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Battle of the Choirs

By Sophie Braccini



Choirs from Lamorinda's three high schools all sing together

The annual "battle of the choirs," at which Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte showcase their musical talents, featured the usual level of top-notch performances for a crowd of adoring parents and friends.

The Fall Choral Classic Repertoire was a day-long affair for the students—they mingled from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to learn three new songs

that the 200-voice strong combined choirs would sing together at the end of the evening. Before the grand finale each school presented its own program: 3 songs by each choir and 3 songs by the elite sub-groups called either "Chamber" or "Choral." The juniors and seniors had their day on October 18, while the sophomores performed two days later.

Although the evening is not billed

as a battle, each school tries to put forth its best creative effort. The Acalanes Choir, directed by Megan Perdue, opened the evening with *Tres Cantos Nativos dos Indios Krao*, a piece freely based on melodies sung by the Krao tribe, a group of native Brazilian Indians who live in the Amazonian forest of northwestern Brazil, and adapted by Marcos Leite who was well-known in Brazil as a conductor, composer, and musical theater director. The beautiful piece mixes bird songs, rhythms and voices, and required from the students and their director a different type of musicianship. The precision of Perdue's direction came out beautifully, showcasing some lovely voices such as that of soprano Lindsay Ford.

Newcomer Mark Roberts made his first formal appearance as conductor of the Campolindo team. Neither timid nor overly cautious, Roberts did not hesitate to take the Campolindo Concert Choir off the beaten path. He

surprised the audience with soloist Katie Marino starting an African Processional arranged by D.V. Montoya, alone on stage—marching to the rhythm of her song and of a powerful drum, the rest of the choir gradually joined her on stage. Roberts then offered the audience two modern pieces that took full advantage of the large pool of talent among his group of singers. He did not shy away from pushing the sound volume and increasing the auditory contrasts in the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, and had the singers interpret *The Battle of Jericho* in a very modern arrangement by Moses Hogan.

The Miramonte Choir, directed by Bruce Lengacher, presented two classical and perfectly executed songs. *Amor de mi Alma*, by Randall Stroope, was especially exquisite, and very finely tuned in all of its nuances by Lengacher.

The third piece by the Acalanes Choir, *Vamuvamba* ("They Crucified Him") is a traditional Tiriki melody from Kenya that was adapted and arranged by Boniface Mganga, the founder and director of the Kenyan Muungano National Choir. The young Lafayette students, with the help of a drum, interpreted joyfully the energetic African music.

Guest conductor Lori Marie Rios conducted the finale, appropriately called the Mass Choir. The result of the day's work was impressive, not only because of the sheer number of singers, but because they memorized and sang everything perfectly. As Rios put it, "Music is more than notes and rhythm; it is a way to self-discovery, to better understanding of others' culture and ways of life."

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Famous Author Comes to Lamorinda Reads Event

By Cathy Tyson

Lamorinda Reads will celebrate its grand finale event for the year with well known San Francisco author Glen David Gold discussing his book, *Carter Beats the Devil*, on November 1. Senior Community Library Manager Susan Weaver anticipates a big turnout in the spacious Community Hall of the Lafayette Li-

brary and Learning Center, "We know that people outside our area also read our Lamorinda Reads choices every year so we've developed a following. Plus, I'd like a nickel for the number of times people have raved about the book to me."

Weaver explains that they try to choose a title that both men and women will enjoy, ideally with a local angle. "This book was easy for us because it has absolutely everything most readers would delight in - a thriller, a mystery, and tantalizing historical fiction to make people wonder what part's true and what the author has simply made up. In terms of check outs, I did a rough count and as of today, the book has been checked out around 1,300 times," she says.

Indeed *Carter Beats the Devil* has gotten glowing reviews since its publication in 2001, even *The New Yorker* called it, "the most entertaining appearing acts of recent years." The tale includes an eccentric cast of characters including President Harding, real-life prize fighter Benny Leonard, Philo Farnsworth and ghosts at Lake Merritt along with hardship and heartbreak.

From the initial "cold-call" e-mail from Caroline Glick, Orinda Library's Senior Community Library Manager, Gold responded enthusiastically. Glick had read the book when it came out, Googled the author, and sent her request. Look for Glen David Gold at The Lafayette Library and Learning Center on Tuesday November 1st at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Hall. Although the event is free, books will be available for purchase courtesy of Orinda Books and can be autographed. Readers may also be familiar with Gold's wife, Alice Sebold, author of *The Lovely Bones* and *The Almost Moon*.

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