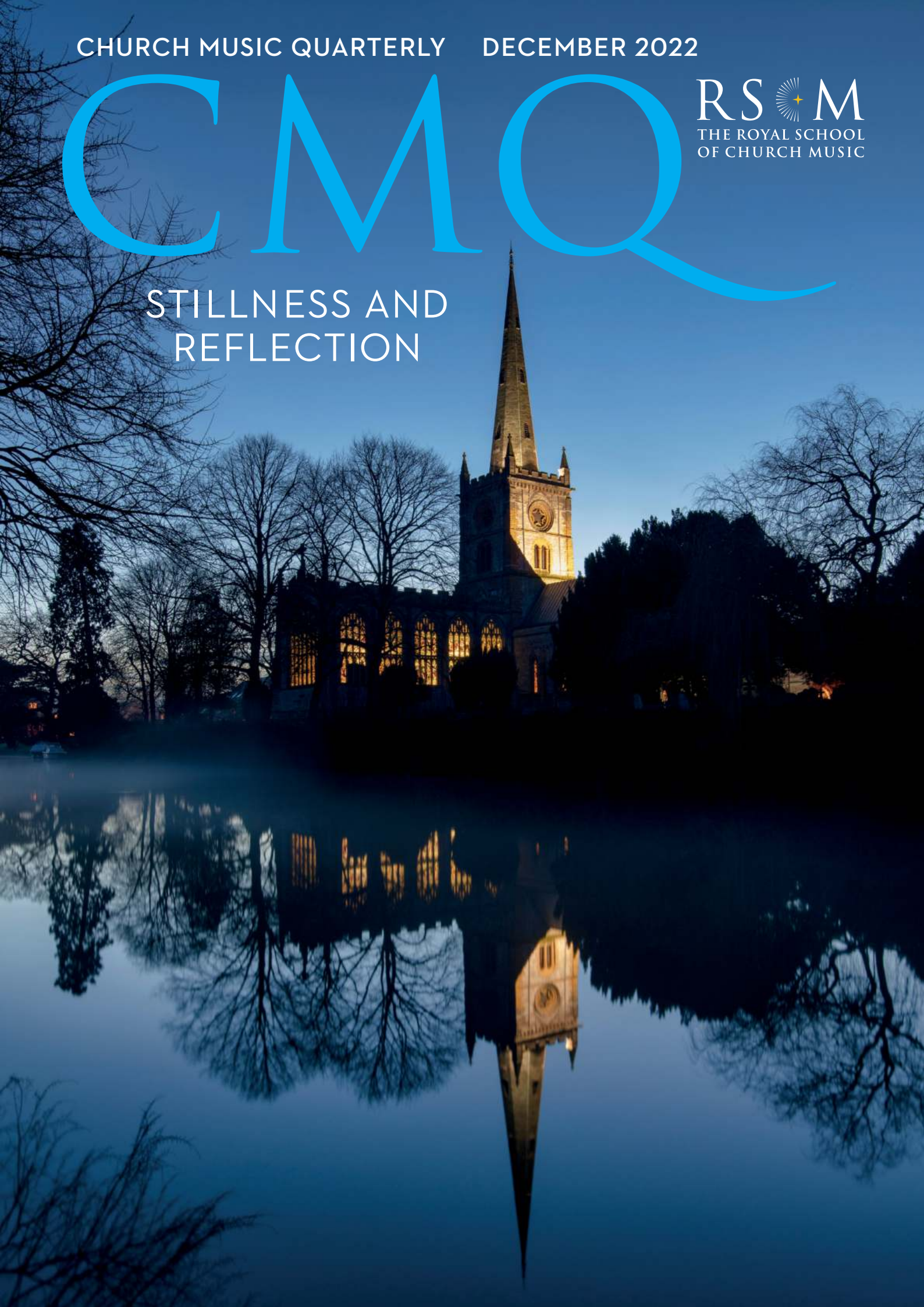


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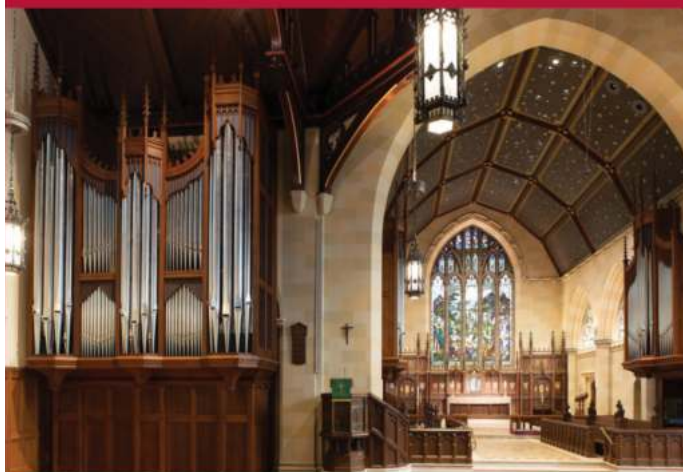
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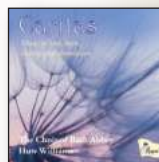
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Richard Peat was one of a handful of composers from across the world to be awarded a scholarship by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies to study with him at the Dartington International Summer School in 2008, he was selected again in 2021 to study with Nico Muhly. His first publicly performed work, *Tenebrae*, was premièred by the Britten Sinfonia at the Sounds New festival in 1997 while he was still at school. His music has been performed all over the world and broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

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WELCOME

All that we know about John Audelay comes from a single manuscript now held in the Bodleian Library. Audelay, who died about 1426, was a priest and a poet. At one point he was attached to the household of the wonderfully named Baron Strange of Knockin. He was also, at the time of compiling his manuscript, elderly, blind and infirm: referring to himself as 'Your broder Jon the Blynd Awdlay'. His manuscript is also the first known grouping of Christmas carols in the English language. Thoughtfully arranged by topic, the 25 carols form a devotional narrative that starts with articles of faith (including the seven deadly sins and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost) and moves through four other topics, including the genealogy of Christ's birth.

One of Audelay's works, *There is a flower*, may be familiar to readers through recent musical settings. Otherwise, his works are these days mostly forgotten – perhaps being too concerned with chastity and the lives of saints for 21st-century carollers. We must fast-forward to the 19th century for many of the Christmas favourites currently in use, including notable collections from William Sandys (1833) and the Revd Henry Bramley and John Stainer (1871–80). Then, half a century later, we have *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928), with music edited by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Vaughan Williams was keen that the publication contain as many English carols as possible. (The fact that Boris Ord failed to include English carols in his King's College services in later years was a sore point for Vaughan Williams, as his letter to Ord in 1946 makes plain.) Percy Dearmer, another of the editors, believed that carols were the music of 'the people', and that their growing popularity marked a break with the austere church music sung at Christmas prior to the 15th century. 'The carol', he wrote, 'was in fact a sign ... of the emancipation of the people from the old puritanism which had for so many centuries suppressed the dance and the drama, the communal singing.' Changes, from the 12th century onward, led to 'the writing of religious songs in the vernacular, as in the *Coventry Carol*, and also the gradual substitution of folk-song and dance tunes for the winding cadences of liturgical music'.

Many factors determined what was and was not included in the OBC, including what Dearmer described as the 'debatable land between the hymn and the carol', in which no man's land several 'Christmas hymns', including 'O come, all ye faithful', were abandoned. Dearmer's comments about carols being a part of 'dance and drama' point towards carols being more celebratory, involving more lively activity (wassailing or carolling), previously disapproved of and suppressed by 'puritan' forces. The etymology of the word 'carol' itself points back to singing and dancing for joy.

Despite the hardships many face this winter, we hope that your Christmas includes both carolling and joyfulness. And, in the words of one 'carol', rejected by the editors of the OBC, 'we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year'.



STEFAN PUTIGNY

CONTRIBUTORS



STUART BEER divides his time in retirement between composing, examining and, on occasion, conducting in Wells Cathedral. After a choral scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford, Stuart sang professionally in London before his appointment as director of music at Manchester Cathedral. His teaching career has included posts at Wells Cathedral School, Chetham's School of Music and Benenden School.



SIMON DIXON is a classically trained organist, pianist, conductor and worship leader. He trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and spent 20 years as organist and choir director at Holy Trinity Brompton, London. Simon was presented with the St Mellitus Medal for his contribution to worship in the Anglican church shortly before accepting the role as director of worship and music at The Falls Church Anglican, USA in 2010.



OLIVIA ETHERIDGE has been a chorister at St Andrew, Shifnal since 2011 and has served as deputy head and head chorister. She has recently been appointed as assistant director of music with particular responsibility for the recruitment of junior choristers aged 8 to 16 years, supporting them through their integration and development. Olivia is an active member of the PCC and currently holds the position of Deputy Standard Bearer for the Shifnal branch of the Royal British Legion.

RSCM STAFF MEMBERS CONTRIBUTORS
John Hall, Chair of Council
Hugh Morris, Director
Fiona Wright, Development Officer



GORDON GILES is Canon Chancellor of Rochester Cathedral. He has written various books on church music and hymnody published by BRF and SPCK and was on the editorial team of the latest *Ancient & Modern* and *The Revised English Hymnal*.



KATE KENNEDY is an award-winning writer and broadcaster on the subject of 20th-century British music and a professional cellist. A supernumerary fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford, she is also a regular presence on BBC Radio 3, and author of numerous books including *Dweller in Shadows: A Life of Ivor Gurney* (2021).



CHRIS THORPE has been a parish priest for 30 years, serving mostly in urban priority areas, but is now vicar of Shifnal, Sheriffhales and Tong. Chris works with the Teaching Community Ministry in the Diocese of Lichfield, and has been involved in writing liturgy with Canterbury Press. He is the author of numerous books including, most recently, *Ploughshares and First Fruits*.



ANNE TOMLINSON is a practical theologian by training and an Anglican deacon by calling. She oversees field education and reflective practice at the Scottish Episcopal Institute, the training agency for the Scottish Episcopal Church, where she also serves as Principal. Prior to assuming that role in 2014, she was ministry development officer for the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway.





HER LATE MAJESTY THE QUEEN

JOHN HALL

Towards the end of her life, it was clear that the Queen was not at all well. She had received one prime minister coming to the end of his responsibilities and another prime minister taking over responsibility. The Queen seemed frail but determined to do her duty. Two days later, sadly, her death was reported. The new King was present, as was the Princess Royal, and other members of the family would be arriving in Balmoral.

The Queen's life and her astonishingly long reign of 70 years are unsurpassed. She became Queen when she was in Kenya, where she and Prince Philip had a moment of peace and quiet before they were to move on to Australia and New Zealand. None of those developments in fact took place. The sad death of George VI made her duty clear. The Queen would return to the United Kingdom and, young though she was, would take responsibility for another 70 years of her duty and her commitment.

I now have the responsibility of chairing the work of the RSCM, and I find that the work the RSCM undertakes is richly important. The various parts of the United Kingdom all have connections with the RSCM, as do the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Kenya and many other places.

Although the heart of the work began here in England, when the organist of Westminster Abbey, Sir Sydney Nicholson, decided in 1927 that serious work needed to be undertaken for the sake of parish

church choirs, there is still a rich potential in many of the cathedrals and parish churches of England. As I see it, there are many parish church choirs that provide no more than a serious collection of adults. Often they will sing virtuously and deliberately and provide a strong lead for the church. However, I would love to see a further development with children's choirs alongside the adults. That was my own upbringing in a parish church, and it seemed to me that this was the best way. It will not always be easy to achieve. And there are many devoted organists and choir directors.

I was privileged to receive the Queen and other members of the Royal Family to Westminster Abbey on many occasions. Several times a year, the Queen would arrive with other members of her family. I would greet the Queen and Prince Philip as she left the car and talk briefly to her as she walked towards the great door at the west end of the Abbey. She would often have people to greet, but these were always special occasions. The Queen always offered a friendly smile. Every year, the Commonwealth Service engaged a rare mix of people. The Queen was prepared for the service and would take part with character and determination. They were great occasions.

Left: Young Princess Elizabeth (Later Queen Elizabeth II) in a 1946 studio portrait near the time of her 20th birthday. Alamy.

Above: Jacob King/PA Wire/PA Images.



IN ACTION CELEBRATION DAY 2022

Saturday, 8 October was a fabulous day in Winchester, which culminated in an inspiring service of evensong.

During the morning, just a few days before the 150th anniversary of Ralph Vaughan Williams's birth, Jeremy Summerly gave a fascinating lecture on his role in the creation of *The English Hymnal*. Jeremy explained how Percy Dearmer managed to persuade Vaughan Williams to be the music editor, and how some of the music from the EH found its way into Vaughan Williams's orchestral works.

The afternoon saw approximately 150 singers, from across the Area and beyond, rehearse in the cathedral under the masterful direction of director of music Andrew Lumsden, and accompanied by the sub-organist Josh Stephens. They were later joined by the cathedral choir. Several tourists commented on how wonderful it was to hear the singing as they walked around.

The focus of the day was our special service of evensong, which included the awarding of Honorary Awards to those able to join us on the day. We honoured those who have made contributions to the advancement of church music and to the work

of the RSCM, and all those involved in the provision of music in worship who work towards its future flourishing. To that end we were pleased to have some young choristers with us for the day, many of whom had not sung in such a setting or such a large group. From among this group, we were able to present one young chorister with her Gold award, and to reflect on the much wider group of choristers progressing through the *Voice for Life* awards scheme.

It was a day of joy, celebration, friendship and worship, enhanced by wonderful music.

