

This Month

THEATER + CLASSICAL + DANCE + CHORAL + BOOKS | EDITED BY TAD SIMONS

Take Note

Robert Robinson

Once dubbed the "Pavarotti of gospel," Robert Robinson sang with pianist Lorie Line in her holiday shows for fifteen years, then struck out on his own last year, delighting audiences with his soulful renditions of yuletide favorites. This year, Robinson returns with a holiday show featuring a nine-piece orchestra, as well as a new CD, *Spirit of the Season*.

GREW UP: Minneapolis, on the north side.

ON DEVELOPING THAT UNFORGETTABLE VOICE: I started singing at about age six with my brother, Reverend Stan Robinson, and my two sisters, Sandra Robinson Hodges and Valerie Robinson. My love for music and informal training started through my mother. We all began singing in church and still perform and minister in churches.

ON GROWING UP IN A MUSICAL FAMILY: My mother was a church soloist for years. She never had any musical training, but she passed on to her four children what she felt was the real spirit of singing—consistently giving 100 percent from your heart and soul.

EARLY MUSICAL INFLUENCES: Locally, I loved to hear Pastor Thelma Buckner, Vera Jean Jenkins, and Elgene Meadows. On a national level, I always enjoyed gospel artists such as Mahalia Jackson, The Clark Sisters, Vanessa Bell Armstrong, Danniebelle Hall, and Tramaine Hawkins. On the secular side, I have always loved Aretha Franklin, Patti LaBelle, Gladys Knight, and Jennifer Holliday.

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TRAVIS ANDERSON

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WHY THE NEW HOLIDAY SHOW IS SPECIAL: I feel that my show offers people a soulful and spiritual insight into what the holidays are truly all about—love—not only for our family and friends, but for the entire world. I'm sure there are a lot of people like me who wish they had the ability to embrace every hurting person in the world and assure them that their lives will get better. I can share that embrace and assurance in my songs.

OTHER PROJECTS: I released a new gospel CD, *The Faith Project*, in December of this year. Next year, I'm planning on recording an easy listening CD that will be released around Mother's Day. I'm a little nervous about it, though, because I tend to have a really big voice. But I can pull it back some and make the songs work.

ON HIS CD PLAYER: *Spirit of the Season*, Robert Robinson; *Journey*, Richard Smallwood; *A Piece of My Passion*, Juanita Bynum; *The Clark Sisters Live*, The Clark Sisters; and *The Blessing of Abraham*, Donald Lawrence & The Tri-City Singers.

LITTLE-KNOWN FACT: I don't get the chance to do either one very much because of my busy schedule, but if I could I'd spend more time going to the movies and going fishing with my dad.

CATCH HIS ACT: Robert Robinson's Spirit of the Season Concert. **Dec. 15.** *Benson Great Hall, Bethel University, 3900 Bethel Dr., St. Paul, 651-638-6333, robertrobinsonmusic.com*