

VIENNA CHOIR BOYS

Jaume Miranda, Conductor and Pianist

Wednesday Evening, March 4, 1992, at 7:00
Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

- Dixit Dominus Baldassare Galuppi
(1706-1785)
- Verbum Caro Orlando di Lasso
(1532-1594)
- Exultate Deo Alessandro Scarlatti
(1660-1725)
- Solo (to be announced from the stage)
- Ave Maria Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)
- Sweet Was the Song Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)
- Pater Hemon (The ancient Greek Lord's Prayer) Peter Marschik
(b. 1958)

Pause

(the audience is requested to remain seated)

- "Tales from the Vienna Woods" Johann Strauss
Comic opera in one act, *arr.* by R. Rossmayer (1825-1899)

INTERMISSION

- Ay Linda Amiga Spanish *Anonymous* (16th century)
- Occhi Dolci e Soavi Luca Marenzio
(1560-1599)
- Das Dorfchen Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)
- Tanzlied Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)
- Solo and Folk songs (to be announced from the stage)
- Polka, Waltz (to be announced from the stage) J. Strauss

Program Note

Tales From the Vienna Woods Opera in One Act, Music by Johann Strauss

Synopsis

Kalafati, a popular Chinese figure of carved wood associated with the oldest merry-go-round in the famous Vienna Prater, has returned after years spent in exile, and tells an old-time story of love's happiness and sorrow, a story not peculiar to old Vienna.

Mitzi, the pretty daughter of Kipfel (the baker), is in love with Franz (the soldier), who has gone with the Austro-Hungarian Army to Bosnia. Mitzi's father, however, wants her to marry Herr von Stieglitz, who pretends to be rich and of gentle birth. Xandl, the smart cobbler's apprentice, succeeds in preventing this marriage by means of a cunning intrigue, Mitzi helping him. He unmasks Herr von Stieglitz, proving him to be a swindler, and then persuades Kipfel to give his daughter in marriage to Franz, and everybody joins in the happiness of the young couple.

About the Artists

For nearly five centuries, the Vienna Choir Boys have enchanted millions with the charm and excellence of their music-making. The traditions they preserve are not the curiosities one finds in museums or libraries, but living, breathing manifestations of a noble heritage dedicated to continuing the glories of the past in today's fast-paced modern world.

The Vienna Choir Boys were founded by Imperial decree on July 7, 1498, by the humanist Emperor Maximilian I to fulfill his wish to have choristers in the Imperial Chapel. From its inception, this organization has attracted the finest musicians in the West: Christoph Willibald Gluck, the founder of the modern operatic form, spent his most creative years as composer to the Hapsburg Court in Vienna and wrote for the Imperial Chapel. Mozart did the same on his promotion as composer to the Court in 1787. Although Josef Haydn was not a member of the Imperial Chapel, he experienced the life of a choirboy to the fullest, and many of his works are found in their repertoire. The greatest prodigy, and without a doubt the most famous choirboy, was Franz Schubert, who sang as a choirboy from 1808 to 1813. Anton Bruckner became organist of the Imperial Chapel in 1867 and added his influence to those of his equally illustrious predecessors.

In 1918, however, it appeared that the collapse of the Hapsburg dynasty and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would mean the end of the world-famous institution. Fortunately, Joseph Schnitt retained the chaplaincy of the Imperial Chapel, and in 1924, encouraged by his many friends, he decided to reorganize the boys choir and bring it back to life. It was felt that the boarding school method was the only practical way of ensuring the musical training necessary for the choristers, and, despite enormous economic difficulties, the attempt was made. Schnitt spared no personal expense, and he alone is responsible for the salvation of this aspect of Austrian musical tradition. What he began as an experiment has grown to be an enormous success, and the Vienna Choir Boys, as they were now called, began to embark on concert tours around the world.

Anyone who has seen the boys, either in rehearsal or in performance, soon realizes the secret of their fascination: they have managed to combine the naivete of childhood with artistic maturity — something that can only be achieved through serious work. Those who wish to be considered for entry attend a special preparatory school where they receive a thorough education, with special attention paid to the theory and practice of singing as well as instruction on one



musical instrument. At the examination, which the candidates take at the age of nine, musical ability is the decisive factor, irrespective of creed or social standing.

