

## BUFFALO SCHOLA CANTORUM/ BUFFALO PHILHARMONIC CHORUS

### REVIEW QUOTES – by Year

“The preparation of Mendelssohn’s ever-popular oratorio, *Elijah*, by the Buffalo Schola Cantorum was a labor of love and devotion to judge from the performance. Only eager devotion on the part of both singers and director, Miss Jessamine Long, could have resulted in as praise-worthy a presentation by a choral group that has had comparatively little experience in the more advanced types of choral composition.”

Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, Jessamine Long, conductor, reviewed by Theodolinda C. Boris, 2/29/1940.

“The singing was more than a mere negotiation of notes and difficult contrapuntal passages although these matters were consistently accurate, but it was singing irradiated with comprehension of style and perception of the spirit of music and text. Extraordinarily well done were the opening ‘Requiem’ and ‘Kyrie’, the ‘Dies Irae’, the ‘Lacrymosa’ and the final ‘Agnus Dei’.

Mozart’s *Requiem*, Cameron Baird, conductor (Schola Cantorum & Buffalo Oratorio Society), reviewed by Theodolinda C. Boris, 12/5/1941.

“The choral singing deserves warm commendation for its accuracy of pitch, good tonal texture, precision of attack, fluidity of dynamics, and above all for a persuasive elan to match the spirit of Schiller’s *Ode to Joy*.”

Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, William Steinberg, conductor (BPO); Schola performed as one of seven combined local choruses prepared by Hans Vigeland; reviewed by Theodolinda C. Boris, 3/26/1951.

“It must be judged on the chorus’ fine sense of line, clear articulation, full-bodied sound, and above all the response to this musical and spiritual exaltation. Much credit to these choristers and their director, Thomas Sokol.”

Bach’s *Mass in B Minor*, Neville Marriner, conductor, Buffalo News, John Dwyer, 11/1/1976.

“The choral role was finely prepared by Schola’s director, Thomas Sokol, and the singers were up for the occasion, psychically, and vocally, poured-on tone and shaped lines.”

Mahler’s *Symphony No. 2 ‘Resurrection’*, Michael Tilson Thomas, conductor; Jessye Norman, soloist, Buffalo News, John Dwyer, 4/4/1977.

“Buffalo Schola Cantorum proved itself to be a symphony chorus outstanding not only in large choral sound, but also in its ability to depict a variety of emotions, articulations and colors. Perhaps the greatest compliment to the chorus comes when forte singing retains both good tone and quality.” Handel’s *Messiah*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, Thomas Gutowski, 12/16/1979.

“The 150 voice Schola Cantorum, prepared by music director, Thomas Swan, hurled itself into the driving rhythms and gigantic declamations of the *Dies Irae* and *Tuba Mirum*, and floated aloft in the adoration passages.”

Verdi’s *Requiem*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, John Dwyer, 5/12/1980.

“The choruses are apt to be the crowning glory of the work, in any case, if they are this well done. The Schola Cantorum, prepared by their director, Thomas Swan, had possibly their best performance ever on this occasion.”

Handel’s *Messiah*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, John Dwyer, 12/14/1980.

“The Schola Cantorum under Thomas Swan’s direction has become a very flexible and lyrically mobile instrument. The opening chorus had a distant sound, as from an abyss, yet it was very responsive to the quick releases of energy in the *Quando corpus* and to the sudden diminuendos Rudel called for in the finale.”

Rossini’s *Stabat Mater*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/29/1981.

“The Schola Cantorum and the orchestra responded to Rudel’s urgent cuing and extremely taut level of concentration with a crispness of attack and pliancy of line that seemed to be the instant result of the slightest conductorial gesture.”

Verdi’s *Otello*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/14/1982.

“The chorus sang with rhythmic alertness, bright, forceful, but balanced sonority and very crisp attacks.”

Poulenc’s *Gloria*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/12/1983.

“Schola Cantorum was wonderfully mellow in the pianissimo entrance, welling out to magnificent volume later; the men’s voices particularly rich and plangent.”

Mahler’s *Symphony No. 2 ‘Resurrection’*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/20/1983.

"Throughout, the chorus produced a homogenous sound, clearly articulated, confident and powerful. The second half of the Mass seemed more solid and mature in performance, with the *Cruxifixus* movement just gorgeously done.  
Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Thomas Swan, conductor, Buffalo News, Kenneth Young, 5/23/1983.

"The Schola Cantorum was very responsive throughout, singing with vigorous attacks, supple and highly musical phrasing, and a highly disciplined ensemble that made the extended running lines a model of clarity."  
Handel's *Messiah*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 12/12/1983.

