

Sewanee Today

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American Spiritual Ensemble sings for joy



From the Community Welcome Assembly on Thursday morning in Guerry Auditorium until the final chords of "Circle of Life" from *The Lion King* in All Saints' Chapel on Saturday night, the American Spiritual Ensemble (ASE) held Sewanee listeners in a joyful spell last week.

A skit prepared by the fifth-grade students of Sewanee Elementary School, the Vocal Ensemble of St. Andrew's-Sewanee, and numerous participants from the community and University combined for a warm "Sewanee hello" on Thursday morning. The sing-a-long included "Hinei ma tov" (Psalm 133:1, the motto of the University of the South) led by Tam Parker, professor of religious studies, and Everett McCorvey, ASE founder and director, conducting the singers and audience in "We Shall Overcome." The *Tullahoma News* covered the event and a [video](#) may be found on their website.

Friday and Saturday evening performances brought audiences of over 600 to Guerry Auditorium and All Saints' Chapel. On Friday, the Sewanee Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Cesar Leal, continued its 30th anniversary celebration in a joint presentation of excerpts of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Dan Backlund, professor of theatre arts, read narration to guide the audience through the selections. Saturday night in All Saints' Chapel, the ASE presented a concert of spirituals and Broadway tunes. Five choral ensembles from the University, community, and St. Andrew's-Sewanee joined the ASE in performing "Keep Marchin' Till I Make it Home" by Raymond Wise.

The American Spiritual Ensemble is reknowned for their energetic and passionate performances of the American Negro Spiritual. The residency at Sewanee was a great success in bringing this repertoire to both new and familiar audiences.

