

***The War Requiem* bombards appreciative audience**

A scooping tritone signaled the onset of hostilities between the ancient and venerable requiem mass and the horror of war as the Cuesta Master Chorale breathed life into the music of Benjamin Britten and the poetry of Wilfred Owen in a hair-raising performance. Hector Vasquez and Cynthia Clayton of the Metropolitan Opera, Jonathan Mack of the Los Angeles Music Center Opera, the PolyPhonics, and the Central Coast Children's Choir joined the Master Chorale. The massed choirs, orchestras, and soloists were under the expert direction of Dr. Thomas Davies.

Music of this genre is virtually unknown to Central Coast audiences and from the choir's first pronouncement of "requiem," the audience knew that they were in for a unique experience. They were not disappointed. Dr. Davies held a tight rein on the musicians, presiding from the podium like a stationmaster, and skillfully directed the 201 musicians through the intricacies and complexities of Britten's music.

Vasquez, Clayton, and Mack delivered a superlative performance as they accented the text of the requiem mass, with the poetry of Owen adding a disturbing element to the usually tran-

quil requiem. The most poignant moment came when Vasquez and Mack sang the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac in a haunting duet. In Owen's poem, however, Abraham ignores the angel's command and slays Isaac. It is symbolic of the sacrifice of a generation of the Western world's sons.



Mack, Clayton, and Vasquez

In the battle of soloists, the victory went to Clayton. This was her "finest hour" so far with the Master Chorale. She delivered a stellar rendition of Britten's music in what many remarked was the "best Cynthia has sounded." Indeed, her voice continues to mature and this performance merely hints of the greatness to come.

See Britten, pg. 2

Publicity and the Master Chorale

At the 10 June meeting of the board of directors, the publicity department was the focus of the majority of the meeting. The board feels that we need to "get a handle" on publicity and keep the ball rolling. Dr. Davies suggested that we take the leap and hire a publicity director. Research has shown that en-

sembles of our size need a paid person whose only responsibility is to promote the ensemble and get the word out.

Financially, we are not in a position to hire someone full time. It would be a part-time job and part of the remuneration would be a percentage of the concert revenue. Although this seems drastic, it is really the only solution to the problem. The board is in the early stages of developing this idea, and we will keep you apprised of our progress.

Your assistance is requested in this matter. Do you know someone who has experience with publicity and promotion? Would they be willing to work with our limited budget and us? If you have any thoughts on this, please speak with Dianne Blakeslee.



Britten, cont.

Equal to the challenge was the chorus, which presented an outstanding evening of music. The first half of the concert had technical difficulties, predominantly in the orchestra; however, the second half was nearly flawless. Several members of the audience had also attended the premier of the *War Requiem* and remarked that the Master Chorale's performance was just as good as the premier was. According to Dr. Thomas Davies, conductor of the Master Chorale, "The Chorale did a great job; I'm proud of their effort and to be associated with such a great singing group."



Dr. Thomas Davies

Britten's requiem is the most challenging music that the Master Chorale has undertaken so far. Preparation for this performance began last September when the Chorale began rehearsals for Rachmaninoff's *Vespers*. The techniques necessary to perform that work were needed to perform the Britten. Performing a cappella trains the singers to listen to the whole chord, not just an individual note. That skill, "tuning the chord," was foremost for the Britten. Because the work is based on the tritone (augmented fifth), it was imperative that the few major chords be absolutely in tune. The scarcity of major chords and their expert execution made them ethereal as they rang throughout the performing arts center. The audience agreed and when Dr. Davies laid down his baton, the audience was so caught up in the spirit of Owen's words and Britten's music that there was a tomb-like silence. It was as if no one in the audience dared interrupt the solemn spell cast by the performance. It was very impressive and very moving. Finally, the applause began and it swelled to a thunder as the audience expressed its appreciation and gratitude.

The performance of the Britten requiem left only one question, "What will the Chorale do after this?" And the answer: Anything—absolutely anything!

And after the hostilities came the party

Thanks to our hospitality chairperson, Madelyn Bedig-Williams, members of the Chorale were able to unwind after the monumental Britten concert at Izzy's for an "end of hostilities" party. They ate, drank, discussed the Britten, and ate some more. Daphne said the margaritas



were "really great." The after-concert gatherings are a favorite activity of the Chorale, and it is nice to return to the old tradition of a "formal" after-concert gathering. Thank you, Madelyn, you "done good."



Heard it on Grape Vine

One of the most effective ways to advertise our concerts is by word of mouth. Most people attend concerts because they were invited by a friend. Please take a few minutes and e-mail the Chorale with the names and addresses of your friends whom you feel would be interested in receiving information about the Chorale.

Also, please let us know the organizations to which you belong, and remember to include your name! We are building a data base for our publicity department.

chorale@cuesta.org

So long, farewell, auf wiedersehen

The Chorale bids a fond adieu to Mary McTaggart, alto, who is moving north. Her husband, Gary, is retiring from his teaching position at Templeton High School and will be taking over the family farm. Mary is also a teacher although she "retired" when a baby boy came into their lives. Mary taught mathematics and German at Templeton High School, and was one of Jim Holloway's teachers (poor Mary!). Alles Beste und Gottes Segen!



