Irish voices, many melodies

The National Chamber Choir of Ireland will bring its vocal style to the Iowa City tonight with a performance hosted by Hancher.

By SAMANTHA GENTY

While on tour in the United States, Alan Leech, a tenor in the National Chamber Choir of Ireland, looks forward to visiting Iowa as he can try the corn and catch a glimpse of the Coralville skyline.

And as a musician and lecturer, he said he’s also interested in the techniques in music departments at various universities.

The choir will showcase their traditional Irish songs at 7:30 p.m. today at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, 228 E. Jefferson St.

Admission is $10 for students, $22.50 for youth, $45 for seniors, and $45 for the general public.

The National Chamber Choir has made a significant contribution to the genre of music in the United States, and it has also toured around Europe, Asia, and South America.

Besides a St. Patrick’s Day performance at the White House, this is the group’s first tour around the United States. It will be joined by multi-award-winning choral conductor Paul Hillier for the special performance.

Jacob Validation, the Hancher programming director, is glad the venue is able to host the special performance.

“The National Chamber Choir of Ireland is one of the greatest choral ensembles in the world,” Validation said. “Hancher is proud to present it in its first tour of the United States.”

The choir recently released its new album, "National Chamber Choir of Ireland." The album’s first single, "Acclamam e Strenuam," is the story of St. Patrick and how he met two great warriors of Irish tradition. In Ireland, children learn about these characters while in school, but they don’t necessarily know all the details, Leech said.

“The music is very beautiful and at times extremely dramatic, particularly the guitar part,” he said. “I think Torek Oregan’s music brings these tales to the 21st century with fresh and individual sound.”

Members of the choir want to see how an Iowa City audience will react to their performance compared to audiences in other countries.

The first half will include pieces by Bach, Brahms, and a brand-new piece by Irish composer Seosamh Clancy.

Many participants have your privilege to do so.

Some people have been truly moved by this music, others exhilarated, Leech said. “I think our audience will be impressed by the sheer scope of the concert, both vocally and emotionally.”

Elizabith Hullah, a soprano in the choir who has been with the group since 2004, said it’s always good to perform in new places. She hopes that the music will be with the group around the world, and it’s always the best place for a meal or drink.

“I am looking forward to coming to Iowa, because this is toward the end of our trip,” Hullah said. “It will be great to see so many different people (of the country).”

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