



The Chorus Newsletter

Published for and about the NOVA Community Chorus
www.nvcc.edu/alexandria/visual/music

NOVA Chorus Charms at Leipzig Choral Festival



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Music Humor

Welcome



Felix Mendelssohn

On July 14, 15, and 17, capacity audiences in Leipzig, Germany, enthusiastically welcomed the NOVA Chorus to the Leipzig Choral Festival in which fifteen choruses sang. Led by Dr. Mark Whitmire, the twenty-four singers performed six American choral favorites and new works. Many of those were in eight-part harmony, without accompaniment and from memory. Soloists included Bill Brown, Estee Herndon, Terri LaGoe, Amanda Price, and Bill and Annette Reilly.

The festival featured opening and closing concerts when each chorus sang one or two selections, as well as joining in massed final numbers. Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* was the opener and two choruses from *Elijah* were sung for the closing concert. On other nights, one or two other choruses presented longer programs. The NOVA chorus sang *Beautiful Dreamer*; *The Road Home*; *Daniel, Daniel*; *Sing Me to Heaven*; *Oh, Shenandoah*; and *Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal*. These pieces combined deceptively simple melodies with complex harmony and rhythm for intensity of expression. (Hear selections at <www.novachorus.org/archives/leipzig>) During six weeks of rehearsals before the trip and daily rehearsals in Leipzig, Dr. Whitmire prepared the singers to deliver soloist-quality sound from every section, every voice. The group also enjoyed two workshops with the music director of the festival, Jonathan Wilcox, who genially polished the performances.

Leipzig was an ideal city for a choral festival with its heritage and appreciation of music. Johan Sebastian Bach was the music director for the Leipzig churches from 1723 to 1750 and composed most of his choral music here. Felix Mendelssohn directed the leading orchestra, the Gewandhaus, in the 1840's. Goethe based a scene in *Faust* (source of many operas) on his student life in a beer cellar that still serves today. The NOVA chorus toured the old city, including Mendelssohn's home and Bach's St. Thomas Church. They sang in the Gewandhaus concert hall, the Reformed Church, and the baroque St. Nicholas Church. The warm acoustics of these venues, with their purity and intensity of tone, were rewarding for groups like the NOVA Chorus.

A special pleasure of the festival was the opportunity to hear and share a drink with others of the fifteen choruses from the US, Germany, the UK, and Switzerland. Angelic sounds from 120 high school girls from the UK came from the balconies; a fifty-voice Swiss chorus from Fribourg offered challenging modern music, and a variety of local German choruses displayed a high level of quality in everything from traditional folk songs to religious meditation to show tunes. The well-prepared NOVA Chorus emerged as one of the best and an audience favorite in its superb performances.

By Annette Riley

MUSICAL HUMOR

"My sole inspiration is a telephone call from a producer." -- Cole Porter

"I would rather play Chiquita Banana and have my swimming pool than play Bach and starve." -- Xavier Cugat

"[Musicians] talk of nothing but money and jobs. Give me businessmen every time. They really are interested in music and art." -- Jean Sibelius,

"The amount of money one needs is terrifying..." -- Ludwig van Beethoven

"Only become a musician if there is absolutely no other way you can make a living." -- Kirke Mechem, on his life as a composer

"Chaos is a friend of mine." -- Bob Dylan

"I am not handsome, but when women hear me play, they come crawling to my feet." -- Niccolo Paganini

"Of course I'm ambitious. What's wrong with that? Otherwise you sleep all day." -- Ringo Starr

"What is the voice of song, when the world lacks the ear of taste?" -- Nathaniel Hawthorne

"Flint must be an extremely wealthy town: I see that each of you bought two or three seats." -- Victor Borge, playing to a half-filled house in Flint, Michigan.

"Critics can't even make music by rubbing their back legs together." -- Mel Brooks

"Life can't be all bad when for ten dollars you can buy all the Beethoven sonatas and listen to them for ten years." -- William F. Buckley, Jr.

"You can't possibly hear the last movement of Beethoven's Seventh and go slow." -- Oscar Levant, explaining his way out of a speeding ticket.

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

From the WEB

Welcome

A hearty welcome to singers who are new to the NOVA Community Chorus, and to all the returning singers from prior years.

The chorus is under the direction of Dr. Mark Whitmire. Our accompanist is Chris Hagan. Fred Wulff is our Stage Manager who will guide us to our places for performances. Each section of singers has its section leader who keeps track of choristers' attendance. The chorus website is managed by Kate Cantrell. Bob Trexler puts together this newsletter and makes copies available at the start of the semester and on the first rehearsal of each month thereafter, August through May.

We normally have a break in the rehearsal about half way though the evening. There normally are section rehearsals on selected Saturdays.

Performances are given at the college's Schlesinger hall, next door and at the Church of the Epiphany in Washington, DC. We are accompanied by the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic, a full orchestra. In addition, we will sing a program with the Band.

Please remember to bring a pencil with you to mark your scores. Dr. Whitmire will give you information about how a passage is to be sung and you should record that in the score.

At the end of the year, we normally have a picnic which is certainly a highlight of the social year.

And, as you see from the first page of this Newsletter, we even travel abroad to bring the joy of music to other lands.

Felix Mendelssohn

The symphony is in three parts, beginning with a Maestoso movement, in which the trombones at once give out the choral motive ("All that has Life and Breath sing to the Lord"). This movement, which is strong and energetic in character, is followed by an Allegretto based upon a beautiful melody, and to this in turn succeeds an Adagio religioso, rich in harmony.

The opening chorus ("All that has Life and Breath") is based upon the choral motive, and enunciates the real "Hymn of Praise." It moves along in a stately manner, and finally leads without break into a semi-chorus ("Praise thou the Lord, O my Spirit!"), a soprano solo with accompaniment of female voices. The tenor in a long dramatic recitative ("Sing ye Praise, all ye re-deemed of the Lord") urges the faithful to join in praise and extol His goodness, and the chorus responds, first the tenors, and then all the parts ("All ye that cried unto the Lord"). The next number is a duet for soprano and alto with chorus ("I waited for the Lord"). It is thoroughly devotional in style, and in its general color and effect reminds one of the arias, "Oh, rest in the Lord," from "Elijah," and "The Lord is mindful of His own," from "Saint Paul." This duet is followed by a sorrowful, almost wailing tenor solo ("The Sorrows of Death had closed all around me"), ending with the piercing, anxious cry in recitative ("Watchmen! will the Night soon pass?") set to a restless agitated accompaniment and thrice repeated. Like a flash from a cloud comes the quick response of the chorus ("The Night is departing"), which forms the climax of the work. At first the full chorus proclaims the night's departure; it then takes the fugal form on the words ("Therefore let us cast off the Works of Darkness"), effectively worked out.

In the Finale the male voices are massed on the declaration ("The Night is departing") and the female voices on the response ("The Day is approaching"); and after alternating repetitions all close in broad, flowing harmony. This chorus leads directly to the chorale ("Let all Men praise the Lord"), sung first without accompaniment, and then in unison with orchestra. Another duet ("My Song shall always be Thy Mercy"), this time for soprano and tenor, follows, and prepares the way for the final fugued chorus ("Ye Nations, offer to the Lord"), a massive number, stately in its proportions and impressive in its effect, and closing with a fortissimo delivery of the choral motive ("All that has Life and Breath").

From: *The Web Music with Ease*

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