

## Italian Ice Cream for Christmas

The Kelowna Community Concert Association's second concert of the season featured Quartetto Gelato at the Kelowna Community Theatre on Monday.

Gelato, the Italian word for ice cream, implies unexpected flavours of sweet delights, so maybe it's not such a bad name for this group. Also, ice cream has popular appeal and isn't just for purists

The Gelato Quartet consists of a clarinet, a cello, a tenor who also plays the violin, and an accordion. Right off the top, the incongruity of such a combination of instruments warns the wary concertgoer to expect the unconventional.

Unconventional, perhaps, but not unmusical, and therein--at least to me--lies the appeal of Quartetto Gelato: the sounds they produce--especially if one is familiar with the piece--may be strange, but their musicianship is beyond reproach.

Peter DeSotto, the apparent leader of the group, is also the vocalist. He has a pleasing timbre and a fantastic range of dynamics and pitch. As regards diction, DeSotto's lyrics in any language are largely incomprehensible, but who cares about words when experiencing a lovely-voiced tenor in full cry?

DeSotto's fiddling is on a par with his singing, which is virtuosic and terrific. Right up there with him is clarinetist Shalom Bard. The two of them, often standing toe-to-toe, tried to outdo each other

Bard's technique is absolutely breathtaking, and I would love to hear him tear into one of the von Weber or Mozart clarinet concerti. His tone is sweet and pure, and it is hard to imagine anyone having greater mastery of his or her instrument than Bard.

Yet, regarding mastery of one's instrument, accordionist Alexander Sevastian arguably takes the cake. Four-time winner of international accordion competitions, Sevastian is truly in a class by himself. This, coming from me, is high praise indeed, for I don't particularly relish the sound of the squeeze box.

Adding charm and grace to the group and not detracting in any way from its virtuosity is cellist Carina Reeves. Her flight to Kelowna was uneventful, but her cello did not fare as well; our national airline managed to send Reeves' instrument elsewhere. John Wells, cellist of the Okanagan Symphony and cello maker par excellence, came to Reeves' rescue with one of his own celli. Reeves' performance on an unfamiliar cello was remarkable.

The concert, billed as a Christmas program, was pretty much just that. A bravura piece by Aram Khatchaturian, played brilliantly by Sevastian, was, however, interpolated in the first half. In the second half, the Gelati replaced the programmed Silent Night Story with Ungaria, Gesu Bambino, and Al di la.

Archangelo Corelli's Christmas Concerto was the major work after the intermission. No clowning here, the performance was well paced and intelligently interpreted. The sound was not traditional, but the playing was first class.

Quartetto Gelato enjoyed a standing ovation and obliged the capacity crowd with a Cinnamon Flower as an encore.

*Charles Velte is a former opera singer (1962-67) who holds a Master of Music degree in Music Theory from the University of Wisconsin (1961). He now leads a music appreciation group at the Society for Learning in Retirement.*