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**ACCLAIMED HOLIDAY SHOW
BENDING TOWARDS THE LIGHT... A JAZZ NATIVITY
RETURNING TO CENTRAL NEW YORK**

BENDING TOWARDS THE LIGHT... A JAZZ NATIVITY, the Christmas story told in a truly American fashion, though the medium of jazz, returns to Central New York on Tuesday, December 13th at 7 PM at St. Mary of Mt. Carmel/Blessed Sacrament Church at 648 Jay St. in Utica, NY. The performance is free and open to the public. Free will donations will be accepted.

THE JAZZ NATIVITY is presented by Chelsea Opera in memory of the late Nicholas S. Priore, Esq., a much-loved native of Utica and this year they are also remembering Margherita Priore Collis. The three kings will be jazz legend Joe Magnarelli (trumpet), Joe Carello (sax) and the incomparable tap dancer Max Pollack. Max has been honored with his image on a US postal stamp. The performance also heralds the return of Utica native mezzo soprano, Leonarda Priore, co-founder and Artistic Director of New York City's Chelsea Opera whose reputation has been recognized by the industry for the quality of its work and received favorable reviews from The New York Times, Opera America, Opera News, and America Oggi to name a few. Ms. Priore has been hailed for her rich mezzo and accomplishments on the operatic stage. As a celebrated jazz vocalist, Priore enjoys shifting from an operatic vocal style to a simple lyrical, jazz styling. She will be featured in the production, along with jazz vocals by Jeff Welcher (baritone), Ceara Windhausen (soprano), John Krause (tenor), child singers Morgan Gaspa and Bella Collis along with the New York City vocal group The Royal Bopsters made up of Amy London (soprano), Jeanne O'Connor (alto), Pete McGuinness (tenor), and Will Gorman (baritone). Special guest soloist Alexandra Priore will also be appearing together with other area performers including Amy Bader in dance and others in song. The performance will be conducted by the composer, Anne Phillips with Garrett August Heater as Stage Director.

The Central New York performance will feature area luminaries Barry Blumenthal (piano), Tom Brigandi (bass), Jeff Stockham (trumpet/flugelhorn), Mike Dubaniewicz (tenor sax/baritone/clarinet), Frank Grosso (alto sax/flute) and Angelo Candela (trombone), David Donley (percussion), Steve Brown (guitar). Acclaimed New York City drummer, Tim Horner will be joining the band on this 6th annual presentation.

"Bending Towards the Light" was written and arranged by singer-songwriter Anne Phillips at the suggestion of the late John Gensel, the famed "Jazz Pastor" of St. Peter's Church in New York City. Additional music was written by jazz icon Dave Brubeck and Bob Kindred with additional lyrics by Henry Timm and Iola Brubeck. It has been performed yearly to turn-away crowds since its 1985 premiere, and has featured such jazz legends as Dave Brubeck, Tito Puente, Grady Tate, Benny Powell, Jackie Cain & Roy Kral, Lionel Hampton, and John Faddis.

Of past renditions, the critics have said:

"By the end of "The Jazz Nativity" you know you've been through something wonderful...a stirring celebration of Christmas!" - Dr. Billy Taylor, [CBS Sunday Morning](#)

"None of the classics is half so giddy, nor so utterly entertaining as "The Jazz Nativity" that burst onto the stage of Orchestra Hall on Sunday afternoon!" - Howard Reich, [Chicago Tribune](#)

"Anne Phillips has created a compelling evening in which the secular and sacred swirl and soar!" - Chuck Berg, [Topeka News Journal](#)

Chelsea Opera is a professional opera company in its eighteenth season which produces fully staged operas with chamber orchestra, and other musical endeavors. Founded in 2004 by former Utican and professional singer Leonarda Priore and Lynne Hayden-Findlay, Chelsea Opera serves two constituencies: singers & audiences, in both opera and other genres. Chelsea Opera has given hundreds of artists the chance to practice their craft in a supportive professional setting in a NYC venue with chamber orchestra and now is expanding to produce in Upstate, NY. For audiences, Chelsea Opera's productions of new & classic repertoire provide enthusiasts a chance to see high quality productions with orchestra in a relaxed, intimate & welcoming location with affordable ticket prices. Performances take place in locations where the intimacy and superior acoustics make the experience exceedingly attractive for all.

For further information, visit chelseaopera.org or write to: kenos@chelseaopera.org

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