



Women's Voices: Cheek to Cheek

by Karen Moorman

May 2, 2009, Chapel Hill, NC: As soon as the infant child discovers her ability to communicate through melodious voice, she becomes the enchantress. Put fifty or sixty of them together and they make magic. The [Women's Voices Chorus](#) spring concert on May 2 at Chapel Hill Bible Church did just that. The selections on this afternoon concert, most of which were performed a cappella, were international in scope; from the ancient Hindi, to Western European Renaissance and contemporary styles. This program was a feast for the senses.

The dance-centered performance displayed traditional folk and sacred classical to ballroom dancers' stylized swing. Dance duo, Gaurangi-priya Gopal and Anandi Salinas choreographed *Bharata-Natyam* to Victor Paranjoti's "Dravidian Dithyramb," and it was beautiful. Rooted in an ancient sacred art form and considered the national dance of India, it is story-telling through movement, delicate hand gestures, and facial expressions. Cailyn Pozella, Irish dance-champ, stole our hearts with effortless soft-shoe leaps and intricate steps to Dolores Keane and John Faulkner's "Mouth Music." And Apple Chill Cloggers, Elia Bizzarri and Elizabeth Raines charmed the audience as they took center stage accompanied by Shirley W. McRae's lovely arrangement of the traditional, "Shady Grove." But what took my breath away were Aksana Klyuchnyk and Yuriy Simakov's ballroom dances. Almost completely upstaging the music ("Cheek to Cheek" by Irving Berlin, arr. K.Shaw; and "It Don't Mean A Thing," by Ellington, text by Irving Mills), their artistry and passion for the dance brought my note-taking to a standstill.

The chorus, however, equally charmed the audience. Besides, their lush, velvety blend ("Innoria" arr. Donald Patriquin) and articulate diction ("Dancing" by Scott A. Tucker), the strength of the ensemble is their remarkable ability to switch styles. From the beautifully balanced Ernani Aguiar's twentieth-century setting "Salmo 150" (Psalm 150) to the Slavic head voice required for "Igraj Kolce" ("Dance the Round Dance" arranged by Jakob Jež), they demonstrated the rare sophistication of a disciplined, sensitively-coached performing group. Allan Friedman, artistic director and conductor, has faithfully stepped into founder Mary Lycan's shoes, and then some. And from the beautifully voiced Brahms "Liebeslieder-Waltzer" and "Neue Liebeslieder" to Ellington's swing, Deborah Coclans skillfully accompanied with just the right presence; never getting in the way of the sonorous beauty of the voices. Also performing on this program were John Hanks, percussion, and Robbie Link, bass.

The chorus really shined on Wayne Howorth's lilting, samba-like arrangement of

Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine," and closed with South African folk tunes encore pieces. Oh yes, there were a few brave souls who upon invitation, danced. The impulse to do so is so deeply embedded in human nature; it seems peculiar that we don't, more often, rise from our seats. Our excuses that range from bad ankles, sore hips and inhibitions that paralyze us are so inculcated in modern society, that we have lost something elemental to the human spirit. Women's Voices challenged Western social norms associated with "high art," for at least, this splendid afternoon. Congratulations to all!

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