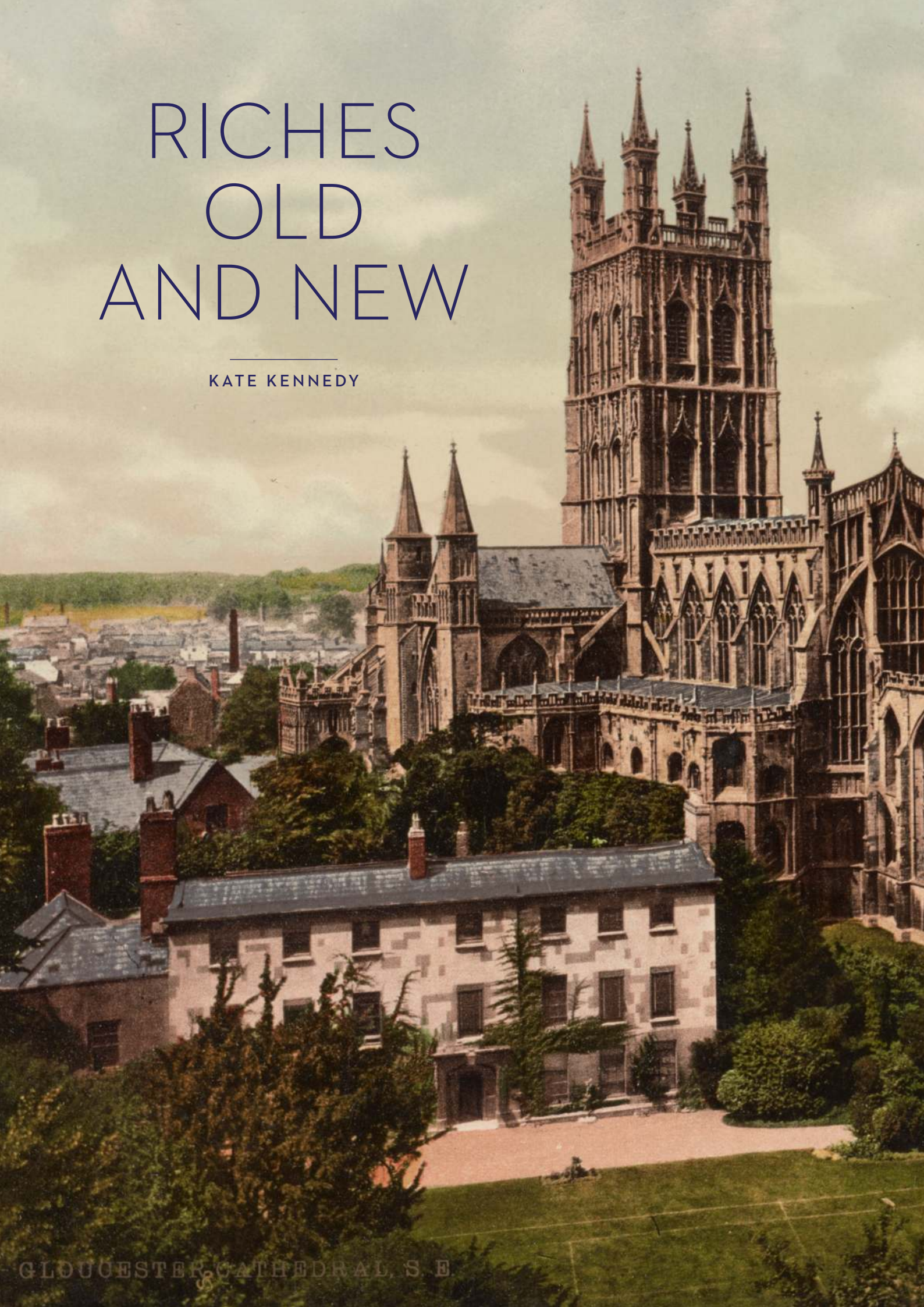
RSCM LECTURE

As part of the day, a lecture entitled *From Hedgerow to Pew: Vaughan Williams and the English Hymnal* took place in Winchester Cathedral's Wessex Centre. It was also live streamed. The paper was given by Jeremy Summerly and was very well received by all who attended.



RICHES OLD AND NEW

KATE KENNEDY





Let me begin with a little vignette. Let's imagine ourselves at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester in 1910. There are two pieces on the programme. One is Elgar's great religious choral work *The Dream of Gerontius*, written 10 years earlier, but before that is a wildcard – the premiere of a work written for the occasion by the young Ralph Vaughan Williams, a 'queer, mad work by an odd chap from Chelsea', as it had been described by the cathedral's rather truculent director of music. Sitting in the audience were two scrawny teenagers, better known to us now as the future composers Herbert Howells and Ivor Gurney. They had started off in church choirs, become choristers at the cathedral and were now assistant organ scholars. They were boys with very big ideas, from very humble backgrounds. What they heard in the cathedral that evening set them on a path to define and develop English music, and to rewrite the script. The land without music, as the Germans had enjoyed calling Victorian Britain, was to become a land bursting with it, and it was largely due to Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

Now let's look a little more closely at how the *Tallis Fantasia* was so ground-breaking. Vaughan Williams and Holst both knew that they were writing into something of a vacuum. Apart from Elgar, who was a bit ahead of them in age, there were practically no exciting British composers around. So what did they turn to if they didn't want to carry on copying Brahms, Strauss and Wagner? They turned to church music – the only thing that the British did really well. And so Vaughan Williams dug deep and drew on this unbroken tradition of excellence to offer a vision for the future of British music. His *Tallis Fantasia* takes its inspiration from Thomas Tallis's great theme, and shapes a new musical world around it, weaving the acoustics of a cathedral into the very fabric of the piece. It's a cathedral in sound, with one foot in the past and one in the future. And that's what was so exciting to Gurney and Howells. They left the cathedral (not before Howells had got Vaughan Williams's autograph), and walked the streets of Gloucester all night, talking about what they'd heard, and what their place was going to be in this strange new world.

I relate this little story as a parallel for what I see in the rich, long history of the RSCM. It is a venerable institution, and, like all venerable institutions, must avoid becoming mired in its own past. But what it offers is a harvesting of the riches and wisdom of that past, a creative and coherent approach to respecting

Left: A view of Gloucester Cathedral, c.1900. From *Views of the British Isles*, 1905, courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs division.



the old while making it fresh and new, building on it just as Vaughan Williams did with Tallis's great melody, and making church music not only relevant but inspiring for future generations of young musicians.

I've written and talked about 20th-century British music for many years now. But it's only when I look back at the composers who shaped it – Gurney, Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Howells, Parry, Stanford, even those who are less well known such as Dorothy Howell or William Denis Browne – that we find that all of them grew with their roots in church music making. They had church organists for fathers, sang in local church choirs, wrote their own hymn tunes and could number choral pieces among their first works. For them, church music was the first port of call to becoming great composers, and for many, their first contact with music. A good few of the names I just listed were not wealthy and didn't have access to great teaching in their early years. Without the start given to them by church music, we might never have had the composers such as Howells, for instance, who were to go on to make such an enormous contribution to its repertoire.



Anyone can join a church choir. And what other institutions are so widely available? Churches sit at the centre of villages and towns, with music free to all

Church music is not an antiquity, it is something living and breathing that has inspired generations for centuries. Unlike our instrumental music, the British church music tradition, a golden thread running from the Tudors onwards, is the envy of the world. What a responsibility and privilege for the RSCM to be today's custodians of that legacy! What will be their ways of making this ancient and great heritage fresh and new for the 21st century?

I had the privilege of being involved with the 30th anniversary concert of Salisbury Cathedral's girl choristers. As I talked to some of those girls, one of the things that struck me was the variety of their backgrounds. Some came from privilege, but many didn't. And it points to one fundamental thing: putting on a cassock is a great social leveller. And so is singing. For me to become an instrumentalist required a lot of support from trusts and grant-making bodies: instrument purchase, lessons, masterclasses, course fees. It's a middle-class occupation. Not so singing.

Above top: Ralph Vaughan Williams pictured c.1910. Courtesy of the Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust.

Above bottom: Photograph supposedly showing Herbert Brewer, organist at Gloucester Cathedral, at the 1910 Three Choirs Festival, pictured alongside Ivor Gurney and Herbert Howells.

Anyone can join a church choir. And what other institutions are so widely available? At a time when music is being edited out of the curriculum, churches sit at the centre of villages and towns, with music free to all. The boy or girl who attends their choirs learns to read music, to express themselves, to be part of a team. And they have fun.

When choirs were shut down during the pandemic, it quickly became clear that it wasn't just a hobby, just something you did in the evenings after a day at the office or on a Sunday morning. It was a way of connecting you to history, to others, and to something other. It was a way of expressing and channelling emotions, of being part of something bigger than the sum of its parts.

Of course, the churches themselves suffered from dwindling congregations during the pandemic, and it isn't just a problem limited to the effects of Covid-19. People are still more reluctant to leave their houses, and numbers haven't returned to what they were. There are many ways in which this is being addressed, but none, I'd argue, so powerful, or so central to the community, as the role that church music plays in bringing people in, involving them, and offering them something that can speak directly to their soul.

So what are some of the practical ways in which the RSCM is supporting church music? Firstly, there is the *Voice for Life* training scheme, designed to help people discover what their voice can do, and how to strengthen it. The scheme provides a framework for choral singers to develop their vocal skills, their musical understanding and their knowledge of repertoire. It comes with a range of teaching material and supporting resources, and gives advice on the practicalities of running a choir. Through Young Voices Festival services and guides to singing, it encourages children to learn about music and look at what it means to be a singer and a member of a choir. And it offers awards for reaching different levels of ability. Like the Associated Board exams, an RSCM medal is something to work towards, and gives you status and confidence. But it's hard to work towards gaining one if you don't have access to good teaching, so the RSCM is now launching a whole new digital platform to help children engage with music and understand what they're singing through digital media.

The RSCM has a new initiative, rather neatly known as *Hymnpact!*[®]. This is a scheme designed to help churches and schools connect in a virtuous circle. A pilot project with the diocese of St Albans is designed to show that better singing in schools can lead to more young people than in churches, leading to church growth. Music is woefully underfunded in schools and, as a result, generations are growing up without the music education that many of us took for granted at primary and secondary level. Recently, I was involved in bringing some singers and musicians to a school in an underprivileged area in Buckinghamshire, where many of the pupils had never heard live music. Some of the children cried when they heard the singing. These are the children who could be touched by choral music, inspired by it, but who attend a school that lacks resources.

In this context, how can we underestimate the role churches can play, from village church to the most exalted cathedral? At the centre of our communities, they are a hub of free, accessible music making, when in many other respects our access to music, both as part of our education and as adults, is often a postcode lottery. The RSCM is at the forefront of helping the church to recognize that music is the key to regrowth and continuing to engage its communities. But as with every great cause, there's never enough money. Looking back through its archives, we find that the school's founder, Sydney Nicholson, was delighted with its progress in the 1930s but, even back then, bemoaned the lack of funding. *Plus ça change*. This is a historic and important organization with the power to change lives, but it needs our help: as funders, as supporters and as advocates. If we support the RSCM in its efforts to encourage church music, we not only support music making, but help our churches to flourish.

Vaughan Williams's *Tallis Fantasia* and the RSCM show us what can be achieved when we celebrate the past and make it new, showing young musicians what the future could look like. What new composers will come as a result of the RSCM's work? And what riches will be brought into the lives of others who might not pursue a career in music, but for whom quality music making in church is a source of nourishment, community and inspiration?

Singing in church is in serious decline.

Help us in our work to secure the future of church music.

Donate via our website at: www.rscm.org.uk/support-us/annual-appeal

A portrait of Hugh Morris, a man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a textured, light-colored stone wall.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

HUGH MORRIS

The death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the RSCM's Royal Patron, left many of us in shock and cast a long shadow across the nation. It also united us. Huge audiences from across the globe watched the services on television. It is increasingly rare that church worship of any kind is so visible to the public, and while the worship displayed was at its most ceremonial, it nonetheless provided a moving demonstration of the power of worship, and indeed of the great power of music in worship. The RSCM's new strategic plan contains the primary mission statement: 'enabling the flourishing of church music'. We recognize, of course, that every church has its own approach to music making. The choirs of our great cathedrals are elite groups that perform at the highest level. We should celebrate and support them, but also recognize that there are countless church musicians outside of the cathedrals. Rather like Association football, the top flight players are highly visible, while the many other professional and amateur teams, of greater number and still of great value, perform weekly off the television screen.

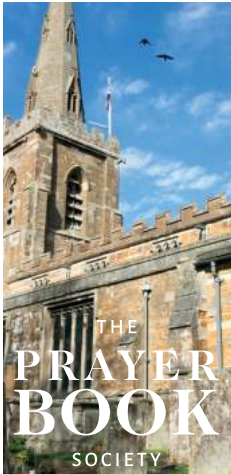
Christmas is another time when music in worship gains real prominence. Lots of people come to carol services and other Christmas-related events in our churches. And while we most easily associate Christmas with a traditional canon of carols, the music performed at Christmas time is not set

in stone. The RSCM publishes many wonderful new carols each year – and I would encourage you to visit www.rscmshop.com and listen to them. On 1 December we are holding a joint Christmas event with the Churches Conservation Trust, at which Zeb Soanes will narrate an illustrated exploration of the sounds of Christmas past, present and future. You can watch the event in person or online. Perhaps it will inspire you to think about how you can make the most of the outreach opportunities that Christmas presents.

In what seem at present to be endlessly dark and challenging days, taking that light and hope of the Gospel, not least through our music, is a positive challenge. The hymn 'We have a gospel to proclaim' (itself an invitation) includes the verse:

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem,
not in a royal house or hall
but in a stable dark and dim:
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

Whatever your resources, whatever the setting, and whoever the people are that come in through the doors of your church, let us all look to be ambitious in how we harness the power of music in worship, not only to advance the RSCM's mission, but that of the church itself, and of our very faith. Let us hang on to the light!



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MUSIC & LITURGICAL EDUCATION

ANNE TOMLINSON

‘You may be told by some of our elder brethren of whom we may speak as “successful in their ministry” that musical knowledge is not necessary, that they have gotten along without it, and that time spent over it is time wasted... I beg you not to regard the matter of education in Church music as of no importance, but to work at it earnestly.’¹

JAMES STEELE, 1894

The first activity on the timetable of any residential event at the Scottish Episcopal Institute (SEI), the agency for training Anglican ordinands and lay readers north of the border, is ‘singing practice’. The student group in charge of worship for the upcoming weekend teaches the hymns, chants and worship songs that will be sung during the 48-hour gathering. The more musically confident members of each group teach the tunes, often prefacing the rehearsal with vocal limbering-up exercises and accompanying the practice with instruments.

