

## Ensemble Galilei: A Universe of Dreams

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### Ensemble Galilei

**By Mike Joyce**

Ensemble Galilei, well known for its far-reaching repertoire, reached out even further than usual Saturday night at the University of Maryland's Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center -- and to frequently enchanting effect.

"A Universe of Dreams," a multimedia collaboration with gifted student-writers including the UM College Park Scholars, found the Annapolis-based chamber group deftly orchestrating a series of spoken-word pieces concerning the universe, creation and other cosmic matters. Reflective, poetic and witty by turns, the student-penned-and-recited contributions often inspired string-woven atmospherics, which complemented a running slide show that offered the audience a Hubble-eye view of space.

Drawing on its rich repertoire of traditional Celtic music as well as Italian and Spanish diversions, the sextet moved back and forth between the sublime and the stirring, juxtaposing poignant airs and courtly melodies with vibrant jigs, reels and cantigas. While the program didn't unfurl without a few hitches, the ensemble had no difficulty fashioning an alternately lyrical and lively soundtrack, one that made colorful use of hand percussion, fiddle, oboe, recorder, Scottish small pipes, Celtic harp and viola da gamba.

Much of the music was several centuries old, including the delightful dance tunes "Mr. Isaac's Maggot" and "Chestnut." But the concert was consistently enhanced, too, by pieces composed by Galilei members: Celtic harpist Sue Richards, piper-fiddler Deborah Nuse, fiddler Liz Knowles and violist Carolyn Anderson Surrick. Kathryn Montoya, on oboe and recorder, and Steve Bloom, on percussion, rounded out the ensemble's neatly honed sound, contributing to its charm and momentum.