FAU celebrates the ‘Spirit of America’ with special performance

Florida Atlantic University Libraries recently hosted “Spirit of America: Gershwin & Copland,” a celebratory concert performed by the 50-piece Klezmer Company Orchestra, which was conducted by Maestro Aaron Kula and joined by the 40-voice Ebony Chorale of the Palm Beaches.

The concert at Florida Atlantic University’s Carole and Barry Kaye Performing Arts Auditorium on FAU’s Boca Raton campus drew more than 2,000 people, including FAU President Frank T. Brogan ’81 who narrated Copland’s “Lincoln Portrait” in honor of Abraham Lincoln’s 200th birthday.

Among the honored guests were Marvin and Sybil Weiner of Boca Raton, who in 2006 donated the “Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection,” prompting the annual Spirit of America concert. This collection, focusing on the American Revolutionary era, contains more than 13,000 printed items with publication dates spanning six centuries.

Two funds to support FAU Libraries were introduced during the concert. The “Weiner Spirit of America Collection Fund” was set up to help the library do additional educational outreach programs to benefit future generations of students and scholars.

For more information on the Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection, contact Ellen Randolph at 561-297-3994 or erandol1@fau.edu, or visit www.library.fau.edu/depst/spc/weiner.htm.

The Klezmer Company Orchestra Professional Ensemble-in-Residence Fund accepts donations of print music to enhance and preserve the musical heritage and financial contributions to help the library continue its outreach and performances.

Other concert guests were FAU First Lady Courtney Brogan; Weiner family members Dr. Howard and Judith Weiner, and Richard and Esther Granade; Norman R. Rales; Marleen Fortas; Dr. Bernard Chodoroff; Jan Jessup; Joel and Patricia Frost; Arthur Jaffe and Marianne Haycock; FAU Provost Dr. John Pritchett and his wife, Ginger; Joanna Marie, host of WXEL's Classical Variations; Stanley and Dottie Pierce; and Dr. William Miller, dean of Libraries at FAU. Kula is conductor of the KCO, as well as FAU Libraries' director of music collections and performance. Since he founded KCO in 1997, the ensemble has successfully taken music in the library's collections “from shelf to stage.” Kula is credited with composing and orchestrating more than 150 works for KCO.

Mid-Morning Musica, performed Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue,” KCO violist Randi Fishenfeld made her annual cameo appearance, performing her unique version of the Florida folk song “Orange Blossom Special.”

The concert concluded with 14 songs from the classic American opera “Porgy and Bess” sung by the Ebony Chorale of Palm Beaches, under the direction of Dr. Orville Lawton. The role of Bess was sung by guest soprano Elizabeth Graham, and the role of Porgy was sung by guest baritone Alyx Powell.

The Ebony Chorale made its debut in 1992 when it performed with the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus during the dedication of the Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts in West Palm Beach. The chorale is dedicated to performing and preserving Negro Spirituals. Its repertoire also includes sacred and secular classics, folk songs and gospel.

The concert was sponsored by FAU Libraries with additional support from WXEL and FAU's Student Union.

For more information about the music collections or KCO, contact Aaron Kula at 561-297-3942 or akula@fau.edu. You can also visit www.library.fau.edu/music/music_collections.htm and www.klezmercompany.com.