Placing the practice at the front end of every weekend’s schedule is a way of highlighting the centrality of music to the overall formational programme. As a staff team, we realized a few years ago that the assessed curriculum followed by our students afforded virtually no time to develop musical expertise. The Christian Worship modules taken by all our students do indeed seek to enable them ‘to develop basic skills in designing and leading elements of Christian worship’, with ‘music and song’ specifically listed in the module outlines offered by Common Awards; but this level of input over the three years felt somewhat minimal.

This awareness of the paucity of our offering chimed with Daniel Aleshire’s observation to the American Guild of Organists:

Education in sacred music, like every other area of study in theological education, competes for limited educational space in a crowded curriculum to prepare future pastors for needy churches. Theological schools have a limited involvement in the education of church musicians.²

Aleshire was reporting on a survey conducted among 251 schools affiliated to the Association of Theological Schools in the USA back in 2005, but a more recent survey across Catholic and Protestant theological colleges and seminaries in Toronto similarly concluded that ‘most seminaries provide an insufficient quantity and quality of music education’.³ As Anne Bagnall Yardley has commented in a study of teaching music in seminaries, music continues to live ‘in a rather uneasy relationship with theological education’.⁴

About the same time as staff at SEI were becoming aware of the lacuna in our provision, one of our students spent time on placement at Virginia

Theological Seminary. She returned full of admiration for the syllabus offered to candidates for ministry at that Anglican seminary regarding the history and practice of sacred music. Her enthusiasm galvanized us to think about what more we might offer within the constraints of time and budget.

INTERFACING THEOLOGY AND THE ARTS

It seemed to us important not to try to squeeze into the curriculum a few dedicated modules on a subject that only a handful of students might elect to study, but rather to offer a non-accredited course that all could experience when gathered for residential weekends. Since our students are part of a formational community for three years, an iterative cycle was developed, looking respectively at ‘liturgy and practice’, ‘liturgy and music’ and ‘liturgy and art’ over that time.

The first year’s syllabus covers such topics as voice production and breath control, posture, movement and manual actions; the third focuses just on how liturgy is enhanced by the interfacing of theology and the arts, ‘creating space for and communicat(ing) the divine’.⁵

The second year’s programme acquaints the students with church music from a range of traditions across the Scottish Episcopal Church. At each weekend, music practitioners from across the province – organists, clergy, worship leaders – are invited to come and share with the students the types of music they use in their church communities, teaching about how and why those choices are made, how they lead the assembly’s worship and how congregations are helped to grow musically. The sessions are participative, often held in the oratory belonging to the Redemptorist centre in which residentials are held, St Mary’s Monastery, Perth.

Staff invite as wide a range of musicians as possible, the span representing the breadth of worship traditions present in our province and thus of the student cohort itself. Equally important has been acknowledgement of the wide variety of contexts in which candidates will serve: from tiny rural churches lacking organ or keyboard, populated by a handful of worshippers, to cathedrals and other urban churches in which robed choirs support the congregational singing.

The three-year cycle is now in its second iteration, as we have been encouraged by student feedback to keep it going. Ministerial candidates have learnt from the clergy and organists from St Mary’s Cathedral, Glasgow and Holy Trinity, Stirling; from the leaders of worship bands at All Souls, Fife and St Paul’s and St George’s, Edinburgh; from members of the Wild

Opposite: Scottish Episcopal Institute students and staff at worship in the oratory at St Mary’s Monastery, Perth in Advent. Ordinands Laura Symon on keyboard and Janet Spence on recorder.



Above: Scottish Episcopal Institute students and staff at worship on the World Day of Prayer for Creation 2022, observing also the WCC's 'Thursdays in Black' dress code.

Goose Resource Group. An organist from a city centre charge in Edinburgh has spoken, crucially, about how best to nurture a good relationship between organist, choir and clergy. An Iona Community musician has taught us how to get a congregation singing lustily in unaccompanied four-part harmony, signing the notes with our hands in the manner affectionately termed by the students as 'doing a John Bell'.

In all of this we have been greatly helped by staff from the RSCM, to which, as an institute, we are now affiliated. One of the highlights of the annual residential programme has been candlelit plainsong compline, sung in the magnificent acoustic of the church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help adjacent to the Redemptorist college. On each occasion, staff from the RSCM have kindly led a training session on the art of plainsong before officiating at the service, and the evaluation of this component always scores highly in student feedback. RSCM staff have also been present at our orientation week, a six-day long programme of study and worship at the outset of each academic year, including two introductory sessions on music in a church context.

One student, commenting on the RSCM sessions at the 2021–22 orientation week, wrote:

These sessions were a real blessing, because music holds an important place in my faith practice. Music for me is a universal language and to be able to share the truth of the Gospel through this medium reaches people with faith and no faith, easily and effectively.

Our desire is to enable all our students to feel, if not fluent, then at least competent and confident in speaking this vital language, and to be able to work well with others in encouraging the assembly's song. For as Douglas Galbraith has written recently, 'the

presider prepares the ground in which the music is planted. Worship is the action of a community of persons and requires a person to hold it together.'⁶

There is, we know, much more that we should do, and indeed we are currently thinking about how students can best be prepared while on placement and in curacies for particular musical responsibilities: ensuring proficiency in singing matins and evensong, for example; in the case of vocational deacons, learning to sing the Exsultet; for those going on to priesthood, being taught the main Eucharistic settings used across the province. We continue to learn from the wisdom and experience of other theological institutes. In all these ongoing endeavours we are, in the Revd James Steele's words to a former generation of Anglican ordinands, quoted at the start of this article, endeavouring to 'respond earnestly' to a pressing need.

¹ James Steele, *The Importance of Musical Knowledge to the Priesthood of the Church*. Address on church music delivered to students of the General Theological Seminary (1894), 2.

² Daniel Aleshire, 'The role of music in the seminary. Where are we?' in *The American Organist* (July 2006), 102–107.

³ Sebastian Moreno, 'Music education for seminarians in Toronto's Christian theological colleges and seminaries', research paper, York University, Toronto 2020.

⁴ Anne Bagnall Yardley, 'Teaching music in the seminary', *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 6/3 (2003), 169.

See also John Harper, 'Renewing the past in the present: the living art of church music' in Stephen Darlington and Alan Kreider, eds., *Composing Music for Worship* (2003), 159.

⁵ George Corbett, 'TheoArtistry, and a Contemporary Perspective on Composing Sacred Choral Music' in *Religions*, 9/7 (2018), 17

⁶ Douglas Galbraith, *Assist Our Song. Music Ministries in the Local Church* (2021), 163, 166.



GROWING YOUNGER?

LETTING YOUNG PEOPLE LEAD

CHRIS THORPE

How old do you think the disciples were? So often in our stained glass windows they are pictured in midlife or old age, perhaps reflecting more about us than the people Jesus called to follow him. We have become an ageing, elderly church. The pandemic has accelerated that process for many churches, which now find themselves with fewer people and with even less energy. What will the future hold?

We have always had a strong choral tradition at St Andrew, Shifnal, with a good front row of children

who would be recruited when around eight years old and who would generally stay until they left for university. A regular progression through the *Voice for Life* levels gave children an incentive to practise and study, while visits to cathedrals and choir festivals gave them experience singing in larger gatherings. The choir was one of our most significant pieces of youth work, shaping lives in worship and Christian community.

After Covid, however, things look very different. Choir continued throughout the various lockdowns

GROWING YOUNGER?

on Zoom, and they recorded hymns and anthems for the online service. Yet we noticed that for three years we had no new joiners, and even though we can now practise and sing without restriction, the gap continues to make it more difficult to recruit. What is to be done?

Jesus trusted young people with the mission and ministry of God. If we do the same, perhaps we will see both the choir and the congregation growing younger

Jesus called disciples who were often younger people, perhaps from 16 to their late 20s. It was to these that he entrusted the mission and the ministry of God. They brought a very different kind of energy and outlook to this calling. In the church we hear little from this age group; they are not generally to be seen in worship and certainly not in leadership.

As a parish we decided to take seriously the challenge of allowing young people to help shape and guide our direction and priorities. At a church council level, we invited two 16-year-olds to join the PCC. In worship we created a lay team that included younger people in that key age group, so that their faces and voices would begin to show a different generation to

the world around us. This was especially significant through the online services. The effect has been notable and warmly welcomed both by the church congregations and by the wider community.

To rebuild the front row of the choir we decided to appoint Olivia Etheridge, a 20-year-old, as assistant director of music, giving her the challenge of reaching out to local schools and community groups to build relationships and encourage young people to try coming to a taster event and to choir practice. Initial contact with the schools has been positive and links have been developed with school choirs. It's not rocket science, but it is beginning to work.

Many parents are struggling to pay for music lessons at a time when the cost of living is spiralling, and there is less provision for music in cash-strapped schools. One of the advantages of the church choir is that we can offer free *Voice for Life* music training through a recognized progression of awards. We have had to recognize that patterns of family life have changed, and we have relaxed some of the expectations for regularity at practice and worship. Despite this we are beginning to grow as a choir and to attract new young choristers.

Jesus called and trusted young people with the mission and ministry of God. If we can have the confidence to do the same, perhaps we will see both the choir and the congregation growing younger!

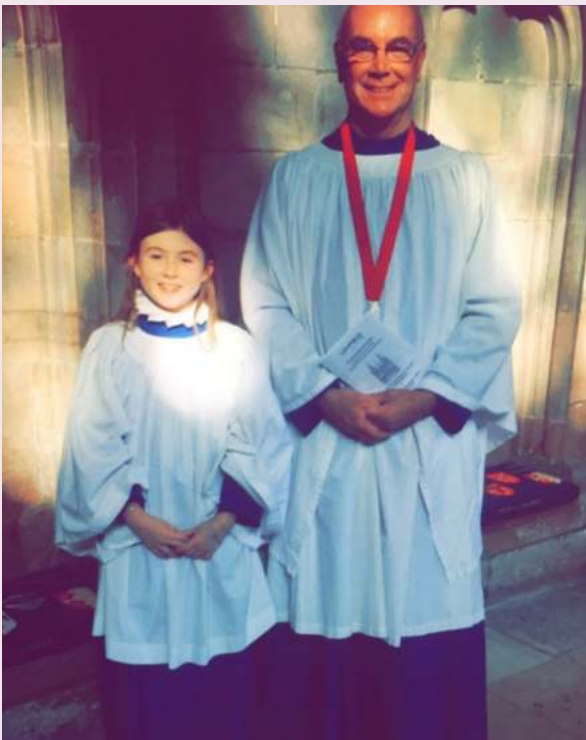
A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

OLIVIA ETHERIDGE

I unknowingly joined the choir when I was eight years old after my dad brought me along to a choir practice one Friday evening (no, really, I had no idea), but it has turned out to be one of the best decisions in my life so far, and for so many reasons. Shortly after joining I began the *Voice for Life* training, working towards my awards as well as undertaking the Bronze and Silver exams, and finishing with the Gold award when I was 16, despite a large lack of self-confidence. I also served for two years as deputy head chorister and a year as head chorister, learning a great deal in the process,

including how to be a good leader, and developing skills to communicate effectively with people of different ages, abilities and experience. Eleven years on, I'm now assistant director of music and I still enjoy the choir as much as I did when I first joined.

I was invited to join the PCC at the age of 16. I felt privileged to be asked, but I did find the prospect rather daunting. I knew that it involved the management of finances, building projects and general church management. I had heard that the decision-making process could be contentious and prolonged.



Above: Olivia Etheridge not long after she joined the choir.



Left: Olivia Etheridge with her Gold award.

I have adopted a very personal approach to recruiting youngsters to the choir, and have begun to visit the local schools as often as is practicable so I can join in with the music classes

I accepted the invitation with some trepidation. It took me a little while to understand the discussions taking place at the first few meetings, but within a short time I felt confident enough to make my own contributions. I have been able to voice opinions, bringing a younger perspective to the discussions when it comes to running our church and our church community. Over the past four years I have witnessed a lot of positive changes and we have coped well with the difficulties that were created by the pandemic. I am grateful that I have been given this opportunity: it has been a valuable and rewarding experience.

I confess to preferring the more traditional forms of worship. I recognize, however, the need for change if we are to attract and retain a new congregation alongside the current worshippers. I don't believe that this means leaving traditional forms of worship altogether: there are always compromises to be found. If something doesn't work, then we can try an alternative. There is no correct way to worship, and this will change and evolve with future generations. The important thing is that we do worship and that we find ways to make people of all ages feel welcome in our church.

When Covid required that all activities be done online, I was asked to join Revd Chris in leading the weekly school assemblies. These were recorded and sent out to the local schools for the children. I had not been involved in school assemblies before, but the children soon became familiar with my face. I am told

that when the restrictions eased, they would often ask if I would be at the next Messy Church so that they could meet me in person. This familiarity has proved extremely useful given my new role within the church. The children already know me, and they have also had the opportunity to learn a little of my life as a chorister. It is this foundation that I am keen to build on as I work with the schools, creating a firm connection with them, while encouraging and supporting their interest in the choir.

I have adopted a very personal approach to recruiting youngsters to the choir. I want to continue to develop a rapport with the local schoolchildren, their parents and the teaching staff so that they can get to know me better. I have begun to visit the local schools as often as is practicable so I can join in with the music classes. This will help me to identify those children who have an interest in singing.

Some schools are now starting to rebuild their own choirs and I hope to attend the practice sessions wherever I can. During these visits I will be able to talk informally about my own life as a chorister and discuss the many benefits that being part of the choir has brought to me. It will also give me the opportunity to chat to the teaching staff, who are ideally placed to suggest pupils who may be interested in becoming choristers. I will offer my help and ongoing support to any child who expresses an interest, helping them to join our church choir and to achieve their potential.

