



life

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The Community of Sound

THE LISMORAHAUN Singers are much more than a choir. For starters, the North Clare based group has reached higher and farther than any group of its size could ever have dreamed - selling out venues all over Ireland and Europe - including the National Concert Hall. They have also produced a number of genuine superstars - with the likes of Naomi O'Connell, Dean Power and Peter O'Donohue making a real impact for themselves on the stages of Europe and North America.

More than that though, the choir has become a community.

The Sunday night rehearsals are about much more than simple practice, it's the coming together of a new tribe, and the refilling of a the feelings of community and togetherness.

"I am always looking for new challenges, both for myself and for the group. And I'm not just talking about the calibre or difficulty of music that we are singing, it is what we actually feel as we are connected to each other [as singers]. Can that connection become more and more intense in the group? Can we come out of ourselves and somehow share some part of ourselves with each other and with the audience," says musical director, Archie Simpson.

"It's always been a forward movement and in that respect we are getting better. It doesn't mean that it is going to sound necessarily better but this shared contact with people becomes more and more special. Maybe this is something that increases as we grow a little older as well. It becomes more special - its about being part of a community.

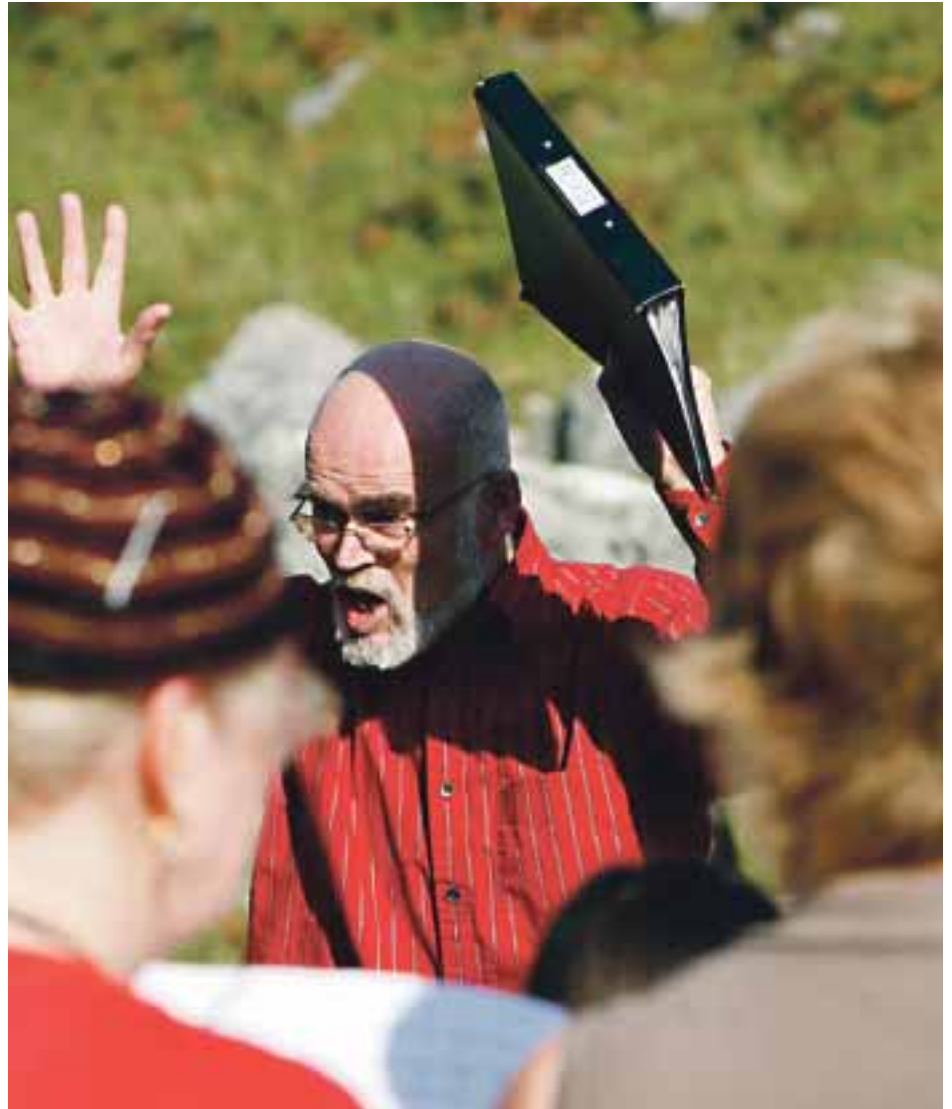
"I think when we meet as a choir that everyone feels that this is their night. I've said it to the choir many times, even though I love the public performances, our practices are the really important thing to me. It is a profoundly beneficial human experience where people can come away from the humdrum of the week, sit or stand and sing together, and go away feeling much better than they did when they came in. That alone, over the past 16 years of the choir, has been worth it."

