



The Chorus Newsletter

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NOVA Idol Winner



Susan Bilodeau, our very own alto chorus member, won the coveted NOVA Idol contest when students voted for their choice on 20 March 2009 in Schlesinger Concert Hall. It was the sixth year that NOVA students selected the best singer.

Top cash prize for the Idol contest was \$3500. Some Chorus members hinted that they might like to share in it when Susan reported to rehearsal on Tuesday night.

If you missed her performance you can still hear her at <http://www.nvcc.edu/novaidol/videos/>

We congratulate Susan on this achievement and wish her well.

Duruflé Requiem

The NOVA Community Chorus concluded our presentation of the Duruflé Requiem on April 5, 2009 with the performance at Bishop Ireton High School in Alexandria, Virginia.

The seemingly ever-growing larger Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic accompanied us on this Palm Sunday.

We were first on the program that included Pianist Carolyn Colton, WMPA 2008 Concerto Composition Winner, playing the Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and the world premiere of the Concerto for Percussion by James Kazik.

Beautiful renditions of solos by the Gors were gratefully received.

Annual Chorus Picnic

Our annual NOVA Chorus picnic will be held on Saturday, May 9, at Fred and Judy Wulff's residence. It will start at 2 p.m. and will be in our standard pot luck format in the standard place.

We'll send more details and a map in a few weeks. For now, mark your calendar. It's a great time to celebrate a successful concert season.

Fred and Judy

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**Music
Humor**



Shearing

MUSICAL HUMOR

Shakespeare's Words in Shearing's *Songs and Sonnets from Shakespeare*

When told that a soloist would need six fingers to perform his concerto, **Arnold Schoenberg** replied, "I can wait."

"Why is it that whenever I hear a piece of music I don't like, it's always by Villa Lobos?"

Igor Stravinsky

"His music used to be original. Now it's aboriginal."

Sir Ernest Newman on Igor Stravinsky

Someone commented to **Rudolph Bing**, manager of the Metropolitan Opera, that George Szell is his own worst enemy. "Not while I'm alive, he isn't!" said Bing.

"After I die, I shall return to earth as a gatekeeper of a bordello and I won't let any of you in."

Arturo Toscanini to the NBC Orchestra

"We cannot expect you to be with us all the time, but perhaps you could be good enough to keep in touch now and again."

Sir Thomas Beecham to a musician during a rehearsal

The great German conductor **Hans von Bue-low** detested two members of an orchestra, who were named Schultz and Schmidt. Upon being told that Schmidt had died, von Bue-low immediately asked, "Und Schultz?"

"Parsifal is the kind of opera that starts at six o'clock and after it has been going three hours, you look at your watch and it says 6:20."

David Randolph

"One can't judge Wagner's opera Lohengrin after a first hearing, and I certainly don't intend hearing it a second time."

Gioacchino Rossini

"I liked the opera very much. Everything but the music."

Benjamin Britten on Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*

Shakespeare's plays abound with musical imagery, references, and performances. He sometimes introduced songs into his plays simply to provide entertainment. Indeed, Elizabethan theatrical performances, even tragedies, often ended with dances performed by the actors. At other times the songs comment on the action or expand its emotional range, most famously in Ophelia's mad scene in *Hamlet*. We have no records of the musical settings used in performances of Shakespeare's plays in his own day. Many composers, however, have been inspired to set Shakespeare's lyrics to music, and Shearing joins such exalted company as Schubert, Mendelssohn, Vaughan Williams, and Britten.

The first poem in Shearing's set, *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, was actually written by the Bard's contemporary, the playwright and spy Christopher Marlowe. One of best known love poems in English, it is often cited as an early example of the pastoral style of the late Renaissance.

Some of the songs in Shakespeare's plays serve a dramatic purpose. "When daffodils begin to peer" in *The Winter's Tale* develops the singer's character. The vagabond Autolycus expresses his own "insolent, merry roguishness", singing of beggars and thieves. "Who is Silvia?" plays a crucial role in developing the themes of fidelity and betrayal in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. It is a serenade sung by one of the eponymous gentlemen as he betrays one woman for another. One of Schubert's most famous songs is a setting of a German translation of these words; more recently the English composers Gerald Finzi and Roger Quilter have set Shakespeare's original text. The melancholic clown Feste ends *Twelfth Night* with "Hey, ho, the wind and the rain", a variant on the popular ages-of-man theme. There are many opinions as to its meaning in the context of the play. One commentator suggests that its "wise-nonsense" is an appropriate comment on the play's high spirits. Falstaff's disguised tormenters sing "Fie on sinful fantasy," elucidating the fat knight's sins, as they take their revenge in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Verdi made memorable use of the Italian translation of these words in his final opera, *Falstaff*.

Other songs have little or no relation to the action of the plays in which they are found. Two characters who have no other function in the play sing "It was a lover and his lass" in *As You Like It*. The song simply indicates the passage of time and elaborates the light-hearted, pastoral mood of the play. There is a well-known musical setting by Thomas Morley, a contemporary of Shakespeare, published in 1600, and there is some speculation that Shakespeare took the song from Morely. "Spring" concludes *Love's Labour's Lost*. It is not clear which characters sing it. An example of an onomatopoeic bird song, a popular type that dates back at least to "Sumer is icumen in", it may simply be a musical entertainment to end the play.

It is perhaps worth noting, in passing, that all of these are strophic songs. There is not a sonnet among them.

By Bill Brown

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.

From the WEB

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