

ENTERTAINMENT

Racing City Chorus cues up holiday hits

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By **STEPHEN DOUGLAS**

SARATOGA SPRINGS— The holidays are here, and this weekend Saratoga will be alive with familiar sounds of the season. Saturday night, the Racing City Chorus will perform “What the Dickens? (A Partridge in a Parody)” at the First Baptist Church in Saratoga Springs. Various singing groups will come together with holiday cheer for the whole family. George “Guv” Wallace, Racing City Chorus’ vice president of marketing and public relations, has been a member of the chorus for close to half a century. “I’ve been involved for over 40 years,” Wallace said. “Like a lot of our members, I went to a concert. I was paid as a school teacher the first time I saw the group.”

Wallace had sung in high school, but he never considered a future in singing. Racing City Chorus changed that.

Their Saturday show will appeal to kids of all ages. “It’s family-oriented, and everything is rated G so you can bring kids. Older people like it because they can understand the words and the songs. Nothing is drowned out by bass or drums,” Wallace said. “A lot of people come to our shows for years and years because they like the harmony.” Barbershop music has a special place in American history, Wallace said. “Barbershop is one of the uniquely American music styles. Barbershop and jazz are really the only two original American art forms of music,” he said. “Harmonies are different. Barbershop adds a special sound to it.” The music style dates back to the 1800s in the United States.

“Racing City Chorus is 56 years old and was founded by a couple local Saratogians,” Wallace said. “There are about 60 guys on the roster, but between people retiring, having family obligations and other random

stuff, there are usually 30 to 35 guys at a performance. We sing in a barbershop style, which means its a capella, and it's an all-male lineup."

The group annually competes in singing competitions as part of the Northeastern District, which includes New York state north of Oneonta, all of the New England states and part of Canada.

Racing City Chorus is more than a good local act. Wallace says they have represented the district nationally on seven separate occasions. "We have three quartets in the group," he said. "We have a group called Primrose Lane. They were the Northeastern District senior championship quartet two years ago. They went on to the International Senior quartet contest." Primrose will be among the performers Saturday night, along with Poughkeepsie's Dented Fenders, who will join the show for some comical takes on traditional Christmas carols. "For 'What the Dickens?' we have a Scrooge character and we have spirits," Wallace said. "We don't claim to be actors, and nobody is going to win any Academy Awards, but it will be light-hearted and goofy with some good holiday music. Generally we do our shows in the spring, so we're excited for a holiday show." Racing City Chorus keeps busy year-round. "We bring the chorus around to do singing Valentine's and deliver quartets," Wallace said. "We do barbershop on Broadway in Saratoga during the racing season. We do a lot at Saratoga National. Saratoga Arts Fest, First Night. We're busy all the time." Saturday will be no different. "It will be a great show for everyone," Wallace said. "We're looking forward to a fun night of holiday music."

What the Dickens?

Where: First Baptist Church, 45 Washington St., Saratoga Springs

When: 7 p.m. Saturday **Tickets:** \$15, 16 and younger admitted free.

www.racingcitychorus.org or call 518-885-7904