



Women's Voices Chorus Provides Fun and Pleasure

by Ken Hoover

May 4, 2004 Chapel Hill, NC: University United Methodist Church was the bright afternoon setting for [Women's Voices Chorus](#) in their second outing under Artistic Director Allan Friedman. The concert, titled *Songs of Innocence and Dreams*, was an eclectic collection of traditional songs, whimsical texts, hymns, choral masterpieces and lilted lullabies.

Several selections featured soloists from the chorus: Shipra Patel, Megan Kauffmann, Rebecca Knickmeyer, Virginia Byers Kraus, Kate Hurley and Judy Moore. They had vocal qualities ideally suited to the pieces they sang, and each did a convincing and winsome job. Many selections were done without accompaniment and emphasized the special blend in harmony and counterpoint that women's voices offer. Pianist Deborah Coclanis partnered with the chorus on several selections, sometimes as an equal element, as in Irving Fine's demanding setting of Lewis Carroll's whimsical texts from *Alice in Wonderland*. In other selections, the piano provided harp-like gentle arpeggios and in others, hymn-like support. One of the highlights of the concert was "Psalm 23," a setting by the master of song, Franz Schubert. What gorgeous and meaningful harmonies! What a perfect blend of voices and instrument!

The first half of the concert focused on innocence, employing the symbolism of the lamb in a couple of spirituals and Tim Blickham's setting of "The Lamb" by William Blake. Other numbers focused on the innocence and loss of innocence of youth and especially young women. Craig DeAlmeida's unaccompanied *Three Songs of Innocence*, with texts by Blake, was a special treat with its infectious rhythms and rich harmonies. Irving Fine's *Three Choruses from "Alice in Wonderland"*, mentioned above, was a tour-de-force by Coclanis and the choir as well. The music matched and enhanced Carroll's whimsical writing and kept a smile on my face throughout, especially in the well-known "You are old, Father William...."

After the wistful and remorseful traditional Irish tune "Down by the Salley Gardens," there were three rather sardonic songs of not-so-innocent young women: the Kentucky mountain tune, arranged by Charles Winter, "I'm Only Nineteen," Stella ter Hart's "The Maid on the Shore," and Ruth Morris Gray's "No Thank You, John." All three tell tales of young women forsaken or wronged who gained wisdom or sweet revenge from the experience.

After intermission, the concert celebrated happy loves and sweet lullabies, beginning with Henry Purcell's "In These Delightful, Pleasant Groves." Schubert's

"Psalm 23" has already been mentioned above. The lovely manger lullaby "Dormi, Jesu!" by Jonathan D. Green was next on the program. The bewitching Welsh lullaby "Suo Gân," sung by Kate Hurley, an authentic Welshwoman, evoked a yearning to be held in a mother's arms, too long forgotten.

The program closed with two Shaker hymns: the familiar "Simple Gifts" and then "Followers of the Lamb," arranged by Allan Friedman. The second of these was accompanied by rhythm instruments and gave us a unique understanding of the Shaker's penchant for dancing as a part of their worship experience.

For an encore we were given a rousing rendition of Gyorgy Orban's "Daemon Irreplit Callidus," which tells of all the evil temptation the Devil offers, none of which can match the love of Jesus.

This was not your usual classical choral concert, but in keeping with the spirit of founding director Mary Lycan, it was a delightful, refreshing and nicely polished program and performance. We have great things to look forward to from Women's Voices Chorus under Friedman's direction.

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