

THE MUSKEGON CHAMBER CHOIR

David Wikman — Music Director and Conductor
Ellen Cutting — Accompanist

Shirley Albers
Jamie Baker
Terry Collett
Sheila Daniels
Ardythe Dezelsky
Julie George
Diane Goodman
Doris Helmus
Lucille Jager
Ann LeJeune
Sondra Lundborg

Carol Wilhelm

C. Richard Borgeson
Kenneth L. Brown
James Crago
Gordon Dahlgren
David Epplert
Kurt Hazard
G. Thomas Johnson
Scott Lachniet
Robert Lehner
Dale Luttmann

Jeff Wood

Shirley Albers - General Manager

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, May 3 at 3:00 P.M.
St. Francis de Sales Church
Rachmanioff: Solemn Vespers

called by many "The ultimate Russian church music."

Special thanks to:

The Irish-American Society
Dr. Martin Luther Church
St. Mary's Church
Beerman's Music House, Inc.

Vickie Luyendyk
Jackie Martin
Ruth Ann Matthews
Anna Moss
Genevra Naill
Christine Neis
Diane Nye
Janet L. Smith
Leona Spoelman
Suzanne VanPelt
Diane VanWesep

Kenneth Michnay
Dana Olsen
Roger Patton
David Peden
Eric Rettig
Brian Rhinesmith
David Stegink
Bradley Taylor
Donald Timmer
James Webb

Londonderry

Mayo

The Muskegon Chamber Choir

David Wikman
Conductor

Presents

Heartsongs of Ireland

Dublin

Irish Sea

Tipperrary

Cork

Saturday, Feb 29, 1992
8:00 p.m.
St. Mary's Church
First at Webster

www.designwithpurpose.com/art

It seems that the Irish soul expresses itself in song. Further, it seems that the Irish express heartbreak better than most. It is not a towering anguish but rather a resignation bordering on fatalism.

The first half of our program deals with the Irish and the English. It opens swearing "...revenge on a tyrant is sweetest of all." It works its way through English oppression of everything Irish and ends with the Irish conscript who went to Ceylon to serve the king returning with no legs and "...so low in flesh, so high in bone..."

The second half deals with the Irish in love. It sings of a girl who will never bear the children of her brave soldier taken away to fight a war his people didn't start and in which he had no stake, other than staying alive, which often he didn't. It ends with that self-deprecating humor so unique to the Irish when the men sing "O all the money e'er I had, I spent it in good company. And all the harm I've ever done, alas, it was to none but me, Good night, and joy be with you all." Legend has it that this was sung on the way to the gallows.

So we have tried to sing the Irish heart.

Personally, I hope it reflects the souls of Jack and Brian and Tom, whose flashing, unpredictable humor made my association with Civic Opera so precious. Most of all, it is my personal tribute to Ed Hanley, a giant of good will who makes the word neighbor very, very special.

David Wikman

PROGRAM

Avenging and Bright	Traditional*
Wearin' of the Green	Traditional
Bradley Taylor - tenor	
Let Erin Remember	Traditional*
David Epplert - baritone	
The Croppy Boy	Traditional
The Harp That Once Thro' Tara's Halls	Traditional
Dana Olsen - baritone	
The Minstrel Boy	Irish Tune: "The Moreen"
Has Sorrow Thy Young Days Shaded	Irish Tune: "Sly Patrick"*
I Wish I Were on Yonder Hill	Traditional
Vickie Luyendyk - mezzo-soprano	
Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye	Traditional

INTERMISSION

fifteen minutes

Sing, Sing	Irish Tune: "Humors of Ballymaguiry"*
I Will Walk With My Love	Traditional
Jamie Baker - soprano	
'Tis Pretty to be in Balinderry	Traditional
The Little Red Lark	Traditional
Julie George - soprano	
I Know Where I'm Goin'	Traditional
The Rose of Tralee	Charles Glover
Bradley Taylor - tenor	
A Ballynure Ballad	Traditional
Rob Lehner - baritone	
The Parting Glass	Traditional
The Girl I Left Behind Me	Traditional

+

* text by Thomas Moore (1779-1852) from his collection *Irish Melodies* (1807-1834). He was the "National Lyricist" of Ireland.

All choral arrangements are by Alice Parker except "Avenging and Bright," which is by the conductor.

