



### Amadeus Orchestra goes north for 18th

The Amadeus Orchestra will celebrate its 18th birthday this year in style, with a gala concert at the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester on 30 March. The concert will feature the first public performance of the choral and orchestral setting of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* by the late Alan Rawsthorne. Barlines spoke to the orchestra's founder and conductor Philip Mackenzie and discovered that the concert has been shaped by an extraordinary series of events.

Not least of these concerns the preparation of the orchestral parts. 'The work was originally commissioned by the BBC and first performed in a studio broadcast from Bristol in June 1940,' he said. 'That same evening, Rawsthorne's flat was bombed and the score and parts were completely destroyed. The Ida Carroll Trust has commissioned a re-orchestration by Edward Harper and they approached the Amadeus Orchestra to give it its first performance. The orchestra was naturally delighted to be offered such a chance and decided to programme it with another choral work that also gives the orchestra a chance to shine: Mahler's second symphony.' With the music fixed, the concert was originally scheduled for performance at the Royal Albert Hall, but at the last minute, says Mackenzie, they decided not to allow the performance – 'We booked it about two years before the concert date, and they were careful to say that they had only pencilled it in. When it came to the stage of issuing a contract, about a year later, they said they wouldn't allow it because they didn't think we would sell enough seats, despite a massive publicity budget for the concert acquired through various trusts. We had booked over 1,000 singers through several London-based choirs.'

Mackenzie, who has extensive links in the north-west decided to relocate to the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester as both Rawsthorne and the Amadeus Orchestra have strong links with the city. 'It is also,' says Mackenzie, 'a much better concert hall and quite a bit cheaper to hire! As luck would have it the chosen date was available and the hall quickly booked.' The choral forces have been scaled down to around 200, but the change has given Mackenzie chance to work with some old friends – participating choirs include the Manchester Bach Choir and the Burnley Municipal Choir, both of which he used to conduct.

Mackenzie has taken the changes in his stride – in the last 18 years the Amadeus Orchestra has made a fine art of mounting ambitious projects with limited rehearsal time, launching the careers of hundreds of orchestral musicians along the way – and is looking forward to conducting what he describes as 'a fantastic work'. 'I didn't know any of his music before,' he continued, 'but he [Rawsthorne] has definitely created his own sound-world, it is not really like anything else.'

The concert begins at 7.30. For tickets tel 0161 907 9000 or visit [www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)