

SESTINA

SESTINA MUSIC IS A NORTHERN IRELAND REGISTERED CHARITY, No. NIC100067

NEWSLETTER No. 2

DEAR FRIENDS,

AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE HEADING, SESTINA MUSIC IS NOW A REGISTERED CHARITY WHICH GIVES US ALL SORTS OF ADVANTAGES INCLUDING GIFT AID TAX RECLAIMS. AND THE MUSIC CONTINUES TO BE EXCELLENT !

KING ARTHUR WENT BRILLIANTLY IN APRIL, WITH GREAT REVIEWS, A CAPACITY HOUSE IN ULSTER MUSEUM AND SUPPORT FROM BOTH ARTS COUNCIL NI AND ARTS & BUSINESS NI. MARK AND OONAGH ALLPORT WERE STILL STAPLING THE PROGRAMMES TOGETHER AS THE AUDIENCE ARRIVED IN BELFAST AND THERE WERE A FEW HITCHES IN PRE-PERFORMANCE PREPARATIONS BUT OTHERWISE IT WAS A TRIUMPH. I'VE ATTACHED A FEW COMMENTS FROM SESTINAS OLD AND NEW AS WELL AS SOME FROM THE MARVELLOUS MUSICIANS MARK CHAMBERS ASSEMBLED. DERRY WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT IN AUDIENCE NUMBERS, A LESSON WE HAVE LEARNED THE HARD WAY, BUT THE PERFORMANCE WAS SUPERB AND WAS RECEIVED WITH HUGE ENTHUSIASM !

THE NEXT PROGRAMME IS IN THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER WHEN WE WILL BEGIN PREPARATIONS FOR A VENETIAN FESTIVAL. MARK C HAS PUT TOGETHER AN INTRIGUING PROGRAMME AS YOU CAN SEE BELOW AND I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN BELFAST.

THE VENETIAN FESTIVAL

PLANS ARE WELL ADVANCED FOR OUR MAJOR PROGRAMME IN APRIL NEXT YEAR - A VENETIAN FESTIVAL OF MUSIC WITH JUGGLERS, PUPPETEERS, MASK MAKERS AND STREET THEATRE. THREE ENSEMBLES, OUR OWN SESTINAS, HIS MAJESTYS SAGBUTTS AND CORNETTS AND THE MONTEVERDI STREET BAND WILL PERFORM INDIVIDUALLY DURING THE WEEK IN ULSTER MUSEUM, BELFAST, ARMAGH CATHEDRAL AND CHRIST CHURCH, DUBLIN;

1. *THE MONTEVERDI STRING BAND PERFORMS MADRIGALS WITH MUSIC AND DANCERS;*
2. *HIS MAJESTYS SAGBUTTS AND CORNETTS PERFORM THE MUSIC OF ST. MARKS AND VENETIAN STREET MUSIC*
3. *THE SESTINA ENSEMBLE PRESENT THE FEAST OF FAT THURSDAY BEFORE CARNIVAL BY ADRIANO BANCHIERI*

ALL THREE GROUPS WILL THEN COME TOGETHER FOR EVENING PERFORMANCES OF *THE VESPERS OF 1610* BY CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI. FANTASTIC STUFF AND ONE TO ANTICIPATE WITH RELISH.

THE FUTURE

INTO 2015 AND BEYOND, THE TWO MARKS AND I ARE PUTTING TOGETHER PLANS FOR A RECORDING AND A BACH FESTIVAL INCLUDING ONE OF THE PASSIONS. OUR COLLABORATION WITH TOM GUTHRIE AND PURCELL'S KING ARTHUR SEEMS LIKELY TO REVIVE IN PERFORMANCES DURING LONDON'S SPITALFIELDS FESTIVAL. MARK CHAMBER IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF A THIRD VENTURE FOR OUR YOUNG SESTINAS EACH YEAR AT CHRISTMAS-TIDE WITH AN ANNUAL MESSIAH AND HAS EVEN BEEN THINKING OF A PERMANENT PROFESSIONAL ENSEMBLE FOR OUR OLDER SESTINAS AS THEY COMPLETE THEIR TRAINING AND EMBARK ON THEIR FUTURE CAREERS. EXCITING TIMES !

WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN JUST A FEW SHORT YEARS AND THE PACE CONTINUES TO QUICKEN !

BEST WISHES

JIM KELLEY

BUSINESS ADDRESS: 13 ABERFOYLE CRESCENT SOUTH, LONDONDERRY, BT48 7PF

TEL: 07976 548 356

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COMMENTS BY SESTINA MUSICIANS - PURCELL'S KING ARTHUR

Being the youngest member of the highly acclaimed vocal ensemble 'Sestina' has definitely brought with it its challenges. It's not everyday that you find yourself working with some of the finest young musicians in the land! However, the camaraderie and support that is also found within this group is one that is very special indeed. With the huge range of experience, ranging from professional singers, to people that maybe haven't participated in something like it before, there are without doubt going to be times when the younger members find themselves 'thrown in at the deep end'. However with continual support and mentoring from the more experienced members, this feeling of uncertainty is quickly overcome! Working with exceptional musicians such as Mark and Thomas, I felt that I have gained invaluable experience and knowledge that I would not elsewhere have gained. Also, working with professional dancers as part of 'King Arthur' was also a first experience for me, and I felt that it has introduced me to a world that I would not have experienced if not for this production. It is for these reasons that I have described that make Sestina an invaluable tool, in training, and also in discovering the new talent that Northern Ireland has to offer.

Joseph Zubier - Countertenor (15) New Sestina Member

Sestina is valuable to me because it gives me an outlet to put into practice what I have learned from my degree so far at a very high professional standard. It is a great networking tool for people who are from all over Ireland (and very often based elsewhere) to come together, share what they know, develop friendships and subsequently strong working relationships, and ultimately know that there are like-minded people who strive to achieve a high standard of performance in all strands of Early Music. It's so important for Northern Ireland to have a group like Sestina, showcasing the unbelievable talent and dedication that we possess in our part of the world and ensuring that the public want for classical music performance at the highest level is being met

King Arthur was an incredible experience, from working with inspirational people like Mark and Tom (who was so impressed I would be surprised if some of us weren't asked to participate in other projects of his, see my point about networking above) to achieving what we achieved, that is to say, a fully costumed and staged opera with baroque orchestra in four days. There are few professional companies anywhere who would be able to pull it off with such flair and commitment, and that is what sets Sestina apart – we're young, fresh and ready to take risks!

Sinead OKelly - Soprano Senior Sestina Singer

Regarding Purcell's King Arthur

I am delighted to convey some of my thoughts after being involved in the recent production in Belfast and Derry of King Arthur. It was a unique and powerful experience for me. It struck me how often society can feel removed from both historical events and early opera and this production brings these things together and makes them resonate in a deeply moving way.

The performances by members of Sestina were fresh, vibrant and impeccably prepared, the energy further heightened by their passion and enthusiasm for the piece. What an amazing opportunity for them. I was so impressed to witness the quality of their performance and it was also remarkable to me that many of these very same uniforms were worn by young men the same age at the front in WW1.

Tom Guthrie's acting, direction and singing were most impressive and the efficiency with which he put this whole production together in such a short space of time with such good grace was amazing.

Mark's passion for what he does, his dedication to passing on his expertise in early opera to these fortunate young singers, his powers of organisation and his wonderful skills as a musician and artistic director are all so commendable and I feel privileged to have played a small part in his vision for this unique production.

My only small disappointment is that more people didn't have the opportunity to witness what Sestina and all involved could do. It would be wonderful to see this piece shared with the rest of the country. I have no doubt it would be well received.

Anita Vedres -Baroque Violinist

I live and work in London, and perform with some of the best early music ensembles around, and I can honestly say that this was one of the most pleasurable and rewarding projects I've been involved with.

The standard of singing that Mark Chambers has managed to pull out from these young singers for the two performances of Purcell's King Arthur was quite honestly outstanding. Audience reports confirm how brilliantly everyone performed. It was quite unlike anything else I've worked on lately. I do hope Sestina will be allowed to continue doing the vital work in developing young Northern Irish singers and giving Irish players a chance to work with them and help them develop.

