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The Chorus Newsletter

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The World in Six Songs

Ira Levin wrote the book, "The World in Six Songs." In the following he comments about music and its affect on people.

What does music do for us that mere words can't?

As Helen Vendler says of poetry, music is not a news report. Except for those knowledge songs, it's not intended to represent objective faces. What music is better able to do than language is to represent the complexity of human emotional states. It's rarely the case that we feel just one single emotion. When was the last time you felt pure joy? More likely it's joy with a bit of apprehension, happiness with a bit of sadness. There are only seven notes in the major scale and seven notes in the minor, but the ways these notes are strung together can convey different emotions. It has to do with predictability, where your brain is trying to guess the next note. If I play notes in a predictable fashion, there's no tension...it's comforting. But, if I do it over and over again, tension will build. And that leads to complex feelings of tension and resolutions, comfort and arousal.

Excerpt from interview contribute by Fred Woulf



Town Hall Meeting

First of its kind, the town hall meeting was held on Tuesday, 28 October 2008 in a lecture hall in the new wing of Bisdorf. Nine faculty and staff representatives responded to questions from students.

The president of the Student Government presided over the meeting and played a computer driven slide show, depicting programs and events that had been promoted or sponsored by the Student Government.

Introductory remarks were given by the Provost.

The SGC president read the name of a person who wanted to ask a question.

The first questioner was concerned about non recyclable waste (Styrofoam boxes) in the cafeteria. The response: Pressure could be put on that company to change its ways. When the contract is to be re-bid, a provision could be made that no Styrofoam be used.

The next person wondered why, (in this land of the free and home of the brave in which the separation of church and state is held dear), she could not have a room set aside for her use as a prayer room. She was told that empty rooms were not ready for occupancy by anyone. But a church pays a fee to use the Schlesinger hall for services. It would appear that despite the separation of church and state, if a sect wished to pay for the use, it could do so.

Questions were asked by various members of the Alexandria Community Chorus as to the reasons why Schlesinger was no longer to be used by the chorus. Dr. White said that the center must be self supporting. Only she is paid by the state, other costs must be covered by sales of space for performances. The chorus was free to use the hall during the week, probably from Monday thorough Thursday. The weekends are prime time and available for rent to those who will pay the going rate.

Dr. Stanzo offered positive proposals that included the possibility of grants through efforts by Dr. Ryland-Wells, and also though efforts to relax the 60 day reservation requirement imposed by Schlesinger for performances to be given during the week.

There is also the possibility that money could be obtained from the College's student activity fund to underwrite rental of the center on weekends. This is the pot of money that the College has, not just the Alexandria campus. The economics dean suggested that if that happened, he would be after some of it too.

Chorus members returned to Tyler to join the on-going rehearsal, and to participate in a review of events following the conclusion of the period.

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Music
Humor



Daniel Pinkham

MUSICAL HUMOR

Daniel Pinkham

"Wagner's music is better than it sounds." -- Mark Twain

"Berlioz says nothing in his music, but he says it magnificently." -- James Gibbons Hunekar

"There are still so many beautiful things to be said in C major." -- Sergei Prokofiev

"I never use a score when conducting my orchestra... Does a lion tamer enter a cage with a book on how to tame a lion?" -- Dimitri Mitropolous

"Already too loud!" -- Bruno Walter at his first rehearsal with an American orchestra, on seeing the players reaching for their instruments.

"I really don't know whether any place contains more pianists than Paris, or whether you can find more asses and virtuosos anywhere." -- Frederic Chopin

"When she started to play, Steinway himself came down personally and rubbed his name off the piano." -- Bob Hope, on comedienne Phyllis Diller

"Never look at the trombones, it only encourages them." -- Richard Strauss

"In opera, there is always too much singing." -- Claude Debussy

"If a thing isn't worth saying, you sing it." -- Pierre Beaumarchais, The Barber of Seville

"Opera is where a guy gets stabbed in the back, and instead of dying, he sings." -- Robert Benchley

"I'd hate this to get out, but I really like opera." -- Ford Frick (Commissioner of Baseball)

"Oh how wonderful, really wonderful opera would be if there were no singers!" -- Gioacchino Rossini

"Movie music is noise. It's even more painful than my sciatica." -- Sir Thomas Beecham

"I think popular music in this country is one of the few things in the twentieth century that have made giant strides in reverse." -- Bing Crosby

From the Web

Pinkham's enormous output represents a broad cross-section of 20th-century musical trends. He produced work in virtually every genre, from symphonies to art songs, though the preponderance of his music is religious in nature, frequently choral and/or involving organ. Much of his music was written for use in church services or other ceremonial occasions, and reflected his longstanding relationship with King's Chapel. At various points in his career, he embraced plainchant and mediievally-influenced modal writing, lyrical romanticism, dodecaphony and serialism, and electronic music. He embraced his role as a creator of (relatively) popular music, once remarking that "One of the most important influences on my music has been my contact with performers, and I am most happy when writing for a specific performance. This, I suppose, explains why I have no unperformed music. I have always been interested in making music technically accessible." Some of Pinkham's best-known works are designed for services: the Christmas, Advent, and Wedding cantatas, the latter of which is performed particularly often. In 2003, he gained further notice with his commissioned piece, written for the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, of *Make Way for Ducklings*. In keeping with the name of the ensemble, the work was designed to be performed for families at the Boston Public Garden near the famous sculptures based on Robert McCloskey's endearing picture book. .

Pinkham's scholarship and work were recognized with a Fulbright Fellowship in 1950 and a Ford Foundation Fellowship in 1962. He received honorary degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music as well as from Nebraska Wesleyan University, Adrian College, Westminster Choir College, Ithaca College, and the Boston Conservatory.

In 1990, Pinkham was named Composer of the Year by the American Guild of Organists. In 2006 Pinkham was named Musician of the Year by the Boston Musicians' Association, AFM Local 9-535.

Contributed by Ray Lipari

The Chorus Newsletter welcomes news, articles and photographic contributions. Are you planning a recital? Tell us when and where and we will get the word out. Call the editor, Bob Trexler at 703 978-9171 or e-mail at Rctrex@aol.com.

The Chorus Newsletter contains information about and for members of the NOVA Community Chorus. It is privately published monthly except during June and July. The College has no responsibility for its content. Members are encouraged to contribute articles and news about musical offerings and musical topics to Robert Trexler, editor and publisher, at Rctrex@aol.com