

pressquotes

SIMON HALSEY, CONDUCTOR

Berlin Radio Choir, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/ Szymanowski *Stabat Mater*

“The CBSO’s recording, for which Halsey prepared the chorus, was an award winner back in the early 1990s. This was a performance to fully remind us what beautiful music this is, Halsey perfectly blending his Anglo-German forces in the cause of Polish expressiveness.”

Birmingham Post, April 2009

Berlin Radio Choir and Orchestra/ MacMillan *St John’s Passion*

“The Radio Choir and Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of the energetic, adventurous and skilled Simon Halsey, gave the German premiere of James MacMillan’s gripping, two-hour-long *St John’s Passion* at the Berlin Konzerthaus, and what a vivid and memorable account it was!”

Berliner Morgenpost, March 2009

Komische Oper Berlin / *Angst*

„It was the excellent Rundfunkchor Berlin, tackling the demanding vocal parts with outstanding musicianship under the leadership of Simon Halsey, who gave new life to the piece in this successfully staged performance.”

Neues Deutschland, January 2009

“The musical performance under Simon Halsey will have set the ultimate standard for future stagings, or even recordings, of the piece.”

Der Tagesspiegel, January 2009

Berlin Philharmonic / Stravinsky *Symphony of Psalms* (EMI Classics)

“Its Latin psalm settings rise from solemnity to ecstasy in music that brings the best from Rattle and choir (Berlin Radio Choir) and orchestra...”

Sunday Telegraph, July 2008

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra / Parry & Elgar

“Conductor and chorus emerged triumphant... This was a sensational performance, not least because Halsey contrived, as if instinctively, to get all the paces right.”

The Independent, October 2007

“Simon Halsey conducted the outer parts of this Edwardian programme of English music. Parry’s coronation anthem *I Was Glad* was a suitably ceremonial opening, while Elgar’s *the Music Makers*... demanded inclusion too.”

The Guardian, October 2007

City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus / Elgar

“In all three works, a large share of the responsibility for driving home the ecstatic high points falls on the Chorus. Happily, the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus lived up to the enviable reputation it has won under the long-term guidance of Simon Halsey. Augmented by the BBC National Chorus of Wales and members of the City of Birmingham Choir, it rose magnificently to every challenge.”

The Telegraph, June 2007

“The weekend’s heroes, however, were the enlarged chorus, prepared by Simon Halsey: precision, passion, pure, clear delivery.”

The Independent, June 2007

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Berlin Philharmonic / Brahms: *Ein Deutsches Requiem*

"The Berlin Radio Chorus, trained by Rattle's old colleague in Birmingham, Simon Halsey, sing with restrained passion and beautifully support Rattle's conjecture that this piece is as much a private as a public statement."

Gramophone Choral Award 2007

"Thanks to the marvellous transparency of the playing Rattle encourages from his Berlin players, and the outstanding choral singing, this is a modern version to reckon with. Simon Halsey, Rattle's chorus director in Birmingham, appears, on this evidence, to have revitalised choral singing in the German capital. Rattle's Brahms really glows."

The Times, March 2007

Berlin Philharmonic / Ives, Shostakovich

"...the Radio Choir (trained by Simon Halsey) performed under Sakari Oramo with intensity and flexibility."

Neues Deutschland, January 2005

Minnesota Orchestra & Chorale / Handel: *Messiah*

"...acclaimed choral conductor Simon Halsey led those four soloists, the orchestra and the Minnesota Chorale in an interpretation suffused with majesty and richly realized depth. Growing more emotionally engaging by the aria, the evening proved every bit as rewarding as you would expect a world-class collection of Handel practitioners to make it...the Minnesota Chorale responded marvelously to Halsey's charismatic direction."

Pioneer Press, December 2004

Music Director of Curlew River at BBC Proms

"...the piece unfolded with absorbing power, eight excellent instrumentalists casting aural light and shade on the austere plainchant that dominates the vocal writing."

Evening Standard, July 2004

"Musically it was a secret policeman's ball, with strong vocal performances all round, but especially from Mark Wilde as the Madwoman and Rodney Clarke as the Ferryman, and the BCMG players captured that semi-improvised feel that Britten intended through his conductorless freedom of movement."

The Daily Telegraph, July 2004

"...it was also musically convincing; a moving and imaginative revelation of Britten's most daring work of music theatre."

The Guardian, July 2004

"...one of the most powerful Proms experiences I've enjoyed. ... [I was impressed] by BCMG's beautifully detailed delivery of Britten's transparent score, by the singing and acting of all concerned."

