

A Choral Delight

Concert Review by Marcus Kalipolites
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Quaint for their modal harmony and rare for their inclusion in contemporary programming were two Renaissance works that opened Tuesday night's "Choral Ensembles Fall Concert" at McKenna Theatre. In "Tu pauperum refugium" by Josquin Desprez (c. 1450-1521) and "Sicut cervus" by Palestrina (c. 1525-94), the 12-member Chamber Singers captured the resonance of the former and the fluidity of the latter in well-balanced a cappella singing.

Other groups performing under the direction of Edward Lundergan in the SUNY New Paltz presentation were the Concert Choir, College-Community Chorale, Kairos: A Consort of Singers and the string quartet of violinists Marka Young and Alyssa Hendrickson, violist Valentina Charlap-Evans and cellist Susan Seligman.

Featured in the Chamber Singers segment was the premiere and a cappella performance of "Three Poems" by Peter Cody whose voicings, texture (homophonic as well as polyphonic) and programmatic effects revealed knowledgeable writing by the student composer.

Mozart's "Ave verum corpus" received a solemn performance by the 31-voice Concert Choir and string quartet, following which the group was joined by Kairos, a quadruple SATB quartet, in a dramatic reading of the deeply sacred "Elegischer Gesang" by Beethoven.

It was the latter ensemble that rounded out the first half of the concert with "The Ecstasies Above" by Tarik O'Regan. Based on a quasi-mystical poem by Edgar Allan Poe, the multisectional work was marked by soprano solos over tutti drones, somber moments, driving as well as cross-current passages and meditative string interludes.

In "Aristotle", poem by Billy Collins and music by Robert Maggio, the Kairos Consort opened the second half with a spirited a cappella delivery of colorful images – scores of them – in potpourri form. Subjects as diverse as "a woman ironing" to "last elephant in the parade" to "falling leaves" were treated with playful exchanges in bantering style.

Joining Kairos for a reverential performance of Bach's "Fürchte dich nicht" were the Concert Choir, cellist Seligman and Gary Palmieri at the electronic keyboard.

Taking over the acoustic grand piano, Palmieri exhibited masterful accompaniment in Haydn's "Te Deum for the Empress", which brought the concert to a full-throated close by the 68-voice College-Community Chorale.