



The Lincoln County News™

Wednesday, May 02, 2012

St. Cecilia Chamber Choir's Lively Performance Celebrates Spring Review

By Kim Fletcher

Wednesday, May 02, 2012

It was a perfect day when the St. Cecilia Chamber Choir joined their beautiful voices together to "Celebrate Spring" in their second performance of the weekend at the First Congregational Church in Camden April 29.

Lincoln County concertgoers enjoyed their first program at the Second Congregational Church in Newcastle April 28.

Directed by Linda Blanchard with Sean Fleming on the church's outstanding organ and piano, the performance was stirring and had some surprises, too.

Kudos goes to Blanchard in her never failing to please selections - wonderful to hear and challenging to sing. She also gives hands-up to rising artists, particularly locals when she offers a place in the alto section to a young vocalist, this time to Lincoln Academy 2011 graduate, Olivia DeLisle.

She also seeks out local talented composers, most notably and most often Richard Francis and for this concert, an absolutely beautiful piece by Todd Monsell, set to the poetry of Robert Frost.

Francis' lovely contribution, "For Winter's Ruins and Rains Are Over" came back-to-back with Monsell's "A Prayer in Spring," and were stirring highlights of the first act, (aside from a personal favorite, "Jerusalem" by C. Hubert Parry, arranged by Maurice Jacobson).

Blanchard also deserves a particular nod for presenting seldom-heard works, "Three Shakespeare Songs," by Vaughan Williams, and "Shakespeare Songs, Book III," featuring a solo by DeLisle, by composer Matthew Harris.

Arguably the supreme poet, Shakespeare's verse and sonnets have inspired many composers most often for solo singers, which makes Williams' beautiful offerings for choirs particularly wonderful.

Two are from "The Tempest," the first, "Full Fathom Five," is sung by the spirit Ariel, which Ferdinand overhears, and the second is "The Cloud-Capp'd Towers," by the magician Prospero, again to Ferdinand.

Williams' third piece in his brilliant "Three Shakespeare Songs," is from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," when Robin Goodfellow (Puck) asks a fairy, 'How now, sprite? Wither wander you?' to which she answers "Over Hill, Over Dale."

The final two pieces from "Shakespeare Songs, Book III," by Matthew Harris, first "It Was a Lover and His Lass," from "As You Like It," depicts, with much historical accuracy, the life of Henry VIII, according to Shakespeare.

Feste, the clown, in "Twelfth Night," sings many songs; the most famous of which is, "O Mistress Mine," that Harris beautifully arranged for choral voices.

Following the intermission, the lively salute to springtime love, "Reveny venir du Printans" by Claude Le Jeune, sung in the original French, was perfect to start to the second section, particularly with its tight harmonies. The piece also featured a recorder duet featuring Judy Falconer and Linda Blanchard on recorders.

The fun send-off to the concert was two songs of the sea, apropos for the coastal Maine audience, and for those itching to get their boats in the water.

"The Mermaid" by John Whitworth was sung with great charm and fun, and is the story of a lad who fell overboard in the "broad Atlantic" going down so deep, until he "came to a mermaid at the bottom of the deep blue sea."

The lively refrain sung to "Rule Britannia," claims, "And Britons never, never, never shall be married to a mermaid at the bottom of the deep blue sea."

The final selection tipped the hat to the lovers of sea chanteys, with the famous song, "Drunken Sailor." Never heard before in choral form by this reviewer, the syncopated rhythms and vocal emphasis mimicked the back-and-forth of a boat on the waves, or the gait of a drunken sailor.

St. Cecilia Chamber Choir featured sopranos Cally Aldrich, Mary Benner, Jackie Merritt, Ruth Monsell, Natasha Salvo, Anna Shaw, Sarah Sproul and Pam Van Siclén.

Van Siclén also performed a flute solo on composer John Rutter's "For the Beauty of the Earth."

Featured altos were Olivia DeLisle, Sidney Harvey, Franciska Needham, Nadine Raley, Judy Seredynski, Georgi Thompson and Nan White. Featured tenors were Laurie Asche, Richard Bates, John Cleary, Del Merritt, George Shaw, John Ward and Steve Ward. Basses were Alan Baldwin, Harold Falconer, Kit Hayden, Franklin Holland, Scott Ludwig, Don Osier, Andy Sherrill and Stephen White.

For more information about St. Cecilia Chamber Choir, visit www.CeciliaChoir.org.