



ELIZABETH PATTERSON conducts the Gloriam Dei Cantores choir outside St. James Church in Medugorje, Yugoslavia. (Photo courtesy of Gloriam Dei Cantores)

Orleans choir returns after tour of Europe

By DAVID REILLY

Following a two-month tour of Europe which included stops in Hungary and Yugoslavia, members of the Orleans-based Gloriam Dei Cantores choir returned home with a different perspective on that part of the world.

"I had this stereotypical picture of communist countries as cold places," said Blair Manuel, a singer who is also the choir's United States publicity director. "I couldn't believe how warm the people were. Perhaps because of all the adversity they've had to overcome, they have a depth of faith which Americans haven't been exposed to."

The professional ecumenical choir is made up of 44 Orleans citizens ranging in age from 19 to 65. Focusing on classical sacred music, the group has studied under renowned choirmaster Dr. George Guest of St. John's College in Cambridge, England. Dr. Guest served as the guest conductor for the European tour.

The tour, which also included stops in England, Holland and Wales, was organized by the choir and funded by various corporations and individuals. The goal of the trip was to "promote peace,

understanding and harmony among the peoples of different nations and cultures," according to choir conductor Elizabeth Patterson.

Titled "Gateway Concert Series," the tour included a concert at Kecskamet — home of the famous Kodaly Music Institute in Hungary; a performance at a special reception hosted by United States Ambassador Mark Palmer in Budapest; and Easter performances in Yugoslavia attended by almost 6,000 people.

"The tour was filled with many special moments of inspiration," Patterson said. "It was truly an experience of oneness transcending all ideologies."

Manuel said Hungary and Yugoslavia made the biggest impressions on her. Noting that the Hungarian equivalent of Independence Day took place on March 13, she said, "For the first time since the Russian invasion, they were allowed to celebrate their holiday and their patriotism is very evident."

Based at the Community of Jesus on Rock Harbor Road, Gloriam Dei Cantores is planning another tour of Europe in 1990 which will include a visit to the Soviet Union.

What To Do

Community Carols Celebrate Season On A Grand Scale

By Dana Franchitto

Last Sunday's English Carol Concert by the Community of Jesus Choir and Orchestra, under the direction of Elizabeth Patterson, was a grand scale event of resplendent voices celebrating the birth of Christ with diverse arrangements of various well-known and not so well-known carols.

Dr. James E. Jordan jr began the proceedings with a zippy set of variations by Daquin and a processional piece, to which the youth choirs made their way to the altar. This set featured some fine solo-

Music Review

ing by two young singers of promise—Tim McKendree in the first verse of "In The Bleak Midwinter," and Katherine Shannon in the old French carol, "Whence is That Goodly Fragrance."

The congregation, which filled the pews, was invited to stand and raise its voice to the strains of "Angels We Have Heard On High." It was a personally moving experience to be swept up in that wave of sonority, but at times the blaring brass fanfares and exotic key changes were excessive.

The same could be said of "Go Tell It On The Mountain," which was fun to sing but a bit overproduced. And this time, the key changes between each verse seemed to disorient the congregation. However, if you like these kinds of arrangements, you couldn't have asked for a better performance.

Lucia Smith, accompanied by the women's voices, drew an effective portrayal of innocence and maternal affection in the Welsh lullaby, "Suo Gan." Soprano Cathy Hale should also be cited for her lilting descant over the song "What Child Is This?"

With Kevin Reese's strong but meditative solo in the

first verse, the choir gave the best performance these ears have heard in a long time of Adolfe Adams's overdone "Cantique Noel" (usually heard as "O Holy Night").

Among the other carols, one of best was "Quem Vidistis Pastores," by the 16th century composer Richard Deering. The slightly brisk tempo taken by the choir enhanced its pastoral ambience.

"Why This Haste, O Shepherd Say" and "King Jesus Hath A Garden" were blessed with the rustic simplicity and humor which account for this genre's appeal.

The simple unison textures of the women's voices in "Ave Maris Stella," by Lajos Bardos, also contrasted with the grand scope of much of this program.

Benjamin Hemple's solid, manly voice lent stability to a capricious yet festive "Fantasia on Christmas Carols," by Ralph Vaughn Williams. This piece has many moments of glory, and the singing and playing were inspiring, but the composer's symphonic and sometimes theatrical treatment of familiar carols gets tiresome after a while. Nevertheless, this brilliant performance earned a standing ovation.

Though only a few people stayed to hear him, organist David Chalmers also deserved a standing ovation for his propulsive flight through the finale of the *First Symphony* by Vierne.

This being their third performance of the weekend, you would think these musicians would have shown signs of fatigue. Not so. Faith seemed to provide them with energy and inspiration.



Elizabeth C. Patterson, Choir Director at the Community of Jesus.