

**Helensburgh Oratorio Choir**  
**Conductor's report**  
**Session 2010-2011**

Sounds of Tranquillity (including Fauré Requiem)  
Messiah  
Carmina Burana/Poulenc Gloria

Another highly successful season. In the past, our recitals programmes have taken place away from Helensburgh – and usually in an acoustic somewhat more congenial for unaccompanied singing – but the concert was greatly enjoyed and contained some very lovely singing. The programme contained items we have sung before plus two new ones: the Goodall Psalm 23 and the Bach chorus from Cantata 71. Each was singled out by the reviewer for their fine performance, as was the Tippett, which was very gratifying. The Requiem received a warm performance and all in all this was a concert to be proud of.

As was the performance of Messiah. This, the fourth time we have sung it since I took over, was by far the best performance that we have given of the work.

As most of you will have gathered, rehearsing Carmina Burana is not what I would choose to do but the hard work paid off. It is undoubtedly a work that is enjoyable to perform if not to learn. The performance sizzled along, however, and this concert, the third of the joint concerts with Cupar, was a huge success musically as the Gloria went well too (and the even harder work in learning what is not an easy piece paid off). The children from Lomond School sang very well too and we can only hope that they would want to repeat the experience. One of the best seasons since I took over.

I had been a little concerned that we had not scheduled enough 20<sup>th</sup> Century music in the past but I feel that with our recent performances of music by Vaughan Williams, Poulenc, Willcocks and Orff that we have redressed the balance for the time being.

We now have to prepare for one of the biggest challenges any choir can face: a performance of Bach's B Minor Mass. It requires concentration and commitment to master what is difficult music but we have faced and met such challenges in the past: the Bruckner F Minor Mass comes to mind; mastering Vaughan Williams's idiom was not easy for that matter. Yet the Bruckner concert generated more letters of congratulation than any other and the Vaughan Williams concert clearly moved the audience. All this is by way of saying that I believe the extra effort will be rewarded. To assist, we will be having a choir day on October 22<sup>nd</sup> with Paul Spicer. This means that we need to have learnt the notes by then for otherwise the day will not bring the benefits it should. The rehearsal schedule should be consulted on this. As you will have gathered, I have put Plan B into operation for this performance and I hope the early extra note-bashing sessions are proving to be useful. The choir last sang the B Minor Mass in 1988 with Walter conducting.

We do need to get new members, particularly men. We still need to watch intonation and it would help if rhythms and word underlay were learnt at home as that would help make the Tuesday rehearsals more productive.

The Spring concert is the lovely Duruflé Requiem, in the organ-accompanied version and that should help us build up the reserves for the return trip to Cupar in 2014. We shall also perform the four Duruflé motets that we last sang in Stirling along with one other piece still to be chosen. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert will be in November 2013 and the intention is to perform Brahms' Requiem.

Taking the choir remains a joy. I would like to thank all of you for your general enthusiasm and support, the committee for its efforts on your behalf and Anne, our accompanist, for her invaluable help in preparing for the concerts.