



CHORAL MUSIC REVIEW

## Women's Voices Chorus Delivers Fantastic Choral Excellence

By [Ken Hoover](#)

April 26, 2015 - Durham, NC:



Spots of Time Photography 1/30/2014

Women's Voices Chorus

[Women's Voices Chorus](#) under the direction of Maestro [Allan Friedman](#) continues to present concerts characterized by choral excellence and fascinating diversity. Now grown to 60 voices, the chorus entertained a full house in the warm and inviting sanctuary of [First Presbyterian Church](#). Today's concert, entitled "Love Notes," included 23 discreet selections sung in English, Latin, Spanish, German, Hebrew, French, Bulgarian, Samoan, Korean, and Yiddish.

The music was written by composers born as recently as 1976 and as remotely as the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Johannes Brahms rubbed shoulders with Eric Whitacre, George Gershwin and [Joan Szymko](#). Here and there a soloist from the chorus stepped forward to show the depth of quality voices in this group. A violin, a saxophone, a tambourine, a speaker, a conductor from the chorus and the select chamber choir enriched the diversity of the program. The blend and balance of voices was amazingly accomplished throughout.

The program began with a sonic wonder by contemporary American composer Joan Szymko (b. 1957). "Only Light, Only Love," a setting of text by Martin Luther King, Jr., with soprano soloist Jennifer Jackson, was deeply moving.

"Quam pulchra es" by Renaissance master, John Dunstable (c.1390-1453) was conducted by Laura Delauney, a member of the chorus, who guided the women through an outstanding rendition; pitch, ensemble and balance were superb.

"Te quiero" by Argentinian [Alberto Favero](#) (b. 1944) and arranged by Liliana Cangiano (1951-1997) is an expression of national solidarity achieved through love of each other. The touching text by Mario Benedetti (1920-2009) and the rich harmonic scoring by Favero were richly enhanced by the soprano solo sung exquisitely by Rachel Spencer.

Johannes Brahms' *Vier lieder aus dem Jungbrunnen* (Four songs from the fountain of youth) was ... well, Brahms, and it was marvelous. The closing cadence let us know that there are some lovely women who can sing pretty down low; what a gorgeous sound.

Eric Whitacre's *Five Hebrew Love Songs* included beautiful violin playing by Christine Allison, tambourine by Jennie Vaughn and solos by Wendy Hua, Jen Byrnes, Darcy Wold and Laura Gorski. It displayed the lyrical charm which is quite typical of Whitacre.

"Big Dogs, Music, and Wild, Wild Women" by [Ruth Huber](#) (b. 1949), all fun and a favorite of the chorus (and their director), was sung with gusto to the absolute delight of the audience.

There were songs of wistful longing, songs with playful banter and double entendre, songs of social consciousness, sad songs of love lost, show tunes, songs in jazz, folk, klezmer, and classical styles. Each selection on the program was sung in the style and interpretation appropriate to its source. There was, quite actually, something for everyone in this concert.

"Frobisher Bay" by James Gordon (b. 1955), edited by Linda Beaupré (b. 1951) tells the tale of whalers in the Arctic Sea who try to catch one more whale, but are trapped in the ice far from the arms of their loves. The haunting beauty of this sad song was delivered via lilting voices as one who understands the deep pain of such an experience.

The Samoan folk song "Minoi, minoi" was a unique treat as was the Korean folk song, "Arirang" arranged by Shin-Hwa Park. Both of these were hauntingly beautiful.

"Ba mir vistu Sheyn" with text by Jacob "Joe" Jacobs and music by the great Jewish cantor and composer, [Sholom Secunda](#) (1894-1974) as arranged by Joshua Jacobson is a high-spirited love song set to captivating klezmer-style music. Guest saxophonist Darren Mueller added a crowning enchantment to this selection.

### EVENT INFORMATION

Durham -- ( Sun., Apr. 26, 2015 )

[Women's Voices Chorus: "Love Notes"](#)

Adults \$15; Students \$5 -- First

Presbyterian Church , (919)

307-6860;

[pr@womensvoiceschorus.org](mailto:pr@womensvoiceschorus.org) ,

<http://www.womensvoiceschorus.org>

-- 3:00 PM

For an encore, WVC sang a delightful song with text by Lucille Clifton and music by Gwyneth Walker. "Sisters" had members of the chorus interacting with each other playfully, including a rhythmic game of hand clapping with the women divided into pairs. What fun! What pleasure!

Other soloists not mentioned above were Britt Kelly, Pauline Robinson, Mary Hoover, Trisha Rae Socias, Allison Mangin, Claire Campbell and Carly Yusiewicz. All were outstanding in their delivery. The rehearsal accompanist was [Nancy Whelan](#) and the guest accompanist for this concert was the accomplished Deborah Lee Hollis.

In the truthful disclosure category, you should know that the reviewer's spouse has been a member of WVC since 2003.

Friedman must have nerves of steel and guts to match to have taken on such a linguistically and musically challenging program. It is barely short of miraculous that he pulled it off so superbly through a combination of excellent musical skill and inspirational leadership. The women of the chorus deserve awesome respect and gratitude for their hard work and grand achievement.



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