CHORAL MUSIC REVIEW   PRINT

Triangle Jewish Chorale Features Works Commissioned by NC Composers

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By Ken Hoover

December 4, 2016 - Raleigh, NC:

"Immigration, Integration, Innovation: Variations on a Theme by NC Composers" was the title of the free concert presented by the Triangle Jewish Chorale at the North Carolina Museum of Art which was packed full for the occasion. The concert, sponsored by the NCMA Friends of the Judaic Art Gallery, explored various aspects of Jewish life in America.

The program began with "Shir HaNoded," a traditional Bukhari Melody, arranged by Audrey Snyder and revised by Connie Margolin, a member of Triangle Jewish Chorale. The lyrics, by David Shimoni, tell of a weary traveler who wishes he could fly like a bird. The violin solo by Gridja Spiri added that sense of mystery and longing we associate usually with klezmer or Ashkenazi music. The chorale settled in for a lovely performance of this iconic Jewish melody.

This was followed by "Dona Dona" by Sholom Secunda, arranged by Joshua Jacabson with lyrics by Aaron Zeitlin. It relates a whimsical conversation between a farmer and his calf and was given a lively performance by the chorus.

Following this was the world premiere of *American Variations on Kabbalat Shabbat,* composed by Allan Friedman, Music Director at Judea Reform Congregation in Durham, Artistic Director of Women's Voices Chorus, founding director of SONAM chorus, and a widely acclaimed music educator. He has written a number of Jewish sacred pieces, the latest of which was given in today's concert. *American Variations on Kabbalat Shabbat* is a setting of six psalms with an instrumental ensemble providing an introduction and a coda. It is a blend of the Jewish traditional ritual for Friday evening prayers (the Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday) and American musical styles. The opening psalm "L'chu n'ran'na l'Adonai," for example, is a lively setting modeled after Aaron Copland's style employed in *Rodeo*. The others were framed in rich harmonies and melodies of sweet beauty. Friedman has developed a style here that is richly lyrical and makes inventive use of varied choral blends. The work also featured the fine mezzo soprano voice of Shana Silverstein Barbieri.

"Lebn Zol Columbus" is a light-hearted Yiddish classic in praise of America. The music by Arnold Perlmutter and Herman Wohl was arranged for chorus by Cathy Rand. Soloists Susan Cohen and Judith Ruderman gave a delightful rendering and the chorus sang with joyful vigor.

Next on the program was Irving Berlin's gorgeous setting of the words by Emma Lazarus inscribed on the base of the statue of liberty – "Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor." One cannot listen to this iconic declaration of the core of American greatness without being filled with fresh pride and hope. It was a beautiful rendition by TJC.

Down Home: The Cantata by Alejandro Rutty was commissioned by Triangle Jewish Chorale and premiered on April 28, 2013. Rutty is currently Associate Professor of Music at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His compositional output includes orchestral, chamber and mixed-media music, arrangements of Argentine traditional music, and innovative outreach musical projects.

Down Home: The Cantata, is based on the documentary *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina*, by Leonard Rogoff. It relates stories of Jewish immigration and acclamation to life in North Carolina taken from recordings of interviews with Jewish residents including the Southern Oral History Project.

Today, we heard three episodes from the total of seven that makes up the cantata: "Goldene Medina," in which we heard the voices of immigrants relating their feelings and experiences on first arriving in the "Golden Land of Opportunity." "Say You Can" tells how a Jewish immigrant fends off bullying when encouraged to give the bully a dose of his own medicine. It worked, as did the positive attitude of determination and perseverance in other situations. The closing movement, "The Letter," consists of the words of Herman Kahn (Cone) written before his departure from Bavaria in 1846. His practical and ethical guidelines became the basis for his success as a merchant and as a human being.

The performance of these three sections of Rutty's entertaining and moving cantata by the TJC virtually sparkled with choral precision and dynamic projection. The solo work by Liz Crisenbery, Connie Margolin, Louise Farmer, Xavier Richert, and Eric Meyers was quite remarkable.

The Triangle Jewish Chorale consists of volunteers who are enthusiastic about sharing the rich treasure of music created out of the wide variety of Jewish cultures from all around the world. Under the leadership of Lorena Guillén since 2011, the chorus has grown in number as well as in artistic and technical accomplishment. The piano accompanist, J. Samuel Hammond, provided consistent excellent support. An outstanding ensemble of string and percussion musicians added rich and lively flavors to today's concert.

This concert will be repeated on Sunday, December 11. See the sidebar for details.

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EVENT INFORMATION

Raleigh -- (Sun., Dec. 4, 2016)
Triangle Jewish Chorale: "Immigration, Integration, Innovation: Variations on a Theme by NC Composers"
Free, donations welcome -- North Carolina Museum of Art , (919) 493-1288; bmost@nc.rr.com , http://www.trianglejewishchorale.org/ -- 3:00 PM

Durham -- (Sun., Dec. 11, 2016)
Triangle Jewish Chorale: "Immigration, Integration, Innovation: Variations on a Theme by NC Composers"
Free, donations welcome -- St. Paul's Lutheran Church , (919) 493-1288; bmost@nc.rr.com , http://www.trianglejewishchorale.org/ -- 3:00 PM