RSCM NEWS

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE UK

CELEBRITY COME AND SING IN PORTSMOUTH

RSCM Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight is becoming known for its celebrity Come and Sing workshops. Over the past six years we have invited John Rutter, Bob Chilcott and, most recently, Philip Stopford, who ran the day on Saturday, 17 September. We amassed a choir of about 100 singers, which included choristers from as far away as Shropshire, North Devon and Cornwall. Of course, most of the singers were from the home diocese, including the Isle of Wight and some members of the cathedral choirs in Portsmouth.

The music making started with Philip taking a choral rehearsal in the nave of Portsmouth Cathedral. The music for the day consisted of three pieces by Ralph Vaughan Williams (including *O clap your hands* and the *The Old Hundredth Psalm Tune*) and several pieces composed by Philip Stopford himself, the climax being a full performance of his recent mass *Missa Deus Nobiscum*. This was made even more exciting with the addition of instrumentalists, who arrived after lunch to add colour to the accompaniment. The brass, wind, string and percussion orchestra, which was made up of local professionals and pupils from Portsmouth Grammar School, sounded amazing in the acoustic of the cathedral. The day ended with an informal concert at 5pm, at which we were pleased to have an audience that was nearly as large as the choir.

Thanks to Philip, who was an energetic and amusing conductor; David Price, who was key in promoting the event and putting the singers and orchestra together; and Gareth Hemmings from Portsmouth Grammar School, who brought along several players, played himself, and even provided his son, Noah, to sing an excellent treble solo and to play the double bass. Thanks also to the Cathedral Choir Association for providing tea, biscuits and an excellent ploughman's lunch and soup. I even had the pleasure of accompanying the morning rehearsal myself on the cathedral's grand piano. All went home thoroughly happy, having taken part in this RSCM event.

I wonder who we'll invite to lead us next time?

Peter Gould



ANGELA HAMILTON

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Angela Hamilton, who has been the RSCM Marketing Officer since 2017. Ange has been a wonderful colleague and has worked tirelessly to promote the RSCM. Her cheerfulness and sense of good humour will be much missed around the office. We wish her every success for the future.

Below: Singers and instrumentalists performing in Portsmouth under the guidance of Philip Stopford.



PILGRIMAGE OF WORSHIP AND SONG

Early in August, a group of 16 RSCM members spent an energetic and enjoyable day in the company of the Revd Helen Bent, associate priest in the Walgrave benefice, exploring the history, architecture and scenery surrounding the four parishes of the benefice: Hannington, Walgrave, Old and Scaldwell. All the churches have monastic roots in their history: in Hannington, for instance, attention was given to the row of central nave pillars, thought to have separated the worshipping nuns and monks in early medieval times.

We walked and talked between churches, largely using country footpaths (and climbing stiles!). The first footpath walk from Hannington to Walgrave was especially picturesque. The local RSCM Area organized the day and introduced the music, using sections of the RSCM resource *To be a pilgrim*.

During our initial time of worship at Hannington, we sang John Bunyan's famous pilgrim hymn. At our further stops, after an introductory talk and some rehearsal, we sang other traditional 'pilgrim' hymns as well as songs and spirituals (including 'I want Jesus to walk with me', 'Jesus walked this lonesome valley' and *10,000 Reasons*) and finishing with the ubiquitous *Sizohamba naye*.

We took our own packed lunches but were tremendously grateful to the many local volunteers who joined us and organized refreshments at all our church stops along the way! There was an enthusiastic consensus for another pilgrimage next summer, along the same lines, exploring churches in a different deanery. We now await suggestions, with some detailed plans to follow.

John Wardle



Above and left: RSCM pilgrims exploring the Walgrave benefice with the Revd Helen Bent.

THAMES VALLEY AREA FESTIVAL

After several difficult years for church choirs, it was a joyful experience to be able to gather in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford on Saturday, 24 September for the first big choral event in our local Area since 2019. Over 100 singers from RSCM choirs around the Oxford diocese and beyond squeezed into the north transept of the cathedral for a rehearsal, first on their own, but later joined by both the cathedral choir and Frideswide Voices. Steven Grahl and Helen Smee conducted different parts of the rehearsal and service, and both were brilliant at encouraging and enthusing the singers. As a result, a good sound was produced from the start.

Any initial concern over the rather complex anthem (*For lo, I raise up* by Stanford) was quickly dispelled, especially once the cathedral choirs joined us and added an extra dimension to the sound. We all marvelled at the brilliance of Simon Hogan, the organist, coping with the myriad of notes in the anthem, and his wonderful support for the Stanford canticles, the much gentler introit (*Listen, sweet dove* by Grayston Ives) and the Walford Davies setting of Psalm 23. A good congregation lent their voices to the two hymns, which really raised the roof and all our spirits. Two young singers (from St Helen, Abingdon and All Saints, Rotherfield Peppard) read the lessons and both were excellent. It was another positive sign to see over 20 junior choristers in attendance.

A further sign of renewed interest in choral singing was the presentation of RSCM Bronze, Silver and Gold awards to 13 girls from Frideswide Voices and three from St Helen, Abingdon. We intend to hold examination sessions in 2023 for those choristers currently preparing for these awards.

We hope that this event will provide a much-needed springboard for more gatherings in the future – certainly many people said they looked forward to whatever we arrange for 2023. So far there are plans in place for the annual Epiphany Festival at Christ Church, Oxford with Steven Grahl (Saturday, 14 January), a Come and Sing of Stainer's *Crucifixion* at Merton College, Oxford with Ben Nicholas (Sunday, 26 March), the three-day non-residential course for young choristers with Hugh Morris in Exeter and Lincoln Colleges, Oxford (11–13 April – see the next column for details) and the annual Area festival at St Helen, Abingdon with Mark Williams (Saturday, 30 September). Please check the RSCM website for further details of all these events.

Janet Low

GET IN TOUCH!

You can send us your news, keep us up to date with what is going on in your church, or get involved in the work of the RSCM by subscribing to our social media feeds.

www.facebook.com/rscmcentre

www.twitter.com/RSCMCentre

www.instagram.com/rscmcentre

www.youtube.com/user/rscmcentre

AN OXFORD NON-RESIDENTIAL COURSE

A non-residential course will be held in Exeter and Lincoln Colleges, Oxford between 11 and 13 April 2023, with a final service to be sung in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. It will be a fantastic opportunity to sing choral music under the leadership of the director of the RSCM, Hugh Morris. The course is open to all choristers between the ages of 9 and 18 and costs £100. Please contact Sue Scott and Alexander Scott at rscmthamesvalleythreedaycourse@gmail.com, or phone 07779 855615 or 07896 851317.

ENDING ON A HIGH

St Oswald church choir, Malpas, Cheshire ended the summer term on a real high, singing evensong in the Lady Chapel of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral on Sunday, 31 July. The opening motet was *If ye love me* by Thomas Tallis, the canticles were sung to the setting in C by Charles Villiers Stanford and the anthem was *Bogoroditse Devo* by Sergei Rachmaninov. The organist was Henry Smith, junior organ scholar at Royal Holloway, University of London and the choir was conducted by director of music, Stewart Smith.

The choir sings the Sunday Communion service at St Oswald every week and choral evensongs in the summer months. Additionally, the choir gives concerts in church and sings elsewhere. Traditionally, we hold an annual service at Chester Cathedral and, before Covid, sang evensong in Hereford Cathedral.

Eleven years ago the choir was very small, but has gradually increased in size. Consequently, it has built a broad repertoire of music that ranges from the Renaissance to the 21st century. Singers are not auditioned but are expected to have basic music theory. Singers of all ages are made most welcome.

Stewart Smith

COME AND JOIN THE FESTIVAL IN WORCESTER

It's good to confirm that there will be an RSCM festival in the nave of Worcester Cathedral this year. Singers will be warmly welcomed to join forces with the cathedral choir for evensong, directed by Samuel Hudson (director of music at Worcester Cathedral) on Saturday, 19 November 2022 at 5.30pm. There will be no charge for music or to participate, because we want to encourage as many people as possible to come along. We hope that singers will want to donate to the RSCM as they leave the building. Details can be obtained from the Worcester secretary, Alexis Hutchinson, at adh.4ban@googlemail.com

Paul Trepte



Above: Young people singing their hearts out in Newark.

A CHURCH FILLED WITH SOUND IN SOUTHWELL & NOTTS

On Sunday, 25 September, the church of St Mary Magdalene, Newark hosted a workshop for young singers from the Southwell & Notts Area. As well as choristers from the host church, there was a group from Nottingham Cathedral and the new children's choir from St Mary, Nottingham. In addition, there were children experiencing singing in a church choir for the first time, as well as those who have sung with the local Singing Squad. The afternoon was led by local professional singer (and member of the Area Team), Ruth Massey, with the church's own director of music (and Area Team Leader), Stephen Bullamore, at the piano.

Stephen commented, 'It was amazing to have the church filled with sound from this talented and hard-working group of young people. They sang their hearts out.' The workshop concluded with a short service, in which the assembled group sang, among other things, *O sing unto the Lord* by Noel Rawsthorne and *A Clare Benediction* by John Rutter.

Both St Mary, Nottingham and St Mary Magdalene, Newark have recently received grants from the Cathedral Music Trust, enabling them to expand their work with young people. They are grateful to the RSCM for the role that it has played in facilitating these Church Choir Awards and the support offered through the new digital *Voice for Life* programme.

Congratulations to Elora and Thomas of St Mary Magdalene, Newark, who have recently gained their RSCM Gold awards!

RSCM Southwell & Notts Area

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOUR DETAILS CHANGE

If you are an RSCM affiliated contact or member and you have recently changed your address, email address or phone number, please inform our membership department by email at membership@rscm.com, by phone on 01722 424848 or by filling in the online form at www.rscm.org.uk/memberscontactinfo. Please also let us know if a new person has replaced a former correspondent.

CONGRATULATIONS



Above: Alma Hellens (left) and Francesca Brooke proudly wearing their Light Blue ribbons.

A GROWING, RIBBON-WINNING CHOIR

Following the pandemic, we restarted the children's choir at St Stephen, South Dulwich in September 2021 with just one chorister. One year later, we now have 20 choristers who attend a weekly evening rehearsal directed by our chorister tutor Caroline Lenton-Ward and accompanied by our director of music Oliver Lallemand. They sing every Sunday with the adult choir and perform an anthem on their own each week. We have encouraged them all to participate in the *Voice for Life* scheme, and on 18 September 2021 we presented our first two Light Blue ribbons. The children enjoy the workbooks, and there is now a race to be the next ribbon wearer!

Caroline Lenton-Ward

65 YEARS OF SERVICE

Christine Wells celebrated 65 years of service to the Hambleden Valley Group earlier this year. She was first appointed as organist and choir mistress in 1957 and was paid £100 per year. In 2013 she received a British Empire Medal for services to music and the community of Hambleden.

In May 2022, we celebrated with a special evensong that included a citation, gifts and special messages. Dr June Williams, of the Guild of Church Musicians, said in her citation:

The remarkable achievement of Christine Wells and her lifetime of service to this parish is almost without parallel ... Christine studied at the Royal Academy of Music ... has the Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists, the Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music and is an Associate of the Royal College of Music. She also has a degree of Bachelor of Music from the University of Durham.

Academically, Christine is as well qualified as most cathedral organists. You have heard of her remarkable achievements locally and the way in which she has enriched this parish, both musically, culturally and, indeed, financially. This is an exceptional achievement and there are few that can match this.

Christine was then presented with a Guild of Church Musicians Certificate of Long Service, which was described by Dr Williams as being 'justly and hugely deserved'.

Christine continues to play at least once per Sunday, every Sunday, and has played at over 20 weddings and several funerals and baptisms this year. Christine has also arranged for a full Advent and Christmas schedule of carol services.

Bless you Christine!

The Revd Sue Lepp



Above: From left to right, the Revd Sue Lepp, Christine Wells, who celebrated 65 years of service in May, Dr June Williams and the Revd Sue Morton.



Above: Two new choristers, Lily Oliver (left) and Victoria Gabathuler (right), being presented with their surplices at St Helen, Abingdon.

HUGH MORRIS RETURNS TO ABINGDON

RSCM director, Hugh Morris, marked RSCM International Chorister Day on 9 October by presenting two new choristers with their surplices at the parish church of St Helen, Abingdon. This was the church at which Hugh first played the organ nearly 30 years ago, and he was pleased to do so again for this particular Sunday morning. His parents are still active worshippers and church community members. Director of music Peter Foster conducted the choir and the anthem was Richard Lloyd's lovely *View me, Lord*.

50 YEARS OF TUTELAGE

On Sunday, 25 September, we celebrated Professor Berkeley Hill's 50 years as organist and choirmaster at St Leonard, Hythe. Many past choristers attended. I was myself of the 1974 vintage – one of the earlier ones – and many of my contemporaries were there.

A significant percentage of those who have been through Berkeley's tutelage still sing (and numerous organ scholars still play). A few of us now lead church choirs ourselves or have gone on to sing in cathedral choirs.

Berkeley is an incredible man: Emeritus Professor of Policy Analysis at Imperial College, he has also had many other music leadership roles in the past.

The impact Berkeley has had on our lives goes far further than music alone. Our lives have been enriched through being in the choir community and through having commitment, discipline, teamwork and fun instilled in us throughout our time in the choir. Personally, I do not think anyone outside my family has had such a profound and positive impact on my life as 'Doc' (as he is known).

Robert Milner



Above: Professor Berkeley Hill celebrating 50 years as organist and choirmaster, pictured in the middle of the second row wearing the organist's surplice.

OVER 30 YEARS OF SERVICE IN NEW ZEALAND

Members of Waikato RSCM choirs joined the cathedral choir for a celebratory evensong on Sunday, 24 July. The choir of 40 was enthusiastically directed by St Peter's director of music, Rachael Griffiths-Hughes, with organ accompaniment provided by Anne Cleaver. A highlight of the service was the New Zealand premiere of the introit *Lighten our Darkness*, a setting of the third collect for evening prayer by contemporary English composer Edward Marsh.

