

# Former Kimberly music teacher gets warm welcome

## Leicht gets focus with performance of MacDowell Chorus

By R.J. Foster  
For The Current

KIMBERLY — Since 1934, the MacDowell Male Chorus has been delighting audiences throughout the country. And this past Friday night was no exception.

Audience members applauded as the 70-plus members of the chorus filed into their places. Clapping turned to cheering, though, as they welcomed director Allan Leicht home.

Leicht was once the Kimberly schools' music teacher. "Grade school, middle school, high school — back then you went all over," Leicht recalls.

The chorus began with a medley of show tunes that spanned as many generations as the chorus members' roster. "Ages range from 80s to just out of high school," notes Leicht. "And everyone gets along, regardless of age."

The chorus' rendition of "Wells Fargo Wagon" had audience members tapping their toes and searching the horizon for the historical delivery cart.

Things got jazzy as soloist Brian Hallman led the group in "Seasons of Love" from the musical "Rent." Hallman's freestyle emotion soared, complemented



Photo for The Current by Brenda Rosenow

**ALLAN LEICHT** directs the MacDowell Male Chorus for a one-night musical performance on Friday in Kimberly.

wonderfully by the chorus' synopated rhythm.

The chorus had the audience tapping and snapping as they doo-wopped through the '50s. The only thing soloist Jereme Griesel's "Great Pretender" was missing was a leather jacket.

The show turned from swing to solemn with the Ray Charles signature song, "Georgia On My Mind." Leicht guided the chorus beautifully from sweet softness to powerful peaks and back. The range was mirrored in the voice of soloist Tom Mullins, whose rich voice brought a virtual gospel feel to the timeless classic.

Fans who follow the group

year after year are never disappointed.

"We've been going for quite a while," Appleton resident Dave Schuh says, "but they always have a great variety."

Variety is to be expected from a group directed by a man with such vast experience. In addition to 33 years of teaching, Leicht directed a women's church choir for 30 years, and has been leading the MacDowell chorus since 1985.

Referred to as the "Sacred Set," the chorus returned from intermission to present an array of hallowed hymns.

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" filled the auditorium

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with a solemn power to rival any church choir, while "Soon-Ah Will Be Done" had a bouncy rhythm reminiscent of an old time spiritual.

Fuzzy Wieting and Jon VanDyke complemented each other perfectly with their emotional duet, "Pie Jesu" from Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Requiem."

"The religious set is the part that I like the best," said Kaukauna resident Bill Bassett.

The final set was when the chorus showed their light-hearted side. Leicht asked for house lights and then invited audience

members to "play along" with the descriptive chorus, "Johnny Schmoker." The crowd roared for this entertaining game of musical Simon-says.

Leicht suggests that what keeps the members of the chorus enthused is more than their love of singing. "There's a great camaraderie among the group."

Their love of singing and the fun they're having are what keeps fans coming back again and again. "You can see the music is in them," says Brillion resident Carol Popp.

Appleton resident Shirley Hameister agrees, "We come every year and it never disappoints us."

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