Jonathan Byers - Baroque Cellist

Being involved in Sestina's production of King Arthur was an amazing experience. The opportunity to work with Mark Chambers and Tom Guthrie for the week was excellent and I think all the singers involved really gained a lot from the week, both from a musical and theatrical point of view. The level of experience in the group varies a lot and with the help of

everyone involved we were able to reach what I think was work of an extremely high standard, that I am surprised to see outside London.

Having things like this happening in Northern Ireland is wonderful and If such opportunities continue to be available, I think it will help ensure our best local musicians remain involved in the music scene here. It is also giving the younger performers the chance to experience things that they might not get the chance to otherwise.

Having War Years Remembered involved really made for a very special production. To have original WW1 props and uniforms created such a real atmosphere and it meant we all felt really involved in the story. Nicky the actress and Bridget and Ryan the dancers involved in the show helped us a lot with our characters and movement. Because we had such a short time to put everything together, having them was essential to help us reach the standard of performance that we did.

The orchestra were just absolutely amazing. When they arrived and we put what we had done together with them it was unbelievable. To have the opportunity to sing with such a talented group of musicians is so exciting!

I hope that people will continue to help support us so that we can do more! I am sure everyone who came to see the production would agree.

Laura Lamph - Contralto Senior Sestina singer

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SESTINA

PRESENTS THE PAIN AND THE PLEASURE

FROM SUBLIME MADRIGALS OF LOVE AND LOSS TO IRREVERENT ENTERTAINMENTS FOR THE
VENETIAN CARNIVAL

THE ULSTER MUSUEM, (TICKETS 0845 608 0000)

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 5TH 2014 19.30

SESTINA WILL PERFORM SOME OF THE FINEST MUSIC EVER WRITTEN FROM **CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S** *BOOK 8 OF MADRIGALS (MADRIGALS OF LOVE AND WAR)* WHERE HE EXPLORES THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE OF THE CONTRASTING EMOTIONS OF THE AMOROUS AND MARTIAL.

THE SELECTION, INTERSPERSED BY VIOLIN MUSIC BY **MARINI** AND **MERULA**, INCLUDES THE STUNNING *LAMENTO DELLA NINFA* WHERE THE SOLO SOPRANO IS INSTRUCTED TO SING "NOT TO THE BEAT OF THE HAND, BUT TO THE BEAT OF THE HEART" IN A FREE IMPROVISATORY STYLE.

THE SECOND HALF WILL CONSIST OF MUSIC WRITTEN PURELY FOR ENTERTAINMENT. **ADRIANO BANCHIERI'S** *IL FESTINO NELLA SERA DELL GIOVEDI GRASSO AVANTI CENA (FEAST FOR THE EVE OF FAT THURSDAY OF CARNIVAL.)* FAT THURSDAY IS CELEBRATED AS THE LAST THURSDAY BEFORE LENT BEGINS (VERY SIMILAR TO OUR OWN SHROVE TUESDAY) WHERE THE TRADITION IS TO EAT ALL THINGS SWEET AND INDULGE IN THE PLEASURES OF LAUGHTER AND FOOD WITH FRIENDS. **BANCHIERI'S** MUSIC HAS A SELECTED CAST OF CATS, DOGS, FILTHY MONKS, UGLY WOMEN AND LOST LOVERS.

SESTINA WILL COLLABORATE WITH THE WORLD RENOWNED THEORBO PLAYER **PAULA CHATEAUNEUF** AND PROFESSIONAL TENORS **THOMAS HERFORD** AND **MATTHEW LONG** WHO RECENTLY RECORDED THE **MONTEVERDI VESPERS OF 1610** WITH THE **ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT.**

SOPRANO: FIONA FLYNN, CAROLINE JONES

ALTO: LAURA LAMPH

TENOR: MATTHEW LONG, NICHOLAS MULROY

BASS: BRIAN McALEA, AARON O'HARE

VIOLIN: CAROLYN HALL, COLIN NORBY

THEORBO: PAULA CHATEAUNEUF

MUSICAL DIRECTOR: MARK CHAMBERS