

Major Works Highlight Sacramento Choral Society's Nineteenth Season

by E. Haig – Sacramento Gazette, October 10, 2014

It is an accomplishment in and of itself that the Sacramento Choral Society and Orchestra (SCSO) is about to embark on its nineteenth season of debt-free operations. That the organization has also become a major source of symphonic performances for the Sacramento community is the product of that success.

The organization, led since its inception by Music Director Donald Kendrick, features a chorus that can number up to 175 voices for specific performances along with a professional orchestra of sixty musicians. The four-concert season will be capped with a summer tour of France and England with performances that will help to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Included on the scheduled tour are concerts in London's St. Paul's Cathedral and in Paris at the Notre Dame Cathedral and L'Eglise de la Madeleine, as well as the American cemetery near the beaches of Normandy.

Again for this season, the organization has secured major sponsorships from Wells Fargo (\$50,000 for the season) and Raley's (\$20,000 for the March Mozart concert).

SCSO's season will start on Saturday, October 25 with an 8:00 concert at the Fremont Presbyterian Church (across the street from Sac State). This Stained Glass Concert will begin with organ works from Ryan Enright, SCSO's resident accompanist, followed by the chorus circling around the audience singing Gregorian melodies and Renaissance style motets by Orlando Lasso and Stephen Carraciolo. The core of the program will be Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum*, which will feature Mr. Enright joined by SCSO members on trumpets, oboes and drums. The work commemorates the defeat by troops led by King George II of the French during the War of Austrian Succession in 1743. That battle marked the last time a British monarch personally led troops into battle.

The annual Home for the Holidays concert will return to the Memorial Auditorium on Saturday, December 13 at 8:00. It will feature the full SCSO orchestra and some new settings of carols and holiday music including the popular audience sing-along. Guest artists will include SCSO Alumna Mezzo Julie Miller, who is currently making a name for herself with the Chicago Lyric Opera, and the Sacramento Children's Chorus, directed by Lynn Stevens.

The season's third concert will see the singers and orchestra return to their *European Masterworks* cycle. The concert is scheduled for Saturday, March 14 at 8 pm in the Sacramento Community Center Theater and will feature the West Coast premiere of English composer Cecilia McDowall's setting of the Latin text "Magnificat" for chorus, soloists and orchestra. McDowall's work unites luscious harmonies with fresh melodies and crisp rhythms. It is a vibrant composition that is divided into six movements.

The second half of the program will feature one of Mozart's greatest masses for soloists, chorus and orchestra called the "Great Mass in C Minor," K. 427, written in 1783. Written in

gratitude not so much to God as to Mozart's young wife Constanze after the birth of their first child, the C minor Mass occupies a very personal place in Mozart's output. Soloists for the Mozart will include Nikki Einfeld, Marina Harris, Ross Hauck and Daniel Yoder.

Maestro Kendrick describes the mass as follows: "It is amazing music, with brooding Kyries, a Gloria full of Handelian shouts of joy, and ornate and impeccable solo and duet writing worthy of the opera stage." He adds that "it remains a mystery as to why Mozart never included an Agnus Dei to complete this Great Mass."

The season's final concert will be dedicated to SCSO's concert master emeritus Michael Anderson on what would have been his sixty-second birthday, May 9. Mr. Anderson died earlier this year from lung cancer. The concert, starting at 8:00, will be held in the Community Center Theater and will feature a collection of works by three eminent American composers.

The concert will open with Dan Forrest's "Requiem for the Living," a five-movement work that includes a narrative for those who survive in pain and sorrow the death of a loved one. Kendrick describes the work as, "a collection of texts that is a departure from the traditional Requiem as we know it. Forrest," he adds, "juxtaposes other parts of Scripture and quotations to create a new vision of consolation and hope."

The second work on the program is "Songs of Eternity" by the prolific American composer James Hopkins, who teaches at USC. He composed "Songs of Eternity" in memory of David Lee Shanbrom whose life was tragically cut short in an automobile accident in 1986. The three movements each relate to some aspect of death, with the prevailing mood of subdued joy in eternal life. Kendrick says of this work that, "tears come to my eyes when I listen to this music and read these touching poems. It is exquisite and powerfully triumphant music."

The concert will conclude with Howard Hanson's "Sea Symphony for Chorus and Orchestra," which is based on Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass." Written in 1977 when Hanson was 80, the work is Hanson's seventh and last symphony. Kendrick describes it as "music of real transcendence and power by a really inspirational composer whose works are gradually achieving a fresh re-hearing."

All in all, the season looks to be another that will bring great classical music to the region from this outstanding organization.

Tickets and information for all of SCSO's concerts are available online at <http://sacramentochoral.com>.