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Q & A with Cole: 2021 Festival of Lights



Gardner-Webb celebrates Festival of Lights on campus preparing for the Christmas season.. rr©2019 GWU/Bob CareyILCE-9M2, FE 24mm F1.4 GM, 1/125, f6.3, iso6400 #delkinblack

By Cole Ray

Dr. Josh Cheney is the assistant professor of music and the director of choral activities and coordinator of worship leadership in the Gardner-Webb Department of Music. I sat down with him to learn more about the Festival of Lights and what to expect this year. **The Festival Of Lights is Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. in Dover Auditorium**

Q: What is the history of the Festival of Lights?

A: You know, that's a great question. As far as I know, it has been around for twenty, twenty five years. This is my second year at Gardner-Webb. So my first festival of lights was online. It was virtual. This is my first in person festival of lights. I know it has been around for a decade or two and it is the Christmas celebration here on campus. So that's the history that I know of.

Q: How is it different this year?

A: It's in person, that's going to be the big difference. We probably have a little bit more, well this might be fair, there is more variety. I tried to include some different kinds of stuff that maybe wasn't kind of done last year especially. We've got some hand motion groups, we've got some chamber music we didn't have before. A Figaro ensemble who are going to present some stuff that wasn't done in the past and this will be the first performance that the corral is split into treble corral and men's corral. Those two groups used to be one and now they are two. So that will feature a difference there. More than anything, I think people here in the department of music are really pleased to be back in person, and I'm just very excited to have my first live festival of lights.

Q: What is going to be the best part of the Festival of Lights?

A: Singing, to me, is going to be the best part. Most of the music will be sung, there's a lot of choral music in the program. Not all of it, we have a couple chamber pieces that are instrumental, brass choir, and bell ensemble. Probably the best part of festival of lights is it's just a great way to kick off the Advent and Christmas season. It's a great way to end the semester for the campus community and the department of music and so it's just a great celebration.

Q: How many people are involved in the Festival of Lights?

A: Oh gosh, probably headed toward 100 because of the faculty staff and students who are performing. There's a good bit. So it's one the larger performances that we have in the department of music on campus. So it's a bit of an all hands on deck kind of thing.

Q: How long has Gardner-Webb been working on this Festival of Lights?

A: I started programing back in May and then slowly, but surely over seven months we pieced all the pieces together.

Q: What makes the festival of lights so successful?

A: What will make successful is attention, hard work from our facility and staff, and most importantly our students who have put in a lot of effort to put on a great Christmas concert at the end of the semester because everybody got all of the regular things. Students have things at the end of the year and then to take extra time to make sure that Christmas season performance is special is what takes it over the top I think.

Q: How often do you practice?A: There's rehearsals for ensembles every single day. The project choir rehearses four times a week, the corrals rehearse twice a week, the brass choir rehearses couple times a week, handbells once a week. The other chamber groups, I don't direct all of them so I honestly don't know their detailed schedule, but there is somebody who rehearses for the festival of lights every single day. From the back half of the semester, we like normally we start early mid-October.

Q: What are your hopes for the event's turnout? A: Because this is my first in person one, usually Christmas concerts are usually just about the best attended thing in any collegian music program. So I anticipate there will be several hundred. Last semester when we did it virtual, we had hundreds of people who watched our performance. Both who streamed it when it was live on YouTube and then also have watched it after that

because it is still there. You can pull it up right now, it is still posted there now, but I anticipate there being a couple hundred folks thus forwards.