

[BOBBY MCFERRIN AND THE KUUMBA SINGERS, "HOLD ON"] Hold on just a little while longer, hold on just a little while longer. Hold on just a little while longer. Oh, everything will be all right.

INTERVIEWER: Mm, that is powerful. That's the incredibly talented Bobby McFerrin with the Kuumba Singers. It's Black History Month and to celebrate, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is teaming up with the Capri Theater in north Minneapolis for a series of concerts this weekend called Northside Celebration. They'll feature amazing music, like that song, from both the orchestra and singers from the Northside.

Now, the Northside is one of the most racially diverse areas of Minneapolis, and they're using this opportunity to shine a light on local musical talent. As part of our North Star Journey series exploring the rich culture and history of our state, we're talking with Dennis Spears and Sherri Orr. They're both with the Capri and part of directing this series of concerts. Oh, I'm so excited. Dennis and Sherri, welcome.

DENNIS Hi, how are you?

SPEARS:

SHERRI ORR: Thank you. Hello?

INTERVIEWER: I am great. Hello, hello to you both. It's great to hear your voices. Thank you so much.

DENNIS Yeah.

SPEARS:

INTERVIEWER: Wow, there's a lot to talk about here. Let's see. Let's talk about the partnership, shall we? I mean, Dennis, I think you were there about seven years ago when this idea for the Northside Celebration concerts was first born. So talk about the partnership between the SPCO and the Capri. How did it get started?

DENNIS Well, we wanted to do something that would be all-inclusive, and I wanted to bring some classical music to this area. We have a school here, and I wanted my students to become more aware of different styles. So I opened my mouth, and here we are 10 years later with our third installment.

INTERVIEWER: I'm glad you opened your mouth and got it going.

[LAUGHTER]

DENNIS Yeah, [INAUDIBLE].

SPEARS:

INTERVIEWER: Sherri-- oh, it's beautiful. Sherri, you're a musician. I know you'll be performing an original song called My Soul Shall Not Die. Tell me about the story of that song.

SHERRI ORR: Well, the song speaks to a resilience of a people. And I feel like the Northside has that in our community. We are a resilient community. And the short synopsis of that song is, it says that my soul shall not die on this Earth. And what that speaks to is, we're able to recover from the things that happened on the Northside. We are able to not just survive, but thrive. So it's a wonderful song. And it's a cappella, neo-spiritual, so it's kind of like a new spiritual.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, OK. So I want to hear-- I know, Dennis, you are most excited about the gospel music and the spirituals that'll be performed. I want to listen to a song right now-- it's going to be played this weekend, I understand. This is called Imagine Me by singer Kirk Franklin. So let's hear it a little bit here.

DENNIS Beautiful.

SPEARS:

[KIRK FRANKLIN, "IMAGINE ME"] Loving what I see when the mirror looks at me cause I, I imagine me in a place of no insecurities and I'm finally happy cause--

INTERVIEWER: What do you like about that song, Dennis?

DENNIS That song will be performed by Known MPLS. And the beautiful thing is these are young people that will be doing

SPEARS: it. And the message is so powerful, when you think about them singing, imagine me in a brighter space. It's powerful.

INTERVIEWER: It's beautiful. I am excited to hear the community choir named Known MPLS. Sherri, what's the story behind the choir? That's a number of young Northside people, right?

SHERRI ORR: Absolutely. And when I say young, we can say from junior high to high school to young adult. Yeah. So they're definitely reflective of north Minneapolis.

INTERVIEWER: OK. I want to hear some of their music, too. Now, this is one of their tunes. This is called Up Above My Head.

[KNOWN MPLS, "UP ABOVE MY HEAD"] Hey, yeah, yeah. Up above my head, I hear music in the air. Up above my head, there's a melody so bright and there I can hear--

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the choir and what you're hoping that the audience takes away from the whole event, Sherri.

SHERRI ORR: Well, with the choir-- the Northside Celebration Choir as well as Known-- I hope that they take away that there is opportunity to connect and become a stronger community. There's opportunity reflecting-- to reflect on where we've come from and to look where we're going to as a community moving forward.

INTERVIEWER: And Dennis, what are you hoping folks who attend take away when they walk out the door?

DENNIS A feeling of hope, joy, gladness, and just looking at the fact that we are better and stronger when we are

SPEARS: together.

INTERVIEWER: Mm. I hope you both have a beautiful time at the Northside Celebration. And of course, I have to play more music. We're going to go out to another well-known spiritual. This is performed by the Superman-- is that right-- the Superman and College Glee Club-- and it's called Children, Go Where I Send Thee. I so appreciate both of you, Dennis and Sherri. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

DENNIS Thank you.

SPEARS AND

SHERRI ORR:

SHERRI ORR: Thank you for having us.

[SPELMAN COLLEGE GLEE CLUB, "CHILDREN, GO WHERE I SEND THEE"]

(SINGING) Children, go where I send thee. How shall I send thee? I'm going to send thee one by one, one for the little bitty baby wrapped in the swaddling clothing, laid down here in the manger. That's [INAUDIBLE]. Children, go where I send thee.

INTERVIEWER: I think somebody misspelled that. It's Spelman College Glee Club. They are amazing. We were talking to Dennis Spears and Sherri Orr. They're both with the Capri Theater in north Minneapolis. They're part of the Northside Celebration Concert this Friday and Saturday at North High School, Sunday at the Ordway in Saint Paul. Now, tickets for the North High performance are free. Tickets to the Ordway are \$12 to \$15. To reserve a seat, just go online to thespco.org. By the way, this interview was made possible in part by the Minnesota Legacy Amendment's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.