

## Milwaukee's Lake Park Festival greets the Midwest Vocal Express

July 24, 2006 by Rich Kirwin, MVE lead

Milwaukee, WI...5:00pm on a hot, sticky Monday in July and picnic tables are being loaded with cheese, crackers, sandwiches, potato salad, and wine. "Pop!" go the corks to 90 minutes of that evening's "Musical Mondays" show in Lake Park, on Lake Michigan immediately north of downtown. A wide variety of music is heard each summer in this picturesque open-air setting as the regular audience of hundreds of appreciative music fans gather for classical, jazz, folk and more. Tonight's program is 90 minutes of great a cappella entertainment presented by the Midwest Vocal Express, and friends. The series' longtime music director, Thallis Hoyt Drake exclaimed, "It was the best concert of the summer!"



Greendale's Midwest Vocal Express at Lake Park "Musical Mondays"

Under the direction of Dr. Chris Peterson, the MVE started the evening with a rousing rendition of the National Anthem, followed by a catchy arrangement of "Puttin' on the Ritz". The "Rain" medley displayed traditional barbershop singing style. It was at this point that master of ceremonies, Jim LaBelle, explained that men *and* women can sing close harmony, too. This segue allowed him to introduce "Heart to Heart," a mixed voice quartet (who just won the Buckeye!) They wowed the crowd with their vocal jazz and kazoo tinged arrangements of "Seaside Rendezvous," and "Operator."



Heart to Heart mixed quartet

As “Women sing Barbershop, too” was announced, the Milwaukee Showcase Chorus assembled on the risers. By this time, more people had crossed the “Musical Monday’s” stage than anyone could remember. A couple of Gershwin put the crowd in their hands.



Milwaukee Showcase Chorus

Director Frank Marzocco then proceeded to show that conducting and singing go hand in hand, providing the lead in the senior’s quartet “Easy Days.”

Wearing their bronze medals won in Indy, the men of the MVE returned to the risers to cool down the 90 degree night with “Jingle Bells,” (after all, it *was* Christmas in July!). Classical music lovers in the audience were pleased with a virtuoso performance of “Kazoo Koncerto” with it’s many popular themes.



MVE "Kazoo Koncerto"

"African Trilogy" (in the Zulu language,) "Shenandoah" and "Orange Colored Sky" allowed the MVE to show they're not limited to strict BBS arrangements (or English) then Greendale quartet "Tetra" delighted with traditional ringing harmony and coaxed the crowd to join in on "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

The MVE brought the concert to an emotional close singing a very special salute to America in the "Armed Forces Medley," with veterans standing and accepting applause when their branch's song was sung. As this full evening of acappella entertainment came to a conclusion in the great outdoors, the chorus gave the audience a deserved encore with "Let Me Fly." This special arrangement was done by one of the MVE members, Jim Franklin, and is an example of how broad the musical horizons of the Midwest Vocal Express are.

Then it was time to pack up the picnic baskets, fold up the chairs and blankets, and head for home with a song in their heart.

Not resting on their laurels, the MVE is currently honing their "County Fair" set (Salt Lake City) for a show in Baraboo, WI September 30<sup>th</sup>, putting a little more salt into the "Fish Set" for District competition in Rochester, MN, and learning some challenging arrangements for their "Christmas Traditions" holiday show December 9<sup>th</sup> in Greendale, WI. For more details, go to [www.MVE.org](http://www.MVE.org)