

OCDANews

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February 1997

SINGING WITH ROBERT SHAW: "CREATING A LONGING TO BE BURIED IN FOREST LAWN"

The rehearsal hall was silent as Robert Shaw gave the final cut-off for "He That Shall Endure to the End" from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. "This makes you want to be buried in Forest Lawn, doesn't it!" Shaw exclaimed. We chuckled, but were also moved by this comment from an eighty year old choral giant who was clearly aware of his own mortality, whose life has been passionately devoted to the timeless art of music, and whose choral legacy would live long beyond the music offered by those gathered in that place.

Described by one Ohio choral conductor as a man who is "forty years old on the podium and eighty years old when he steps off," those of us who sang with the Robert Shaw Choral Institute at Carnegie Hall this January were taught and transformed by this legendary conductor who lives and is revitalized through his passionate commitment to choral singing.

In music—"the only time art we have"—Shaw, with an exactitude anticipated by his reputation, paid careful attention to the rhythm that divides and organizes duration. Rehearsals often began using his familiar "count-singing" of subdivided beats. This technique affects not only rhythmic duration, we were told, but also affects the integrity of intonation, alignment of vowels, and creates "miracles of togetherness." "Forte singing," he repeatedly reminded us, "wipes out this work on detail."

Careful attention to enunciation reflected Shaw's belief that "each syllable is a rounded, closed, thoughtful event." The entire score was often sung on four nontriadic pitches to ensure that every pitch and consonant took on a shape and life of its own. Shaw encouraged us to sculpt a musical line resembling "a necklace of flawless pearls connected to each other in perfect succession." We were challenged to create "the miracle that results when the voice becomes the vehicle of the composer."

Shaw's vitality grows out of his ongoing search for a more perfect expression. His edition of *Elijah*, originally done in 1994, embraced several scriptural editions to heighten the poetic union of music and text. Two subsequent revisions yielded a score filled with explicit technical and interpretive directives that rendered us responsible for performance criteria, and offered a libretto that flowed naturally with the inflections of the English language. Long-time Shaw singers spoke reverently of rehearsal emphases that only began to evolve in the last few years. Our deep respect for Shaw intensified with the realization that he was still striving to elevate the choral art to new plateaus of integrity.

In Shaw's conception of *Elijah*, dynamics and affect were organically linked to story and mood. The *fortes* which created famished tones portraying drought and famine ("Help Lord, there comes no power to save us.") also carried the frenzied shouts of people echoing Elijah's call to slay false prophets of Baal. *Pianos* heavily whispered with awe by people feeling the presence of the true God also carried sublime assurance that "he watching over Israel slumbers not, nor sleeps." With foundations carefully laid in isolated work on technique, musicality soared off

the page in response to Shaw's intuitions, scholarship, and passion.

Shaw's rehearsal demeanor—demanding, instructive, fiery, humble, intellectual—emerged from his chosen role as a servant of musical sonority. His impatience with us ("You're each singing as if you have something to say!") surfaced when we allowed individual vocalism to dominate musical intent. A rigorous rehearsal style reminded us of the need for personal discipline in the larger aims of music making.

In a culture hungering for the examples of heroes, one wonders who the future eighty year old bearers of choral standards will be. Who among us have the deeply analytical musical minds and the humility to subject egos, minds, and souls to musical expression? Who among us are continually tempering musical insights with evolution, maturity, and thought-filled scholarship. Experiences with Shaw-like figures are inseparable from the joy we find in our work and the significance we bring to our culture through choral music. May we always walk in the presence of such giants!

—Ronald Morgan
OCDANews Editor

Submit April/May Concert Dates
by March 15, 1997

to:

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CHORAL PERFORMANCES ACROSS THE BUCKEYE STATE

February 12

Winter Concert, Euclid High School Choraliens, Diane Tizzano, conductor, Choral Masters and Varsity Chorale, Bea Grushcow and Ken Ferlito, conductors. EHS Auditorium, 7:30 P.M.

February 14-17

Miami University Choraliens Winter Tour, Clayton Parr, conductor, Atlanta, Georgia.

February 15

A Valentine Program, The Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati, Earl Rivers, music director. Elizabethan madrigals, British Isles folksongs, William Hawley's settings of Emily Dickinson poems. Brahms' Love Songs, Rossini and Richard Rodgers vignettes. Memorial Hall, Cincinnati. 513/556-6600.

Winter Choral Evensong, Bluffton College Camerata Singers and Chorale, Debra Brubaker and Debra Lenssen, conductors. Yoder Recital Hall, 4:00 and 7:00 P.M.