The psalm of the day was the appropriately joyful Psalm 47, 'O clap your hands together all ye people: O sing unto God with the voice of melody', to a chant by 18th-century organist and composer Thomas Sanders Dupuis. The well-known Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in B flat by Charles Villiers Stanford were sung after the readings.

Following the sermon preached by local RSCM chaplain, the Venerable Andrew Evans, a special presentation was made. Paul Ellis, President of RSCM New Zealand, had travelled from Christchurch to present the award of Associate of the Royal School of Church Music (ARSCM) to David Brookes, currently chairman of the RSCM Waikato branch. This is in recognition of more than 30 years of outstanding service to the RSCM in New Zealand. As Auckland branch chairman for 18 years, David organized many musical events, workshops and choir schools before retiring to the Waikato where he is now sharing his enthusiasm for sacred music.

The choir's anthem was the beautiful *Evening Hymn* by Henry Balfour Gardiner. The final hymn and postlude, *Now thank we all our God* (J.S. Bach, arranged by Virgil Fox) were played by David Brookes. Clergy, choir and congregation then proceeded to the cathedral lounge where a sumptuous supper was served and further congratulatory speeches made. David Brookes mentioned musicians who had inspired him on his journey, including the legendary Professor Peter Godfrey and all those who had attended various events organized by him over many years. Those present followed the words of the psalm, clapping hands and singing with the voice of melody.

Roz Robinson



Above: David Brookes at the console, and being presented with his ARSCM by Paul Ellis, President RSCM New Zealand.



Above: Ray Harbourne, who has sung tenor at St Martin, Worcester for 40 years.

A REMARKABLE MILESTONE

The choir of St Martin, London Road, Worcester, recently calculated the years of service of its longest-serving choristers, following the example set by former organist Trevor Tipple MBE, who totalled 42 years. Ray Harbourne has sung tenor here for 40 years. We congratulate him on this milestone. During lockdown, he was one of the choir members who contributed recordings to the virtual choir.

The long-serving choristers of the future must start somewhere, and the church is in the second year of its primary school-age singing programme called 'Tunes and Chips'. The children's choir helps lead the crib service and harvest festival, and hopes to take on more as they grow in confidence and numbers.

John Swindells

RSCM VALIDATED SINGING AWARDS

VOICE FOR LIFE SINGING AWARDS

These results are listed alphabetically under RSCM Regions, Areas and Countries.

(F) = RSCM Friend

(IM) = Individual Member

(S) = Student member, if candidate's choir not affiliated.

★★ Highly commended: 130+/150

★ Commended: 120+/150

GOLD AWARD

Derbyshire: Ella Brown*, Grace Hindle** (Derby Cathedral).

Lincoln: Job Schofield (Grantham, St Wulfram).

Southwell & Notts: Elora Brailsford*, Thomas Li** (Newark, St Mary Magdalene).

SILVER STANDARD

Bristol & Swindon: Leo Borgnana** (Redcliffe, St Mary).

Derbyshire: Thomas Hygate, Lily Simpson (Derby Cathedral).

Gloucestershire: Tia McBain** (Lechlade, St Lawrence).

Guildford: Sasha Dow** (Farnham, St Thomas-on-the-Bourne), Theo Carraretto**, Arthur Ford**, Molly Jopson, James Kelynack**, Alex Pop**, Lulu Skilbeck**, Bella Strange* (Guildford Cathedral).

Leeds: Edwin Field (Halifax Minster), Dexter Bevan*, George Scott, Joseph Shepherd, William Swap* (Wakefield Cathedral).

Lincoln: Daniel Gardner*, Grace Knight, Rose Tomlinson*, Alice Waller (Grantham, St Wulfram).

Southwark & E Surrey: Marcello Boldrini-Diamond**, Gabriel Harper**, Keeran Jithendra**, Harry Jones*, Milo Lennon**, Henry White* (Wimbledon, Kings College School).

Thames Valley: Flo Bocci* (Oxford, Christ Church Cathedral).

BRONZE STANDARD

Bristol & Swindon: Benjamin Alsop (Redcliffe, St Mary).

Derbyshire: Rhian Archer-Dyer, Flynn Martins Bradbury, William Outhwaite, Jessica Stokes-Barrett*, William Whitehall** (Derby Cathedral).

Essex & E London: Angelo Caicedo (Chingford PC).

Guildford: Jake Anthony (Farnham, St Thomas-on-the-Bourne), Ethan Song** (Guildford Cathedral).

Leeds: Sara Daniel*, Thomas Mitchell (Baildon, St John), Michael Nzeribe*, Rhys Smouse*, Maria Vasilache*, Frieda Wellesley-Smith**, Martha Woodhead (Bradford Cathedral), Franklin Hill, Richard Hill, Brogan Murphy, Konstanty Nowak, Emma Powell**, Harvey Shelley (North Elmsall, St Margaret), Freddie Scott (Wakefield Cathedral).

Lincoln: Allara Campbell*, Grace Ezeilo, Philippa Flecter, Eliyana James**, Iona Williams* (Grantham, St Wulfram).

London: Ali Haghi* (Finchley, St Mary-at-Finchley).

SE Wales: Nia Maunder* (Maindee, St John).

Southwark & E Surrey: William Brice**, Joshua Peacock* (Cheam, St Dunstan), Emma Joyce (Plumstead Common, SS Mark w Margaret), Daniel John**, Harry O'Hare** (Wimbledon, Kings College School).

St Albans: Amelia Reeves (Gt Berkhamsted, St Peter).

Thames Valley: Ada Baker*, Rahel Dwan**, Elizabeth Hannington**, Aoife Hogan*, Kate Liu**, Romola Payne* (Oxford, Christ Church Cathedral).

INSTRUMENTAL AWARDS

Alistair Timmis, Leeds (Organ III, Distinction).



POETRY HEARD AFRESH IN MUSIC COMPOSING AN ANTHEM

STUART BEER

It has been a joy to find that seeds sown in my youth have grown afresh in my retirement. As an undergraduate, it was my great privilege to meet each week with Bernard Rose, submitting my harmony and counterpoint for his scrutiny, often with some trepidation. He instilled in me a lifelong love of counterpoint, canon and fugue as we studied the giants of the Renaissance and the Baroque. And then, as a young tenor, I encountered the writing of Benjamin Britten. Working on his scores, especially his *Holy Sonnets of John Donne*, instilled a regard for the metaphysical poets and convinced me that great poetry could be heard afresh in music.

In my working life, I always scribbled music for my choirs, often out of necessity and urgency, but

rarely with real satisfaction. In my retirement, I have been afforded time for more serious composition and, as friends and colleagues have asked and encouraged me, it has been a privilege to write for several choirs, especially the cathedral choir here in Wells.

In October 2020, I was pleased to be asked by the RSCM to compose an anthem for St Oswald in Ashbourne. Due to the pandemic, my contact with the choir and Michael Halls, their director of music, was necessarily limited. Yet Michael and I soon agreed on something penitential, perhaps Lenten, but still able to be used more widely. Our final choice was John Donne's *A Hymn to God the Father*, not least for its accessibility and for Donne's glorious punning on his own name: 'When thou hast done, thou hast not done, For I have more.'

A Hymn to God the Father

Words: John Donne

Music: Stuart Beer

$\text{♩} = 78$
With some freedom

Sw. *mp*

16' (+ Sw.)

8

p Wilt thou for - give that sin where I be -
p Wilt thou for - give that sin where I be -
p Wilt thou for - give that sin where I be -
p Wilt thou for - give that sin where I be -

© 2022 The Royal School of Church Music, 19 The Close, Salisbury, SP1 2EB.

Above: A Hymn to God the Father by Stuart Beer.



Above: Portrait of a young John Donne (1572-1631), aged just 18, based on a lost miniature and taken from the frontispiece to his posthumously published *Poems* (1635).

No matter how challenging a project may be, I hope to find a modern voice, but rooted in that youthful love of harmony and counterpoint

MUSICAL PATHWAYS

For me, composing always starts with thinking time spent away from the piano or manuscript. Happily, the structure of Donne's poem, with its cadences and clarity of direction and arrival, offered a clear musical pathway. I know well the setting by Pelham Humfrey (1647-74) and was pleased to discover another setting by a contemporary of Humfrey, John Hilton. My own anthem contains little nods to both: to Humfrey in some play between major and minor tonalities and to Hilton in the use of a descending scale for 'When thou hast done'.

When the writing begins, I tend not to worry about details. I find roughly sketched ideas for key moments, knowing that many will be discarded, while others will be transformed. Perhaps it's rather like starting with the straight edges of a jigsaw puzzle, finding the inner detail next and finishing with the sky!

Whenever my pencil meets manuscript, I always sing in my head each musical line together with its words. This allows me to test that everything fits the voice, that melodic shapes sit within and enhance the vertical, harmonic framework, and to find horizontal,

often contrapuntal interest. In this anthem, it was also important to check that the unexpected leaps are musical and that the enharmonic shifts in the final verse are logical. An organ accompaniment gave me the opportunity to release the basses in the choir from the harmonic bass line, which is covered by the organ, and to add a solo organ voice to give additional colour and imitation.

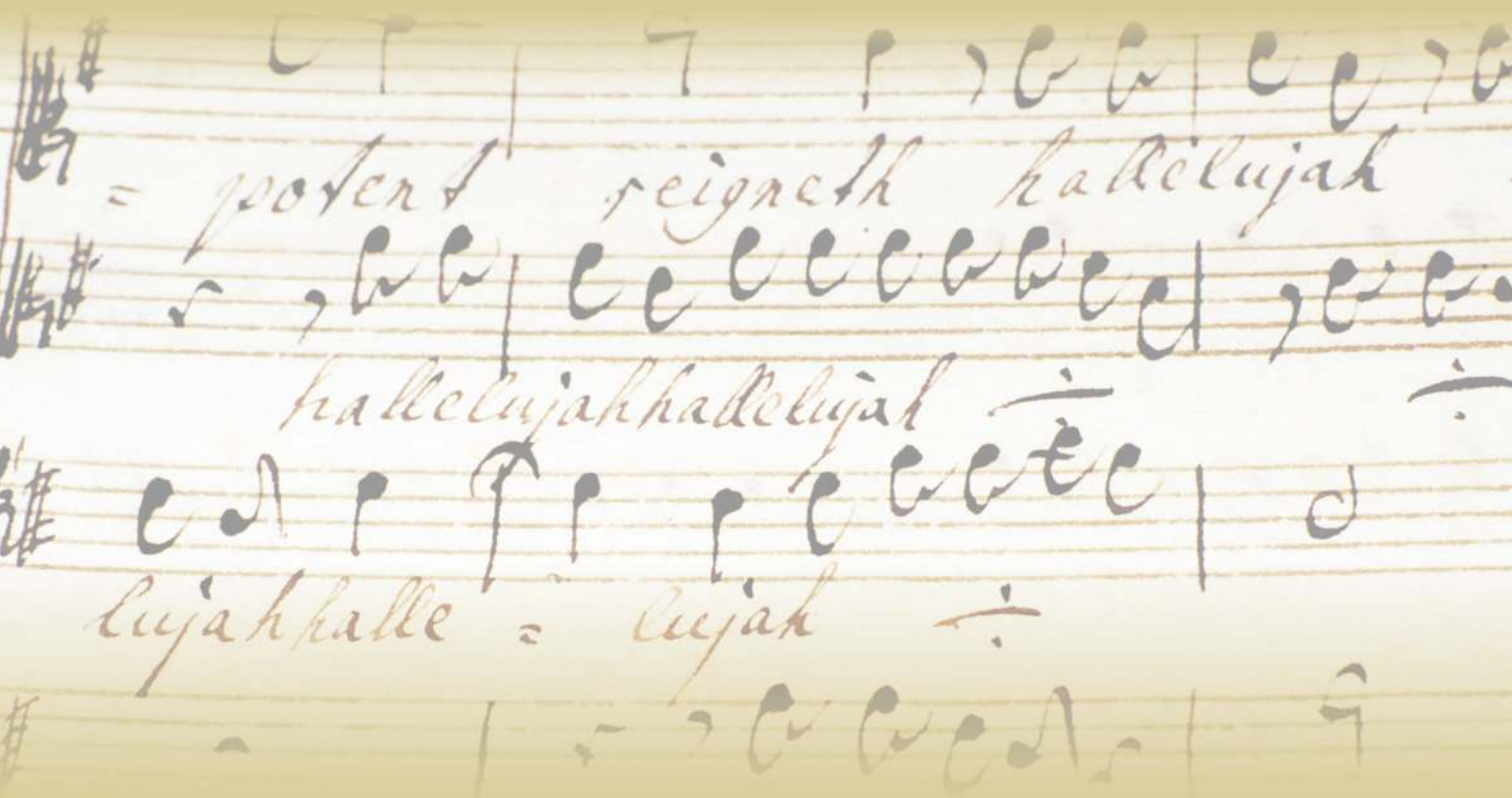
The process of refinement – and by this time I will have set manuscript paper aside in favour of Sibelius software – can sometimes be the longest. And yet, ironing out the bumps, clarifying the performance indications and rewriting small sections is often a process of simplification rather than complication. In *A Hymn to God the Father* it was the short organ introduction that proved tricky; I recall many attempts at this before I was content.

As I continue to write, no matter how modest or challenging the project might be, I hope that I can find a modern voice, but one which remains firmly rooted in that youthful grounding and love of harmony and counterpoint.

Messiah

**Hope and salvation:
the meaning of
Handel's masterpiece**

by Stephen Thornton



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WHERE IS THIS STUPENDOUS STRANGER?

GORDON GILES

Where is this stupendous stranger?
Prophets, shepherds, kings, advise:
lead me to my Master's manger,
show me where my Saviour lies.

O most Mighty, O most Holy,
far beyond the seraph's thought!
Art thou then so mean and lowly
as unheeded prophets taught?

O the magnitude of meekness,
worth from worth immortal sprung!
O, the strength of infant weakness,
if eternal is so young.