The Independent on Sunday, September 2004

"All five of the Birmingham Opera Company's lead singers were excellent, notably the rising young tenor Mark Wilde in the central, cross-dressing role of the Madwoman. Halsey's players excelled. Those listening on Radio 3 must have enjoyed a rare treat."

The Observer, September 2004

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City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus, London Symphony Chorus / Mahler. 8

"The City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus, the London Symphony Chorus, the City of Birmingham Symphony Youth Chorus and the Toronto Children's Chorus, near-impeccable in attack, intonation and blend, were magnificent."

Evening Standard, June 2004

"The City of Birmingham and London Symphony Choruses sang with precision and apparently limitless reserves of physical and emotional stamina. And it was wonderful to see as well as hear the enthusiasm of the City of Birmingham Symphony Youth Chorus and Toronto Children's Chorus, at one point cupping their hands to their mouths to make themselves heard through the tidal roar of one of Mahler's biggest climaxes. To get well over a hundred teenagers and younger children to sing German and medieval Latin with such precision and gusto is no small achievement."

The Independent, June 2004

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra / Elgar

"...Simon Halsey secured a poised and radiant Elgar performance sprinkled with just enough portamento to taste."

The Times, May 2004

Berlin Radio Choir / 25th Anniversary Concert

"It was not simply concentrated volume, but a fine art of song, tender pianos and orchestral colour which made the concert, directed by Simon Halsey and Daniel Reuss a pinnacle of choral singing"

Der Tagesspiegel, February 2004

Netherlands Radio Choir, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra / Szymanowski: *Stabat Mater*

"It is incomprehensible why this work is not performed more often, as this *Stabat Mater* has an ethereal beauty. The real star role was reserved for the Netherlands Radio Choir, which related Szymanowski's Slavonic drama with crystal clear, angelic singing."

Parool, January 2004

Chorus master for Mahler 8 with Simon Rattle and CBSO at Symphony Hall, Birmingham

"...the choral singing, combining the CBS and London Symphony Choruses, [was] characterised by an in-your-face clarity that ensured every line of the complex polyphony was uncommonly audible."

The Guardian, June 2003

"No less impressive was the contribution – rhythmically acute yet weighty – of the massed choral voices..."

The Telegraph, June 2003

"The City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus, the London Symphony Chorus, the City of Birmingham Symphony Youth Chorus and the Toronto Children's Chorus, near-impeccable attack, intonation and blend, were magnificent."

The Evening Standard, June 2003

"...the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus and Youth Chorus, the London Symphony Chorus and the Toronto Children's Chorus, all excellent."

The Financial Times, June 2003

Berlin Radio Choir

"The Radio Choir under the direction of Simon Halsey, showed good form throughout – not just in this extremely complicated premiere: excellent intonation and almost perfect balance with alert attention to all the rhythmical difficulties."

Leipziger Volkszeitung, March 2003

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Chief Conductor of the Berlin Radio Choir

"Halsey's extraordinary musical intelligence and his energy have turned the Rundfunkchor into a top-quality ensemble in record time."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, April 2002

Edinburgh Royal Choral Union / Handel: *Messiah*

"The Edinburgh Royal Choral Union looked and sounded jubilant...in a performance as professional and slick as any you would wish to hear...under the tart and efficient direction of Simon Halsey. This was a performance which carefully avoided any sensationalism or attention-grabbing dependence on the big numbers. It was operatic in concept. Halsey gathered together the various chunks logically, moulding these into slick and meaningful extended theatrical scenes. The whole of Part II was full of energy and passion, not least in the final, uninterrupted leap into the famous Hallelujah chorus. The concluding Amen was a satisfying climax to one of the most tasteful performances of the work I have ever heard."

The Scotsman, January 2001

European Voices & Simon Rattle / Salzburg Festival

"The performance possesses high vocal qualities, not least because of the choir European Voices, magnificently prepared by Simon Halsey, which also works hard on its dramatic role."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, May 1999

"The chorus of European Voices also plays a decisive role. Their flexibility and dramatic intelligence supersede by far the ability and willingness of an old-fashioned opera chorus."

Der Standard, May 1999

CBSO Chorus & Simon Rattle, BBC Proms / Beethoven Symphony No.9

"Simon Halsey...had moulded receptive voices into a pliable, cohesive force of eloquence."

The Daily Telegraph, August 1998