

Voces Novae: "Gloria" November 12, 2000

Group Presents Glorious Selection

By RICK MATTINGLY © The Courier-Journal

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Not much room had to be devoted to text in the program for Voces Novae's performance yesterday afternoon at Christ Church United Methodist Church. All seven works were settings of the "Gloria."

The concert opened and closed with pieces that were somewhat more "showbiz" than spiritual. Jackson Berkey's setting featured a perky, Latin-flavored piano accompaniment, with the sopranos and altos riffing on "Gloria in excelsis Deo."

With its heroic, fanfare-like brass and timpani parts to its dynamic extremes, John Rutter's "Gloria" had plenty of Hollywood excess with little subtlety. Some of the effects were impressive, such as when the singers built to climaxes in which they were practically shouting and then instantly dropped to a whisper; on a technical level the piece brought the concert to a triumphant close.

But the emotional highlights were earlier. Thomas Weelkes' hymnlike setting of the "Gloria" was sung a cappella with exceptional smoothness and depth, bringing out the solemnity of the lyrics. By contrast, Mozart's spirited setting, sung with chamber orchestra accompaniment, brought out the joyful aspects of the text.

The centerpiece of the concert was Vivaldi's multimovement "Gloria," in which practically every line of the text is given its own setting. From the ecstasy of "Gloria in excelsis Deo" to the passionate supplication of the "Agnus Dei" section, the piece demanded a range of emotional depth from the singers, which the chorus and the various soloists more than delivered.

Randall Thompson's short, a cappella setting featured interesting phrasing and mixed meters and provided an apt opening for the concert's second half.

That was followed by the nicest surprise of the afternoon. David Cross, a local musician and singer, composed a "Gloria" setting especially for the occasion. His piece, sung a cappella, made excellent use of a variety of choral textures, with sections featuring only men, only women, soloists, few singers and all singers. The piece received an enthusiastic ovation from the capacity crowd.

[Voces Novae Past Concert Information](#)