Today, there are four Vienna Choir Boy units, rotating so that each choirboy spends only part of the year traveling. Most often, two choirs are away on tour at the same time, with each tour lasting an average of three months. On such a tour, the 24 choristers are accompanied by a choirmaster, a tutor, and a nurse, who are entrusted with their care and welfare. Since their first United States tour in 1932, the Vienna Choir Boys have visited America no fewer than 46 times, have completed numerous tours of Asia — traveling as far as Japan — and have toured in Australia, as well as appearances in South America and South Africa. They have been received by innumerable heads of state and have had audiences with Popes Pius XI, Pius XII, and Paul VI. The time lost on concert

tours is more than compensated for by an intensive program of teaching and study in classes that seldom exceed more than ten students. In the private school, which conforms to the standards set by the Austrian Ministry of Education, there is a staff of 30 fully qualified secondary school teachers.

Through their films, recordings, television appearances, and tours, the Vienna Choir Boys have delighted millions in every corner of the world with their programs of sacred and secular songs, folk music, and their ever-popular one-act comic operas, upholding their renown as the world's most beloved choir.

The Vienna Choir Boys made their Ann Arbor debut in 1933, one year after the choir's first United States tour. Returning ten times throughout the succeeding decades, tonight's concert marks a total of twelve appearances for the ensemble in Hill Auditorium.



The piano in tonight's concert is a Steinway available through Hammell Music, Inc., Livonia. The Vienna Choir Boys are represented by ICM Artists, Ltd., New York City. Activities of the UMS are supported by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Behind the Scenes

by Bob Lundegaard

(excerpted from the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, 1986)



Boys will be boys, even when they look like cherubs and sing like angels. So says Wally Adams, American manager for the Vienna Choir Boys on a recent tour. "When you travel around the country with 24 little boys," he says, "you have so many unusual experiences that they aren't unusual any more.

"A year or so ago at Niagara Falls, one of the kids found out how to bypass the control for the machines that make your bed vibrate. He had every room in the hotel vibrating.

"When we stay in a high-rise, there's always someone who wants to find out how long a roll of toilet paper is. So they hold it out the window and watch it unroll, and sure enough, they discover that it's about 18 floors.

"And we have to clean their suitcases periodically, because they'll collect all kinds of junk. One boy was collecting ashtrays for his father. He had 19 of them. We discovered that when we heard his suitcase clanking, and when we tried to lift it, it weighed more than some of the wardrobe trunks. You have no idea the number of soggy matchbooks we've pulled out of flight bags."

The group is one of four Vienna Choir Boys groups that make three-month tours to raise funds to operate their private school in Vienna. Auditions for membership are conducted twice a year in Austria. Those who

are accepted take music lessons twice a week at the Augarten Palace, and, after two years, become choir members and live at the Palace. Although 80 percent of the boys are Catholics, there is no religious qualification for membership. The only requirements are that you be Austrian and musically gifted — and a boy. Equal opportunity hasn't reached Austria yet. "No girl has ever auditioned," Adams says. "She wouldn't even be considered. Her voice is a different instrument. The composition of the boys' throat muscles is so much stronger."

Adams is one of two Americans who travel with the boys. (The other is their bus driver.) They also bring with them a musical director, a nurse, and a house-father from Austria. The latter is sometimes called a tutor, but Adams says he doesn't do much teaching. "He's the disciplinarian, the one who organizes things for them," he says.

Adams signed on with the choir because "I'd been a concert manager before, and I'd handled some groups which — I hesitate to use the word difficult — but special-care groups.

"If you roll in with an American show, you say, 'All right, fellas, there's the theater and I'll meet you there in half an hour.' But you can't do that with boys. They have to be entertained, they have to be fed, they have to be taken sightseeing. It's a 24-hour-a-day thing."

What do they do for kicks?

"Bowling is very big. And roller-skating. Disneyland or movie studio tours when we're in southern California. And if everything else runs out, we've got two or three soccer balls on the bus. We find a field and turn 'em loose, and they're happy."

But they're turned loose with a strict warning: Don't scream. It's bad for the throat. Above all, the boys mustn't drink milk after 4 p.m. on the day of a performance. "Milk phlegms the vocal cords," Adams says. "But they are kids and they need their milk, so we always ask for milk and cookies after the show. The cookies are frankly a bribe to get the 'little devils' to drink their milk."

Onstage, however, they look like cherubs and sing like angels.