



City of  
**OAKLAND**  
California

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**Oakland Chorus Continues to Spread Holiday Joy more than 70 years after its Founding**

OAKLAND, CA – The City and Port of Oakland Employees’ Chorus, founded in 1940 by Elsie Giani, is one of the best kept secrets in town. For more than seven decades, the Chorus has performed every holiday season and at many City functions and events. The 72<sup>nd</sup> season features free noontime concerts on Wednesday, December 12; Thursday, December 13 and Friday, December 14 in downtown Oakland. These festive concerts are open to the public.

Ms. Giani, inspired by a group of carolers she saw in a local department store, founded what was then dubbed the City of Oakland Holiday Choir in 1940. The first concert featured five singers, including Elsie and her sister Albina, accompanied by organist Hilda Brandt, who was also a City employee. That first concert was performed in front of the decorated holiday tree on the grand staircase in Oakland City Hall’s Rotunda.

Fast forward and you will be able to enjoy the City and Port of Oakland Employees’ Chorus in the same location. Among the 28 members of this year’s Chorus you will also see Ms. Giani who continues to sing with the group as she approaches 99 years of age. Joining with her will be City and Port of Oakland employees and retirees and Oakland citizens.

The concerts on Wednesday, December 12 and Thursday, December 13 will be held in the lobby of the Dalziel Building, 250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza. The concert on Friday, December 14, will be held in the Rotunda of Oakland City Hall, 1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza. All three concerts will begin at Noon and will last about an hour.

Ms. Giani, who was a secretary for the City Council when she founded the Chorus, has been recognized in several ways for her dedication to and support of the Chorus. In 2008, she received a Mayoral Proclamation and, in December 2010, the Oakland City Council issued a Resolution honoring the Chorus for 70 years of holiday concerts that have enriched our community.

For the 2012 concerts, resident conductor Jacqueline Hairston, a nationally renowned ASCAP published composer-arranger, will lead the Chorus through a diverse repertoire. Musical selections will include traditional holiday standards plus the Hebrew prayer “Oseh Shalom”, the traditional spiritual “The African Noel”, the Gospel song “Rise up Shepherd and Follow” and the classic “Hallelujah Chorus”. Rounding out each performance will be audience sing-a-longs. Several of the musical arrangements sung by the Chorus are original compositions by Ms. Hairston. Accompanying the Chorus will be Jerry Donaldson, an accomplished Bay Area concert pianist.

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