



06/18/2003

S'Wonderful

By: Susan Van Dongen, TimeOFF

All-female group Key of She partnered with Women Aware for 'An Amazing A Cappella Amalgamation,' a benefit concert taking place at South Brunswick High School June 21.



The women of Key of She will perform at South Brunswick High School in Monmouth Junction June 21.

The audience at the Union County Arts Center in Rahway had come to see Ray Charles, so they were a little perplexed when six nice ladies from Central Jersey — the a cappella group Key of She — took the stage.

"They thought Ray had changed to the Raylettes," jokes Key of She founder Sue Jaques.

"There were about 1,300 people in the audience in Rahway and we thought 'Uh oh, the people are just here for Ray, they must be wondering who we are,'" says Patty Cronheim, a Key of She member from Pennington. Ms. Jaques and her "posse" opened for Mr. Charles last May, just one of a flurry of concerts and activities the group has enjoyed since coming together in fall 2001. They've also performed at the Conduit in Trenton, Philadelphia's Annual Paradigm Award Luncheon, the Bastille Day

Celebration in New Hope, Pa., and the Montgomery Center for the Arts.

In addition, they helped bring in the New Year, performing at Newtown, Pa., for First Night, New Year's Eve 2002. Key of She also found time last year to record and release its first CD, *Our First Time*, available through the Web site www.keyofshe.com.

This weekend they will embark on a new partnership — with Women Aware — for *An Amazing A Cappella Amalgamation*. The benefit concert was jointly created by Key of She and Women Aware, the Middlesex County-based nonprofit that provides services for victims of domestic violence and their children. The all-a cappella concert takes place at South Brunswick High School in Monmouth Junction June 21 and features The Accidentals and Duwende from New York, Philadelphia's Lunatic Groove and Spare Parts from Princeton.

"We think it'll be a great evening with a gathering of five great groups," Ms. Jaques says.

"Since we're an all-female group it was a natural fit to do a benefit for a cause that really supports women," Ms. Cronheim says. "They saw Key of She perform and came to us with the idea. We do some charitable concerts but this one was a total no-brainer. We're very enthusiastic about supporting this organization."

Women Aware's programs provide shelter, legal advocacy, counseling, education, referral information and a 24-hour crisis hotline to the community. Since its inception some 20 years ago, the agency has helped more than 10,000 victims of domestic violence.

"They're there to give women good answers to important questions so they can make healthy choices," Ms. Cronheim says.

"(With this event) the funds are going to help pay for affordable housing, so the women can be independent when they walk away from the abuse. That's one of the biggest challenges for victims of domestic violence — finding housing once they've made the very courageous step to get out of a situation. We're just happy to be a part of this and help out. That's what we're trying to do — as well as make some great music."

Key of She drew from the lively all-female a cappella scene in Central and North Jersey, inviting Lisa Ernst of Hightstown, Amy Raditz of Princeton, Pat Fass of Pennington and Dyann Mazzeo from Secaucus ("an honorary Central Jerseyan," Ms. Jaques says) to come aboard in fall 2001. The group didn't take long to harmonize and build up their song list, which they add to constantly.

"We have a lot of new songs," Ms. Cronheim says. "We're having a great time learning new music and working with some new arrangers."

"We've got Kevin Fox, the lead singer and arranger for the Toronto group Cadence, working on an arrangement for us," Ms. Jaques says. "We've been having fun with new styles of things and the new voices. We're trying out some originals too."

They've also adapted "Not That Kind" by R&B diva Anastacia and added George Gershwin's "S'Wonderful" to the repertoire. This is all in addition to Key of She favorites "Runaway," "Moondance" and "I've Got You Under My Skin."

Because of time restrictions they won't be doing their patented musical introductions of the invited groups. Ms. Jaques hopes they'll get around to "A Man" — a humorous takeoff on Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" that celebrates the quirks of the male sex.

"How many roads must a man travel down/ before he admits that he's lost?" is just one line.

Ms. Cronheim was in Double Treble, one of Key of She's previous incarnations, and was invited to come back to the group about a year and a half ago. According to Ms. Jaques, she's the instrumental specialist, the one providing much of the "drum" and "brass" sounds — all with her voice.

"It was worth coming back because these ladies are so talented and we have such fun," she says. "It's more than a typical a cappella vocal group — it's really an a cappella *band*."

They must have been doing something special that night in May 2002, because they managed to win over the Ray Charles fans, as well as the soul superstar himself.

"The audience was so enthusiastic," Ms. Cronheim says. "It was a great experience and we actually got to meet Ray, who was very charming."

"That was a dream come true," Ms. Jaques says. "He's an icon. He's the man."

An Amazing A Cappella Amalgamation, with Key of She, The Accidentals, Duwende, Lunatic Groove and Spare Parts, *takes place at South Brunswick High School, 750 Ridge Road, Monmouth Junction, June 21, 8 p.m. Tickets cost \$22, \$17 for seniors and students; proceeds benefit Women Aware of Middlesex County. For information, call (732) 249-4242 or (609) 466-2494.*

On the Web: www.keyofshe.com

©PACKETONLINE News Classifieds Entertainment Business - Princeton and Central New Jersey 2005