Friends". Was there ever a song more pertinent?

The music director is Bernard Carney, a well known and capable musician who will guide the choir to its big moment at Perth Concert Hall in October when it will be joined by the Perth Male Voice Choir and Bernard's choir, Working Voices, in a fully-produced concert designed to raise funds to keep the Spirit of the Streets choir going.



Ken Steele, is the project manager from the Perth Male Voice Choir, founded in 1926. "It's a big gamble but we have been greatly assisted by generous sponsorship," Ken said.

Perth City Council, The WA Dept of Health (Mental Health Division), ADG Global Supplies, Healthway, Relationships Australia's "Make Time To Talk" and many private donations have all chipped in to put the concert on stage.

Ken said the standard of the choirs and their production (by producer Rachel Moorhead) on the concert hall stage will be high. It will entertain and appeal to, he is certain, a wide section of the public.

"There'll be a lot of support from the medical area but we see this evening as being enjoyable for anyone who enjoys great songs sung by people who love to sing, and sound terrific. This will be a two-way experience for everyone," Ken said.

With plenty of bums on seats, the evening will garner much needed funds for the choir and its organisers.

"The Spirit of the Streets Choir" was originally the "Big Issue Choir". However, the name was changed to make it more inclusive for other people who were homeless, long-term unemployed or otherwise socially excluded, and who wanted to join.

The choir is essentially for the people who don't get a seat at the table of conventional society, the people who are excluded and vulnerable and who need the non-judgmental social interaction which is embodied in the choir.

The 14th of October concert performance will reflect this spirit of inclusion and acceptance. It will convey the lifestyle situation of many of the people who sell The Big Issue magazine. Many are homeless, with tragic life stories of abuse, and self inflicted addiction. Others have suffered mental illness and social non acceptance, resulting in isolation and low self esteem.

The choir has brought a ray of light into their lives, a way to communicate and a forum for socialising which had never before been possible.

The PMVC had been keen to fundraise for the choir, Ken said, and virtually all concerned with the concert had given their services free. The concert will reach the stage with all costs paid for. Money from net tickets sales will all be donated to the "Spirit of the Streets Choir".

"The Spirit of the Streets choir" is the WA equivalent of the Eastern States based "Choir of Hard Knocks", presented on the ABC TV series, which demonstrated what can be achieved.



The WA "Spirit of the Streets choir" presents exactly the same difficulties and therefore the very same opportunity to improve their situation by helping to improve the health of the participants, reduce the stigma and isolation their condition creates, increasing their self esteem and providing an opportunity to be a part of a group, enjoying the benefits, fellowship and shared values that choir participation can bring.

There is no discrimination by way of race, sex, culture or creed or the ability to read music or perform to a set standard. The Spirit of the Street Choir is administered by the Ruah community welfare organisation.



For more information on the choir visit www.spiritofthestreetschoir.org.au

Or on the Perth Male Voice Choir: <http://www.perthmalevoicechoir.org.au>