Two MIT Pros To Lead Choral Concerts

John Harbison
By Stephen Ovadia

John Harbison of the MIT music faculty will direct the Cantata Singers in two performances of Bach's Saint Matthew Passion at 7:30pm this Wednesday and Thursday, November 19 and 20, in Sanders Theatre.

The season, the Cantata Singers are being led by three different conductors in their three Sanders programs, and they have no regular music director. Harbison was the group's director from 1969 to 1973, when he retired due to time pressures and health problems; this is his first appearance with the Cantata Singers since that time. John Ferris of Harvard's Memorial Church and Iva Dee Huit of Smith College will conduct the remaining two programs.

Cantata Singers' concerts have traditionally been "centered" on Bach groups, but the larger works of Bach. The three groups merged their corporate identities and the resulting ambitious step for the group, into the represented. These performances of the Society, Glee Club, and Schola Cantorum that has undergone a thorough reevaluation since last year. Where there is now only the Choral Society, also heads the vocal program at MIT.

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The faculty will direct the Cantata Singers in two performances of Bach's Saint Matthew Passion at 7:30pm this Wednesday and Thursday, November 19 and 20, in Sanders Theatre.

Tickets are $3 and $5, and are available at the TCA office in the MIT Student Center, at the door on the evening of the performance, or by phone from the Cantata Singers office, 227-5625. The office can also provide subscription information on the rest of the season.

by George Harper

On Sunday, November 16 (that's next Sunday), John Oliver will lead the MIT Choral Society in its first concert of the 75-76 season. Choruses and soloists Daisy Newman (soprano) and David Arnold (baritone) will present Johannes Brahms's German Requiem. Several factors are at work here to make this an extraordinary and, potentially exciting performance. First, the group itself. The choral music program at MIT has undergone a thorough reorganization since last year. Where there were three groups on campus - Choral Society, Glee Club, and Schola Cantorum - there is now only the Choral Society. The three groups merged their corporate identities and the resulting "Choral Society" (the name is the only easy carry-over) is substantially stronger than any of the old groups could have hoped to have been. Even a simple head-count corroborates this: where the old Choral Society numbered 120 at best, there are over 200 active members in this year's group. Sections are consequently stronger, and there's a blend and richness of tone that's been lacking in recent years.

A second factor is the concert site: Sacred Heart Church, 49 Sixth Street, Cambridge (a short walk from the east side of campus). It's worth the price of admission just to cast your ballot against that acoustically monstrously called Kresge Auditorium.

Another factor is the program material. Brahms's Requiem was his first universally recognized masterpiece. It's full of wonderful turns, with gestures to Handel, to Beethoven, even to Schumann. Simply, it is one of the finest works of the choral repertory. It's been a long time since a group at MIT has tackled a work on this scale.

Finally, there are the soloists. David Arnold is a fine baritone who is just beginning to make a name for himself - he sang with the Boston Symphony Orchestra two summers ago in Ozawa's memorable production of Schonberg's Gurre-Lieder. He has a voice of impressive size and flexibility. Daisy Newman has studied at the BSO's Berkshire Music Center, where she won the High Fidelity/Musical America Award for 1975. Her voice has a richness and luster one doesn't often find in a soprano.

John Oliver, who conducts the Choral Society, also heads the vocal program at MIT, and he has the BSO's Tanglewood Festival Chorus. He is on this faculty at MIT and has led the Choral Society through four years which have seen steady change and growth. This year's especially ambitious schedule includes the Requiem, the Vivaldi Lauda Jerusalem and the Beethoven C Major Mass.

Tickets are on sale all this week in the Building 10 Lobby, and again at the door on Sunday. They're $3, or $1 with MIT ID. To reserve seats, call 253-4720.

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