

Salute to Sal! A Farewell Concert at the Carmel Mission!

As expected it was an amazing sendoff! The Carmel Mission was packed to the gills, and into many six-seat-capacity pews were squeezed one or two additional music lovers - this was the largest audience I can ever remember seeing at the Mission. It was the first of two "Farwell Concerts" celebrating Sal Ferrantelli's 36 years with I Cantori, and sadly to say, marking his retirement from the group. Ferrantelli has nurtured and developed I Cantori over the last tree and a half decades into a professional ensemble that has consistently presented performances on the highest artistic level of choral music that spanned many centuries. It has also often included his own compositions written for I Cantori.

Ferrantelli has been a formidable musical presence on the Monterey Peninsula as a Professor of Choral Music at Monterey Peninsula College and also as a singer, director of choral ensembles, arranger and composer. Above all it is his love and commitment to music that has made him such a special person. His infectious enthusiasm has not only imbued every performance under his direction with a special significance and inevitability, but it has also helped him develop special relationships with instrumental and vocal musicians on the Monterey Peninsula. Concertmaster David Dally, pianist Pauline Troia, Assistant Conductor Susan Mehra, and his perennial soloists Reg Huston and Linda Purdy (joined on this occasion by soprano Katherine Edison and tenor Arthur Wu) are musicians who not only consistently give their best, but always also a little more under Ferrantelli's direction.

The program for this "Farewell Concert" consisted of music that has had special significance in Ferrantelli's long career. Opening with two *a cappella* masterpieces, "Hark All Ye Lovely Saints Above" by Thomas Weelkes and Anton Bruckner's *Ave Maria* we heard choral music for mixed voices with subtleties of dynamic control and blending of colors that produced some magic moments. The three movements from *Ein Deutsches Requiem* by Johannes Brahms that ended the first half of the program let us hear the orchestra, which had been silent up to this part, suddenly emerging with the dark rich timbres we associate with Brahms. Especially effective was the somber *Selig sing die da Leid tragen* and the *Ihr hat nun Traurigkeit* featuring soprano Katherine Edison, whose powerful voice was intense and expressive.

After intermission we heard Ferrantelli's own setting of *Selig sind die da Leid tragen* written in 2008 for I Cantori, which began with a striking two-note falling motif and featured some beautiful phrases that echoed back and forth between the women's and men's voices, and also a significant violin solo written for concertmaster David Dally.

The concert ended with glorious performances of the *Kyrie Eleison* from Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and the *Kyrie Eleison* and *Gloria* from Beethoven's *Mass in C, Op. 86*. Coming out from the wings to join the orchestra and chorus were the evening's soloists: soprano Katherine Edison, mezzo-soprano Linda Purdy, tenor Arthur Wu and Baritone Reg Huston - all familiar soloists from previous performances by I Cantori. The orchestra, which has been principally strings and woodwinds in the first half of the concert was now amplified with brass and timpani, and the ensemble with the vocal soloists added splendid new effects.

Incidentally, in the orchestra, as always with I Cantori, we see many familiar faces - Dave Dally, Arlyn Knapic, Vernon Brown, Nicola Reilly, Laura Burian, Bon Dally and Margie Dally, but I noticed among the brass players a newcomer, Scott Seward, Director of Marketing and Public Relations for the Carmel Bach Festival. Now that's synergy for you, and I didn't even know he played trumpet.

After this very heartfelt concert the applause and loud cheering was tumultuous and sustained. When the din died down, Ferrantelli addressed some remarks to the audience thanking so many supporters who make these concerts possible. Then there was a little surprise for "Sal" when the chorus (joined by the audience) broke into a spontaneous round of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." What a great way to say thank you.

The concert was followed by a reception in Crespi Hall behind the Mission.

- Lyn Bronson
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