

Saint Mary's College Women's Choir Wins NBC Choir Competition

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NOTRE DAME, Ind. — NBC announced on Monday's primetime broadcast of Clash of the Choirs that the Saint Mary's College Women's Choir and two other choirs won the show's "Holiday Challenge," a national contest of choral ensembles. The three choirs were featured in a promo during the show Monday. Saint Mary's choir's performance of Amazing Grace is expected to air this week during one of the remaining three shows. The program airs at 8 p.m. (ET) tonight through Thursday on NBC. You can see the clip now on the NBC Web site at http://www.nbc.com/Clash_of_the_Choirs/ (click on "Holiday Challenge") or go directly to http://www.nbc.com/Clash_of_the_Choirs/video/#mea=196464.

In a congratulatory email to the College, Lewis de Dios, associate producer of comedy/on-air promotion at NBC, wrote, "Your performance of Amazing Grace was incredibly inspired and beautiful."

Clash of the Choirs is a four-night competition that began on Monday featuring five celebrity choir directors—Nick Lachey, Patti LaBelle, Blake Shelton, Michael Bolton and Kelly Rowland. The five traveled to their hometowns and assembled amateur choirs that will compete live for the title of "America's Best Choir." Viewers at home will judge the choirs.

Saint Mary's College Women's Choir is a select 37-voice ensemble. Choir Director and Music Department Professor Nancy Menk found out about the "Holiday Challenge" contest while reading about the new Clash of the Choirs show on the NBC Web site. The national contest invited choirs from across the country to send in performances for select songs, including Amazing Grace. Menk taped the choir and sent it to NBC.

"The (contest) specified four or five pieces that could be performed, and the Women's Choir had just performed a beautiful arrangement of Amazing Grace this fall, so we had that in good shape," Menk said.

The College's music program is one of its six accredited academic programs and a draw for many incoming students. "The Women's Choir stands out as one of the most delightful experiences we offer our students," Patricia Ann Fleming, Ph.D., and Vice President and Dean of Faculty. "The excellence of the choir, under the superb direction of Dr. Menk, demonstrates our mission to promote a life of aesthetic appreciation in our young women students. NBC's recognition of our choir as the winner of the Clash of Choirs Holiday Competition is well-deserved!"

The Women's Choir regularly commissions and performs new works for women's voices. The Choir tours nationally every other year, and regularly performs with the University of Notre Dame Glee Club in joint performances of major works with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra. They have appeared in concert at Carnegie Hall in 1999 and 2001, and returned there in November 2005 to perform music by Gwyneth Walker for women's voices and orchestra. The Women's Choir has recorded four compact discs on the ProOrgano label: Ave, Ave!, recorded in 1997, Amazing Day!, recorded in 2002, Anima mea!, recorded in 2004, and Across the Bar, recorded in 2007.

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