

## **NICS Press Release, Spring 2025**

**by Roger J. Goodman, Tenor, NICS**

### **A Valley First – The Epic Carmina Burana by Carl Orff**

North Island Choral Society (NICS) is proud to present Carl Orff's Carmina Burana in what we believe is its first ever performance in the Comox Valley. This will be a feast for the ears! A concert not to be missed.

Carl Orff is a 20<sup>th</sup> Century German composer of a wide range of music. He specialized in operas, choral works and innovative music education for children based on a strong focus on rhythm and use of percussion instruments. However, he remains best known for Carmina Burana a unique and beloved work still performed frequently today.

Carmina Burana is not a religious oratorio but rather a secular cantata. The text is derived from 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century medieval poems found in a Benedictine monastery in Bavaria, Germany in 1803. These poems were written by a group of young quasi-clerics, known as the Goliards. For them, revelry, mischievousness, and having a good time were all de rigueur.

Carl Orff chose to set 24 of these poems as a five part cantata. It begins and ends with its most recognized music, O Fortuna. In between are three other sections called Springtime, In the Tavern and Courtly Love. The lyrics and music celebrate earthly life, often raucous, joyful and loud. It is in three languages – medieval Latin, medieval Bavarian high German and occasional French: sometimes the languages are intertwined.

What makes the cantata remarkable is Orff's music. The music does not have complex harmonies but wonderful rhythms, repeated melodies, explosive percussion and at times breathtaking speed. It is the rhythms and speed that provide a major challenge to choral groups. Like his section "Springtime" Carmina Burana is a rite of passage. One's lifetime of choral singing is not complete without singing Orff's unique Carmina Burana.

To pull off this performance requires large music resources. Paul Colthorpe, our artistic director has assembled a large 62 voice NICS choir with our collaborative pianist, Julie Matthews. In addition, we have a 26 voice Comox Valley Children's and Youth Choirs (artistic director, Sophie Simard), and the largest orchestra we have ever assembled – 30 instrumentalists. We are pleased to have our excellent returning professional soloists, soprano Jennifer Rasor and our imposing bass-baritone Michael McKinnon. We also welcome for the first time with NICS, local young tenor Austin Diotte-Turner. To manage this mass of musicians we actually have to remove four rows of church pews at our performance venue! The more limited seating capacity will mean tickets will go fast.

Carmina Burana will be performed at St. George's United Church in Courtenay at 7:30pm on Friday April 4<sup>th</sup> and at 2pm on Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$10 for youth and are available online at [www.northislandchoral.ca](http://www.northislandchoral.ca).