

Minstrels wrap up season with great show

Community Concerts brought their season to a close last Friday with a rollicking program of Gilbert and Sullivan

Their operas are among the top picks for audience delight, and it was certainly so with *The Wand'ring Minstrels*, a quintet from New York City.

The Minstrels were: Susan Caldwell Smith, soprano; Angela Smith, contralto; Daniel Greenwood, tenor; Stephen Quint, comic baritone; David Wannan, bass baritone; accompanied by Elizabeth Rogers at the piano.

Each singer not only has a splendid voice, well suited to the genre, they also have a great flair for comedy.

It was obvious from the start they were seasoned professionals who were extraordinarily comfortable in every song, beginning with much of *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Their version offers a great deal of scope for fine singing, comic "shtick" and dialogue – just enough to carry the story line.

Simple costume changes allowed the troupe to play various roles, adding to the fun.

Throughout the evening, there were only a few small difficulties.

The soprano's middle high notes seemed forced, but her very high notes rang clear and true. The tenor tended to be a helden-tenor with plenty of bravura sounds and a wide range, although I would have liked a smoother style from him sometimes. Quint made the most of his role, suiting his tone to each demand and singing the "patter" songs with aplomb. Having sung some of these myself long ago, I can really appreciate his

skill. Smith's warm contralto was even throughout the range, but the Oscar goes to David Wannan. His bass baritone voice was rich, flexible and full of dynamic nuances over his wide range.

Together, their ensemble singing was superb, well blended and stylish. The four-part songs of Gilbert and Sullivan are among my favourites for they show Sullivan's talent for writing choral music.

Indeed, he wrote many part songs both secular and sacred, which I'm sure pleased Queen Victoria greatly.

After intermission, we were treated to selections from various works, and then the audience was invited to request songs.

We responded with a variety of requests, which they performed ably. The tenor even sang as one of

the *Three Little Maids*, which nearly brought the house down.

It is a tribute to their skill that they could perform such works at a moment's notice.

Accompanist Elizabeth Rogers deserves kudos for her work, supporting and augmenting the singers with ease.

There were so many songs performed that one could not pick a favourite or even a high point.

The audience showed their delight and appreciation with a prolonged standing ovation. What a way to end a season.

I can only say jolly good show!

Marvin Dickau is an organist, pianist and conductor who has an A. Mus. from the University of Alberta. He is currently minister of music at First United Church and executive director of the Kelowna Kiwanis Music Festival.



**MARVIN
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Review