

Sound choice: Glorïae Dei Cantores choir

The **Glorïae Dei Cantores choir** maintains an official blog, called "things of note," run by the Glorïae Dei Artes Foundation. On Sunday, Dec. 16, the entry was titled "To Sing is to Pray Twice" and it said, simply, "Maybe, in the shadow of the unexplainable tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary - when words seem unbelievably small and incapable - music might bring some solace."

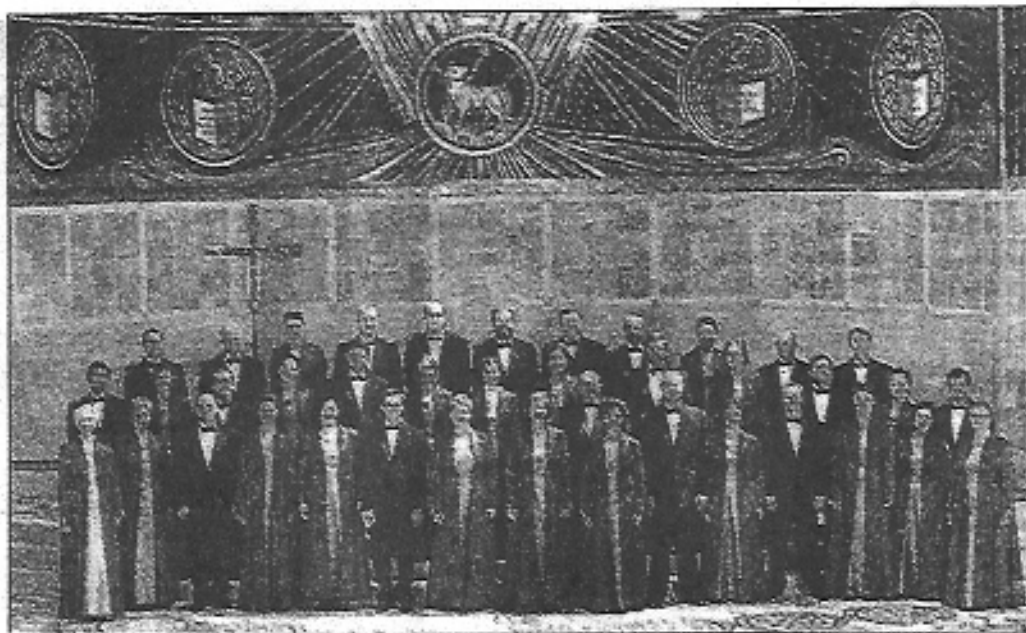
And it is this belief in its music's beauty and healing power that has driven the choir now for a quarter of a century.

Glorïae Dei Cantores, which translates to "singers to the Glory of God," will launch its yearlong **25th anniversary concert series** at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday at the Church of the Transfiguration in Orleans.

The concert series will include performances throughout the year. This weekend's repertoire will include "Quatre Motets" by French composer Maurice Durufle, "Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin bei dir" by Bach, "Messe Solennelle" by Jean Langlais and three choruses for Tolstoy's "Tsar Feodor Ioannovich" by Georgy Sviridov.

The internationally renowned 40-voice choir performs in 18 languages, and has appeared on the concert stage and in recordings with such artists as John Williams, Keith Lockhart, Samuel Adler, Mark O'Connor, Vladimir Minin, Stephen Cleobury, and the late George Guest.

Highlights of the choir's career, according to a press release, include three invita-



STEVE J. SHERMAN

The Glorïae Dei Cantores choir is kicking off a yearlong 25th anniversary concert series in Orleans.

tional tours of Russia, the opening of the 900th anniversary of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, live broadcasts with the BBC, the soundtrack of the film "Lorenzo's Oil," and performances in some of the finest concert halls throughout Europe. Its discography of 40 recordings is distributed in the United States through Harmonia Mundi. The Church of the Transfiguration is the choir's home base and members sing weekly worship services there.

The choir is led by Elizabeth Patterson, who has guided the choir on 24 interna-

tional tours since 1988. According to the choir's website, Patterson is also an accomplished keyboard artist, organist, pianist, and harpsichord specialist. In addition, she is recognized for her extensive contribution to the world of Gregorian chant, the specialty of the choir's adjunct group, the Glorïae Dei Cantores Schola.

Other concerts in the anniversary series will be held at the church on Feb. 15-16, March 15-16, April 26-27, July 12-13, Aug. 2-3, Sept. 27 and Dec. 6 and 8.

COLLEEN PRESTON

If you go:

What: Glorïae Dei Cantores 25th Anniversary Concert. When: 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Where: Church of the Transfiguration, Rock Harbor, Orleans. Tickets: \$35 general admission; \$30 seniors; 18 and under or students are free. Discounts available for two or more concerts in the series. Information: www.gdcchoir.org or 508-240-2400.



First-rate singing puts spirit in ‘Messiah’

By **KEITH POWERS**

Posted Dec 16, 2012 at 2:00 AM

MASHPEE — There are many reasons Handel’s “Messiah” has become a holiday tradition.

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Mainly its rich score, with outstanding settings for soloists, chorus and ensemble — some parts absolutely thrilling. But also its flexibility. The great oratorio has been set for thousands of singers and instrumentalists, outsized performances made to accommodate large chorale societies and their followers.

But Handel’s original concept was for a small ensemble, and maestro Jung-Ho Pak and the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra returned to those intentions Friday evening at Christ the King church in Mashpee. Pak assembled a modest group of period instrumentalists, the dynamic Gloriam Dei Cantores choir, and four superb soloists, presenting a touching performance with the sound writ small but emotions large.

Pak chose the sparest possible ensemble of period instruments: harpsichord-based orchestra, with a dozen strings, a few winds, a pair of natural horns and occasional timpani. The instrumental playing was spirited, sometimes inspired, following early practices that avoid vibrato and emphasize open strings. Intonation was at times a problem, as frequently happens with more delicate instruments in exposed settings.

But the singing was first-rate. Gloriam Dei Cantores, about 30 strong voices, made a lasting impression with precise diction, robust part articulation and a maturely blended sound. The multiple layers and entrances of “For Unto Us A Child Is Born” were a joy to listen to.

Each of the four soloists took advantage of their moments to shine.

Alto Krista River, tenor Jason McStoots, soprano Kristen Watson and bass Thomas Jones, all sought-after singers in early music circles, vividly painted Handel's three-part telling of the Messiah story.

The sound in the tall, broad spaces of Christ the King church was boomy with echo, and took some getting used to, but volume was certainly never a problem, and each of the soloists' strong instruments danced around the room.

There were many highlights. River had the most variegated solos: her bold "But Who May Abide The Day Of His Coming" contrasted wonderfully with the morosely paced "He Was Despised." McStoots sang with fierce passion, getting things started with "Ev'ry Valley Shall Be Exalted" and climaxing just before the famed "Hallelujah" chorus with "Thou Shalt Break Them With a Rod Of Iron," a lovely setting, deftly accompanied by a small selection of strings.

(Instrumentalists were not listed in the program, and thus cannot be singled out.)

Watson's slight frame belies her prodigious voice. She occupied the stage for a long section after the orchestral Pifa, elevating the first part — predominantly the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's birth — to a charged climax with "Rejoice Greatly, O Daughter of Zion." And Jones' sturdy bass brought the story to a close with "The Trumpet Shall Sound," doubled elegantly by the set of natural horns.

Extravagantly sized performances of major works like "Messiah" have their place, but this intimate, well-conceived and -managed performance seemed just as adventurous and appealing as any other.