

Expanded Rogue Valley Chorale performs carols

It was a special evening. Lynn Sjolund returned as musical director and conductor of the Rogue Valley Chorale after a three-year sabbatical in New Orleans.

The newly invigorated and expanded Chorale, more than 70 voices strong, offered a beautiful program of 23 Christmas carols.

An appreciative audience numbering in the several hundreds crowded into Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Medford to hear the program. There were few empty seats.

It happened Friday night, and it's happening again this afternoon as the Rogue Valley Chorale repeats "A Concert of Carols" at 4:30 p.m. at the same location.

Sjolund said he picked Sacred Heart for

Cleve Twitchell

Commentary



this series of concerts because of its acoustics, mainly longer reverberation time.

"The sound is all around you," he said, "you get bathed in it," and that certainly proved to be the case.

Sjolund and the Chorale made full use of the large church. An organist played in the

balcony at times. Singers stood along the sides of the sanctuary as well as the front for several selections.

The carols were primarily English, or English language, by composers ranging from Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654) to the contemporary Malcolm Williamson (1931) and William Mathias (1934).

A few were familiar, like "Away in a Manger" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem," but most were new experiences for many in the audience.

The evening offered many highlights:

- Susan Olson's beautiful solo in "Away in a Manger."
- The stirring Irish traditional "Wexford Carol" with Eric Smith as soloist.
- The two Mathias carols, the rousing

"Sir Christmas" and the dynamic "A Babe is Born."

● Voices from both front and rear as several of the Chorale singers took to the balcony to lend extra dimension to Scheidt's "A Child Is Born in Bethlehem."

● The flute of Joe Frodsham, which enhanced "Sans Day Carol" and "Shepherd's Pipe Carol."

Sjolund added his own special touches with periodic commentary on the program and the performers.

The program opened with "Sussex Carol," arranged by David Willcocks, and "See Amid the Winter's Snow" by John Goss (1800-1880).

The Chorale sang two versions of "In the Bleak Mid-Winter," by Gustav Holst (1874-1934) and Harold Darke (1888-1976).

"Birthday Carol," another Willcocks arrangement, and "Lord of the Dance," a Shaker tune, concluded the evening. Time passed quickly.

Soloists in addition to those already mentioned included Kimberly DeMoss, Sean Warren, Linda Wegner, Nancy Guiley, David Deller, Carrol Graber and Christopher Stoney.

Tickets for this afternoon's repeat concert are \$8 general, \$5 for senior citizens and \$3 for students, available at the door. The church is on Oakdale Avenue at 10th Street in Medford.

The Friday night performance was recorded, and a tape will be made available for purchase by Dec. 10. Cost is \$10. Those interested may write the Chorale at P.O. Box 842, Medford, OR 97501.