

## Arts in Prison Quarterly



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## A Worldwide First: East Hill Singers to Perform Handel's Messiah



Arts in Prison, Inc. is thrilled to announce that the next East Hill Singers concert will be the first ever of its kind. They will be performing Handel's beloved oratorio, Messiah. This is the first time in history that the Messiah has been performed by a prison choir outside the walls of a prison.

The performance is the brainchild of East Hill Singers conductor, Kirk Carson.

The East Hill Singers is a 13 year old chorus comprised of inmates from Lansing Correctional Facility along with volunteer singers from the community. Usually those volunteers are men. For this concert, however, it is necessary to have female singers as well. So the regular East Hill Singers inmates and volunteers will be joined by women from the choirs of Colonial Church in Prairie Village and Community Christian Church in Kansas City, MO. Singers from Village Presbyterian Church, Country Club Church, and the William Baker Festival Singers will also join with the regular volunteers to present this piece.

The same concert will be given on two dates. The locations are churches where the East Hill Singers will be performing for the first time.

**Sunday, November 6, 2011**  
**St. Joseph Catholic Church, 11311 Johnson Drive,**

**Shawnee, KS  
4:00 p.m.**

**Sunday, November 13, 2011  
Grace United Methodist Church, 11485 S.  
Ridgeview Road, Olathe, KS  
4:00 p.m.**

Concerts are free and open to the public. A free-will offering will be requested.

### **New inmate art: Going digital**

Lansing Correctional Facility inmate, Donald C., has donated several digital works of art that he has created. We loved their vibrant colors and bold designs. Arts in Prison is in the process of having them printed on art print paper and frame, but we want to share some of the images with you here. The framed prints will be available at the upcoming East Hill Singers concerts.



### **Documentary on East Hill Singers: Update and fundraising report**

As you may remember from previous messages, a Los Angeles film company is creating a documentary about Arts in Prison and the East Hill Singers. It is a labor of love for them, and they continue to raise the funds needed for its completion. If you would like to support this project, please let us know, or send your gift designated for this project.



### **AiP Website now has a store!**

Arts in Prison's website has been undergoing a transformation. We are excited to announce that the site now hosts a shop at which you can purchase your favorite AiP art, photography and notecards. Stay tuned for more website updates. Meanwhile, check out our new Gallery/shop area at [Arts in Prison online shop](#).



## New Arts in Prison classes

Arts in Prison has begun several new classes at Lansing Correctional Facility. We are excited about each class and grateful to our wonderful volunteer teachers.

## Director's Column from Leigh Lynch, Executive Director

Have you ever wondered what the East Hill Singers think about their concert and singing experiences? East Hill conductor Kirk Carson takes some time after each performance for the singers to share their observations and thoughts.

The first thing shared is usually great appreciation for the "fantastic meal" the inmates received from the host church. After everyone has commented on what a treat the dinner was, the singers start to explore what it felt like to stand before a large audience.

Sometimes, they have never stood in a performance space so large. Sometimes, they marvel at the size of the crowd, and some admit a bit of stage fright. Sometimes they even notice how wonderful the sound is in the space, something attributable to the skills they are developing under Kirk's guidance. Always, there are comments about how gracious and appreciative the audience members who come through the receiving line are. "This woman came up to us with tears in her eyes. She said we gave her hope. By the time she was done I was crying too." expressed one inmate singer. "The people are always so welcoming. It gives me hope for when I get out." remarked another. Then the talk turns to family.

"Some of my family won't visit me at the facility, but they always come to the concerts. It was really nice to have a chance to see them." "My son hadn't spoken to me in years, but he came to a concert last year and brought my newborn grandson. Now we are in touch regularly. I am really looking forward to the next concert! I love my son." Almost every inmate has a similar story. Probably the one that pulls tightest on the heart strings is a singer we will call "Alec". His daughters had not had contact with him for 20 years, but this year they contacted his sister, from whom they learned about an upcoming concert. Without letting him know in advance, they traveled to Kansas City to see him sing. He caught sight of them a few times during the warm up, but it was not until the receiving line that he was sure. He was still crying with wonder and joy long after the concert.

Another inmate comment brings home the wide reach that Arts in Prison programs have: "My kids get to see me doing something positive." It meant so much to him that, through what he is doing in the East Hill Singers, he is recreating the image that his children have of

him. And he and his children can continue to bond through sharing this experience.

Statistics show that children of the incarcerated are more likely to get into trouble themselves. Think about how through singing, drawing, painting or performing, the men in our programs are showing loved ones that they can change their lives. Positive change inspired and motivated through the arts is impacting more than one at-risk population. Thank you for your continuing support.

Leigh

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