

The People's Critic

David Dow Bentley III

STATESMEN Getaway a Delight at Crighton Theatre

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STERLING QUARTET Photo: Courtesy of Crighton Theatre

The program's title was *Let's Get Away From It All*, and the vacation atmosphere was set the moment a very local audience of family, friends, and music fans entered the Crighton Theatre for the delightful concert of the **STATESMEN CHORUS** last Saturday.



STATESMEN Photo: Courtesy of Crighton Theatre

A beaming youngster greeted arriving guests and presented each with a Hawaiian style lei to wear around the neck, much as would happen when taking off on a cruise to tropical islands. And a cruise it would be as the show got underway with a bit of silly help from some of the regulars in Crighton's Stage Right



STATESMEN Photo: Courtesy of Crighton Theatre

(Tom Lockhart Jr., Marcia Feldt Bates, Michael Raabe, & Giny Mendez), as they were led by Carolyn Wong in supplying a lightweight cruise-ship-to-Bermuda plot



SHIP AHOY ! - Stage Right Players PHOTO: Courtesy of Crighton Theatre

(complete with amusing ship board announcements and safety drills) that would surround the lovely music of the Statesmen Chorus that would clearly be the main event of the evening under the skillful direction of Janet Burnett.



Carolyn Wong (left) laughs it up with the STATESMEN

The title song got things off to a resounding, mellow and robust start. Once "on board" the ship, the audience was transported to a large ballroom with decorative streamers and ornamental balls hanging from the ceiling while the very large chorus was assembled on risers trimmed in tinsel and gold. When they began singing,

“Keep the Whole World Singing,” the style quickly reminded me of my dad and grandfather, both alumni who had great affection for the Yale Glee Club. (I had to settle for being a humble UT Longhorn myself — well, not THAT humble!). Next, the talented singers offered what was arguably the best rendition of “Deep in the Heart of Texas,” that I have ever heard. The unusual, “Darkness of the Delta,” was sprightly and delightful, and was followed by more joyful bounce with the mellow, “Take Me to the Land of Jazz.”

A series of wonderful quartets were next as the **River City Five** delivered one of my favorites from *The Music Man* with perfection for the deliciously tricky counterpoints of “Lida Rose / Will I Ever Tell You,” that were highlighted by a stellar solo from Giny Mendez who actually starred as Marian the Librarian in Stage Right’s recent production of *The Music Man*. Then, with a fine a cappella arrangement, The **Relics Quartet** offered the very sweet harmonies of a carefully woven, “Nevertheless.” The four young men in the **30 North Quartet** made a big hit with the audience singing a high-energy, “Paper Moon,” the **Boyz of Spring Quartet** sang a very pleasant “After You’ve Gone,” and the **Silver Statesmen Quartet** offered the rippling delights of “Down By the Riverside.”



STATESMEN Chorus Photo: Courtesy of Crighton Theatre

Next, the Statesmen Chorus returned for six more wonderful numbers that began with a perfect song for drought-stricken Texas, “Trickle Trickle.” They offered a warm and mystical, “Yesterday,” that seemed to recall a simpler time when songs had more sweet sentiment and far less noise. With cute musical variety and smooth harmonies, the **Sterling Quartet** then stepped forward to sing, “Never Say Never Again.” The Statesmen returned to tip their hats to rock-n-roll with a “Who Put the Bomp?” that featured lots of silly gesture antics that culminated in rousing applause from the audience. Their lovely, “Goodnight Sweetheart,” brought the show to Intermission.

The final part of the program brought the featured quartet, **Sterling**, back to the stage for a full set that began with the soaring gospel sounds of “Turn Your Radio On,” and the pinpoint precision and soothing spirituality of, “I Go to the Rock.” There was high-energy vocal power for an “Ambitious” rendition of the Beatles tune, “Oh, Darling.” An amusing, “In the Still of the Night,” was full of silly high jinks and the audience loved it. The Beach Boys medley that followed was another winner with the crowd, as was the unusual tribute to America’s military with a unique vocal constructed around the march, “Stars and Stripes Forever.”

When the Statesman Chorus returned for the finale they were arrayed in elegant formal attire, as was director, Burnett, in her sleekly elegant floor length black gown. Final vocal treats included, “How Great Thou Art,” “I’ll Fly Away,” “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder,” and Lee Greenwood’s American anthem, “God Bless the USA.” I would add, God Bless the Statesman Chorus!

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About The People's Critic

David Dow Bentley III, writes columns about the performing arts which are featured in newspapers from the East Coast to the Gulf Coast. A member of the Lambs Club, he is also editor of The Lambs' Script. Mr. Bentley may be contacted via e-mail at ThePeoplesCritic@earthlink.net.

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