

Club's concert has Celtic feel for benefit

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For The Daily Gazette

MUSIC REVIEW

ALBANY — The Mendelssohn Club gave its annual spring concert, its 263rd, Friday night at Chancellor's Hall in celebration of its 101st season, and as a benefit for the Irish American Heritage Museum. So the theme of "Greeting to Spring" had a decidedly Celtic feel.

With pianist Michael Clement providing his usual stalwart presence, conductor Victor Klimash and the almost 60-voice men's chorus — all of them sporting green carnations — began with a perky and upbeat "The Donovans," followed by a spirited "The Galway Piper" and a very short piece by Amy Beach called "The Year's at the Spring."

"Air from County Derry," whose melody provided the basis for the even more famous "Danny Boy," was especially tuneful. The men sang with round, resonant tones, good diction and good balances. Klimash set a steady pace and did not allow the tune to degenerate into over sentimentality.

The guest act for the evening was the six-piece Hair of the Dog band, which joined the chorus for "Will Ye Go Lassie Go." They provided a tasty level of assistance. Then the Hair took a three-song set by itself. Right away, the decibel level shot up and the drummer's periodic snare drum shots overbalanced the lead singer and even most of the instru-

mental lines. By getting the near-capacity crowd into clapping the rhythm in "Galway Girl" and the more rollicking "Mary Mac," most people got caught up in the spirit of it all. For some reason, balances were corrected for the last tune, "The Moonshiner," so lyrics could be understood and harmonies and the interweaving lines could be heard.

The chorus continued with "The Liar," with solo tenor Michael Donegan selling the song marvelously, and Brahms' "May Night," which had especially great diction from the basses.

After intermission, Mishka Gilkes, the 2010 Tulip Queen, and her court were introduced and the three winners of the Joel Dolven Vocal Awards were recognized: John Leighton, Kara Cornell and Andy Truax. The remainder of the program was devoted to Alice Parker, who is considered a paragon among choral directors for her exceptional arrangements and compositions.

The Club performed many of Parker's arrangements, including "Gentle Annie" and "Down by the Sally Gardens" as well as the premiere of "Greeting to Spring," which Linda Mangione commissioned in memory of her husband, a former Club member. Hair of the Dog also played another set.