

Alexandria Symphony, Bowen McCauley Dance
Washington Post, March 10, 2008

"You're about to take a Rorschach test."

That's how conductor-turned-psychoanalyst Kim Allen Kluge introduced the second half of the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra's concert Saturday night. His collaborator -- in high art and pop psychology -- was the [Arlington](#)-based choreographer Lucy Bowen McCauley. She invited audience members to "all see different things" in "Alleluia, Amen," a three-movement work that began as a conversation between conductor and choreographer and evolved into a choral extravaganza at [Rachel M. Schlesinger](#) Concert Hall at [Northern Virginia Community College](#).

The first half of the concert featured the orchestra in solid performances of Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony and Respighi's Ancient Airs and Dances Suite. After intermission, the musicians pushed their chairs back toward the risers and welcomed singers from [Westminster](#) Presbyterian Church and Alexandria Choral Society. That left space onstage for seven members of Bowen McCauley Dance.

Kluge, McCauley and Neil Weston, interim director of the choral society, settled on three pieces that proved perfect: Fauré's Pavane; Beethoven's Elegischer Gesang, Op. 118; and Handel's "Zadok the Priest." McCauley's choreography suited the music but avoided interpreting the lyrics -- no flitting nymph or prostrate priest.

This barefoot ballet was notable for its creative partnering and configurations. Two women would be lifted by all three men; then lean back supported by a single guy. Moments of imperfect poise did suggest that the choreography would be prettier if performed by stronger dancers. But the final movement featured precise footwork and more angular movement that fit Handel's rhythmic "Coronation" anthem. At the final "Amen," the dancers turned and raised their arms to chorus upstage. The meaning of this gesture was obvious: Alleluia, indeed.

-- **Rebecca J. Ritzel**