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## Proud, strong, united: The community in concert

*Bringing it all together, joint concert by the Portland Gay Men's Chorus and the Portland Lesbian Choir captivated SRO audiences in Lesbian/Gay Pride capper.*

BY DR. TANTALUS

Saturday, June 27, 1987 marked an historic event in Portland's gay and lesbian community as the Portland Gay Men's Chorus and Lesbian Choir jointly hosted a concert at the Eastside Performance Center. A packed house for two performances witnessed an occasion that was part political theater and part enter-

## Music

tainment as Lesbian/Gay Pride Week came to a close.

The evening began by the first public performance of the Lesbian Choir, a group of approximately twenty-five pioneers conducted by Jeri Hendricks. The Choir gave enthusiastic readings to "Sisters," "Swing Low" and "The Body Electric," before leaving the stage to a rousing standing ovation.

The Choir reportedly has struggled under numerous handicaps, including the lack of a permanent rehearsal hall, a regular accompanist, and the need for more sopranos. Such problems would be the death knell of many volunteer organizations and less dedicated ensembles, and the continued existence of the Choir is praiseworthy under such intolerable conditions. It is difficult to believe that there are not persons within the community who could lend assistance on such matters.

These organizational dilemmas necessarily manifest themselves into the onstage performance. Entrances and exits tend to be ragged, members fail to always focus their attention on the conductor, and the blend is heavily weighted to the lower voice ranges of the Choir. However, what is lacking in technical spit and polish must be weighed against the unbridled enthusiasm of the performance. Certainly there is no problem here that time and additional rehearsals cannot cure. The most coherent musical performance, "The Body Electric," showed promise of greater things to come.

The Gay Men's Chorus has no such excuses with its long history of performance and its greater numbers. However, no excuses were necessary for the performance given on this night as the Chorus proved to be in fine form. Of special note was a moving performance of Rogers' and Hart's "My Funny Valentine," which seemed to bridge the gap between popular entertainment and art.

A review of the Chorus would not be

complete without a special tip of the Doctor's scalpel to accompanist Stuart Zimmerman, who always seems to provide "just the right note" and the appropriate balance between himself and the chorus. David York, as usual, conducted and deserves credit for the polished performances that audiences now take for granted. It wasn't always that way.

In addition to the efforts of the choruses, the audience also received fine performances from David Smith, pianist, and Musica Femina, a guitar and flute duo. A comedic highlight was the inspired duet of Steve Fulmer and Kathryn Heron. In keeping with the political undercurrent of the evening, all groups received equal time, as did the two announcers, Katharine English and Keeston Lowery.

The evening concluded with a joint performance by the Chorus and the Choir, as well as a special guest appearance by Kate Sullivan, who added her lusty voice to the event's delights. One hopes that this evening can be repeated in future years as the perfect end to Gay Pride Week.

Did I say perfect end? Well, honey, obviously I must have been referring to that other new spectacle that occurred this year. Only one day later the first drag show that this Doctor has ever seen took place in the Washington Park amphitheater. Lady Elaine Peacock, Empress XXIX, wowed 'em in the aisles as she led a procession of buxom beauties into our hallowed park. Some unsuspecting tourists were so taken aback that the Doctor was afraid he might have to give mouth to mouth resuscitation to the shocked throng. However, a knowledgeable crowd of two to three hundred sat back and enjoyed the night air and the performance and let the tourists fend for themselves.

Just the thought of a drag show in the park was enough to make the Doctor reach for that Valium prescription he keeps written for himself. Did I say perfect end? Girls — have you seen the flip side of Lady Elaine? They must spray that dress on then have to scrape it off.

With music provided by The City Nightclub, it was refreshing to hear music that was written after 1978, unlike that heard in the Doctor's usual haunts. Of course, the volume was enough to send squirrels into spasms, but one assumes that such adjustments can be made in the future.

By the conclusion of the weekend, the general feeling, for those of us lucky enough to attend, was that the community is indeed becoming proud, strong and united.



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