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**The Gryphon Carolers 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Concert to be held at  
Spangenberg Theater on December 14th**

*This year's concert to benefit local non-profit, KARA - Grief Support and  
Education Center in Palo Alto*

**Palo Alto, CA, October 15, 2007** – The Gryphon Carolers will this year be marking 26 years since the first assembly of its singers and musicians took to the streets of Palo Alto to delight passers-by with a now famous repertoire of holiday music. For over a quarter century, the group's annual concert has evolved into a "must see/hear" tradition of music and mirth for sold-out audiences at such venues as Villa Montalvo, Stanford's Dinkelspiel Theater, and Redwood City's Fox Theater. This year, for the first time, the group has designated KARA, a local non-profit organization to be the recipient of proceeds from the concert. Palo Alto's Spangenberg Theater at Gunn High School will host the revelry on Friday night, December 14th at 8 pm. Detailed information about the concert and tickets can be found on the group's Web site: [www.gryphonallstars.com](http://www.gryphonallstars.com).

Today, the Gryphon Carolers is a 35-voice ensemble that draws from a 200-page repertoire of songs, many of which were arranged or written by individual members of the talented group. The eclectic repertoire for the concert features seasonal Christmas and holiday songs and instrumentals, ranging from traditional and contemporary takes on Celtic music, modern jazz vocal arrangements set in Brazilian and Latin styles, and original songs and compositions. The unique and dazzling vocal and instrumental arrangements are what keep bringing audiences back every year.

**Gryphon Carolers Partner with KARA Grief Support and Education Center**

As a way to further ties to the community it entertains, the Gryphon Carolers has selected KARA, a nonprofit organization serving the San Francisco Bay Area since 1976, to be the first recipient to benefit from proceeds of its annual concert.

"KARA offers such a vital service to our community," said Carol McComb, sing-songwriter and co-founder of the Gryphon Carolers. "KARA's volunteer counselors have helped several of our group's members on their journey through a life-threatening illness and/or bereavement, and we thought this was a great way to support such a valuable community service and show our appreciation."

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KARA espouses no particular philosophical or religious orientation. There is no charge for those who use the group's services; they are supported primarily by tax-deductible donations from individuals, corporations and foundations. In addition, to individual and group counseling, KARA sponsors a number of events that are open to the public each year such as "At Your Own Pace Walk," a three mile fund-raising walk in memory of loved ones; workshops for professionals and corporations; and an annual non-denominational Candlelight Remembrance Service, this year to be held at the Unity Church in Palo Alto on Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. For more information: [www.kara-grief.org](http://www.kara-grief.org).

### **The History of the Gryphon Carolers and All-Stars**

Twenty-five years ago, when local jazz musician and composer Ed Johnson and singer-songwriter Carol McComb recruited students from their harmony singing classes at Gryphon Stringed Instruments, it would have been hard for them to imagine the eventual acclaim and staying power of the group they were founding. In the early years, they merely provided sheets of Christmas carol lyrics to the group and informally serenaded seasonal shoppers and diners on the streets of downtown Palo Alto.

"We've come a very long way since those early days," said Ed Johnson. "We've matured into a more formal - but still spirited - group. We've gone miles past the simple, traditional carols we once sang. Some of the arrangements have as many as seven different vocal parts. And the program runs the gamut from Celtic, folk and bluegrass to Brazilian jazz and other South American-influenced musical stylings. People love the diversity of the music."

The Gryphon "All-Stars", an instrumental group that accompanies the Carolers, is this year comprised of Carol McComb on guitar, mandolin, and percussion, Ed Johnson on guitar, piano, and percussion, bassist Preston Carter, violinists Valerie Rose and Anita Grunwald, Heather Winkle on piano, flute and penny whistles, Kristen Strom on saxophone and clarinet, Keith Little on guitar and Brian Rice on percussion. This all-star band will perform both with the Carolers and as a separate band during the concert.

### **A Challenging Repertoire and Rigorous Rehearsal Schedule**

The Carolers adhere to a weekly rehearsal schedule that begins in September and continues until the December concert. Participation is voluntary, with most joining through word of mouth or being recruited through classes at Gryphon Stringed Instruments in Palo Alto. As the group has matured through the years, its caliber has radically changed and improved, attracting the local area's top musicians and singers and inspiring Johnson and McComb to write and arrange more challenging material.

Johnson, who started writing arrangements for the group in 1987, will often take elements from other compositions and adapt them to an already existing carol. "I Saw

Three Ships” is a traditional English carol Johnson arranged as a Celtic jig, incorporating Irish fiddle tunes throughout the piece. Another audience favorite that will be performed this year is “Come All Ye Faithful,” arranged in a gospel-rock style.

In addition to the Annual Concert on December 14th (open to the public), the group will also be performing at local area nursing homes in the coming weeks. These concerts are as important and beneficial to the group’s members as they are to the audience. “It’s a really moving experience to be part of this group,” said McComb. “It reminds us all of what the holidays are supposed to be about—reaching out to people in our community and giving, regardless of religion or beliefs. It cuts across all of the commercial stuff.”

### **Concert/Ticket Information**

The 26th Annual Gryphon Carolers and All Stars Holiday Concert will be held at The Spangenberg Theater at Gunn High School on December 14, at 8 pm. Tickets will be offered in an open seating arrangement at two tiers of prices. Premium seating is \$25 for adults and \$18 for seniors and children under 12. General admission will be \$15 for adults and \$10 for seniors and children under 12. Tickets can be purchased at Gryphon Stringed Instruments, 211 Lambert Ave, Palo Alto, (650) 493-2131 and will be sold there until 4pm the day of the concert. Tickets are also available online at [www.gryphonallstars.com](http://www.gryphonallstars.com) and will be sold at the Spangenberg Theater box office the night of the performance.

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