

# Rogue Valley Chorale celebrates holiday season with fine performance

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The Rogue Valley Chorale gave its audiences another fine performance of Christmas music Friday and Saturday evenings in the Eastwood Baptist Church.

Director Lynn Sjolund chose works by Bach, Charpentier, Poulenc and Respighi to celebrate the coming holiday season. The church is an excellent auditorium for choral mu-

sic, as its acoustics are particularly fine, and its organ provided an excellent accompaniment to the opening number, the Motet No. 5, Jesu, Komm by Bach. In the Bach,

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the chorus gave an especially effective rendering of the second section, "Come, come, to Thee, O Christ, I yield." Greg

Smith was the organist.

The most impressive work on the program was the Respighi "Laud to the Nativity," with Kathy Gordon as the angel, Sharyl Lonstron as Mary and Steve Simmons as the shepherd. The music follows an old Italian text, in a form similar to a cantata, but Respighi's music shows the qualities of his own time, including dissonances and impressionistic passages. To the

accompaniment of a 17-piece orchestra, the singers were heard in a series of melodies that tell the story of the wonder of the birth of Christ, sometimes in deep, mysterious passages and at other times in rising notes expressing joy. Especially notable was Mary's solo, to English harp accompaniment.

Ms. Lonstron's voice is light and sweet and was most effective in the passages with a

single instrument, as the full orchestra tended to overwhelm her.

The Charpentier "Messe de Minuit pour Noel" is melodic and charming and the voices of the two sopranos, Regina Glasgow and Beverly O'Leary, blended beautifully in their duets. Other soloists were Diane Newland, alto; William Matthews, Ron McUne and Deane Tack, tenors, and Carroll Graber, baritone.

The mass is based on French Christmas carols, which give it a delightful country flavor.

The Poulenc was a series of motets for the season of Christmas, sung a cappella, all composed in the traditional mode, without the dissonances and other modern qualities usually heard in Poulenc's works.

The closing chord of the first motet, "O Magnum Mys-

terium," was pure joy, a clear and perfect blending of the voices. The second, "Quem Vidistis Pastores Dicite," is a flowing pastoral, as the shepherds describe what they have seen and the opening passages of "Videntes Stellam," a chorus for the women's voices, expressed happiness and welcome as the Wise Men enter with their gifts of gold and myrrh and incense.

The final motet, "Hodie

Christus Natus Est," ("Born today is Christ"), rejoices with a final "alleluia" passage.

The chorale improves constantly, now becoming a well-rehearsed, coordinated group of dedicated musicians. At

present, it has 81 members, with Ron Hollensted and Carroll Graber as assistant directors.