*If so young and thus eternal,
Michael tune the shepherd's reed,
where the scenes are ever vernal,
and the loves be Love indeed.*

*See the God blasphem'd and doubted
in the schools of Greece and Rome;
see the pow'rs of darkness routed,
taken at their utmost gloom.*

*Nature's decorations glisten
far above their usual trim;
birds on box and laurels listen,
as so near the cherubs hymn.*

*Boreas now no longer winters
on the desolated coast;
oaks no more are riv'n in splinters
by the whirlwind and his host.*

*Spinks and ouzels sing sublimely,
'We too have a Saviour born';
whiter blossoms burst untimely
on the blest Mosaic thorn.*

God all-bounteous, all-creative,
whom no ills from good dissuade,
is incarnate - and a native
of the very world he made.



Above: Portrait of Christopher Smart (1722-71), 1750s.

Words: Christopher Smart (1722-71)

Music: Ottery St Mary Henry Ley (1887-1962)

Castiglione Bryan Kelly (b. 1934)

Kit Smart Alec Wyton (1921-2007)

Halton Holgate William Boyce (1711-79)

This year sees the tercentenary of the birth of Christopher Smart, whose Christmas hymn is much admired, often overlooked and, sadly, rarely sung. If we call it a Christmas hymn rather than a carol, we may want to add that some Christmas carols are in fact hymns (in that they praise God and recount the story of the nativity and expand its meaning), that some Christmas carols are definitely not hymns, and that there are some Christmas hymns that no one has ever considered to be a carol. This magnificent poem by Smart is likely one of those.

The title is not 'Who is this stupendous stranger?' but 'Where'. The text does tell us who Jesus is, as divine and human, but the opening question gives a clue as to Smart's purpose. This is a hymn of pilgrimage, a song that sings of being led to the manger, in which to find the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It is a personal meditation on the way, which takes in views of classical fields and theological mountains. The point of arrival is ahead, although the destination is the realization of the *homoousios*: the paradoxically unified nature of two distinct aspects, divinity and humanity.

POET AND JOURNALIST

Smart was born in Shipbourne, near Maidstone, Kent, on 11 April 1722. He attended Maidstone Grammar School, but his father died when he was only 11 years old, so his family moved to Staindrop, County Durham, where he attended Durham School. He went to Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1739, graduating in 1744 and becoming a Fellow in 1745. He fell, however, into debt and left for London in 1749 to work as a poet and journalist. He became mentally

ill and spent time in an asylum in Bethnal Green between 1759 and 1763. His apparent madness would perhaps not be so interpreted today. As Dr Samuel Johnson put it: 'My poor friend Smart shewed the disturbance of his mind, by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the streets, or in any other unusual place ... I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society.'

*The text is precise, concise and glorious,
as well as being rich in reference*

Smart managed to work on two of his greatest poems while incarcerated. *A Song to David* appeared in 1763, but was not acclaimed. The other significant work was *Jubilate Agno*, which was eventually published in 1939 as 'Rejoice in the Lamb: A Song from Bedlam'. Parts of it were set in a choral work by Benjamin Britten in 1943. Smart continued to borrow money and was arrested for debt in 1770. In 1771 he was convicted and sent to the King's Bench Prison in Southwark where he died aged 49, just after having completed his *Hymns, for the Amusement of Children*.

The hymn 'Where is this stupendous stranger?', as we know it, is effectively the first three and last verses of a nine-verse poem from Smart's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England*, published with *A Translation of the Psalms of David* in 1765. Entitled *The Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, the five central verses (in italics above) are, perhaps unsurprisingly, not sung nowadays since, beautiful as the language of the omitted verses is, it

is rather obscure. It was first published as a hymn in the *Hymnal* of 1940 in the USA, with only verses 2 to 4. In America a tune called *Kit Smart* is used, composed in 1969 by Alec Wyton, which is named after Smart, who was known as 'Kit' to his friends. Englishman Wyton served as organist and minister of music in churches in New York and Connecticut. Bryan Kelly's tune *Castiglione* is found in the *New English Hymnal* and

Common Praise. Henry Ley was precentor at Eton College and wrote *Ottery St Mary* for Newman's hymn 'Firmly I believe and truly'; it was first published with Smart's text in *The Clarendon Hymn Book* (1936) and the *Eton College Hymn Book* (1937). Ottery St Mary is a small town in Devon, Ley's home county, on the river Otter.

PRECISE, CONCISE AND GLORIOUS

The text is rich in reference. 'Stupendous' means something to be wondered at, by which to be struck senseless, such as to cause a stupor. Nowadays we might associate the word with something amazingly large or great, but here Smart uses the word to refer to the child in the manger: so amazing, so divine that shepherds and kings (Magi) have already beaten a path to the manger bed. Line 2 originally read, 'Swains of Solyma, advise,' (the shepherds are the 'swains'). We are reminded in St John's prologue that God comes in Christ as a 'stranger' (John 1.18). The second verse addresses the Christ Child and gives a heavenly perspective, that a human being so fragile and poor could also be divine



Left: The King's Bench Prison, where Christopher Smart died aged 49, taken from Ackermann's *Microcosm of London* (1808-10), which contains the description that it was 'a place of confinement for debtors ... [with rooms] which measure 9 feet square'.

and holy, and, although fulfilling Old Testament prophecy, no one noticed then. Only now that Christ is born can we heed and join in the acclamation of the angels, 'Gloria'. The third verse contains oxymorons that underline the paradox of incarnation: the 'magnitude of meekness', 'worth from worth immortal', 'the strength of infant weakness', 'eternal (yet) so young'. 'Magnitude of meekness' is a precise and concise, glorious phrase that sums up every Christmas carol we have ever sung. Smart is not speaking of eternal youth but rather the opposite: the ancient of days, eternal God, made but a day old.

As we enter the unsung zone of the central verses, we see that the fourth verse expands the third: 'if so young and thus eternal'. If so, then the archangel Michael is asked to help the shepherds' pipes play the tunes of the eternal springtime, which the birth of Jesus brings in. The idyllic scene is one where spring love is eternal love. It conjures up scenes of Elysium, the classical fields of frolicking love and play. Yet in the

following verse, Smart steers us off classical allusions, classical philosophy that undermines Christian theology; now the darkness of blasphemy is defeated and scattered by the birth of him who is the light of the world.

The sixth verse carries us further into nature's realm, which gleams with delight at the holy birth; the birds on hedges learn from the angels' songs. The seventh verse returns us to mythology. Boreas was one of the four wind-gods: the purple-winged god of the north wind and of winter who swept down from the cold mountains of Thrace, chilling the air with icy breath. For Smart, eternal spring has replaced the long, dark winter and it will never return; neither will the winds of destruction. The 'spinks' and 'ouzels' of verse 8 are finches and blackbirds, and the Mosaic thorn is a reference to the thorn of Glastonbury (which supposedly sprang from Joseph of Arimathea's staff), merged with the story of Aaron's rod sprouting in Numbers 17.

In the concluding stanza God is distant yet close, human and divine,

eternally good and gracious. He is praised, in Christ, as the creator self-created, the one who was before creation. 'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.' (Colossians 1.15-18)

Where are you, Lord, in our troubled and dark world? By the incarnation of your Son most holy, calm the unstable centre of our lives, that we, the natives of earth, may feel the light and love of your presence, and so be led into the glorious faith, hope and love with which you have blessed us in the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WORSHIP FROM THE HEART

ADVICE FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

SIMON DIXON





Left: The Falls Church Anglican, just outside Washington DC.

Simon Dixon is director of worship at The Falls Church Anglican, just outside Washington DC. In the first part of a two-part article, the second part of which will appear in March, he shares some top tips for those leading music in worship and extols the benefits of putting God at the heart of your musical life.

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944, wrote:

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of the imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of the will to his purpose – and all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable ... [William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, Gifford Lectures 1932–3 and 1933–4]

We live in a world that encourages worshipping the ‘self’. It has been said that what you think about most in your day is what you tend to worship most, which is a sobering thought. God created us in his image to be in relationship with and worship him alone. Derived from the word ‘worth-ship’ (ascribing worth to something or someone), worship is God’s gift to us. When we truly understand this, we can join the many great composers and hymn writers throughout the ages who wrote God-inspired music.

As American pastor and author A.W. Tozer (1897–1963) said in an address to a Youth for Christ convention, ‘God wants worshippers first. Jesus did not redeem us to make us workers, but to make us worshippers.’ At the end of his manuscripts, J.S. Bach wrote *Soli Deo Gloria* – ‘glory to God alone’. I include these quotations because I found it to be life changing when I finally understood, in my heart as well as my head, that, as in the parable of the talents, our calling as church musicians is to use and grow God’s musical gifts for God’s glory. I had previously believed that the pressure of performance rested firmly on my shoulders and how hard I practised, and this brought with it the anxiety and stress felt by many performers. I drove myself hard, including making my feet bleed from over-practice. I would make myself exhausted from over-preparing and put myself through difficult

*'Let everything that has breath
praise the Lord'. Psalm 150*



Above: Simon Dixon leading the choir.

and stressful situations. Out of many examples, a few are: transposing on sight a handwritten brass arrangement when playing organ at the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall; giving an organ recital at St Paul's Cathedral suffering from the flu and a temperature of 104 degrees; and the time when the Archbishop of Canterbury processed down the aisle and the organ just kept going. I turned the wind pressure off, which was fine until I had to turn it back on again to play the opening hymn and the cypher was still there!

My heart is beating faster just remembering each one of those. You will undoubtedly have your own stories where playing, conducting or singing in a service or concert did not go according to plan. Yet in each instance, I would try to think of something positive to take away, such as 'this experience is character building', or 'this will be good for my *curriculum vitae*'. As I let go of control and began

to worship more from my heart, I realized that it wasn't all about me and how good or bad my performance was, but that God was and is more committed to his bride (the church) than I will ever be. As I moved from the self-inflicted pressure of 'it's all about how well I perform' to that of adoration with my attention on God and his grace and love for the church, I experienced a greater sense of freedom and peace. Away went the self-consciousness and anxiety. And do you know what? I found that my playing actually improved.

SOME PRACTICAL AREAS OF DISCIPLINE

Fellow church musicians will know that this role can be isolating and sometimes lonely. Someone once said to me, 'Simon, it's interesting that you chose the organ: an instrument where you can hide and not be seen and yet still make the loudest noise!' I remember enjoying not having to face people, except perhaps at the end of a concert when I would sometimes have to run

down from the loft to take a self-conscious bow before the applause stopped.

At times, church musicians need to interact with others, whether the choir, instrumentalists, soloists, congregation or clergy, and this is the area in which I have been most challenged to grow. I have found that many of the disciplines necessary to be a church musician are learnt away from the organ bench. I could write an article about each one of them, and you will doubtless think of others that are equally important when leading worship, so here are my top 14 for you to consider:

1. Be consistent and organized. Plan worship for the liturgical calendar in advance, informing and booking musicians, and pay particular attention to planning special services such as lessons and carols, Christmas Eve, Good Friday and Easter.
2. Order, hire and collate music in advance. Ideally, have a choir librarian to help you.
3. Be punctual and expect others to do the same. Start and end rehearsals on time.
4. Plan your warm-ups around the pieces you are about to rehearse.
5. Have a predetermined rehearsal schedule with timings and decide which areas of music need particular attention. Factor concentration and stamina into your timetable.
6. Work within the budget.
7. Maintain and tune the instruments under your care.
8. To avoid confusion, maintain a choir seating chart based on voice quality, character, height and experience (this is an art in itself).
9. Consider having choir section leaders who can help care for the choir and answer relevant questions.
10. Regularly review the worship you are offering and the musicians you are leading; have a body of people you trust (a choir council) to help and advise you.
11. Create an easy audition pathway for those seeking to join your music group while maintaining, for the sake of Sunday worship and those already

taking part, the standard of musicianship you have set. For some this may mean taking lessons and re-auditioning at a later opportunity.

12. Pray together. Be flexible. Laugh and cry with one another. Plan social events outside of the Sunday schedule.
13. Be personable, humble, gracious and kind as you work and encourage others, whether that's the choir, instrumentalists, congregation or clergy.
14. Seek to maintain a good working relationship with your clergy.

On the last point, I have found that maintaining a mutually healthy relationship with the clergy is vital if church worship is to thrive. There is so much that can be said about this, and it seems to me that both theological and music colleges have only recently started paying enough attention to the issue. There can be misunderstandings on both sides – most often due to a lack of ongoing communication and comprehension. I have been fortunate to serve under gracious and godly pastors in all the churches in which I have played, but I also know that there are others, both musicians and clergy, who have been less fortunate, and it can be distressing if not addressed. One key area of potential conflict seems to be around the choice of worship: traditional or contemporary, a subject I will expand on in the second of these two articles.

It is important that we grow in our ability to plan, practise, prepare organ registrations, turn up before the rehearsal starts and be personable. If, for example, I have to choose between two good singers, I will often choose the one who is easier to work with rather than someone who is demanding, unprepared or unpunctual.

As church musicians, I believe our role is like that of ushers or waiters who escort you to your seat or serve your meal with a deference that doesn't draw attention to themselves. We have the privilege, through the choral pieces and hymns we choose and sing, of ushering the congregation into the very throne room of God.

An organist needs to lead hymns and service music in such a way as if to say, 'this is where we are going; come with me'

WORSHIP FROM THE HEART. ADVICE FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

LEADING HYMNS FROM THE ORGAN BENCH

Hymns such as 'Praise, my soul, the King of heaven', 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty', 'Tell out, my soul' and 'Immortal, invisible' have all stood the test of time. They are majestic and glorious to sing and will continue to be sung for generations to come: they are just as relevant today as when they were written. I encourage those of you who are organists to resist the temptation simply to mark which number they are in the hymn book and how many verses you're playing. Instead, spend just as much time preparing the hymns and sung service music as you do your preludes, postludes and choir music. It takes great skill to play a hymn effectively. Here are a few factors to consider.

1. Play accurate and clear introductions and cut-offs between verses.
2. Choose tempos that keep a hymn moving while allowing for breaths.
3. Play in keys a congregation can comfortably sing. D tends to be the ceiling I encourage for a congregation. For example, 'feed me now and evermore' from 'Guide me, O thou great redeemer', all on a D.
4. Anticipate and lead a congregation as they sing. Pause ever so slightly to gather them on the first note.
5. Play slightly ahead of the congregation to keep the music flowing at the tempo. If not, it may drag and get slower and slower.

