

Longtime GP Community Chorus director steps down

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By [Jody McVeigh](#) on December 07, 2022

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After 13 years at the helm of the Grosse Pointe Community Chorus, Joseph Palazzolo will direct his final concert before stepping down to focus on other pursuits.

“Holiday Memories” takes place at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 11, at St. Clare of Montefalco Catholic Church, 1401 Whittier, Grosse Pointe Park.

The program features a selection of Palazzolo’s favorite chorus numbers dating back to 2009, as well as music “appropriate for a holiday concert,” he said. “I’ll chat a bit between numbers, giving you a window into the pieces and what they mean to me.” When choosing the program, he continued, his focus was on the war in Ukraine.

“I wanted to speak to freedom and liberty and peace,” he said. “Most of the numbers are reflecting that.”

Palazzolo was the accompanist for the GP Community Chorus for two years before then-director Anna Speck leaned over to him during a rehearsal and whispered, “Want a job?”

As he recalled, “In September of 2009, I find myself standing in front of a 70-voice chorus with master accompanist Ron Pietrantoni at the piano and the rest is history.”

From the start he received a warm welcome, as well as the collective chorus’s willingness to work hard to achieve great results. During the last 13 years, those results have yielded myriad fond memories and unforgettable partnerships, including with the Our Lady Star of the Sea choir, Grosse Pointe Symphony, singers from Grosse Pointe North High School and the handbell choir at First English Lutheran Church.

“One of the most thrilling events for me was directing the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Civic Orchestra performing a Mozart Mass with us,” he said.

Three movements from that Mass will be performed at his farewell concert.

Though stepping down as music director of the chorus,

Palazzolo will retain his role as music director at Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church, a post he’s held since 2002. He’ll also continue giving piano lessons there three days a week; he currently has 12 students.

“I still love teaching,” he said. “I get a kick out of these little kids coming in and 12 years later at their senior recital they’re performing Chopin or Beethoven.”

In addition, he recently became the music director at Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Farmington Hills.

“And I perform myself,” he added. “I have a busier concert schedule now ... so I want to concentrate more on performing. (Stepping down from GPCC) will give me more time to practice.”

In addition to the chorus, “Holiday Memories” features world-class violinist Sonia Lee, as well as an organ solo by David Troiano, the former music director at St. Clare of Montefalco.

As Palazzolo prepares to direct his final chorus concert, he praised the wonderful support he’s received throughout the years, from the board of directors and others.

“Thanks so much to Diane Andriotakis and the chorus’ current president, Sandra Mengel, for keeping us organized and paving the way with all the behind-the-scenes work that hardly anybody sees but without which the chorus, as well as myself, the director, would truly have suffered,” he said. “Thanks go most of all to our brilliant accompanist, Ron Pietrantoni. His professionalism and expertise have made rehearsals a real joy for me. ... I bid a fond farewell to all chorus members past and



Photo by Renee Landuyt

Though stepping down as director of the Grosse Pointe Community Chorus, Joseph Palazzolo will continue giving piano lessons. Here, he instructs Chloe Loucks at Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church.

present as I turn to the next chapter in my life.”

Tenor section leader Ken Hermonat will serve as interim director moving forward.

“Good luck and best wishes to my longtime friend, Ken Hermonat, as he mounts the podium to continue the wonderful work that our founders, Malcolm and Marian Johns, began in 1953.”

Tickets for “Holiday Memories” are \$18 in advance, \$20 at the door and \$5 for ages 12 and younger.

Tickets are available at Moehring Woods Florist, 20923 Mack, Grosse Pointe Woods; and Posterity Gallery, 17005 Kercheval, City of Grosse Pointe.

For more information, visit grossepointecommunitychorus.org.

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