

SCHOLA CANTORUM'S *SUMMER SINGS* PROGRAM BRINGS TOGETHER TOP BAY AREA CONDUCTORS TO LEAD MEMBERS FROM OVER 200 CHOIRS IN SINGING GREAT CHORAL MASTERPIECES

As summer rolls around and choral groups take a hiatus until Fall, Schola Cantorum steps in to fill the void. Over six Monday evenings beginning on July 13, Schola's Summer Sings program provides an opportunity for members from the over 200 local choirs to join together as a community to sing some of the greatest choral masterpieces of all time. Without the commitment of rehearsals. Without the pressure of performing for an audience. And with no other goal than the joy of singing works from classical music's finest composers under the baton of some of the top choral conductors in the Bay Area.

From Brahms to Mozart, Haydn to Beethoven, Vivaldi, Verdi, Fauré, and Mendelssohn, the requiems and oratorios in Schola Cantorum's 32nd annual Summer Sings include some of the most beloved and recognizable pieces in choral repertoire.

According to Music Director Gregory Wait, it was Schola's second conductor, Louis Magor, who started the Summer Sings program in 1983 after hearing about this sort of event happening in New York. "For quite a long time, Schola was the only Bay Area chorus doing sing-alongs," says Wait. How it works: "You show up, Schola provides the scores, you pay a small fee, and a guest conductor leads you through." After a warm-up and short explanation of the work, the fun begins.

And fun is what everyone agrees on. It's the no-pressure aspect, with nothing riding on the outcome. It's the chance for friends to join together in song and meet new people in a non-competitive environment. For some, it's the beginning of a long career of singing in a choir because they've attended one of these events and said, "wow, this is something I need in my life; this has value." It's the opportunity to sing a solo, but not in a scary way, because thirty other people are singing it also. It's the time to revisit known works, discover new pieces, practice sight reading, and keep fresh over the summer.

The series begins on July 13 with Gregory Wait, Music Director of Schola Cantorum, conducting Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* and Beethoven's *Mass in C*. "The *Lord Nelson Mass* is probably the best known of all of the masses Haydn wrote late in his life, and the most performed," says Wait. "It has wonderful melodies and a spectacular sense of joy to perform. All of the vocal parts are distinct, giving singers a sense of musicality. Beethoven was Haydn's student, and wrote a mass reminiscent of his teacher, but also stayed true to his own originality."

On July 20, Dr. Scot Hanna-Weir conducts the Fauré *Requiem* and Vivaldi's *Gloria*. A French composer well known for his vocal music, Fauré's is "the most gentle and sensitive of requiems," he says. "It's incredibly beautiful music that people can't help falling in love with." Dr. Hanna-Weir is the director of choral activities at Santa Clara University, and artistic director of the Santa Clara Chorale.

On July 27 Bryan Baker conducts the Verdi *Requiem*. "Verdi took a sacred piece and infused it with all of the drama and sacred intensity you get in opera. The sound is huge, with thundering climaxes, and wonderfully rewarding choral parts mixed throughout." Baker is artistic director and conductor of Masterworks Chorale; director of music at the Unitarian Universalist Church of

Berkeley; founder and director of the chamber choir Serenade; and assistant conductor of the San Francisco Choral Society.

On August 3, Dr. Stephen Sano conducts Mozart's *Requiem*, "one of the most recognized, beloved and known pieces in all of choral repertoire," and two pieces by Brahms: *Schicksalslied* and *Nänie*. "Although smaller in scale and length, the pieces are rich in what they offer musically," he says. "The choral and orchestral writing and the setting of the poetry is so perfectly done." Dr. Sano is professor and chair of the Department of Music and Choral Studies at Stanford University, and director of the Stanford Chamber Chorale and Symphonic Chorus.

On August 10, Dr. Buddy James conducts Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (abridged). He describes the piece as "one of the great oratorios of all time," with massive choruses which are exciting to sing, and a dramatic baritone solo he calls "the role of a lifetime." Dr. James is director of choral/vocal Studies at California State University, East Bay; and founding director of its School of Arts and Media.

The series concludes on August 17 with Dr. Magen Solomon conducting Brahms' *Requiem*, "a spectacular piece to sing," she says. "The harmonies, the orchestration, the color of the voices and instruments are beautifully constructed." Dr. Solomon is artistic director of the San Francisco Choral Artists, and artistic director of the San Francisco Bach Choir. She won the Chorus America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming.

Schola's Dawn Reyen will act as accompanist for four Sings, playing the orchestral part masterfully on the piano.

Each Summer Sings begins at 7:30 PM, and will be held at the Los Altos United Methodist Church. Admission price is \$13 general; ages 25 and under free with valid student ID. As a special savings, Schola offers a Sings FLEX pass: six tickets for \$66, to be used as one ticket to attend all six concerts, or to be shared with friends over one or more concerts. Tickets may be purchased at the door, online at www.ScholaCantorum.org, or by phone: 650-254-1700.

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