6. Occasionally articulate the alto, tenor and bass while keeping the melody legato. This will help to keep the hymn moving forwards.

7. Choose a registration that is different for each verse, including playing the melody occasionally on a different manual to complement the voices and the general feel of the hymn (look to support rather than squash). For instance, I would register 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' differently from 'Praise, my soul, the King of heaven'.

8. Anticipate and breathe with the phrases as a singer would. This is so important.

9. Understand and complement the meaning of words being sung as you play.

Like shepherding sheep (the Bible often compares us to sheep), unless given clear direction we are prone to go astray. An organist needs to lead hymns and service music in such a way as if to say, 'this is where we are going; come with me.'

TRADITIONAL VERSUS CONTEMPORARY

I remember as an organ student being told to avoid churches that had drums or guitars, that they were 'the enemy' of the organ and would, when introduced, lead eventually to the church organ being broken up for firewood! In the second of these two articles I will include some observations about the sometimes thorny issue of contemporary worship music, from the perspective of someone who has spent the last 30 years of my 40-year career working in both fields.

Below: The adult choir singing in a worship service with brass and organ at The Falls Church Anglican.



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A selection of RSCM Publications for the season

ADVENT

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Joanna Forbes L'Estrange
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Advent 'O' Carol is inspired by the text and chants of the seven 'O' antiphons, which traditionally are sung in the days immediately preceding Christmas.

The 'O' refrain, which opens the piece and reoccurs between each of the seven verses, is based on the opening melodic chant of the medieval antiphons, its 7/8 time signature reinforcing the piece's connection to the number seven.

Depending on the size and ability of your choir, there is scope to divide the singers into those who sing the refrains (the 'ripieno' SSATB) and a solo SATB quartet to sing the verses. If space allows, it would be effective for the refrain choir to stay put while the solo quartet moves slowly around the building, singing each verse in a different location and finally returning to the main choir for the climactic 'O Emmanuel' tutti entry. Alternatively, the refrains and the verses could be sung by the same singers; a minimum of seven singers (SSAATBB) is required to cover the occasional division. For the close harmonies to be heard and to reinforce the medieval origins of the piece, minimal or no vibrato is preferable.



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CHRISTMAS

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Find out more and listen to recordings of the carols

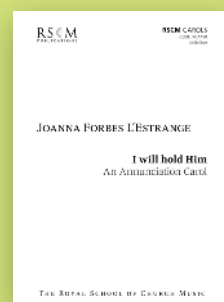


CHRISTMAS

I will hold him

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange
£2.95

Based on the angel Gabriel's visitation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, this wonderfully evocative setting is ideal for carol services. Beginning with the familiar story of the angel Gabriel coming to Galilee to bring Mary the news that she will bear God's son, the verses thereafter take the form of a conversation between Gabriel (tenors and basses) and Mary (sopranos and altos). The turning point comes at verse 5 when Mary repeats the words that the angel has just spoken, but in the first person, indicating her willingness to accept God's calling. For the final section of the piece, Mary, now represented by a solo soprano, communes directly with God through prayer. The metre changes from a folkly 6/8 to a freer *colla voce*, at which point the choir resumes its verse 1 role of narrator.



Listen to a recording

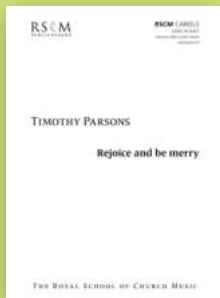


CHRISTMAS

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A light-hearted and graceful new carol with a trick up its sleeve: it's in 7/8 metre. Once you have the knack of the uneven metrical division (which is easy to do, since it never varies), the music carries you joyfully through the Christmas story, with the voices supported by a nimble, dance-like organ accompaniment.

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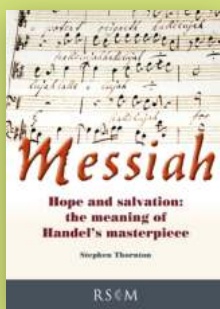


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DIGITAL RESOURCES

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Voice for Life Digital is a new online version of our acclaimed *Voice for Life* publications. It takes the content of the tried-and-tested books and makes it more dynamic (with videos, quizzes and assignments), as well as allowing for greater choir trainer interaction. The digital version is intentionally compatible with the printed resources and the outcomes from each of the five levels remain the same.

Voice for Life Digital will launch in January 2023. The portal to access the resources will be on the RSCM's main website. It will cost a one-time fee of just £50 for access, discounted to £10 for affiliated organizations. Thereafter, each level for each chorister costs just £5.

Church Musicians Fees

The RSCM is not a professional organization for church musicians. It is, however, a body that tries to assist churches with their music – and that includes advice on remuneration for musicians. Each year, we publish a guide intended to help ministers or incumbents, church committees or councils, and church musicians to discuss and negotiate appropriate levels for remuneration.

The guide for 2023 is available now and can be downloaded by RSCM members only from the membership area on our webshop. Visit: www.rscmshop.com

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See *Hymnpact!* in action.



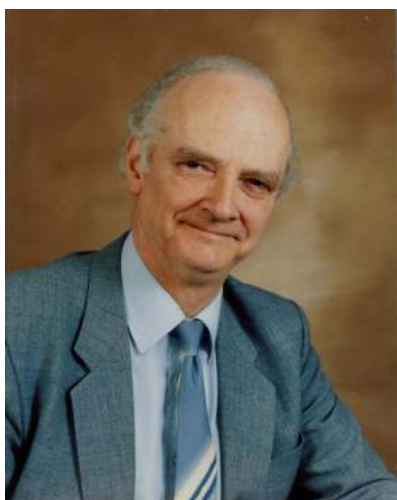
OBITUARIES

MARTIN HOW

Martin How was born in Liverpool in 1931. He was educated at Repton School and Clare College, Cambridge. He became choirmaster at Addington Palace in September 1955, and from then on dedicated much of his life to church music.

Among his many contributions to the RSCM was the Chorister Training Scheme, which launched in December 1965. The scheme proved an immediate success, attracting more than 2,000 applications within the first year. Martin was made Headquarters Commissioner in 1964, and in 1971 was appointed Commissioner for the South. He officially retired in 1992 but remained as a special advisor. Martin was awarded an MBE in 1993 for 'Services to Church Music'.

Since his death, we have been sent many notes of appreciation for Martin, testament to his legacy as a friend, mentor and colleague to many both inside and outside the RSCM. To the right, John Bertalot shares his appreciation.



I owe any choir-training skills I may have to Martin How

I first met Martin in 1956 when he came to a concert I was conducting in St Peter, Brighton, while I was still a student. I vividly remember him walking up the nave of that enormous church at the end of the concert and inviting me to be a housemaster on RSCM choristers' courses. From that invitation everything else followed. I knew I would be working with experts who knew how things ought to be done.

A major turning point in my choir-training life came in 1960 when I was organist at St Matthew, Northampton. I invited Martin to lead a day's workshop for trebles from Northampton church choirs (in those days there were many boys in most church choirs). I can recall walking into the church hall to find Martin standing on a low platform in the middle of the hall, surrounded by about 100 boys. I tried to find my boys there and discovered that their eyes were shining. Their eyes didn't shine when I took them for practices. What was Martin doing to create such abounding enthusiasm? I quickly found out.

'What's the name of the first note in this anthem? Is it G or is it A?' Martin asked.

Hands shot up and someone said, 'A'. 'Nearly,' Martin replied. 'Try again!' 'G,' said the same boy.

'Well done!' said Martin. 'The G clef curls around the second line up to tell us where G is.'

I realized then that the answer 'no' would have been a put down. So, he gave the lad a second chance to enable him to succeed, and he also took the opportunity to do some basic teaching. Martin continued:

'Now let's sing the first word, "God" – for how many beats?'

'Two,' someone called out.

'Right. And on which beat does the D come?'

'The third,' said someone else.

'Right! So, here's the note.'

And here the pianist played.

'One, two, ready? Breathe!'

They sang.

'Did we all come in together?' he asked.

The consensus was no.

'Who thinks that they can begin and finish together?'

Lots of hands shot up.

From left to right:

Martin prepares choristers for a television broadcast in 1958.

Martin rehearsing *Blest Pair of Sirens* at a singers' workshop, which were held on Friday lunchtimes for city workers at St Mary, Woolnoth. Photo c.1959.

Below: Watch a performance of *Day by Day* by the RSCM's Millennium Youth Choir in tribute to Martin How.



Right: Martin How in 1955, the year he joined the staff at Addington Palace.

‘OK. All those who put up their hands, sing that first two-beat note *absolutely* together, with me. One, two, ready? Breathe! Excellent! Now let’s *all* try it ...’

By asking so many questions, Martin was involving every individual singer to contribute to the progress of the practice. As a result, every singer felt involved in the creative process. Progress, which everyone could achieve, was made by a series of tiny steps.

After observing Martin (whose personality radiated ‘communicate encouragingly’), my technique for leading choristers’ practices radically changed that day, and for the next 40 years of training choirs on both sides of the Atlantic my ‘Is it G or is it A?’ sessions were always packed with enthusiastic singers. All my five books on choir-training were initially inspired by Martin. In fact, I owe any choir-training skills I may have to Martin How.

So, thank you, Martin, for being such an enthusiastic and faithful friend to so many of us. You enriched our lives and through the power of inspired music you brought us nearer to God.

John Bertalot



OBITUARIES CONTINUED

RICHARD SEAL

Along with countless other musicians, I owe an enormous debt to Richard Seal. I joined the Salisbury Cathedral choir in 1967 and spent four years as a chorister under Richard. As a teacher, he had complete command over his charges – in this case, 16 boys – who had to be moulded to produce a perfect evensong. And perhaps it is worth noting straightaway that, for Richard, the *Opus Dei*, that is daily cathedral worship, was far more important than recordings or tours. That meant right notes, musical phrasing, secure intonation and ensemble. And when things did go wrong (which was very rare), he would be understandably upset. And we felt that. But while that could so easily have created anxiety in children, it simply instilled in us the desire to do our best: a lesson for life.

Richard was an inspirational choir trainer and conductor. As choristers with eight services a week, I'm sure we worked hard. But it never seemed like hard work. Richard was always entertaining. Rehearsals would be peppered with references to 'The Goons' and the time would pass quickly. Much longer rehearsals in the 'chori hols' (chorister holidays in the weeks leading up to Easter and Christmas, when school had broken up and there were the festivals to prepare for) would be interspersed with walks

round the cloisters, with Richard telling anecdotes. And, of course, with that other wonder-musician, Richard Shephard, at the school, we were immensely privileged. I can think of many ex-Salisbury Cathedral School musicians (male and female, for Seal set up the first cathedral girls' choir in 1991) who have gone on to stellar careers, the foundations of which were laid by these two Richards.

When I rejoined the choir as a lay vicar in 1985, Seal was at the peak of his musical powers. His conducting style was seemingly effortless. Always clear, never unnecessarily flamboyant, he simply showed you how he wanted you to sing the music: a flick of the wrist, or of the elbow, expansive where necessary, or a raised eyebrow, and so often accompanied by an encouraging smile. And because singing in a three-man back row is often challenging on the breathing, you could get away with nothing. He would always notice you breaking a phrase in a daft place: a glance in your direction was just 'could do better'.

Richard was genial, self-effacing and a man of truly great musical judgement. In the big pieces, choral or orchestral, for sure, but also in the equally important small-scale creations. And in the daily psalms. Only a few months before his death, I was conducting at a Chalke Valley funeral for which he was playing.

I sent him an arrangement of *Amazing Grace*, outlining which verses were to be solos, accompanied, a cappella, and so on. He phoned me, suggesting 'might it not be better if ...'. In his usual, quiet way, he made it immediately better, providing the sort of ideas that left this arranger thinking, 'yes, of course, why didn't I think of that?' Rest in peace, Richard. And thank you. *Steve Abbott*

First published in the September 2022 issue of Choir & Organ magazine.

PETER MILLWARD GREGORY

Distinguished organist and master of the choristers, Peter Gregory, spent 31 years at St Alphege, Solihull. Inheriting a choir of four boys in 1971, he increased it to be always over 25, set high standards and recruited and trained excellent altos, tenors and basses. He instituted cathedral choir weeks, always receiving praise for music and behaviour, and repeated invitations. He was an inspirational teacher at school and church, and many of his pupils won choral scholarships and became professional musicians. His legacy at St Alphege, and more widely, lives on.

