

# Gardner-Webb Concert Choir Selected To Perform At Conference

## Gardner-Webb University - Asst. Director of Communications

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Since Dr. Joshua Cheney, Gardner-Webb assistant professor of music and director of choral activities, arrived on the University campus in 2020, he has challenged himself and his students to consistently strive for improvement. He's also given the Concert Choir an opportunity to perform on an international stage in Paris to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day.

This semester, the group of musicians are in the spotlight again. The North Carolina Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (NC ACDA) has invited the GWU Concert Choir to perform at its conference on Oct. 4 at Queens University in Charlotte, N.C. Choirs from across the state auditioned to perform, and the GWU Concert Choir is one of four chosen for the event, which represents the largest annual gathering of choral directors in North Carolina.

"The Concert Choir is proud to represent Gardner-Webb, the foothills, and Western North Carolina at NC ACDA, and we are honored to sing alongside our friends and colleagues from across the state and beyond," asserted Cheney. "We will present a program entitled Meliora, which was inspired by the growth and bright future of GWU choirs. The program includes selections by renowned American composers like Eric Barnum and Rosephanye Powell alongside modern voices from around the world like Ola Gjeilo and Tsai Yu-Shan."

Meliora is a Latin word that means "for the pursuit of the better." Cheney explained why he chose this theme, "In my time with the Gardner-Webb Concert Choir, we have consistently sought better for ourselves, our musicianship, our community, and our engagement with whomever was in the audience."

Concert Choir member, Nellie Chappell, looks forward to her first concert with a college ensemble. A freshman music education major from Moore, S.C., Chappell has performed in choral groups since she was in elementary school. “I enjoy having the challenge of working with other singers,” she related. “Some of them are more advanced than I am, which is a real treat. Dr. Cheney says that we must be 100% better than we were last time, which has honestly pushed me to say the same thing in other places as well.”

Her favorite song in the program is “Afternoon on a Hill” by Barnum. “I love this piece not only because it has a gorgeous flowing melody that the altos sort of rule over, but also because of the musicality it takes to sing this piece,” she described.

Junior Boakye, a junior music education and trumpet major from Kings Mountain, N.C., enjoys singing but has limited experience performing with a choir. “I started singing with the Concert Choir in Spring 2023,” he noted. “I like singing with the Concert Choir, because I love making music, and the music that we put out is at a high standard. The connections I’ve made from the choir have been very meaningful.”

Boakye inadvertently helped Cheney decide on the name of the program. Cheney had a working title that encompassed past, present and future, and he also liked the theme for the NC ACDA conference, “Sing Our Stories.”

“I remember, quite specifically, discussing what could be cool about the amalgam of thoughts I had regarding the entire thing, when music education major Junior Boakye said (something like) ‘Well, is there a word for the process of becoming better?’” Cheney reflected. “That was it. I had to look it up, but that word is Meliora, the pursuit of the better.”

Cheney continued, “Constantly looking onward and upward for how we might make the world a better place is a part of what we do. It might even be the largest part of what we do, and I believe in the idea strongly. Our goal for performance in Fall 2024 is to share about who we’ve been and where we hope to go, for the good of the world around us—and for the good of ourselves. These selections are from our past efforts to pursue better, our present efforts to pursue better, and our future effort to pursue better.”

Boakye is grateful for the opportunity to perform with the Concert Choir at the NC ACDA conference. “Representing Gardner-Webb at this event is really important and means a lot to me,” he affirmed. “And, I feel like this whole experience will help me tremendously as a musician by seeing and being a part of the work being done by Dr. Cheney and the choir. The musicianship and hard work required to put out a meaningful product like the Concert Choir does is impressive, and I am glad I get to be a part of it and grow with the group as a musician and a person.”

Additional Performances

The public is invited to hear the Concert Choir’s program at two upcoming events:

- Oct. 1 at 7 p.m. – Fall Preview Concert, First Baptist Church of Morganton, N.C.
- Oct. 10 at 7 p.m. – Fall Concert on campus in Dover Chapel.

Learn more about the Gardner-Webb Department of Music. https://gardner-webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/arts-and-sciences/music/

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