"In the jubilant final pages, the Schola Cantorum was right on top of the rhythmic pulse, singing with brightness, urgency and compelling forward sweep, and producing a massive sonority that sounded like many more than the 123 voices."  
Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9 'Ode to Joy'*, Julius Rudel, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 5/12/1984.

"The Schola Cantorum... obviously well-trained and in excellent form, responded very well to dynamic changes and produced clean and balanced climaxes that were very satisfying."  
Verdi's *Requiem*, Semyon Bychkov, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/2/1986.

"*Belshazzar's Feast*... is full of bombast, but is brilliantly orchestrated, and when given this kind of performance it is irresistibly exciting. Here director Swan got the best out of his powerhouse choir in a wonderfully detailed yet dramatically cohesive performance. In lyrical sections the line was rhythmically flexible and beautifully phrased."  
Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Thomas Swan, conductor, Buffalo News, Kenneth Young, 5/19/1986.

"The chorus was superbly prepared by its director, Thomas Swan, and the pianissimo attack on the *Aufersteh'n* entrance was thrilling in its hushed intensity, and the choral climaxes were good and solid, fully achieving the peaks that Bychkov had been aiming for from the opening downbeat."  
Mahler's *Symphony No. 2 'Resurrection'*, Semyon Bychkov, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/1/1987.

"The sound of the chorus was full, rich and balanced all evening, and in the expansive acoustical environment Swan was able to draw nuances of coloration from both chorus and orchestra that I have heard in no other performance."  
Brahms' *German Requiem*, Thomas Swan, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 5/3/1987.

"The VI movement gradually worked down to a pianissimo in the last five bars that had a breathless, timeless beauty. Those concluding measures were superbly controlled and sung. Swan had the choir very well prepared for this premiere and it acquitted itself splendidly."  
Argento's *Te Deum*, Thomas Swan, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/5/1988 (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commission and premiere).

"The detached fortissimo Amens at the close of the Credo section were absolutely thrilling because each had a chance to peal like a bell, hang tantalizingly in the air and die out before the next Amen surged forth."  
Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis, Op. 123*, Thomas Swan, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/13/1989.

"From the strong, layered choral entrances of the opening Kyrie right down to the rhythmic snap generated in hurling out the jubilant closing 'Osanna in excelsis' Swan's direction of both the chorus and orchestra consistently emphasized the work's impressive architecture and massive sonority. Each successive chorus seemed to find some larger dimension than the one preceding, and when the incomparable 'Qui tolis peccata mundi' was reached, the musicians seemed to reach a high point in both choral focus and gravity of utterance in this plaint of immense intensity."

Mozart's *Mass in C minor*, Thomas Swan, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 11/11/1991.

"The chorus was very well-prepared. Among the best evidences of this were the clean fugal development in the Kyrie, and near the end, the wonderfully clear melismatic lines spun out in the contrapuntal 'Cum sancto tuis'. The Schola was also long on fury and excitement in the 'Dies Irae' and at the opposite emotional extreme built up a very persuasive, progressively more mournful ambience in the 'Lacrymosa'."

Mozart's *Requiem*, Maximiano Valdes, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 8/9/1992 (Artpark).

"The chorus produced a very homogenous sound and sang with fine focus. Either a cappella or with the orchestra, the massed ensemble sounds were smooth enough to make Stravinsky's mild dissonances sound merely piquant, not at all jarring. The repeated incantation of 'Alleluia' in the final Psalm was sung with finely polished nuance..."  
Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Maximiano Valdes, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 3/27/1993.

"The most notable thing about the chorus, however, was its sonority. Director Thomas Swan did not have the sopranos, altos, tenors and basses grouped together in well-defined sections, but equally distributed in much smaller sub-groupings throughout the choir. The result was a wonderfully homogenous and superbly balanced choral sound. Choruses such as 'And He Shall Purify' and 'For Unto Us a Child is Born' leapt out with an exciting vitality and agility, plus a bright massed vocal sound."  
Handel's *Messiah*, Thomas Swan, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 12/4/1993 (BPO, Kleinhans).

“The opening ‘Requiem’ section was effectively a microcosm of the character of the entire performance about to unfold. Its initial moments were intoned with a palpable hushed reverence, both orchestra and chorus producing a thrilling, beautifully supported pianissimo. The excitingly churned out choral fugue on ‘Libera me’ and the subsequent quiet ending brought forth well-deserved cheers from a modest sized but enthusiastic audience.”

Verdi’s *Requiem*, Maximiano Valdes, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 12/11/1993.

“Musically, the season opened with Valdes conducting the orchestra and the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus in Verdi’s *Te Deum*, with fine balance in the hushed, a cappella opening for the men’s voices. The suspense was broken by a shatteringly precise attack and wall of sound hurled at us by the full forces.”

