

# Dance Spotlight

## Alexander Johnson

By Cassandra Shaw

It takes a lot to break away from the crowd and be comfortable to try new things. Alexander Johnson did just that when he became the first out of his family to be involved in theatre and dance. He graduated from Lakeville High School and started his freshman year at Concordia University in the fall of 2014. His major is Theatre and his minor is Dance. Alexander is a natural dancer, but coming to Concordia gave him the opportunity to learn different dance techniques. Some of the types of dances he does are freestyle, hip-hop, pop-lock, ballet and modern. Currently Alexander is taking tap here at Concordia. During his freshman year, Alexander participated in his first dance concert Spring Into Dance. At last year's "Spring into Dance," he danced in a couple of pieces including, "The Falling Romeo" with music by Dark Paradise.

Over the summer, he got the chance to work with Michael Matthew Ferrell, who is the Founder and Artistic Director of Alive & Kickin, a Minnesota non-



Photo By Cassandra Shaw

profit organization. Having the chance to work with Ferrell, gave Alexander a firsthand experience with a well-known, famous choreographer that teaches other students about dance. Now a sophomore, Alexander has been hard at work in the dance studio. "When it comes to being a choreographer, I like the ability to have an idea of a dance piece, by writing it down and then seeing it happen, I love seeing my creations." He hopes to be a professional dance choreographer and have his own dance studio. Alexander wants to be able to choreograph big dance pieces and dance with major companies. He is taking a choreographing class at Concordia and he is also working on a couple of dance pieces for the "Spring Into Dance." Bob Fosse was a talented dance choreographer who inspires Alexander to follow his dream of being a choreographer. "Making up dances can be a difficult task but when you love doing it, the vision you had for that particular dance will unravel perfectly."

# Concordia Christmas Concert

## "The Work of Christmas Begins"

By Maria Markman

In the midst of the Christmas hustle-and-bustle, the last thing we want to be reminded of is all the work remaining ahead. The Christmas to-do list keeps getting longer and longer. But those who attended this year's Concordia Fine and Performing Arts Christmas Concert were in for a special treat. The concert focused on reminding the audience of the true reason for the season, especially in light of all the events, to do lists, and preparations for finals and Christmas.

The concert was held in a festively decorated Buetow Auditorium. Dr. Chapman welcomed the audience and reminded the group of Concordia's long-standing tradition of the Fine and Performing Arts Christmas Concert. Many families return to this concert year-after-year, which is "St. Paul's best kept secret," in Chapman's opinion. The concert itself consisted of three parts: "Begins," "Of Christmas," and "The Work." Each section featured songs by Concordia's Christus Chorus, Jubilate, and the Handbell Ensemble; some of the pieces even included the Chamber Orchestra (an added treat).

What better place to begin the concert, then at the very beginning, God's Creation? The Christus Chorus entered singing "O sifuni mungu" with solos by Patrick Inouye, Anna Simon, Karina Schlect, and Lydia Hook. The choir sang text in both Swahili and English, like opening a Christmas present, immediately the audience felt a major theme of the concert, "All creatures, every kind, all men and women, praise God, praise the Lord!" We are God's creation; he created us for relationship with one another and in loving one another we are doing "The Work of Christmas."

Next the two choirs sang together along with some handbell accompaniment. The handbells acted as a bell toll before a church service, an alarm to wake you up, or the chime before you begin your work. This song, "All You Works of the Lord" really welcomed the audience into the concert. Throughout the remainder of the "Begins" section, the audience joined in hymns and heard readings of the prophesied Messiah. "Savior of the Nations Come" a handbell ensemble piece directed by

Carolynne Mathis, was my favorite piece overall. There were many cross overs between the members of the choirs, orchestra, and the handbells ensemble solidifying the strength in Concordia's Music Department lead by Dr. David Mennicke.

The next section titled "Of Christmas" opened with Handel's "Messiah," a Christmas favorite for many. The chamber orchestra was the perfect addition to the joined choirs. Lydia Hook, Concordia Senior Music Business Major, sang like an angel. Her voice was truly magnificent and the perfect preface to the choirs jubilant reprise, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on Earth."

"The Work," the final section of the concert, wrapped everything together. From God's creation, the fall of humans, to the Savior of the World, as Christians what work we are called to do in a world torn by injustice, fear, and oppression? The Work of Christmas, as stated in the concert's namesake piece with text by Howard Thurman: When the song of the Angels is stilled, The work of Christmas begins. When the star in the heavens is gone, The work of Christmas begins. To find the lost, To heal the broken, To feed the hungry, To release the prisoner, To rebuild the nations, To bring peace among brothers, To make music in the heart. When the kings and princes are home, The work of Christmas begins. When the shepherds are back with their flocks, The work of Christmas begins.

And in this wonderful season of Advent, waiting and preparing for Jesus' return, students are called to be the light, help for the helpless, and to be a voice for the dumb. The two choirs were magnificent under the direction of both Dr. Mennicke and Professor Shari Speer. The two put countless hours into choosing the pieces for the concert and rehearsing them. Concordia is so fortunate to have these talented individuals. Instead of feeling burdened by the weight of Christmas tasks, students should feel inspired to share the truth of Christmas. "E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come."