

The Crowd: Holiday dinner, concert brings joy to all

December 30, 2011 | By B.W. Cook



MAJOR SUPPORT: Mr. and Mrs. John Hermann with Lisa and... (Daily Pilot)

A Newport Beach tradition at Christmas time once again filled the grand ballroom of the Balboa Bay Club & Resort with a major dose of family warmth and togetherness.

On Dec. 23, the Costa Mesa-based All-American Boys Chorus attracted some 250 guests for the annual holiday dinner and concert of the season on the coast. Led by executive director **Anthony Manrique** and musical director **Wesley Martin**, the chorus performed with musical perfection for the crowd of multi-generational family members united to share in the joy of the season.

The evening began at sunset with cocktails for the big kids and punch for those waiting impatiently for Santa's arrival. Magician and mime "Abbit The Average" tickled the fancy of all, creating giggles throughout the ballroom as he romped from end to end with his holiday hijinks.

A three-course dinner was served, beginning with a butternut squash soup and salad vinaigrette, followed by an entrée of filet and salmon. For dessert, the traditional Yule Log. The crowd table-hopped, visiting friends dressed in holiday sparkle.

Joy Curtain of Corona del Mar, smashing in a black sequin cocktail suit, visited with **Warren and Marilyn Haig, Patti and Billy O'Desky** and **Sharon and Gary Grimes**.

Alexandra Crotin was in from Los Angeles for the evening. The pretty young Hollywood publicist had just returned from a whirlwind international tour with **Tom Cruise**, promoting his latest "Mission: Impossible" film. Crotin shared her memorable time with Cruise and family, visiting Ramstein U.S. Air Base in Germany and meeting with American troops and wounded vets making their way home for Christmas.

Also in the crowd, in from a first challenging semester at Duke University Law School, was **Ali O'Desky**, sharing the holidays with beau **Dan Sachs**, up from La Jolla where he is immersed in significant venture capital acquisition for cutting-edge future technology poised to revolutionize the human condition. Pretty impressive young people.

Alex Chazen was all smiles having just passed the bar exam. The UC Irvine and Loyola University Law grad joined his bride, **Sabrina**, celebrating a two-year anniversary. Sabrina recently launched her own fashion blog known as samplesize16.com that is creating major buzz. A fashion magazine following the blog has offered her an editorial position. The scope and reach of the Internet seems unlimited.

Also in the crowd were **Sandy** and TV personality **Sarah Purcell McClintock, Lisa** and **Dr. George Brennan**, bringing multiple tables of friends and family, **Catherine and DeLane Thyan, Cecelia, Richard and Danielle Goodman**, and the **Rowerdink** family; **Jeff, Cole, Fallon and Tracy**.

As dinner service was cleared, the lights dimmed in the ballroom and the boys entered, wearing their red and white choral robes. The concert repertoire would travel the classical and contemporary musical roads, delighting the audience with both the familiar and the less familiar selections. Midway through the performance, a holiday bell-ringing number enabled the chorus to do a wardrobe change and the boys returned in their signature red blazers, shirt and tie.

"More than 1 million people have been a part of the boys chorus audiences," shared Manrique, who has championed the program for decades. "We have made 50 concert tours to Europe, Asia, Australia and Canada as well as performing all over the United States," he added.

It is a legacy that has been a part of countless young men's lives. The All-American Boys Chorus program is much more than simply a musical training ground. As Manrique said, it is a program in self-discipline, "teaching values of unselfish cooperation, a spirit of responsibility, personal poise, and offering a taste of success for a job well done. All guidelines that help to make young men into 'leaders' — the next generation of young people following their own personal road to self fulfillment and social responsibility."

On that positive note, a perfect transition to happy New Year wishes. May 2012 bestow blessings upon all Daily Pilot readers. Wishing you good health above everything else and the courage and opportunity to follow your dreams.

THE CROWD runs Thursdays and Saturdays. B.W. Cook is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.

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