

Halley's Comment

Paul Halley's letter to the audience in the program notes for the King's at the Cathedral Series: "For All The Saints" concert featuring 'The Requiem' by Maurice Duruflé.

The Chapel Choir of the University of King's College with Ensemble Regale

Cathedral of All Saints, Halifax, Nova Scotia - Wednesday, November 3, 2010 - 7:30 pm

(In the Octave of All Saints)

Dear Friends,

Thank you for joining us for this, our second annual concert entitled "For All The Saints". This year's event differs from last year's in two important respects. First of all the CBC has honoured us by recording and broadcasting the concert. (Look for it on their upcoming programmes schedule.) Secondly, I am very happy that thanks to the generosity of many people, tonight's concert is free. My desire to have this be a free concert caused one of my colleagues at King's to make the observation that I must be either insane or a genius. Even my mother wouldn't go so far as to label me a genius, so I must be insane – or at the very least, slightly out of touch. I think this is a fair assessment. I find I am increasingly out of touch with the prevalent idea that you get what you pay for, as if we can somehow earn the things of quality in our lives.

Everything I value in my life has come to me freely, as a gift, including whatever ability I have to grasp that basic fact. In the Letter of James, the author writes, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." So we know the source of all giving and of all forgiving. It is in this knowledge that we celebrate the *Feast of All Saints* with a thank-offering of the finest food for our hearts and minds and souls and bodies that money can't buy. Charging admission to such a feast might appear churlish and even misguided. Does this seem idealistic? Of course it is. But are we to give up on the ideal, even if it comes at a price?

Thanks to the grateful hearts of our patrons and the willing work of the King's Advancement Office, we may be able to turn around the economist's adage that "there is no such thing as a free lunch" into the possibility that there is such a thing as a free banquet.

Of the many gifts I have received, the privilege of performing the music in this concert with the King's Chapel Choir and the musicians of *Ensemble Regale* figures prominently. These texts, and the way these masters have set them, speak to all manner of humanity, regardless of age or race and certainly income. For me this feast is made sacred by the presence this evening of so many guests joining with that greater company seeking Jerusalem where "the choir of saints have found the well-spring of life and door of paradise."

Yours,

Paul Halley