

Christmas with the Santa Cruz Chorale

by Heather J. Morris
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On December 18, the Musical Arts of Santa Cruz presented yet another stunning concert by the Santa Cruz Chorale, led by artistic director and conductor, Christian Grube. Holy Cross church is a dramatic venue for the traditional Christmas concert by this local group. Many attendees are lifelong followers and make the concert the destination of the season year after year. The opening, *Confitebor tibi Domine* (Psalm 110), by Moneteverdi, proved a stunning opener with soloist Suzanne Duval singing a lengthy, challenging melisma section. *O Magnum Mysterium*, by Morten Lauridsen was also a distinct crowd favorite. *Riu, Riu, Chiu*, a Spanish piece from the 16th century, was up tempo, and looked forward with hope — seemingly the theme of the concert. In ending the concert Grube explained that he had altered the words of the refrain to *Quempas* by Praetorius, to ‘Let us pray for peace on earth’ and implored us to search our hearts for why he would make such a change.

Grube truly engaged the audience by making them seemingly lean in to listen. His movements were always subtle and at times he stopped moving completely, but almost, as by some trickery, his motions produced the intense spinning of air and quiet dynamic that made this concert so impelling to witness. The range of dynamics that the Santa Cruz Chorale produced was what really made the concert. Each member of the choir was present in the moment and intent on being part of the whole.

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