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CHORAL MUSIC REVIEW

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Women's Voices Chorus Energizes Capacity Crowd with Comical Critters

By [Ken Hoover](#)

May 5, 2013 - Chapel Hill, NC:

Anyone who has followed [Women's Voices Chorus](#) over much of its existence (they will celebrate twenty years in 2014) knows that one of the skillsets which both of the two conductors who have lead them has possessed is a keen ability to search out, dig up, track down, commission, or write music that suits this group to a tee.

Today's program, entitled "The Foibles of Fauna" (a world tour of music about animals), included twenty or so selections, depending on how you slice the bigger pieces. They included mouth music (without words), nonsense rhymes, songs sung in Japanese, a couple of different African dialects, German, Castilian, Spanish, tongue twisters and visits from critters ranging from crickets to elephants. To say that this was an energizing concert would be an understatement, but at least we can start from there. The venue at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Chapel Hill was packed to capacity.

The concert began with a Celtic folk song that uses made-up words to hint at an otter dancing about in the river. Then a Japanese children's song about fireflies was sung in Japanese. The whimsical poem by Eugene Field about a duel between a gingham dog and a calico cat has long been a favorite of mine. It dances into combat on a delightful tune by Cristi Cary Miller and was conducted by WVC member Laura Delauney.

The next set included a couple of limericks and a gorgeous lullaby called "Nurse's Song" from *Three Songs of Innocence* by Craig DeAlmeida. WVC member, Rachel FitzSimons conducted the limerick "The Old Person of Skye."

The title for the concert derives from a set of four pieces composed (both text and music) by Friedman for the Durham Children's choir. *The Foibles of Fauna* consist of "The African Elephant's Swing" about Eloise the absent-minded elephant; "The Tarantella of the Italian Wolf" which features Lupi Lupo and his fanciful interpretations of Italian history; "The Waltz of the Austrian Boar," which introduces us to the stylish Baron von Baden the Boar who is no bore; and "The Tango of the Argentine Caiman" who would be a fine friend as long as you "beware of my stare and my jaws that go SNAP!" Each poem was read expressively by narrator Ann Harris who, on the last verse of "The Argentine Caiman" closed her music folder with a SNAP and dropped it on the floor creating a bit of commotion from which she recovered with grace to the delight of all. Each of the four pieces written in the style indicated provided pure delight.

Some of the other highlights of the concert included the beautiful South African song by Mackay Devashe, "Lakutshon 'Illanga" (The Sun is Setting), "El Grillo" (The Cricket) by the 15th century renaissance master, Josquin des Prez, and a seldom heard lovely setting of the 23rd Psalm by Franz Schubert.

The major piece on the program was Ariel Ramirez's infectious *Misa Criolla*. The original recording first released in 1964 sold more than three million copies. The mass, sung to a Castilian text, is a striking combination of the composer's own melodies and traditional Argentinian and Hispano-American regional forms and rhythms. Different soloists were featured in each movement: Claire Campbell, Rachel FitzSimons, Rachael Posey, Katie Shrieves, Jennifer Weld, and Rachel Leeman-Munk. Each did an outstanding job of projecting the appealing melodies and irresistible rhythms. It was a fiery performance and I almost felt the music of the Gloria could burst into flame if pushed much further. Guitarist Rick Keena and percussionists John Hanks, Beverly Botsford and Andrea Woods fanned the flames superbly.

An energetic arrangement of the Mexican classic "La Cucaracha" by Alberto Grau stimulated the ladies of the chorus to reach for their Raid. However the last line of the piece says that "They say the cockroach fell from a bicycle and because of that, can't put her slipper on."

EVENT INFORMATION

Chapel Hill -- (Sun., May. 5, 2013)

[Women's Voices Chorus: "The Foibles of Fauna"](#)


Adults \$15; Students \$5 -- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church , (919)684-3855;

contact@womensvoiceschorus.org , <http://www.womensvoiceschorus.org> -- 3:00 PM

The closing piece was the familiar tongue-twister "How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?" It seems that the Women's Voices Chorus has been working hard on their enunciation, their pronunciation and diction in general and determined that a woodchuck can chuck wood and can chuck three and a half cords in the time it took to sing this arrangement by Judith Shatin. And, an additional half a cord can be chucked if you have an accompanist like Deborah Coclalnis.

The effervescent Maestro Friedman stimulated the effervescent WVC and both stimulated their Sunday afternoon audience who all appeared to leave the concert with gleeful effervescence the likes of which we have not seen since the days of L. W.

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