



PRESS RELEASE 10 May 09

HACKNEY SINGERS BRING MESSA DI GLORIA ALIVE

The performance of Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* by the Hackney Singers and the Forest Philharmonic on Saturday 10 March to a full church of 800 people at St John-at-Hackney thrilled the audience, the choir and the orchestra alike.

"It was like the angels singing those words of the Gloria", said Father Rob Wickham, Vicar of the host church. "Hackney Singers and Forest Philharmonic has excelled themselves once again. The best day of St. John-at-Hackney is when it's filled to capacity and used for that which really it's built for – good music."

The audience expressed unquenchable excitement following the performance – even amongst some of the younger members. Matthew Hodges, nine years old, said the performance was "good, big and loud. And it's cool; I love it!"

Anna Platman noted that the performance was "very powerful; the choir was enjoying the singing which made it quite endearing and tremendous. The acoustic of the venue brought the Gloria to the highest peak". "Wonderful concert and very moving. Glorious indeed", added Maryl Constantine.

"Firstly, congratulations to the Hackney Singers for a full church for such a relatively unknown work", said Conductor and Hackney Singers' Music Director Mark Shanahan. "What was most noticeable was how the audience captured the spirit of the work and sensed the singers' commitment to the vitality and beauty that the work demands. A most memorable evening."

John Crawford, Leader of Forest Philharmonic said "What is amazing is that this piece is a discovery for me. What a fantastic piece! I have done most things but this is really great and fascinating for me. The choir sound absolutely great; the best I have seen them".

Andrew Greenan, Bass Soloist, said: "It's an absolute thrill to be back here to sing with such marvellous chorus and orchestra. The sound is fantastic. This Puccini is one of the most exciting, uplifting and joyous piece of music...its also a very special joy to be working again with my friend Mark Shanahan, who's a very special conductor indeed".

"This was my first *Messa di Gloria*", said Tenor soloist Thomas Hertford. "It's quite a difficult sing, but it was made much easier by the fantastic audience – such enthusiasm! I enjoyed myself immensely."

Howland Mullally, a volunteer for the day, thought that the performance was "very good and professional. Really well organised with a good community feel. This gives me assurance that there is a lively and interactive aspect to Hackney than what you see outside. As a new resident, I now feel happy and confident!"

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For more information about the concert and the choir see our website,
www.hackneysingers.org.uk , or call 020 8986 7710.

Notes for Editors

1. Hackney Singers is a large mixed choir with about 150 members. The choir is based in Hackney, with members drawn from all over Hackney, North and South London. The choir has been performing for over 25 years. The choir is a Registered Charity, No 294564.
2. The Forest Philharmonic Orchestra, a registered charity Number 1026792, has over 90 players aged 16 to 60. It was founded in 1964, and is one of the country's leading community orchestras. The Orchestra puts on concerts in Walthamstow Assembly Hall and the Royal Festival Hall. More information from 01304 620410, or www.forestphilharmonic.org.uk.
3. The musical director of the Hackney Singers (since 1998) and of the Forest Philharmonic (since 1991) is Mark Shanahan, a conductor whose career includes conducting at the English National Opera, Opera North and La Fenice Venice. Shanahan has recently been appointed an honorary Fellow of the Royal Northern College of Music.
<http://www.markshanahan.co.uk>.
4. Photographs are available of the choir, the composer, the conductor and the venue from Andy Brown or Godwyns Onwuchekwa -- see contact details above.
5. Hackney Singers does not hold auditions. Everyone is welcome to join in the Thursday evening rehearsals, held at St Luke's Church at 7.30 pm during term time. More information from the Hackney singers website, www.hackneysingers.org.uk.
6. St Johns-at-Hackney was built in 1792, although a church has stood on this site since at least 1275, and possibly before the Norman Conquest. The church is wheelchair accessible. We aim to make our concerts accessible to all. <http://www.stjohn-at-hackneychurch.org.uk>.

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