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BOY'S CHOIR OF HARLEM

the expected and the unexpected

The world-renowned Boys Choir of Harlem appeared at Roy Thomson Hall on June 23 as part of the International Choral Festival. They gave the packed hall a performance that many will remember for its unique qualities.

The performance began with a rendition of "Te Deum," by Franz Joseph Haydn. That, in itself, was memorable, for it isn't often that one can witness 45 black boys, aged eight to 18, singing a largely polyphonic piece from the late Baroque period. Under the directorship of Dr. Walter Turnbull, the boys performed with precision and skill which resulted in an enthusiastic response from the attentive audience.

They moved on with a specially commissioned piece entitled "Songs of Isaiah," which is a contemporary classical composition featuring odd time signatures (5/4, 7/4) and many images, both lyrical and musical (piano).

They also performed a Duke Ellington composition, "Praise God and Dance," which featured some simple cho-

reography. The piece is somewhere between classical and jazz — classical because of the choral arrangement, jazz because of the music (jazz bass solo, for example).

Up to this point, the choir, practicing correct posture, appeared quite restrained dressed in their black robes. They livened things up a bit with their rendition of five Negro spirituals.

In general, these pieces were shorter, and more direct; therefore they had a more immediate impact. Mostly a capella, the songs had a storytelling quality. This is one style of music that tends to be associated with black choirs, and the boys thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and indeed, did the music justice.

Now done with the expected, they did the unexpected. They came bounding back on stage dressed casually and did energetically choreographed arrangements of some Gershwin songs. This continued with other jazz standards ("God Bless The Child", "Take the A-Train"), and ended with Kool and the Gang's "Celebration," and Al Jarreau's

"Boogie Down."

Throughout this whole second section, the boys displayed imaginative arranging and entertaining choreography. Like the music, the dancing went through time, touching styles from tap to the latest jack moves. From the energy in the show, you knew the boys liked to have a good time.

After the show, you experienced how friendly they were since they lined up in the lobby to meet the crowd.

And these boys are only a select few. The Boys Choir of Harlem has about 200 members. That's 200 boys that rehearse every day, receive an overall musical education and also receive counselling about health, careers and family concerns. The Choir is not only committed to musical excellence, but also to high personal achievement.

Perhaps the most impressive sign of their commitment to overall excellence is this statistic: in a community where the majority of children don't finish high school, 98 per cent of the boys from the Choir go on to college.

Honey, I lost the joke

You want so much to enjoy *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids*, but you simply cannot. Audiences expect the same Disney magic they've seen in films like *Mary Poppins* and *The Shaggy D.A.*, but, sadly, there is no such magic in *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids*.

Rick Moranis is unusually unfunny in his portrayal of Wayne Szalinski, a zany physicist whose electro-magnetic shrinking machine would greatly aid NASA, if it would only work. The total lack of humour in Szalinski's character makes you think that Moranis was cast in

the role, not for his comedic talents, but because he looks like the stereotypical "mad scientist" in his oversized glasses. The only laughs allotted to his character are a series of sight-gags involving ridiculous headgear which aids in his search for the microscopic children.

Szalinski's wife, Diane, is played by Marcia Strassman, who will always be remembered as Gabe's wife on the '70s sitcom *Welcome Back, Kotter*.

Unfortunately, her character is also quite boring. It lacks dimension and more importantly in a movie like this, wit. Strassman's performance, though limited by

the role, keeps viewers wondering why this competent actress keeps being typecast as the wife of goofy guys.

Szalinski's children, as well as those of his next door neighbour, get zapped by his contraption when a baseball accidentally sets it off. The shrunken children find adventure everywhere: in the attic, in their backyard, and even a bowl of Cheerios. They slide down blades of grass, are taken for a joy-ride by a bee, and sleep in a piece of LEGO. All this seems exciting, but the audience members over the age of 18 will remember similar technical tricks from the film *Fantastic*

Voyage and the adventure series *Land of the Giants*.

To viewers who have been mesmerized by directors like Lucas and Spielberg, *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids* is disappointingly dull.

The one memorable role is that of the no-pain-no-gain, next door neighbour, Russ Thomson, played by Matt Frewer. Frewer is better known to most of us as electronic cool guy, Max Headroom. Thomson's character grows from a self-centred jerk to a caring father when he learns that his children are in danger.

Honey, I Shrunk The Kids is

preceded by what I fear to be the first of many animated shorts. *Tummy Trouble* is a warp speed, seven-minute production featuring Roger Rabbit and the annoying hyper-tot Baby Herman. Viewers expect to see the same lovable "toons" they enjoyed last summer in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, but instead they feel more exhausted than entertained after *Tummy Trouble*.

The Disney double bill will provide a few laughs for children, and may even satisfy adults after getting to the movie theatre only to find out that *Batman* has sold out.



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