



Kelowna 'indebted' to Dett

Fresh from an appearance at Barack Obama's inauguration and full of enthusiastic discipline, the Nathaniel Dett Chorale gave the grateful patrons of the Kelowna Community Concert Association a concert to remember. The event took place Tuesday at the Kelowna Community Theatre.

Mind you, a couple solid hours of spirituals and other Afrocentric music might not be everyone's cup of tea, but it was certainly performed brilliantly and from the heart.

Robert Nathaniel Dett was a Canadian-American composer, a contemporary of Sergei Rachmaninov, being born five years later and dying six months after the Russian master. Dett was an accomplished pianist, and his compositions were constructed with great skill and originality.

The Nathaniel Dett chamber choir is the brain child of Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, who is also the only conductor the group has ever known. Blyden-Taylor came to Canada from Trinidad-Tobago in 1973 and has been extremely active in the Toronto music scene before and since starting the Dett Chorale in 1998.

Major items on the program were Adolphus Hailstork's opening set of three songs with tenor solo, and an abridged version of R. Nathaniel Dett's oratorio, *The Ordering of Moses*.

I was particularly taken with Dett's breathtakingly beautiful *Ave Maria* and his vividly descriptive *Listen to the Lambs*, with its intricately woven wailings. To enhance the vocal blend, Blyden-Taylor mixes his charges instead of positioning them in sections or blocks.

The Chorale could not proceed to its next destination in Vancouver without giving the crowd an encore: *Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho*. Before delivering the downbeat, Maestro Blyden-Taylor exhorted the audience to believe in the possible, as Joshua had done, and to let one's self-erected walls come tumbling down.

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.