

San Mateo County Times

Bay Area Showcase Chorus 2002 Holiday Show



Bay Area Showcase Chorus performed its annual holiday show December 8 at the Santa Clara Convention Center Theater to audiences at two "sold-out" performances. The show was reviewed by Keith Kreitman for the San Mateo County Times.

by Keith Kreitman, Contributor - San Mateo County Times - Tuesday, December 10, 2002

Here's something to sing about: We have a world-famous women's chorus right here in the Bay Area. The Bay Area Showcase Chorus, established in 1956, is a group of 135 women drawn from all over the Bay Area who sing a cappella in barbershop harmony style.

Members of the 600-voice Sweet Adelines International organization, Bay Area Showcase Chorus ranked fifth last year in the Sweet Adelines International Chorus Competition. The richness of their voices and trueness of their intonation and pitch are a delight to listen to. And I have never seen members of a musical organization have more fun.

And did I mention versatile? They do barbershop, jazz, pop, rock and I'm sure whatever other style is needed. The group's extensive abilities might be attributed to its diverse membership, which ranges from college students to seniors and includes many business and professional members. And they throw in a lot of stage humor and choreographed dance. Are you able to envision more than 100 women swinging and shaking to Elvis Presley's "Jailhouse Rock?" Their "Musical Celebration of the Holidays" at the Santa Clara Convention Center on Sunday was a real spirit-lifter. I was "Jailhouse Rock'n" right along with them.

The sheer variety of their songs is astounding. Under direction of Julie Starr, they opened with a choreographed "When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'." Then, they slipped into traditional holiday pieces: "Home for the Holidays," "Coventry Carol," a raucous "Jingle Bells," the more somber, "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear" and "Silent Night," with a soloist singing the original German version. A barbershop quartet -- Teri Boucher, Carol Pahud, Betty Zanatta and Julie Wykoff -- moved front and center to do "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Oh Come All Ye Faithful" and "Christmas Was Meant for Children." If you've only heard a male barbershop quartet you're missing out, trust me.

Later, assistant director Liz Larsen stepped up to expand the holiday spirit to Hanukkah with "Hanukkah Medley" and "Light the Candles." The True Colors Quartet -- Averi Brickson, Robin Richie, Laura Bode and Julie Star -- did a little heart-string strumming with "Why Doesn't Santa Claus Go Next Door (to the little poor girl there)" and "You're a Mean One, Mister Grinch." Attempting to crash this all-female party, The Three Amigos (and there were four) -- Jordan Haedtler, Joe Pigg, Dave Bittrich and David Haedtler -- offered "Let's Get Away From It All," before the women ejected them. They kept trying to sneak back in with wigs and makeup.

The program closed with the nostalgic "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" I'll probably be sitting by the fire remembering the chorus' great performance and humming their tunes. Keith Kreitman is a freelance writer and host of "Inside Arts" on Peninsula cable TV channel 26. You can reach him by e-mail at Rainykeith@AOL.com.