

Email from Catherine Bott, 26th October 2011

Dear Laurence,

Pass it on asap - Isleworth Baroque has done it again! And in this splendid new venue, the simple but effective production used the space intelligently - I gather from a couple of orchestra members that you all found the acoustic rather dry, but I can assure you that it didn't come over like that. We got lots of dynamic contrast, good definition from the players and outstandingly clear diction of that lovely libretto from every single one of the singers.

It was good to see and hear some familiar faces and voices in the cast, all of whom seem to develop interpretatively and vocally with every show. The newer members did a great job too: every small solo was well-prepared and taken with confidence, and the principal roles were very well cast, rising to the challenges of all those ensemble numbers. You gave us all a very moving moment at the heart of the drama, when Solomon made sure the baby went to its rightful mother. I also very much enjoyed the hint of comedy in Samson's relationship with the Queen of Sheba, and the simple depiction of real affection between King and Queen.

I'd be patronising you (excuse the pun) if I said I didn't notice a few moments when confidence and synchronicity dipped momentarily, but take heart, if it happened to you, from the professional way you dealt with it: and rejoice that in Leslie Anne, you have a conductor whom you can trust with your musical lives. She knows the work better than even Handel ever did, I reckon, and has a wonderfully clear technique, so keep watching!

It's a great pleasure to see Isleworth Baroque grow in confidence and style: I'm so glad that Helena was able to come to the dress rehearsal, and I'm sure she was proud of you. You have immersed yourselves in a baroque masterpiece of a different kind to some of the works you've tackled before, and it'll stay in your hearts and minds.

Onwards and upwards to your 10th anniversary concert - I'm honoured to be your patron, and hope very much to be there (Laurence is going to keep in in the loop as to the date).

Best wishes for the rest of the run, Catherine