

BC Choral Directors Create Sensational Songs

BY DAVID TEILELBAUM

Two glorious chorus masters at BC makes for a busy concert season. As the semester winds down and the culmination of months of hard work are brought forth to the appreciative public, the achievements of both Dr. James Bowyer, the new chorus master in Brooklyn College, and Professor Vince Peterson underscores why Brooklyn College features only the best. Dr. Bowyer conducted his Brooklyn College debut last Tuesday to a packed house of faculty, students, friends and Brooklyn residents with music of Mozart, Rachmaninoff, Copland, Ives and Lauridsen. The subtleties required for these scores were precisely wrought; making the majesty of the music stand on its own merit as the Conservatory Chamber Choir sang to perfection. To describe Dr. Bowyer's vision in conducting, one can think of Toscanini—precise, unyielding and persnickety at detail.

At the concert, and with an eye to the future of Brooklyn College academic success, a few solos were featured as sensational counterpoints to the collective sound of a chorus. Miriam Chaudoir, a graduate student and assistant to Dr. Bowyer in his administration of his duties, excellently sang a set of Modern-Hebrew songs

scored by Eric Whitacre. The flow of her pleasant voice soared, but never harshly. Her artistry mature and intelligent, she marked the evening with a slice of recital heaven. Accompanying her was one of the finest violinists in the conservatory, a conscientious chamber-music player, Daniel Marquez. His playing at times can be robust like that of a soloist but to measure the tone to fit the ensemble is a trick few young students allow themselves to learn. He's perfected it.

Ms. Chaudoir sang the solo in Mozart's Psalm 116 as well, to perfection, but another voice, in the undergrad group of students, made its appearance in Stephen Paulus' *The Road Home*. Monica Soyemi has already been turning heads among her peers in the Brooklyn College Conservatory. Her clear, bell-like soprano, confident and colorful marks all ensembles she graces, with a fine glittering hue. At times dark, but always with polish, she makes all music she sings pulsate with beauty.

A very different kind of performance was given on Sunday by the critically and popularly acclaimed Choral Chameleon; an independent choral group under the direction of its founder Vince Peterson, a music professor at

Brooklyn College. His style is more that of the potter: shaping sound, virtually with his hands, to make the delight that fills the hall come alive as if from nothing. It recalls the art of Furtwangler in how music is malleable rather than precise—the mastery of which is extremely difficult but equally rewarding.

In its season Opener, Choral Chameleon, which includes Brooklyn College alumni in its roster, followed a program of 'exquisitely sung works celebrating time. "Tempus: The Art of Time and Concord" was an hour of straightforward bliss, where aspects of time and its relation to Man were described vividly by the composers who wrote the works.

Three world-premieres in a well-designed program featured a series of pieces referred to as 'time-pieces'. The 'time pieces' all explore interesting rhythms—a specialty of Peterson's—and bring forth ideas the notion of time in a very brilliant manner. For instance, *Clocks* by Stephen Chatman, *Time Piece IV*, is an ingeniously worked out canon of the movements of watches, clocks, its gears, bells and chimes. The inclusion of this work is a testament to humanity's connection to time as a finite part of life.

Similarly, Joseph Gregorio's *Look Back on Time with Kindly Eyes*, where the chorus dispersed around the balcony to form and organ of individual sounds mimicking the clock's face, made the enveloping reality of time stand before an awestruck audience, as each marvelous singer marked his or her line on the slate of time.

These works are noteworthy due to their innovativeness. But interwoven with these works the program featured works ranging from the Renaissance to selections from Britten's opera *Gloriana*, pop songs and modern, introspective art songs. Maestro Peterson is known for his insatiable curiosity and devotion to healthy exploration. It is this drive that leads him to create such spectacular performances that introduce the most eclectic but magnificent repertoire, expertly.