

The Brockville Community Choir Concert

“War and Peace”- a Compelling Tribute

The usual Community Choir supporters and other interested folk, including new arrivals to our country, all contributed to an atmosphere of reflection and hope last Friday night at St. Francis Xavier Church, Brockville as they gathered for the choir’s commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

With the support of the Strings of St. John, Ottawa, the choir embarked on a very credible performance of “Requiem” by Gabriel Fauré. The deportment and focus of the singers was evident from the start and set the ground work for an amazing “Kyrie”. The ensemble between the chorus and orchestra, although a ship that was righted at times, shone forth particularly in the “Offertory”. The experienced tenor, Christopher Coyea and promising soprano, Kate Waters complimented the text and genre well. Throughout the work, especially at the opening of the “Agnus Dei”, the men convincingly demonstrated their increased strength from past seasons. The performers continued imploring God to grant rest to those who have died. It was a fitting tribute to the fallen flanked by moments of silence.

Following intermission, the choir surrounded the audience for “Lay Me Low” and “Paradise” from Malcolm Dalglish’s “Hymnody of the Earth”. These two songs were bridged with a “Hammered Dulcimer Solo” performed by Kari Kokko. The ringing sounds so masterfully played, soothed many in the church to meditative thought. The choir harkened the audience back with a spirited “Glory Halleluiah” and assurances that “there is a love that never dies”.

Closer to World War II, the women of the choir performed three poems set to song from Charles Davidson’s “I Never Saw Another Butterfly”. These poems were written by children of the Holocaust during their imprisonment in Terezin. The women artfully used rhythmic articulations and a myriad of tone colours to bring this poetry to life, so much so; that our breath was taken away. The innocence and resolute courage of these young poets made the evil brutality they suffered so lucid. The women of the choir communicated this well. It was a highlight of what was to be accomplished here.

The concert concluded with selections from Ralph Vaughn Williams’ “Dona Nobis Pacem”. Together with drums, the choir dramatically re-created the desperate pleas for peace that were evident when this work premiered just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. While energized by the performance of the choir and skillful soloists, one could not help but draw parallels to the concerns that we face in world conflicts today.

The audience was very appreciative of the thought and hard work that went into this heartfelt and emotion filled concert. Congratulations to artistic director and conductor Dr. Heather Eyerly, her support staff, choir members, family members and friends who brought this compelling tribute to reality. The Brockville Community Choir continues to establish itself throughout the city and surrounding area as a highly successful and vital music organization.

Review submitted by: Janette Jensen Piehl