Also departing from the rolls of the Chorale is Nannette Secor. Her employment situation will take Nannette to San Diego. We hope the relocation is only temporary and that she will soon be back in San Luis Obispo County and the Master Chorale. (In the meantime, we have a place to stay when we visit Sea World!)



Josef Davidman, the Chorale's only descendant of the great King David, is off to the Los Angeles area to begin teaching. Josef is the Master Chorale's "child" and, like all parents, we will all miss him. Mazel tov, Josef!

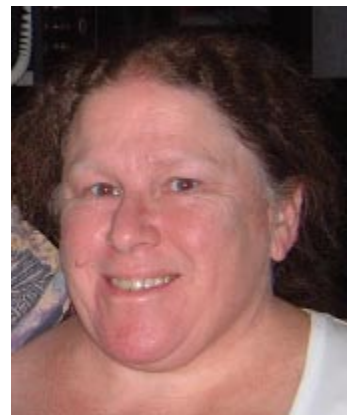


We wish them God's blessings as they begin a new chapter in their lives. Keep in touch.

Gee, Wally, that sounds made up to me!

If any member of our Chorale has the right to brag about music connections with Cuesta College, it is Dorothy Tomilson. The Los Osos resident grew up in the East Bay (Oakland, Rodeo) and says her childhood was a carbon copy of those family sitcoms that we love to watch on TV Land. She had "great parents, good friends, excellent teachers, a nice home, Brownies, drill team, dance lessons, and summer vacations in the Santa Cruz Mountains." Gee, Wally, do people live like that? Nah, Beav, that's only in movies and stuff like that.

Dorothy's musical life began at age 7 when she began piano lessons. Later she joined the elementary band and learned to play the clarinet; in junior high she switched to the saxophone. Dorothy attended the Beatles' last concert at Candlestick Park, and she finds it amusing that Janis Joplin was the warm up band for her school dances. In 1966 Dorothy's family moved to Morro Bay. She studied piano with Wachtang Korisheli, played under the baton of Dick Shapley, and joined the choral class at Cuesta when Dr. Earle Blakeslee, "Doc," was the director.



She is very active at St. Peter's Episcopal Church where she has been a member for 35 years. Her 20-year-old daughter, Kate, is away in college. This leaves Dorothy a lot of time to relax at "the cabin on getaway weekends." Dorothy has worked for Cal Poly's Testing Center for more than 20 years.

When Dr. Davies was named conductor of the Master Chorale, Dorothy was at the first rehearsal and has missed only one season since then (when assisting a friend with terminal cancer). She has fond memories of the trip to Spain, but she missed the music-loving rooster—she enjoyed motion sickness instead. Dorothy is one of the Chorale's royalties by virtue of having performed with the Cuesta Music Department for 30 years!



Magic lives

—Rae Stone

To say we're lucky to have them doesn't even begin to acknowledge the gift that is the Cuesta College Master Chorale. I was privileged to be in the audience on May 18th for their performance of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* at the Cal Poly Performing Arts Center. This is big music, folks, inspired in conception and glorious in delivery. It takes hold of you and soars, never once releasing its grip until the last achingly beautiful note whispers its end.

The concert was performed by the one hundred and forty-five combined voices of the Cuesta Master Chorale, the Cal Poly PolyPhonics, and the Central Coast Children's Choir; three soloists Hector Vasquez, Cynthia Clayton, and Jonathan Mack; and sixty-six musicians from the San Luis Obispo Symphony and the Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Thomas Davies. Of special note, the third section begins with children's (angels?) voices accompanied by a single organ. It seems otherworldly—the children's choir performs offstage—and had the audience whispering, "It must be a recording," so pure and ethereal is the

sound. Put all this formidable talent together on the same stage and only one thing can happen—magic. And if you've stopped believing in it you have only to experience one of these concerts to know that magic not only lives, it sings right here on the Central Coast.

Britten's *War Requiem* speaks to the fear, the passion, the dreams, the determination, and ultimately the triumph of humankind. That it should be performed this year in the aftermath of [September 11th] makes it all the more meaningful for it is a condemnation of the violent waste of war and a powerful plea for peace that leaves you believing this ageless prayer can and finally will be answered.

This review appeared in an on-line discussion group and is used by permission of Ms. Stone.



Dr. Davies and tenor Jonathan Mack

Fall Concert Dates

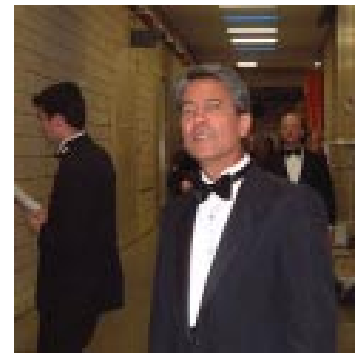
Clear your calendars for the weekend of 22-23 November. The Master Chorale is returning to its historic performance dates. Watch your e-mail for more information about the November concerts.



... so the horn player says ...



Sherry Kaml gives one of her "teacher" looks that seems to say, "Hey, not in my classroom!"



Calvin, Calvin, you're so fine....



"I've had 60 cups of coffee today" says soprano Daphne Myers.

Register early

Remember to register online via the WEBREG for Master Chorale. Go to the Cuesta Web page, click on WEBREG and follow the simple steps. The section number is 1243. It's simple, and fun, it oughta be done! Cuesta's URL is:

<http://www.cuesta.org>

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