

3/06/07

“Music, Music, Music”

by  
Tom Holbrook

Music, music, music in The Villages! *In spite* of the fact that I participate in both these musical organizations I must say, unequivocally, that those who chose to attend two vocal performances this past week were treated to some of the finest music, performed by two of the most talented groups that you’ll find anywhere. How blessed we residents of this community and surrounding environs are to have the availability of and ability to hear regularly the quality of entertainment the **Village Voices** and the **Heart of Florida Barbershop Chorus** produce for our enjoyment.

If you are a music aficionado and enjoy the works of the Gershwins, Cole Porter, Norman Luboff, Harold Arlen and other notable composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, you should have been at the Church on the Square, when the Village Voices, a mixed choral group of 125+ voices presented their annual Spring Concert to a nearly sold out auditorium. Under the incomparable direction of **Dr. Sandra Willetts** and accompanied by pianist extraordinaire **Bill Allen**, the audience was treated to music of all genres... from Handel’s “**Hallelujah, Amen**” to African-American genius **Jester Hairston’s** moving “**Great God A’Mighty**” spiritual.

The Voices are rich with talented soloists and the audience enjoyed each of them. Baritone/Tenor **John Rogerson** reprised **Robert Morse’s** Broadway and movie role of J. Pierpont Finch, brilliantly singing “**Brotherhood of Man;**” and those in attendance were looking all around for a resurrected **Vaughan Monroe** as Bass/Baritone **Lamar Young** came forth with his rendition of Cole Porter’s “**Night and Day.**” “**September Song,**” a ballad made famous by **Frank Sinatra** in the 60s, featured a brilliant piano solo by **Bill** and Tenor **Brian Maderos** crooning so effectively the ladies in the audience were swooning in the aisles.

**Sandra’s** diverse selection of beautiful pieces had the audience clapping, patting their feet, wiping tears from their eyes and reminiscing of days gone by throughout the performance and culminated in a standing ovation at concert’s end. Choral music giant **Norman Luboff** contributed two music arrangements that thrilled the choir as well as the audience... a completely unexpected version of the Civil War inspirational song of the South, “**Dixie,**” and a slow jazz version of the spiritual “**Steal Away.**” Combine these with a medley of Broadway hits from the 30s, the exciting Israeli Folk Song “**Hava Neytzey B’Machol,**” a creative emcee **Barbara Pierce**, an instrumental accompaniment duo of bassist **Dick Garrett** and drummer **Dan Sciscente** and you have the perfect mix for a absolutely stellar performance.

If you missed it you have the opportunity to see an encore performance this coming Thursday night, the 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7 pm, at the Church on the Square, assuming all the tickets have not been sold, which is a great possibility. I encourage all of you to try to make it.

Unfortunately, if you didn’t make it to the **Heart of Florida’s Barbershop Chorus’** Spring Show which was held this past Saturday night, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, at Savannah Center, you will not have the opportunity to see it again. Both shows were held on the one night at 6 pm and 8:30 pm. What can I say... if the audience members with whom I spoke at intermission and show’s end are to be believed this chorus of 140+ men of various shapes, sizes and heads of hair gave a show that was enjoyed overwhelmingly by those in attendance.

The show highlighted three main themes... **Fun, Faith, and Freedom**... and featured songs celebrating the genius talent of Walt Disney from a few of the many movies which are his legacy, such as “**Mary Poppins**”, “**Pinocchio**,” “**Song of the South**,” and “**The One and Only, Genuine, Original Family Band**.” Those songs represented the “**Fun**” segment of the show and the last two segments, “**Faith**” and “**Freedom**” included a “**Gospel Medley**,” a World War II tear jerker “**We’ll Meet Again**,” an “**Armed Forces Medley**,” and our “**National Anthem**.”

This concert also featured six quartets comprised of chorus members who sang numbers they had prepared. The name of each quartet gives an insight as to the age and humor of the group and the audience was asked to ascertain if the names fitted those singing in the quartets. Those quartets performing on the show were “**Eventide**,” “**Northeast Extension**,” “**Over the Hill Gang**,” “**So Far, So Good**,” “**Aged To Perfection**,” and “**Four Sharps**.” All quartets put on a good show and represented themselves and the chorus admirably.

The guest stars of the show were an award winning Barbershop foursome from Atlanta, GA... “**State Line Grocery**” (**SLG**). These young men took to the stage for a half hour of fun, frolic and fantastic musical ability. Their harmony was as right on as their comedy routine and the audience loved them if applause and whistles are to be used as a measure of approval.

“**SLG**” was formed only 4 years ago but they have already reached the level of finalists at the International Barbershop Harmony’s competition. They are among the top 10 Barbershop quartets in the world and their singing performance verified the ranking is deserved.

**The Heart of Florida Barbershop Chorus**, under the direction of their award winning, premiere music director **Scott Werner** and Assistant Director **Bill Bernard** put together a night of entertainment that was second to none and certainly gave the audience their money’s worth. I would like to commend as well a chorus member, **Frank Bushey**, who drew, cut and painted all the stage props used for the show. He did a great job and the chorus is proud and happy Frank is member of their group. Save me a seat Frank, will you?

By the way, thank you **Lois** for stopping me and letting me know how you enjoyed the show and this column. Now I know who that other reader is.

See you all next week.