

The Concert Choir promotes ECSU in its Fall tour through eastern NC

By Arlinda Banks

The Elizabeth City State University Concert Choir presented its annual Fall Concert Tour throughout eastern North Carolina Nov. 6-9, 1992. Sponsored by the ECSU Department of Music, the tour offered four days of music to audiences in Goldsboro, Raleigh, Wendell, Smithfield, and Washington, North Carolina.

The tour began about 6:30 a.m. Nov. 6, with choir members standing outside Williams Hall, waiting the arrival of the tour bus. With suitcases packed with choir robes, formal gowns, and tuxedos, the choir members were set to begin.

First stop on the tour was Goldsboro High School in Goldsboro, N.C.

After the bus approached the campus, choir members were moving about the tight aisle of the bus reaching up to the top rack to get their royal blue and white choir robes. Once they entered a gate at the rear of one section of the school, they quickly filed off the bus and into the school, from which two first-year choir members, Meechsha Atkinson and Shonda McNair had graduated.

Inside, the choir performed for a crowd of ninth through 12th grade students. Songs included, "Hodie, Christus natus est," by Healey Willan; "Deo Gratias," by Carl Haywood; "As By The Streams of Babylon," by R. Nathaniel Dett.

One selection, "He's Preparing Me" by Carol Antrom, directed by student conductor, Julius Goodman, bought the audience to its feet. Soloist Dwane Smalls, pianist, Donald McClain, and the choir seemed to, "Let go and let God," according to McClain.

On Monday, Nov. 9, the choir performed at Smithfield-Selma High School in Smithfield, North Carolina. After the assembly, Hines conducted a master class to members of the Smithfield-Selma High School Chorus, teaching them techniques in singing and breathing.

The choir also performed at St. Paul AME Church in Raleigh; at Pleasant Groove Baptist Church in Wendell; and at First United Methodist Church in Washington to an interracial, standing-room only audience.

"People were eager to be involved with our program," said Antoine Fries, a freshman choir member who sings bass. "The audience was attentive to make the program go over successfully."

"All types of people could enjoy the same music," said sophomore Nicholas Hemby.

Ginger Barnes, a native of Washington, performed her solo "Alleluja, Exsultate jubilate, K. V. 165" by W. A. Mozart, to an audience which included her family, friends and teachers.

The University Choir's 38 members

became more of a family after four days of traveling and rooming together, and sharing the confining space of a chartered bus.

"We realize that majority of us are reaching for the same goals in life," said Ginger Barnes, a senior music major. "We want to be the best we can in our respective areas, and as a unit."

The choir also shared the emotion and hard work of performing.

"It created a unifying bond between the choir and Hines. Instead of students, we're a family," said James Bembry, a sophomore accounting major.

Choir member say they set out on this tour with different expectations.

"I felt the choir was prepared," said Donald McClain, a returning student. "The excitement of the members, the time put into evening and night rehearsals, and the quality of the music all made this a good tour."

The University Choir serves as a valuable recruitment tool for the University, according to choir director, Billy C. Hines.

Hines' assistant, ECSU student, Sharon Wiggins, sets up displays promoting the University at each stop, said Hines. Included in the displays are ECSU catalogues, pamphlets on degree programs offered at the University and scrapbooks with information and pictures of the University Choir.

A binder containing the resumes of all the choir members is also on display.

Hines encourages choir members to take advantage of these travel opportunities and reminds them that prospective employers may attend these performances.

Following each performance, choir members also talk to students, which allows them the opportunity for one-on-one recruiting.

Members of the University Choir's majors range from business administration, criminal justice, education, English, geology, music, and political science.

Hines says he makes a great effort to showcase the individual talent of the members. The tour exhibited the talents of eight soloists, two student accompanists, three instrumentalists, two narrators and a student conductor, some having interchanging roles.

The University Choir performs at most university functions, and whenever called upon by the Chancellor.

The choir presents fall and spring tours each year at various locations across the country. The choir will perform its Christmas Candlelighting Concert on Dec. 6 at 8:00 p.m. in Moore Hall Auditorium. As conductor, Hines is accompanied by Mrs. E. Vendetta Sutton, an alumna, and music instructor at ECSU.



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