

**By Gene O. Morris**

**Executive Director Fox Theatre-McCook**

Enchanted by a performance that “captured my interest and held me in time,” Charles Coleman is encouraging people throughout the McCook area to attend the Saturday night performance of “Civil War Voices” at the historic Fox Theatre in downtown McCook.

Coleman, who traveled to Lincoln with his wife, Christina, to view the Civil War musical performance at the Lied Center, said the show “had moments which took my breath away. It has such a powerful message. Jim Harris, the author and one of the main characters, has crafted a magnificent story and the cast does a superb job of connecting with the crowd. It’s as if you are a close friend or a member of the family, and the performers are talking directly to you,” he said.

The Saturday night performance at the Fox, which will begin at 7:30 p.m. (CT), “offers a rare treat for the people of the area.”

Coleman, who is the chairman of the Fox Operations & Events Committee, has been involved in music most of his life, including many years as the elementary music director in McCook.

“In all those years, I have seen precious few performances as powerful as Civil War Voices,” he said.

Saturday night’s show at the Fox is made possible by a donation of the Harris Brothers—J.T., Bill, Bob, Bert and Jim—and their mother, Eleanor Suess Harris, as a memorial tribute to Mrs. Harris’s parents and the Harris brothers’ grandparents, Louis and Ethyl Suess.

All net proceeds from the sale of tickets will go to the Fox Theatre renovation campaign.

Advance tickets, available at Hershberger Music Co., are available through Saturday noon for \$20 each. Tickets may also be reserved by calling Gene Morris at 340-5972 or Janet Werkmeister at 345-3426 or 340-1049.

On the night of the show, tickets will be available at the door for \$25 each.

More than 800 people attended the Friday night show at the Lied Center for the Performing Arts, and Coleman said the crowd would have been larger if it had not been for a snowstorm which struck Lincoln Friday afternoon.

After the Lincoln show, an 85-year-old patron of the arts told J.T. Harris that “Civil War Voices” was the best show he has seen in a lifetime of following theatrical productions.

Coleman sees the reason for the man’s high praise.

“Civil War Voices appeals to so many people. There’s something for people who like gospel music and spirituals. There is also a powerful patriotic message and an uplifting emphasis on outstanding musical performance. It touches all segments in a compelling way,” he said.

The show covers the gamut from the humorous to the very heart-wrenching. On the light side, there are the smiles created by the singing of “Eating Goober Peas,” the old term for peanuts, and then there is the touching and tearful words of “Beautiful Dreamer” as sung by Theo and Harriet Perry, the young Texas couple torn apart by Theo’s Civil War service.

Jim Harris’s story, inspired by his Great Great Uncle Joe’s Civil War diary, “Does a fine job of portraying both sides of the Civil War conflict,” Coleman said. “The story line pulls you in and you feel like you’re watching both sides. You learn to like all the characters.”

The songs are classics—including “Amazing Grace” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic”—but they are given a contemporary sound by Mark Hayes, the composer from Kansas City who did the original musical arrangements for the show, Coleman said.

The full cast, crew and orchestra—totaling 32 persons—will be coming to McCook for the Saturday night performance.