Verdi’s *Te Deum*, Maximiano Valdes, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 9/22/1996.

“The newly unveiled work by Bass ... was filled with the kinds of moments that make choral music fans smile.”

Randol Bass’ *Passage Into Spirit*, L. Brett Scott, conductor, Buffalo News, Garaud MacTaggart, 3/26/2007.

“The Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus sang with magnificent crispness, bite and full body.”

Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 4/29/2007.

“The chorus was nothing short of heavenly, showcasing the ethereal sopranos in ‘Silent Night’, its powerful, erotic basses in ‘We Three Kings’ and every voice in the chorus on ‘O Holy Night’.” BPO Holiday Pops, Robert Franz, conductor, Buffalo News, Anne Neville, 12/8/2007.

“The Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus was featured in four ecstatic selections, opening with ‘Call to the Champions’, written for the 2002 Winter Olympics. This is music of wildly summoning, challenging character, sung with precision and great force. The result was exciting...”

*A Salute to John Williams*, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 8/4/2008.

“The Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus...sang with fine balance and, in the predominantly mezzo forte dynamics, achieved impressive warmth and depth.”

Faure’s *Requiem*, Maximiano Valdes, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 11/6/2008.

“The Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus added depth and drama. It was amazing what dimension this huge ensemble added to the closing of ‘Old Man River’.”

*Salute to Jerome Kern*, Marvin Hamlisch, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 3/1/2009.

“The chorus treated *Ode to Joy* with power and finesse, with carefully shaped dynamics and fine moments of drama.”

Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 10/4/2009.

“The Philharmonic Chorus should be commended for its great job on ‘A Musicological Journey Through 12 Days of Christmas’. The ‘Hallelujah’ chorus had strength and presence.”

BPO Holiday Pops, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 12/19/2009.

The Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus sang with strong, crisp attacks and was at its best in the lovely pianissimo entrance of the opening chorus and in the two bravado fugal passages in the fourth and sixth sections.

Brahms’ *A German Requiem*, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 5/15/2010.

“The chorus sang well throughout, especially in the detached, accented attacks of this agitated text.”

Brahms’ *Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny), Leon Botstein, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 11/7/2010.

“The Philharmonic Chorus’ ever-growing skills are highlighted in a Robert Shaw medley that included the lovely French carol ‘Bring A Torch, Jeanette Isabella’. The concert ended with the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus rocking the house with ‘O Holy Night’ and the famous Christmas sing-along.”

BPO Holiday Pops, Matthew Kraemer, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 12/11/2010.

“The Philharmonic Chorus is to thank for the biggest thrills of the evening. The Honegger piece set the stage for the beginning of Bach’s festive ‘Christmas Oratorio’. You could actually see the melody as it moved from one part of the chorus to another. With the brass and booming timpani, it made you want to jump out of your skin.”

BPO Classical Christmas, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 12/19/2010.

“A big draw was the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus, decked out in red and black and raring to go. This massive ensemble has been polishing its act and its sound was chiseled and powerful.”

BPO Classical Christmas, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 12/19/2010.

“ ‘Unto Us a Child is Born’ put the chorus through its paces, and the chorus was up to the job. The neat staccatos – ‘and the government shall be upon his shou-ou-ou-oulders’ – and the fluttery, challenging melody lines showed the group’s clarity and articulation. The *Hallelujah Chorus* resounded and impressed.”

BPO Classical Christmas, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 12/19/2010.

“Twenty members of the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus gave the production their all. They created enough volume for an ensemble twice their size and always joined the action and added to the laughs.”

BPO *Funny Girl*, Matthew Kraemer, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 4/10/2011.

“Matthew Kraemer began the concert with his take on *America the Beautiful*. With the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus going full tilt and the orchestra surging, it was a thrill. A powerful but bittersweet *Battle Hymn of the Republic* spotlighted the subtlety and virtuosity of the Philharmonic Chorus.”

BPO Star Spangled Pops, Matthew Kraemer, conductor, Buffalo News, Mary Kunz Goldman, 5/28/2011.

“The opening ‘Requiem aeternam’ had a thrillingly hushed sense of anticipation, and was followed by a full-throated ‘Te decet hymnus’, which sent a chill down the spine. The chorus sang with exceptional responsiveness, a rich, ripe sound and a vibrant textural fullness.”

Verdi’s *Requiem*, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Buffalo News, Herman Trotter, 6/5/2011.

“The chorus also was completely engaged, twice delivering a very moving a capella choral prayer ‘Almighty Father’; it was a moment of shattering musical drama, perhaps the most moving thing Bernstein ever wrote.”

Bernstein’s *Mass*, Doreen Rao, conductor, Chautauquan Daily, John Chacona, Guest Reviewer, 7/25/2011.