The Lismorahaun Singers will host a two night Summer Concert Series in Kilfenora and in Ennis later this month. The concerts will feature some of the choirs former prodigies who have gone on to make names for themselves in the wider world of music. North Clare tenor Peter O'Donohue will perform in the Kilfenora concert only, while Doolin soprano Kate Daly and Ruth Kelly will also star, with Ronan De Burca on piano and organ.

"We will welcome back Peter O'Donohue for the Kilfenora concert. Just a couple of weeks ago Peter was one of the soloists with the RTE Concert Orchestra with their performance of Madam Butterfly in the National Concert Hall. So he is flying the flag for himself as a soloist nationally," continues Archie.

"Then we have Kate Daly and Ruth Kelly and a few new soloists who will be making their debut as soloists. These are people who are loved and appreciated by the community and they are coming back to sing in these concerts.

"We have people coming [to sing for the choir] from all over the coun-



There is something there that does keep people coming back. I am going to be 70 next year and I had been wondering about retiring and getting somebody else to take over, but I've decided that I will go on until I drop.



ty. People are coming over each week from Scariff in East Clare and from Kinvara and Loughrea. People travel from Ennis and from all over North Clare to be part of it. There is something there that does keep people coming back.

"I am going to be 70 next year and I had been wondering about retiring and getting somebody else to take over, but I've decided that I will go on until I drop.

"Having said that, it is important that the group will keep going even without me as the conductor. Whatever roll I have played, I hope that this group will continue on into the next generation. I think it come down to encouraging younger people from community to keep singing in whatever genre they want.

"We are looking for new members all the time. After this concert series we will close down for two months and come back in September. But we will come back with a bang in September with an event in St Nicholas' Church in Galway for National Suicide Day. A number of choirs will come together that day to highlight what is a growing problem in Ireland.

"In October we have a Danish choir, a major girls choir from Copenhagen, will be coming over to

join us in concert. So there is always something happening. We are an organisation which seem to attract like minded people from other countries and we have been able to travel by being part of this choir."

One of the central sections of the concert series will be the local debut of a piece by American composer, Morten Lauridsen. The piece, which is entitled 'O Magnum Mysterium' is one of the most popular recent compositions in choral music. The concert series will take place in St Fachnan's Church in Kilfenora on Tuesday, June 15 from 8pm and on Tuesday, June 21, from 8pm at St Columba's Church on Bindon Street in Ennis. All proceeds from the Kilfenora concert will benefit the 'Aid to Haiti Project' sponsored by local priest, Fr Ned Crosby.

Tickets are available from Mulqueen's Florist in Ennis, the Russell Gallery in New Quay, Jordan's Mace in Lisdoonvarna and from Howley's Shop, O'Gorman's Express Stop and the Post Office in Kilfenora. For more information, visit: www.lismorahaunsingers.com

Above: Archie Simpson conducts the Lismorahaun Singers in the middle of the Caher Valley. Yvonne Vaughan



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