

## Vokal Ensemble München



Founded in 1992, the Vokal Ensemble München consists of around 25 vocally trained singers between the ages of 25 and 50. The choir's repertoire encompasses all musical eras from the Renaissance to the present, although its focus is on the interpretation of Early Music from the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries.

So much for the basic facts. But what distinguishes this choir? What sets us apart? For starters, of course, our ambition to perform music at its best. In order to achieve this goal, the commitment of every individual is imperative, both musically and organizationally. In fact, all of the choir's achievements are a result of the members' voluntary commitment.

Another distinctive characteristic is that we regularly take on the challenges of performing in solo ensembles or double quartets. Such ventures range from single pieces

within a concert to complete concert programs rehearsed in supplementary rehearsals.

In a typical concert year, we prepare four main programs: Holy Week, Christmas, and two additional programs in the summer and fall, sometimes a cappella, sometimes with instrumental accompaniment. In addition to the weekly choir rehearsals, we have two rehearsal weekends a year, and every summer we retreat to the Plankstetten Monastery for several days of intensive rehearsing. Recent programs prepared at Plankstetten include the mass, "In Illo Tempore", by Claudio Monteverdi—which we subsequently performed both in Plankstetten and Munich in August 2010—and in 2012, Johannes Ockeghem's mass, "L'homme armé", also performed in Plankstetten, Neuburg an der Donau, and Munich, both programs to the general appeal of both audience and press.

The fact that we sing predominantly sacred music is only in part due to our conductor's profession—he is not only a conductor and musicologist, but also an evangelical pastor. Particularly in Early Music, it is often the sacred works that are among the most beautiful. For a good example, one must only think of J.S. Bach; the performance of his St. Matthew Passion

on Good Friday 2010 was one of the highlights of the Vokal Ensemble's history.

The choir's signature sound is most certainly benefitted by the minimal fluctuation of choir members. Those who have found their way to us generally remain for a long time. Most of us have been singing in the ensemble for several years; in fact, among the ranks are still a number of the founding members.

What makes people stay is not only the broad spectrum of works we perform, but also the chance to participate in national and international choral competitions (e.g. in Gorizia, Arezzo, and Tours, and first prize at the Bavarian Choral Competition in Regensburg in 2001, among others), record CDs (available are the St. John Passion by Schütz as well as a recording of works by the Munich court composer, Ludwig Daser), and take the occasional excursion into the world of theater (e.g. members of the Vokal Ensemble made up the opera chorus for a 2002 production of Stravinsky's "The Rake's Progress", and in 2010, we performed the melodrama "Electra" by Christian Cannabich).



For all the collaborative spirit, we are nonetheless—but not least—individualists. In this respect, our choral conductor, Martin Zöbeley, is not to be envied in his endeavors. How does one manage to guide 25 singers, each with their own individual backgrounds and beliefs about music, to form a unified sound? Of course, our ambition and our common goals unite us as we strive to sing each piece at its finest. But ultimately, the secret lies in our conductor's ability to arouse our enthusiasm; again and again, he inspires us to musical peaks.

