

John Boccacino:

In your humble opinion, what is it about Holidays at Hendricks that makes it such a special occasion?
We have alumni that will come

John Boccacino:

What was it like for you the first time that you stood as the artistic director of how it is at Hendricks?
What kind of things hit you at that moment?

Peppie Calvar:

Oh my gosh. What am I getting myself into here? This is actually my 10th Holidays at Hendricks, and the amount the show has grown since my arrival here in 2013 is just... I mean, there have just been improvements from one end to the other. When we started out, it was just the Hendricks Chapel Choir. I invited the University Singers, because they're the university's flagship choral ensemble, and we collaborated with the Syracuse University Brass Ensemble directed by James Spencer for a great many years. That was established for quite a while prior to my arrival. We've since shifted away from the Syracuse University Brass Ensemble to put more of a spotlight on our student instrumental organizations, namely, the Symphony Orchestra and the Schiff Jazz Ensemble.

Since then, we've incorporated all of our larger Setnor choirs and we've returned it into a major showcase

with this pandemic. In anything, it's intensified, because we need to really be there for each other. I love the idea of spreading the light, taking it from Hendricks Chapel going out into the world

Peppie Calvar:

Oh my gosh, man, it is a daily blessing. It is a blessing. It always comes with a set of challenges, but it also comes with small, daily victories. A light goes off somebody's head every single day around here. I've said from the day I got here, I feel like being at the right place at the right time is really, really important for people. This place has such a wonderful tendency to create the right time for people.

John Boccacino:

You don't just limit your talents to the students who are here in Central New York. I want to give our audience some background. You love to travel and you have a residency in Mexico, you have a residency in Costa Rica, you travel across the continents giving these clinics and masterclasses. What fuels that part of your passion?

Peppie Calvar:

My goodness, just that ongoing drive to spread the light and spread the message of choral music across the world. I think that's part of my job as a faculty member at this institution is to bring choral music and great choral music, particularly great American choral music, across the world. That's what audiences across the world want to hear anyway. I leave for Brazil on Tuesday, Friday I will be there for two weeks doing a choral festival down there with... I will be hearing four choirs a day, no, 10 choirs a day, doing four pieces each and giving them comments and feedback. I can't wait, so excited. At the same time I'll be doing a clinic on music literacy, which I find to be so incredibly important, because the world wants to sing and the world sing a whole heck of a lot better if it knows how to read music. They'll sing a whole heck of a lot more if they know how to read music.

I'll be doing a presentation on choral arranging because I love doing it. At the same time... That's Brazil, in my time there. Later this spring, the Hendricks Chapel Choir is going to collaborate with the Syracuse University Wind Ensemble and travel to the UK, specifically to Lockerbie to be there to commemorate the 35th anniversary of Pan Am Flight 103, which 35 Syracuse University students perished. We are so excited and honored to be a part of that commemoration.

We're commissioning a piece from a UK-based fabulous composer, Cecilia McDowall. She's actually composing a piece with a text by Nicholas Vrenios, who was one of the victims of Pan Am Flight 103. We just couldn't be any more excited about the international impact that the Hendricks Chapel Choir is having. I'm just honored to be in the right place at the right time, even if that right place happens to be 5,000 miles from here. My attachment to here is what makes it great.

John Boccacino:

No, there's a lot to be said for the right time, right place mentality. Again, we're so fortunate to get to have your services here at Syracuse University. You do so much music. Slightly, have a preference of being a composer or being a conductor? Which one may stand out to you as maybe being your favorite? Or does it depend on the day and the performance?

Peppie Calvar:

I feel like it's a real privilege to be able to wear all the hats. My high school band director, God rest him, he said that I was a jack of all trades and a master of none. I'd like to think I've made it far enough down the road that I can wear the hats and wear them well enough to be able to educate our students from a multitude of perspectives, how it is that their performance is going to be received? What it is that they

need to do to put on the best performance? What do they need to do as composers that performers can put on their best performance? It's a thrill ride. I love rollercoaster.

John Boccacino:

I do want to shift gears briefly before we close here. There have to be some passions of yours that are outside of the musical realm. What are some hobbies you've got that you like to do in your free time?

Peppie Calvar:

I love being outdoors, particularly in Central New York, particularly in the summer and fall

Hendricks Chapel. My last question for you is one I've been dying to ask, but I wanted to save this towards the end. What's the story behind your nickname of Peppie?

Peppie Calvar:

Peppie is a nickname. I'm José Calvar III. My grandmother, my dad's mom, insisted that my name be José, so that's my name. But my mom did not want me to be named José. So, every José, well, the nickname for José is Pepe. She didn't want me to be Pepe either. So, she put Peppie, P-E-P-P-I-E, pretty much on me at birth without putting it on my birth certificate. I've been called Peppie by everybody ever since. Except for the DMV and the bank. Honestly, I think that José in Italian is, Signore Boccacino, Giuseppe. So, Giuseppe short is Peppe, [inaudio 00:29:40].

John Boccacino:

See, we try to educate our audience and share some insights into our guests that go beyond just their title. I love the candor you've given us during this conversation. It's been a fantastic time chatting with Peppie Calvar, the artistic director of Holidays at Hendricks. He does so much more than as an associate professor and assistant director of the choral activities. Make sure you follow along the Hendricks Chapel website for information getting your tickets for Holidays at Hendricks Sunday, December 4th. Guaranteed to be a thrill and a crowd-pleaser inside of Hendricks Chapel. Peppie, thank you for the time and best of luck with your travels and we can't wait to see in a couple weeks for the performances.

Peppie Calvar:

[Italian 00:30:21] Signore Boccacino.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of The 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for The 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.