Chamber Choir's concert a breath of Irish spring

By **BILL SEEBACK**

Chronicle special writer

The wind chill may have been below zero outside, but it was spring green, warm and wonderful last evening at St. Mary's Catholic Church, site of the Muskegon Chamber Choir's second annual fete of Irish song.

It was a concert of the familiar and unusual, of choral music and vocal solos. What came across assertively was the beauty of long Irish melodic lines in most of this program of shorter works. The phrases were always lyrical and singing. And the choir sang with consistency throughout the concert: good pitch, balance almost always effective, and the choir much more precise than the last time I heard them.

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Although the Irish melodies of the program are traditional and are inherently beautiful, it is the sensitivity of the arrangement that gives the melody its musical clothes. I felt that these arrangements were all strong; they never hampered the spirit of the original text or the original musical intention, but gently enhanced. Several of these arrangements were attributed, but there were many excellent ones that received no recognition, unfortunately.

The electronic keyboard accompaniment, most capably performed by Ellen Cutting, was sometimes bell-like and often harp-like, fitting the Irishness of the program. But it became more and more cloying as the program progressed.

The several solos were an effective contrast to the choral selections. Baritone David Epplert performed "The Lark in the Clear Air," a pleasant voice with a rich vibrato. James Webb's excellent rendition of "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms" was in the tradition of the great Irish tenors, tender with a hint of braggadocio. Alto Ann LeJeune was often lost in the heavy ensemble accompaniment during "Silent, O Moyle."

Generally, what would have enhanced both the ensemble and the soloists work would be the careful inclusion of more rubato, that little give and take in the tempo, and greater attention to the crescendo and decrescendo, especially in music of this style. But director David Wikman must be awarded his kudos for this attractive program with its excellent arrangements and fine choral singing.

I found that the truly outstanding selections on the program included the beautiful nocturne "Slumber Song," arranged by Bruce Vantine. The long overlapping phrases of the four sections on the choir was as excellent as any number on the program. Also, the sprightly, intricate "What Would You Do If You Married a Soldier?" with its unusual shifting accompaniment was a well-met challenge for the choir. It was a nice change to hear the lucious alto section featured in "Tis Pretty to be in Balinderry," as well as the pluperfect second tenors who were featured in the "Irish Lullaby" (Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra)

Choir offers more than just a wee bit of Ireland

By JOHN L. ALLEN

Chronicle special writer

St. Patrick's Day, when it gets here, will be an anti-climax this year. The Muskegon Chamber Choir ran off with all the shamrocks Saturday night, singing "Heartsongs of Ireland" to a standing-room-only crowd at St. Mary's Church.

It was a gathering of the faithful, but I'm not sure just which faith: the faithful of St. Mary's, the faithful Irish, or the faithful followers of the Chamber Choir. Perhaps it was all three.

Whatever it was that drew so many people, it was gratifying to see such a crowd. The group has long deserved overflow audiences, and the choir returned the favor with an overflow of song. Irish music, whether filled with Irish patriotism, melancholy love, or mournful death, is an endlessly

REVIEW

rich trove of treasure, and makes for a natural theme for such a program. An extra salute to conductor David Wikman for thoughtful programming.

Each half of the program ended with a number that was worth the price of admission all by itself: before intermission it was "Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye," and at the end it was "The Girl I Left Behind Me" — with "O, Danny Boy" for a heart-tugging encore.

Other highlights certainly included "The Minstrel Boy," "I Know Where I'm Goin'," and "I Wish I Were on Yonder Hill." The latter was a solo sung by Vickie Luyendyk.

In all, there were at least half a dozen solo numbers scattered throughout the program. Conduc-

The group has long deserved overflow audiences, and the Muskegon Chamber Choir returned the favor with an overflow of song.

tor Wikman kindly offers these spotlight opportunities to many of his choristers, most of whom have solo-quality voices. But, for once, I found myself a little impatient with some of these individual interludes, wanting to hear more of the full choir.

The acoustics of St. Mary's are partly to blame; the hall tends to enhance the blend of mixed voices, but to swallow text and diction. The smooth mix of well-modulated tones was lovely when the full choir sang; but it was a constant

strain to make out the words, especially on the solo numbers. St. Mary's may have been the logical site for a program of Irish tunes, but acoustically almost anyplace else would have been better.

Ellen Cutting served as accompanist, and accompaniment was on harp, appropriately enough.

When next the choir sings, it will be in St. Francis de Sales and the focus will turn to Russia, with Rachmaninoff's "Solemn Vespers." That will be 3 p.m. May 3. Mark your calendar now.