February 16

Showstoppers!, The Winter Pops Concert of The All-Ohio Youth Choir, Coshocton Community Choir, and The Roscoe Brass, Charles R. Snyder and Christopher McManus, conductors. Coshocton High School, 3:00 P.M. 614/622-3960.

Bowling Green State University Collegiate Chorale Invitational. Choirs from Archbold (Richard Schnipke), Otsego (Janine Baughman), Pike Delta York (Jennifer Schondel), Sylvania Northview (Ben Ayling) High Schools. With the BGSU Collegiate Chorale, Richard Mathey, conductor. Kobacker Hall, BGSU, 3:00 p.m.

February 21-22

The Masterpiece: A Toymaker's Dream, a Gospel allegory. Bay Presbyterian Church, Bay Village, 8:30 P.M. Rick Fortney, music director, 216/871-3110.

Jacques Offenbach's La Perichole, Wright State University, WSU Creative Arts Center, 8:00 P.M.

February 22

Children's Chorus Festival, Sandra B. Brown, coordinator. 915 A.M. - 3:45 P.M., Ashland University.

Cabaret Dinner, Westerville South HS, Todd Stoll, conductor, 7:00 P.M.

Two-Year College Choir Festival, Ohio State University, James Gallagher, guest conductor.

February 23

Hymn Festival, Choirs of First Baptist (Robert Schneider), Forest Hill Presbyterian (Anne Wilson), Epworth-Euclid United Methodist (L. Max Bunker) Churches. Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, Cleveland Heights, 4:00 P.M.

February 25

Ohio State University Men's Glee Club in Wellington, 7:30 P.M.

February 26

The Ohio State University Men's Glee Club and Concert Band at Cleveland's Severance Hall. 800/868-1141 or 216-231-1111.

March 1

Cathedral Classics, The Lancaster Chorale, Robert Trocchia, artistic director. *Funeral Ikos*, Taverner; World Premier, *Mass Over a Period of Time*, Jackson Berkey; Music of Byrd, Lotti, and Pachelbel, 8:00 P.M.

Men's Glee Clubs from Ohio State and Bowling Green State Universities in Concert, Weigel Hall, OSU, 8:00 P.M.

March 2

Ohio State University Chorale and Mastersingers, Linworth United Methodist Church, 3:00 P.M.

March 4

The Hiram College Choir, Ronald Morgan, conductor and The Hiram Men's Chorus, Tina Dreisbach, conductor. Brahms's *Neue Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op. 65*, works by Schubert and Shaw-Parker. Featuring faculty soprano Damaris Peters-Pike. Hiram Christian Church, 8:00 P.M.

March 5

The Lake Erie League Choral Festival. Cleveland Heights, Garfield Heights, Lakewood, Mentor, Normandy, Parma, Shaker Heights, Shaw, Valley Forge, and Warrensville Heights High Schools. Dr. Betsy Burleigh, guest conductor. Garfield Heights High School, 7:30 P.M.

March 6, 7, 8

Peter Pan, Euclid High School's annual musical, Ken Ferlito, director. EHS Auditorium, 7:30 P.M. with 2:00 P.M. matinee on 3/8. 216/261-2900, x. 400.

March 7

A Schubertiade!, The Singers' Club of Cleveland, Thomas J. Shellhammer, conductor. Celebrating Schubert's birth with *Song in the Forest*, *Songs of the Spirits over the Water*, and other works. Waetjen Auditorium, Cleveland State University, 8:00 P.M.

MARCH 8

Grove City High School Show Choir Competition. Contact Peg Weber, 614/875-9550.

Masterworks Chorale, Donna Tozer Wipfli, conductor, Requiem Masses of Mozart and Brahms, Bach cantatas, motets by Byrd and Victoria, Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*. Collingwood Presbyterian Church, Toledo, 8:00 P.M.

Pre-Contest Concert, Reynoldsburg High School, Joe Thrower, conductor, 7:30 P.M.

March 10

Marysville High School Chorus/Band Contest Concert, D. Winters, conductor, 7:00 P.M.

March 11

OSU University Chorus and Women's Glee Club, David Monseur and Hilary Apfelstadt, conductors, Weigel Hall, OSU, 8:00 P.M.

March 13

Pre-Contest Concert, Thomas Worthington High School, Jerry Parsons, conductor, 7:30 p.m.

March 14-16

Mayfield High School Music Department's production of GREASE, Stephen Glosser, director, MHS Auditorium, Mayfield Village, 7:30 P.M.

