

Celebrate Christmas with the Chorale

The choir's holiday concert features Bach, Barber, Schuman and others

Rogue Valley Chorale will perform Bach's "Sleepers Wake the Night is Flying," a cantata with seven narratives, or verses, paired with a selection of contrasting works by Pulitzer Prize-winning composers during its annual holiday concert.

"It's a complicated program because it contains sections that are quite different from each other,"

By **LAURIE HEUSTON**

Mail Tribune

says Lynn

Sjolund,

director and founder of the 90-member choir. "The most interesting thing is the musical minds of the composers."

Along with Bach's cantata, the program will feature works by Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem, William Schuman, William Balcom, Dominick Argento and Norman Dello Joio.

"These composers' distinguished careers include music of many genres," says Sjolund. "They differ from each other so much. The Argento is bombastic compared to the Barber, which is contemplative and romantic."

"Christmas with the Chorale" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 11, and 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12, at the Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater, 23 S. Central Ave., Medford.

Bach wrote his cantata, "Sleepers, Wake the Night is Flying," after he was established in Leipzig, Germany, where he wrote most of his sacred choral works, says Sjolund.

"He took an old hymn by Nicolai and made it into a cantata, or a longer composition. It's theme is

On the cover:

Rogue Valley Chorale vocalists rehearse for their upcoming holiday concert.

Photo by Julia Moore



Photo by Julia Moore

Artistic director Lynn Sjolund and the Rogue Valley Chorale will be joined by members of the Rogue Valley Symphony for its annual holiday show at the Craterian Theater.

'wake up because Christ is coming.' It's really an advent experience.

"Each verse elaborates on that theme, and each is composed differently. The first section is called a choral fantasia: That's where the sopranos have the melody, and the other parts elaborate," says Sjolund.

Two of the sections of the cantata are duets and will feature baritone Michael Wing and soprano Susan White. The duets will be accompanied by Rogue Valley Symphony concertmaster Scott Cole and oboist Kristin Kessler, respectively.

"The best-known section of the cantata is the fourth verse for tenors and chamber orchestra," says Sjolund.

"About a dozen tenors in the chorale will perform the verse with accompaniment from members of the Rogue Valley Symphony, a group that includes six violins, two violas, two cellos, one bass, two oboes and one piano.

"It's spectacular how they fit together," he says. "They're their own entity but are dependent on one another."

In addition to traditional carols to be performed at the concerts, there will be a medley of Hanukkah songs arranged by pianist Jeffrey Biegel. Biegel was featured this summer at the Britt Classical Festival in Jacksonville. He has written several pieces for chorus, as well as instrumental ensembles.

Andrea Brock accompanies the Chorale, which has performed in Southern Oregon for 37 years. The group will present "The Best of Bernstein" in March and "And Away We Go," a program of American music and English anthems, in May at the Craterian Theater.

The chorale has toured many European countries, and it has been featured at

If you go

What: Christmas with Rogue Valley Chorale

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 11, and 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12

Where: Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater, 23 S. Central Ave., Medford

Tickets: \$20, \$5 for students

Call: 541-779-3000 or see www.craterian.org

Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Tickets for the Craterian show cost \$20, \$5 for students and are available at the new Craterian box office, 16 S. Bartlett St. The box office will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and

from noon until show time on performance dates. Will-call tickets will be held at the new box office. Call 541-779-3000 or see www.craterian.org.