

Sonoran Desert Chorale presents 'Twice the Spirit: Two Choirs as One' Feb. 24-25

Queen Creek Sun Times Staff
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**TWICE THE SPIRIT:
TWO CHOIRS AS ONE**


**sonoran desert
CHORALE**


**Canto
Vivo
chorale**

Saturday, February 24 7:30 PM
First United Methodist
15 E. First Ave. Mesa 85210

**Bernstein and Britten
plus double choir favorites**

Sunday, February 25 3:00 PM
La Casa de Cristo
6300 E. Bell Rd. Scottsdale 85254

Dr. Craig Peterson, Artistic Director

Sonoran Desert Chorale and Canto Vivo Chorale join together under the direction of Dr. Craig Peterson for a grand collaboration this weekend in both Mesa and Scottsdale. Two of choral literature's most revered pieces are the cornerstone of the concerts along with some of the best-loved double choir works in the repertoire. | Submitted

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"Twice the Spirit: Two Choirs as One" performances are set for Saturday, Feb. 24 at 7:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church in Mesa, at 15 E. First Ave., and Sunday, Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. at La Casa De Cristo Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, at 6300 E. Bell Road.

Single tickets are \$25 for adults/\$20 for seniors, students and groups of 10 or more. Tickets may be purchased online at [SonoranDesertChorale.org](https://www.sonorandesertchorale.org), by calling 480-305-4538, from singers or at the door. Student Rush tickets are available 10 minutes before curtain with appropriate ID.

Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, written in 1965 in response to a commission from the Dean of the Cathedral of Chichester, juxtaposes vocal part writing most commonly associated with church music with the Judaic liturgical tradition. By combining the Hebrew with Christian choral tradition, Bernstein was implicitly issuing a plea for peace in Israel during a turbulent time in the young country's history. The piece is jazzy and contemporary, yet accessible. The work ends with a chorale which Bernstein called "a prayer for peace" – "Behold how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity." It is accompanied by organ, harp and percussion.

Benjamin Britten's setting of Christopher Smart's poem *Jubilate Agno*, in his cantata, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, showcases the depth of Smart's spirituality, and the indisputable wisdom and insight that his poetry has an extraordinary capacity to inspire and delight. Britten doesn't shy from Smart's eccentricity, but, rather, serves it up for the listener, so that all might experience the crackling brilliance of his imagination. Strange, to be sure, but there is so much wonder in which to share and so large a measure of beauty to ponder in this striking fusion of music and poetry.

Sir William Harris's masterpiece *Faire is the Heaven* (1925) is one of the best-loved works in the repertoire. *Coelos ascendit hodie* (C.V. Stanford) a motet scored for double choir, makes much use of dramatic interplay between the two choirs. The superb final 'Amen' grows ever outwards from one single note, concluding on a vibrant eight-part chord. These and others, including *Sing We Merrily Unto God* (Martin Wood), comprise the remainder of the concert. Truly a glorious sound-fest not to be missed.

About the chorales

Sonoran Desert Chorale was founded in 1994 by Jeff Harris, who directed the group for 25 years. It is now led by artistic director, Dr. Craig Peterson. Since its inception, the group has become a highly regarded and sophisticated choral organization, presenting musical compositions from cultures around the globe as well as important pieces from the European and American music traditions. Concerts frequently include guest performances and collaborations with distinguished artists and organizations in the community. They have engaged in six international concert tours, with performances throughout Europe. They were invited to perform with Broadway superstar Michael Crawford for the inaugural concert of the \$150 million Mesa Arts Center. The Chorale was

selected to appear at the Western Division Convention of the American Choral Directors Association in Salt Lake City.

Canto Vivo Chorale was formed in the fall of 2004, and began first as the West Valley Chamber Chorale at Glendale Community College by founding artistic director and still current director, Dr. Craig Peterson. The group's members are made up of professional singers, choral directors, educators and advanced vocal students from around the Valley. It is lovingly referred to as "a choir of choir teachers." The ensemble adopted the name Canto Vivo Chorale in 2006 when the group moved its home base to Mesa Community College, where they still rehearse today. In addition to a four-concert season each year, Canto Vivo Chorale has been chosen to perform at several choral and music conferences, including the Arizona Music Educators Association and the Arizona Choral Directors Association. They have also been on several international tours.

Significant support is received from the Arizona Commission on the Arts. For more information, see and hear the Sonoran Desert Chorale at [SonoranDesertChorale.org](https://www.sonorandesertchorale.org).

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