

State gospel choir masses to record

BY CHRISTIE STORM
 ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The joyful sounds of gospel music will fill the air today as the Arkansas Gospel Mass Choir gathers to record an album in Bentonville.

The group, led by Charles E. Moore, is recording its first album for T Records during a performance and recording session at 5 p.m. at Valley Harvest Ministries, 211 S.E. 34th St., Suite 13. The public is welcome. Admission is free.

The choir was formed last year and includes members from across the state, including Bentonville, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Jonesboro, Little Rock and Springdale. The recording session will also feature guest artists, including Trevon Davis from *Sunday's Best* on BET.

The live album, *This Is the Day*, will be released nationwide in August. The project will feature original songs and a variety of styles, from traditional gospel to praise and worship. Moore wrote two of the songs and is partial to "Where Jesus Is," an

old-style tune he wrote in memory of his mother.

Moore, a longtime member of the Georgia Mass Choir, moved to Northwest Arkansas in 2004 and soon became interested in starting a similar group.

"Arkansas didn't have one that was active, so I was inspired and after some prayer I put together a small committee," Moore said. He visited churches and choirs across the state and recruited members. The group came together for the first time in March for a worship concert. More than 130 singers participated.

Moore said he heard an old friend, Troy Sneed at Emtro Gospel, was searching for new talent. Moore sent him a videotape of the group's concert.

"He called and wanted to listen to us in person," Moore said.

Sneed visited Arkansas in the fall and offered the group a three-album recording contract. Moore said he's still in a daze from the unexpected news.

"I think I blacked out," Moore said. "Companies today don't

typically invest that kind of money in a choir that's never been heard of before ... so he's taking a chance on us."

The choir is not only made up of members from throughout the state, it is also denominationally and racially diverse — something Moore is especially happy about.

"Our common goal and objective is to show people that regardless of our differences we all have something in common," he said. "We love music and we love ministering and singing and all of us love the Lord."

With members spread out over Arkansas, getting together to rehearse can be problematic, so the group gets together by region, with Moore traveling from place to place with a few musicians. He expects about 100 members to be on hand for today's recording.

Information about the Arkansas Gospel Mass Choir is available online at www.arkansasgospelmass.com or by calling Moore at (912) 381-1018.

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