

Chorale provides 'inspired' program

An effective blend of choral and instrumental music highlights the fall concert series of the Rogue Valley Chorale.

The chorale, directed by Sean Warren, opened the series Saturday night, performing "Mass in Time of War" by Franz Joseph Haydn as its major work.

The concert will be repeated this afternoon at the same location, the auditorium of South Medford High School.

The nearly 60-voice chorale performed the Haydn mass with four soloists and a 19-piece orchestra. On the whole, it was an inspired effort.

Soloists Susan Olson, soprano; Carol Jackson, alto; Ted Lawson, tenor; and Eric Smith, bass, were in fine form.

The orchestra of strings, oboe, bassoon, flute, clarinet, trumpets, French horns and tympani provided lively accompaniment. Many of the musicians are from the Rogue Valley Symphony.

The Haydn mass is noted for its marching theme accented on occasion by the tympani.

As program notes explain, Austrian-born Haydn (1732-1809) was asked to write the mass to honor the birthday of the wife of Prince Nicolas II. But at the time, Emperor Franz of Austria was embroiled in a war with Napoleon.

In something of a paradox, Mass in Time of War mixes joyous celebration with brooding thoughts of wartime.

The piece, a little over 45 minutes long, is most interesting to hear, with many eloquent passages and notable solemnity at times.

The concert opened with "Songs of Nature" by Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904). The Czech composer, perhaps best known for his "New World Symphony," composed choral works as well as symphonies, chamber music and operas.

The titles are pretty much self-explanatory, "Melodies Steal Into My Heart," "Vesper Bells Ring," "Golden Sunlight," "Slender Young

Cleve Twitchell

Commentary



Birch" and "This Day."

The other work on the first part of the chorale's program was Johannes Brahms' "Lieder Und Romanzen" (Songs and Romances).

The German composer Brahms (1833-1897), whose Symphony No. 1 was performed by the Rogue Valley Symphony on the same stage a week ago, was also known for his creations of lieder, German art songs.

The chorale sang five of them in their original language, with translation provided for the audience in the program. Gina McDonald was featured as soloist.

With Germany much in the news of late, the performance took on additional meaning, particularly in the finale entitled "Courage."

The group often has performed in churches in the past. This fall's move to the 940-seat South High auditorium makes it possible for much larger audiences to attend. The chorale deserves that kind of support.

This afternoon's repeat concert will be at 4:30 p.m. in the South High auditorium. Tickets are \$7 general, \$5 for students and senior citizens. They may be purchased at the door.