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Solo auction over, roles set for 'Messiah'

BY SYDNEY STONNER
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The auction is over, the parts are assigned and seven amateur vocalists will shine in the spotlight at the Columbia Chorale's "Messiah" sing-along this Sunday.

In November, the Columbia Chorale had eight solos from Handel's Christmas oratorio up for bid on eBay. The auction, the proceeds of which are split between the Missouri United Methodist Church Concert Series and the Columbia Chorale, brought in \$704.50.

Dianna Long, a bankruptcy attorney and president of the Columbia Chorale, bought the alto solo "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion" for \$53.

"I expected to pay a lot more," Long said. Someone bid against her but later dropped out of the auction.

Long is singing her piece as a duet with friend and chorale member Lara Nugent. She decided to buy the solo "as a reminder that you don't have to be an opera singer to sing." Long hopes her amateur efforts will help the sing-along be more inclusive.

Columbia physician Theodore Willmore purchased the tenor recitative and aria "Comfort ye ... Ev'ry Valley" for \$100. A member of the chorale since 2001, Willmore minored in voice in college. He chose this solo, the first in the oratorio, because "it's one of my favorites," he said.

Other winning bidders are David Orr and Susan Robertson of Columbia and John and Janet Stone of Pennsylvania. The highest bid received, placed by the Stones, was \$125 for the soprano solo "I know that my redeemer liveth." The Stones bought four solos: two for soprano and two for tenor. They plan to make a weekend of their musical excursion to Columbia.

"We'd been looking for a vacation," John Stone said.

But they see more in this than a weekend getaway.

"Rarely in life do you get the opportunity to sing with a full orchestra," Stone said. The Columbia Civic Orchestra will perform with the chorale.

Alex Innecco, director of the Columbia Chorale, is pleased with the results of his rather unusual audition technique. He sees that "everybody is very committed" and that all the soloists "want to give their best."

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