

It has been my good fortune to sing the great composers' music in places where they themselves lived and worked, but the experience of singing the music of a composer considered by many to be one of the best of this century, and singing his music *under his direction* surpassed the pleasure of all those previous concerts. I am writing in reference to the trip several choir members and I took to New York City to sing in Carnegie Hall with a chorus of approximately 250 singers under the direction of John Rutter. We sang his *Gloria!* and *Winchester Te Deum*, the latter being a premier performance for that work with orchestra, which was previously published for voices and organ. Friday, April 4, Ken Bruner, Kristi Click, Katie Beth Lane, Jane Ragsdale, Cheryl Smith and I joined the group of Schreiner choir members at 7:00 AM for the flight to New York. The first rehearsal with Mr. Rutter was four hours Saturday afternoon. We found him to be patient, yet insistent on getting the best out of our voices. His sense of humor was delightful—more than once he reminded us that, "I am very familiar with this music!" and when wrong notes were sung, chastised that section, saying, "I'm the composer here." One of his phrases that we liked was his asking for our "personal maximum" when he wanted a big sound from the choir. During the course of the rehearsals we were given breaks, and at these times, he graciously signed autographs, posed for photographs, and listened to our memories of his music. For example, Jane Ragsdale told him that his "For the Beauty of the Earth" was sung at her wedding more than 20 years ago!

Dress Rehearsal was Monday afternoon, and that was when we got our first look at Carnegie Hall from the stage. There is seating for 2800, and we were told the acoustics are some of the best in the world. We were also reminded of the glorious tradition of the hall, with the world's most celebrated artists having performed there. (Several of our group purchased memorabilia with old saw, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall? ---Practice, practice, practice!") The rehearsal was with orchestra, and I imagine most of the group felt gratified as I did that we did well. That evening excitement was almost tangible as we waited backstage until time to perform. I was pleased to see that the audience was large—some of us estimated more than 2000! The performance went well, and we received standing ovations for both pieces—even the orchestra complimented us!

Tuesday we started home, but were caught up in the American Airlines cancellations, and didn't get back until a day later than expected, and at this writing I still don't have my luggage, but I am still feeling exhilaration from the experience, and so grateful for the opportunity. Being with the Schreiner students was also a pleasure, and you should know that they will perform the *Te Deum* here in our sanctuary at their concert April 27 at 6:00 PM.

Sally Ritch

Director of Music