

1994

WHAT'S AHEAD

Big name choir drops in for a show

White Rock concert-goers will be able to welcome spring in style when the globe-trotting Elmer Iseler Singers touch down at the White Rock Baptist Church, Friday, April 8 at 8 p.m.

This will be the choir's only Lower Mainland concert, as part of a nine concert 20-voice chamber tour which also includes Calgary, Edmonton, Victoria and Whitehorse.

This tour puts White Rock on the map when you consider where these singers have been lately. Highlights of past seasons include the Elmer Iseler Singers' Carnegie Hall debut as special guests of the Canadian Brass, coinciding with the release of their joint album of Christmas music for Philips; a three week Asian tour, culminating in their appearance at the Olympic Arts Festival in Seoul; a joint Christmas tour of Ontario and Quebec with the

Tudor Singers of Montreal; extensive tours to California, Texas, the American Midwest, Northern Ontario and Western Canada; and Mozart 200, a cross-Canada tour with the Amadeus Ensemble, in an all-Mozart program in celebration of the Bicentenary of Mozart's death.

White Rock Concerts subscribers are reminded of the bonus concert which is being offered free to all members on Friday, April 22, when violinist Helen Kim is accompanied by her brother Michael Kim in a duo recital program.

White Rock will be the only Lower Mainland stop for the Elmer Iseler Singers, a 20-voice choir noted for their flawless technique and wide interpretive range.



1994

Singers explore power of the human voice

By Alex Browne

Staff Reporter

White Rock Concerts subscribers were treated to an outstanding display of choral precision last Friday (April 8) at White Rock Baptist Church, as the Elmer Iseler Singers made the only Lower Mainland appearance in a cross-Canada tour.

The much-praised group — really a national treasure — demonstrated through its outstanding control of pitch, diction and breathing the many possibilities of the human voice as an instrument.

But it seems to be a group that is easier to admire than to warm to. Oddly, with a few clear

exceptions, the overall personality of the group often seemed a little cold and precise — just like the conducting gestures of its founder and maestro, Dr. Elmer Iseler.

With everything performed in such an exemplary manner it made it clear that there are limits as well as possibilities to choral singing.

That's why, for all the technical facility with which the Iseler Singers handled the contrapuntal effects and Germanic syllables of J.S. Bach Cantatas 192, 147 and 130, the magic didn't begin to happen for me until the excerpt from Cantata 135 (O Sacred Head Now Wounded) in which the more legato tempo brought out the beauty and superb matching of the voices.

Mozart's slow K. 273 (Graduale 'Sancta Maria') was similarly much more suited to choral expression, highlighting the intonation of the choir and some excellently handled diminuendos.

And when the choir moved on to "How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings" from Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, the typically Romantic harmonic development was the perfect showcase for the choir's smooth overlapping of voices, the clarity and intonation from the basses through to the highest soprano voices, and a well-handled building to a highly impassioned conclusion.

Through the complex syncopations and folk-derived

harmonies of Aaron Copland's robust Western music, to the equally folk-oriented *Canadian Suite* (including Epitaph For Moonlight — a breathtaking study in technique and dynamics that ought to win the group the monopoly on soundtracks for chiller movies) to a convincingly swinging spiritual, "Let Me Fly" — the choir proved its abilities again and again.

But it was not surprising that the most enthusiastic applause from the audience greeted the two spotlight pieces for baritone soloist Nelson Lohnes — a tribute as much to his warm and ingratiating stage personality as to his excellent voice.



Submitted photo

Pianist Michael Kim and his violinist sister Helen will appear in recital at White Rock Baptist Church on April 22 at 8 p.m., as a bonus concert in the White Rock Concerts series. New subscribers for the 1994-95 season can attend this concert free — for more information call 536-5760.