

Voces Novae  
 Concert offers a day of choral delights

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By GEORGE R. HUBBARD • March 4, 2002  
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I missed the Voces Novae concert of Hebrew music three years ago, and so I was unprepared for the choral delights that Frank Heller and Angela Vaughn Hampton brought forth yesterday afternoon in the Stem Concert Hall at Indiana University Southeast. The featured guest artist was Cantor David A. Lipp of Adath Jeshurun Synagogue, and his fine tenor voice lent the stamp of authenticity to the variety of works presented.

It's hard to pick favorites -- my program is covered with stars and pluses! But Louis Lewandowski's "Halleluyah," a setting of Psalm 150, really rocked the rafters. Lewandowski's music is a staple of the synagogue choral repertoire, and with this as a sample, it is easy to see why.

"Yom Gilah" ("Day of Delight") by Samuel Adler opened the program, with Cantor Lipp joined by baritone Aaron Vowels, soprano Tiffany Taylor and alto Robin Sutherland, highlighting portions of this text for the Simchat Torah celebration. It was a light and lively beginning, full of the promise of joys to come.

Bonia Shur's "Kol Haneshamah," a setting of the last verse of Psalm 150, showed the chorus to be in tip-top choral fitness. The energetic work aptly reflected its text, "Let everything that breathes praise the Eternal."

Salomone Rossi, a 17th century pioneer in Jewish liturgical musical composition, was represented by "Shir Lama'alot, Essa Einai," a setting of Psalm 121. The unaccompanied choral sound was rich and effectively balanced, finely enhancing the serenity of the text. This was the finest choral singing of the day, and surely among the finest to be found anywhere.

"Eil Malei Rachamim," a movement from Max Janowski's "The Compassion Cantata," is a work for concert usage rather than for liturgy, but its reiterations of the text "O God, full of compassion" make it a resounding prayer. Cantor Lipp was joined by Taylor and by alto Anne Greenfield for brief but telling solo passages contrasting with the mass of choral sound.

"Hashkiveinu" by David Shukiar again featured Cantor Lipp in a reflective prayer from the Sabbath Eve service, "Grant, O eternal God, that we may lie down in peace." The cantillation of his solo mixed and matched with the chorus to splendid effect.

Gerald Cohen's "Hinei Mah Tov/Shaal Sh'lom Y'rushalayim" combines texts from Psalm 133 for the choral parts and Psalm 122 for the cantor. The delicate shading and balancing enhanced these prayers, "How good and how pleasant when comrades dwell in harmony" and "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

The program will be repeated Sunday at Adath Jeshurun Synagogue.