March 14

Wright State University Madrigal Singers and Women's Chorus, Hank Dahlgren, conductor, works by Britten, Taverner, Debussy, WSU Creative Arts Center, 8:00 P.M.

CHORAL PERFORMANCES ACROSS THE BUCKEYE STATE

March 15

The Combined Choirs of Otterbein College, Aya Ueda, David Price and Jennifer Whitehead, conducting. Music for men's and women's voices, Battelle Fine Arts Center, 3:00 P.M.

March 16

The Canton Civic Opera, St. John Passion, Frederick Locker, conductor, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Massillon, 3:00 p.m.

Clark State University Chorale, Carol J. Todd, conductor, Kuss Auditorium, 3:00 P.M.

March 20-23

The Music Man, Pickerington High School.

March 21, 22

Professor Lawrence DeWitt Memorial Concert, Duruflé Requiem. Miami University Combined Choir and Symphony Orchestra, Clayton Parr, conductor, Hall Auditorium, 8:00 P.M.

March 23

Brahms' German Requiem. Bluffton College Cantata Singers, Camerata Singers, Chorale and Orchestra. Debra Brubaker, conductor. Founders Hall, Bluffton, 7:30 P.M.

March 27-April 7

The Chamber Singers of The Ashland Symphony Youth Chorus, Sandra B. Brown, conductor. Tour of England, Scotland, and Wales.

April 5

Opus Zero of Otterbein College, Stephen Monroe, conductor. Selections from Tommy, Battelle Fine Arts Center, Westerville, 7:00 and 9:00 P.M.

April 6

The Denison Singers, William Osborne, conductor, First Lutheran Church of Bellefontaine, 2:00 P.M.; First Presbyterian Church, Marion, 7:30 P.M.

April 7

Mount Union College Choral Chamber Ensembles in Concert, Scott Dorsey, conductor. ROUTE 62, the Women's Chorus, and the "Fire-Engine" Choir. Presser Recital Hall, Alliance, 8:00 P.M.

April 11

Bowling Green State University A Cappella Choir and Women's Chorus, Mark

Munson, conductor, Kobacker Hall, BGSU, 8:00 P.M.

April 11, 12

Miami University Men's Glee Club, Clayton Parr, conductor. Hall Auditorium, 8:00 P.M.

An Elizabethan Tea, The Hiram College Madrigal Singers and Recorder Consort, Damaris Peters Pike, conductor. Drury Hall, Hiram, 4:30 P.M.

April 12

Marysville High School Show Choir Competition, D. Winter, conductor.

April 13

BGSU Collegiate Chorale Invitational, Kobacker Hall, BGSU, 3:00 P.M.

The Mount Union Alliance Chorale, Scott Dorsey, conductor, Alliance High School, 3:00 P.M.

April 16

The Denison Singers, William Osborne, conductor. Works by Hassler, Foote, Brahms' Marienlieder, Ferko's Marian Motets, Barber's Reincarnations, Alexander Auld's The Ohio Harmonist. Burke Recital Hall, Granville, 8:00 P.M.

Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Shaker Heights High School A Cappella Choir, Orchestra, and Faculty Singers, Ronald Morgan, conductor; Edward Maclary, guest conductor. 7:30 P.M.

April 18

Otterbein College Early Music Ensemble Sings Bach, Aya Ueda, conductor, Battelle Fine Arts Center, 8:00 P.M.

April 19

The Denison University Concert Choir and Welsh Hills Symphony Orchestra, William Osborne, conductor. Schubert's *Overture to "The Magic Harp"*, Brahms *Requiem*. Swasey Chapel, Granville, 8:00 P.M.

Ashland Symphony Concert Chorus, Sandra B. Brown, conductor, with the Ashland Symphony Orchestra, McDowell Auditorium, Ashland.

25th Anniversary Concert, Bowling Green State University Men's Chorus, Richard Mathey, conductor, Kobacker Hall, BGSU, 3:00 and 8:00 P.M.

THE COMPLETE CHORAL CONDUCTOR

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•A workshop for conductors of school, church, and community choirs.

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JULY 20-23, 1997

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Peter Bagley, Jr.

from the University of Connecticut
Interest Sessions and Director of the Conductors' Chorus

Dr. Christine Jordanoff

from Duquesne University and the Youth Choir of the Pittsburgh Mendelssohn Choir
Clinic with The Solon Middle School Choir
Techniques and repertoire for young voices

Dr. Ronald Gould

Youngstown State University, "Leading from the Organ"

Performances

The Westshore Chorale, John Drotleff, conductor
"Christmas in July"
Solon Middle School Chorus, Ann Usher, conductor
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