Carol Southworth

CLASSIFIED ADS

The price for Affiliates and Individual Members is 50p (excluding VAT) per word (or abbreviated word) and number, in both announcement and address. This includes a listing on the RSCM website for up to three months. The price for Friends and non-members is double the above. There is an additional optional charge of £15 for a highlighted advert and a premium position (including a photograph) on the RSCM website. Closing date **two months before publication**. Send to cmq@rscm.com

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WANTED

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St Ninian's Troon (SEC) South Ayrshire require an **organist**. Contact Keith Thomasson on 01292 313731, troonrector@myphone.coop

Bolton Parish Church

(www.boltonparishchurch.co.uk). We are seeking to appoint a talented and enthusiastic musician as our next **Director of Music** from 1 January 2023. Remuneration is in line with RSCM rates, in addition to fees from weddings and funerals and from other occasional services and events that take place throughout the year. Bolton School, with whom we have strong links, is currently seeking to recruit an organ teacher and school organist. For a suitably qualified applicant, the post of director of music may be held in conjunction with these posts. For someone seeking to build a broader portfolio career, there is the possibility of work with schools and other organizations. An appointment will be made subject to a satisfactory enhanced DBS disclosure. For further information or to arrange an informal conversation, please email vicar@boltonparishchurch.co.uk or PJB@boltonschool.org



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REVIEWS OF CDs & BOOKS

CDs

- ★ **Worth hearing**
- ★★ **Recommended**
- ★★★ **Essential listening**

ORGAN CDS

★★★

MAESTOSO

Callum Alger plays the organ of St Matthew, Northampton ♦ **Regent REGCD572**

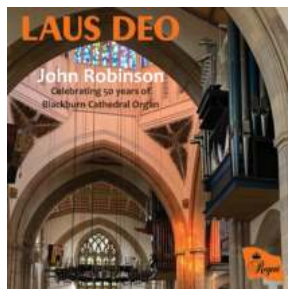
Bairstow's Prelude in C gets this excellent recital by Callum Alger off to a spirited start. In this short work, the rhythmical clarity of the toccata-like opening semiquavers gives way to a more mellow section, allowing the mighty 1895 J.W. Walker & Sons organ to shine. In a rare outing, Bairstow's Organ Sonata in E flat is given a powerful rendition. It is clear that this is the music that Alger relishes playing; it raises the question of why we don't hear more of Bairstow's organ music. The coupling of organ works by Bairstow and Elgar is an inspired idea. Alger builds the melancholic Maestoso movement to a powerful and shattering conclusion. There is the occasional bit of noise from the mechanics of the organ, but this does not detract from these magnificently mature performances by this young organist. Elgar's first Organ Sonata brings the disc to a spectacular finale. *Ian Munro*

★★★

LAUS DEO

John Robinson plays the organ of Blackburn Cathedral ♦ **Regent REGCD561**

This CD marks the 50th anniversary of the J.W. Walker & Sons organ of Blackburn Cathedral, and the four works featured all have associations with the cathedral. The power and might of the magnificent organ is felt from the opening bars of *Laus Deo* by Jonathan Harvey. John Robinson's mastery of the score comes across: the punchy, angular rhythms and sudden dynamic contrasts are particularly



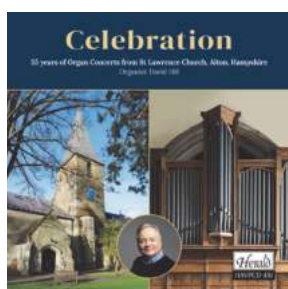
effective. After the merry-go-round of notes and moods that form Francis Pott's *Introduction, Toccata and Fugue*, John Bertalot's *Variations for pedals on Regent Square* provide a brief moment of calm for the listener before Percy Whitlock's Sonata in C minor brings this CD to a stunning conclusion with the final, quiet chord disappearing into silence. Robinson clearly shows his prowess as an organist of exceptional skill in such a demanding programme, while revelling in the might and majesty of the Blackburn organ. *Ian Munro*

★★★

CELEBRATION

David Hill plays the organ of St Lawrence, Alton ♦ **Herald HAVPCD416**

Francis Jackson's *Diversion for Mixtures* opens this substantial recital by renowned organist and conductor David Hill. Miniatures by Buxtehude, Lefébure-Wély and Brahms sit alongside Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, Franck's *Pastorale* and Vaughan Williams's Prelude on the hymn tune *Rhosymedre*. An illustrious list of luminaries have performed on the Henry Speechly organ at St Lawrence. Hill's thoughtful, well-chosen programme celebrates the many tonal characteristics the instrument affords. Bach's 'Fasch'



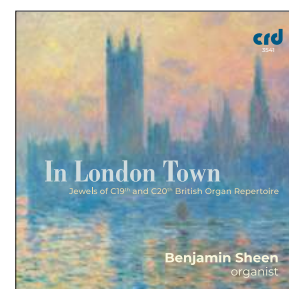
Trio in C minor sounds a little underpowered; however, Hill's use of ornamentation and measured tempo allows the character and the charm of the piece to shine. This recital provides worthy documentation of a much-loved instrument. Langlais's *Hymne d'Action de grâce 'Te Deum'* and Howells's moving *Rhapsody*, Op. 17, No. 1 certainly pack a punch. Lanquetuit's *Toccata en Ré majeur pour Grand-Orgue* brings a packed CD to a triumphant conclusion. *Ian Munro*

★★★

IN LONDON TOWN

Benjamin Sheen plays the Dobson organ of St Thomas church, Fifth Avenue, New York ♦ **CRD CRD3541**

Walton's March for 'A History of the English-Speaking Peoples' gets this disc off to an explosive start. The 2018 Dobson organ is given plenty of opportunity to show its mettle in works including Whitlock's *Fantasia Choral No. 1* and Graham Sheen's transcription of Elgar's *Cockaigne* overture, while Howells's *Master Tallis's Testament* receives a splendid rendition. There are two problems for me. The first is the vastness of the acoustic. The Elegy from Ireland's *A Downland Suite* is glorious, as is Judith Bingham's *St Bride, assisted by angels*, but the delicate pianissimo passages are swallowed up in the acoustic. The other problem is that, when at the peak of its powers, the organ is just too loud! There's no questioning Sheen's skill as an organist – he's just taken up the post of sub-organist at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford – but, for this listener at least, both the acoustic and might of the organ impact negatively on these wonderful performances. *Ian Munro*



REVIEWS OF CDs & BOOKS

CHORAL CDS

★★

REVOICED

Corvus Consort / Ferio Saxophone Quartet / Freddie Crowley †
Chandos CHAN20260

Right from the outset, it comes as a pleasant surprise to hear how well human voices blend with the mellow timbres of a range of saxophones. This is especially apparent in Giovanni Gabrieli's sumptuous *O magnum mysterium* for two choirs, where we may be familiar with the second choir parts taken by a brass ensemble. How refreshing it is then to hear a saxophone quartet instead and with an unobtrusive sound balance too! Schütz, Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, and J.S. and J.M. Bach are represented here with a range of choral motets accompanied by an instrument that had not been invented until long after the baroque era. J.S. Bach's *Sleepers wake!* and *Jesu joy* bring a smile at how well the combination works. Some sonorous contemporary fare explores the relationship between voices and saxophones more deeply. Owain Park's *Miserere after Allegri* is a clever reworking of phrases from the original motet, as is Roderick Williams's *Ave verum corpus re-imagined* – in this instance William Byrd's setting. With its mixture of new and old, *Revoiced* is an apt title for this collection: a fascinating listen.

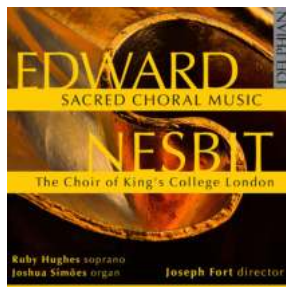
Stuart Robinson

★★★

EDWARD NESBIT: SACRED CHORAL MUSIC

Choir of King's College London / Ruby Hughes (soprano) / Joshua Simões (organ) / Joseph Fort †
Delphian DCD34256

A CD devoted to the music of a young, relatively unheard-of composer is a big risk; however, this is one which pays off! Edward Nesbit's Requiem shows his originality as a composer. The text is passed between soloist, the excellent Ruby Hughes, and choir. The soloist reminds me more of a jazz singer, improvising their own melody, distinct from the choir, which sings its own stylistically different music. It makes



for an arresting take on a familiar text. The complex textures and harmonies are sung with commendable accuracy by the members of the King's College choir, who give fine, committed performances throughout. The Benedictus is the most successful movement of the Requiem, in which the complicated polyphonic textures are woven effortlessly in a passage of utter serenity. The subtle, yet vital, organ interjections are performed by Joshua Simões, who gets his own moment to shine in the effervescent *Fanfares and Rounds*.

Ian Munro

★★★

THE PSALMS

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge / James Anderson-Besant, Glen Dempsey & George Herbert (organ) / Andrew Nethsingha †
Signum Classics SIGCD721

The singing of psalms is an integral part of evening choral services in both the Anglican and Catholic traditions. A lot of nonsense has been uttered about choral evensong in particular being akin to a concert, the proponents forgetting that for both musician and hearer alike, striving for perfection might just be an expression of God-given talent and/or faith. This CD might rekindle that debate, but so what: here is Anglican chant at its perfect best!

All 13 psalms are sung in harmony throughout, but there is plenty of contrast. Take the dramatic declamation of Psalm 76, 'In Jewry is God known', sung to Robert Ashfield's powerful triple chant. By contrast, time stands still in the heartrendingly penitential Psalm 88, 'O Lord God of my salvation', sung to a chant by William Prendergast. With clear

diction, unhurried chanting, sensitive phrasing and perfectly balanced choral singing, this is the sort of psalm singing many choir directors would crawl over broken glass to achieve. The accompanying booklet has a range of excellent articles.

Stuart Robinson

★★

LUX AETERNA

Gesualdo Six / Owain Park †
Hyperion CDA68388

Ever since its foundation by Owain Park in 2014, this all-male sextet has gone from strength to strength. *Lux Aeterna* is their sixth CD. Following the pandemic this collection is timely and is reflective in mood. It explores ancient and modern musical responses to mourning and loss. Tallis, Byrd, Morales and Purcell (*Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts*) are interspersed with works from Neil Cox, Howard Skempton, Eleanor Daley, James O'Donnell and Joanna Marsh. Mention must be made of John Tavener's *Funeral Ikos* performed with the same effortless poise and sense of line as I heard in their live concert in Salisbury Cathedral earlier this year.

The centrepiece is Owain Park's own *Sequence: In Parenthesis*, an atmospheric setting of a WWI poem by Welsh poet and artist David Jones. The narration is threaded with a range of contemporaneous tunes and some Welsh ditties such as *Sosban fach!* This is an excellent CD, recorded by the same audio engineer and producer (David Hinnitt and Adrian Peacock respectively) as the *Revoiced* CD reviewed above.

Stuart Robinson

★★★

MISSA FESTIVA: CHORAL MUSIC BY FLOR PEETERS

Choir of Royal Holloway / Onyx Brass / Matthew Searles & George Nicholls (organ) / Rupert Gough †
Ad Fontes AF008

Flor Peeters (1903–86) is probably best known as an organist and composer of organ music. This beautifully packaged CD of his choral music is a welcome addition to the library. The dramatic *Entrata Festiva* gets this recording off to a spirited

REVIEWS OF CDs & BOOKS

start. Brass, choir and organ are perfectly balanced and instrumentalists accompany the choir most sensitively. It sets the listener up for a special journey of some quite exquisite music. With powerful (but not overpowering) brass contributions sitting alongside the composer's familiar traits of long pedal notes, parallel fourths and fifths as well as the evocation of medieval plainchant, the *Missa Festiva* is an exciting, dramatic but moving setting of the Mass. The a cappella singing in the Credo is especially beautiful. It is wonderful to hear some hauntingly beautiful miniatures, including settings of *Tantum Ergo* and *Ave Maria*. The *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi* receives an equally committed performance. Highly recommended.
Ian Munro

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTMAS

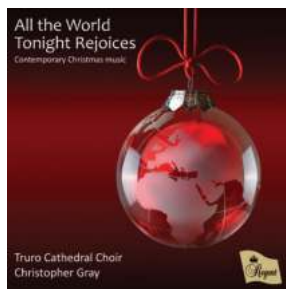
★ ★

ALL THE WORLD TONIGHT REJOICES

Truro Cathedral Choir / Andrew Wyatt (organ) / Christopher Gray
♦ Regent REGCD560

This exceptional carol album is all the more remarkable given that it was embarked on under social distancing conditions in May 2021, although not released in time for review here last year. The story of the start of the Nine Lessons and Carols tradition in Truro in 1880 is frequently told. Less widely known is that, since 2003, each service has included the premiere of a newly commissioned carol. Eleven of these are included on the disc, along with six further recent carols (or recent arrangements) and two organ pieces. Eight of the tracks are first recordings.

There are well-established composers, such as Judith Weir with *Illuminare, Jerusalem* (a 1985 King's commission) and Gabriel Jackson with *Nowell sing we* (a 2006 Truro commission). The youngest composer is Helena Paish, born in 2002, whose *While Mary slept* contrasts girls' voices singing of Mary's joy and lower voices singing of the pain to come. Throughout the CD, the carols



alternate boy choristers (nine tracks) and girl choristers (eight tracks), singing along with the lay vicars and choral scholars. There are many cases of well-known words given completely new music. Among the smaller number of arrangements of the expected tune is Gary Cole's unaccompanied treatment of *Away in a manger* in which the singing, with boys' voices, is particularly fine. For a first recording after lockdown this was an ambitious undertaking, but carried off with outstanding success – it is a disc to which I shall return with pleasure, and not only at Christmas.
Judith Markwith

BOOKS

AT THE ORGAN OF NOTRE-DAME

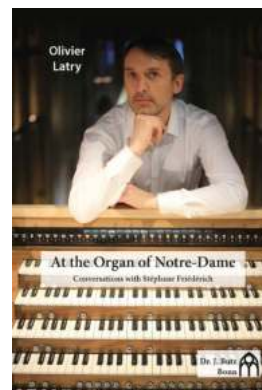
Olivier Latry and Stéphane Friédérich

Dr J. Butz 156pp.

PB 978-3-928412-32-2 €15.00

Acclaimed worldwide (and on YouTube) for his astonishing improvisations and organ recitals, Olivier Latry is nonetheless a committed and deeply spiritual church musician. He has been co-titular of Notre-Dame de Paris since his appointment in 1985 at the remarkably young age of 23. Although presented here as a series of conversations with French music journalist Stéphane Friédérich, this book is essentially the autobiography of a humble servant of God, masterfully and fluently translated by Martin Setchell.

In addition to his life story, Latry discusses the organ at Notre-Dame and his relationship with it – this all



written after the disastrous fire at the cathedral. One surprise, considering his current reputation, is to learn that Latry did not enter the world of organ improvisation early or easily, but rather reluctantly and out of liturgical necessity. Topics discussed include the performance of French repertoire old and new, much about his teacher and mentor Gaston Litaize, thoughts on organ design, the philosophy of music in general and the work of a Catholic liturgical organist. This latter subject, revealing his deep Christian faith, gives insights into a French church musician's work that are especially interesting; I learnt a great deal from these conversations.

One quotation is worth repeating: 'Playing a service and playing a concert really have opposite goals. In a service the organ is playing for a group of people, most of whom are believers. Music touches their souls to reach their hearts. In a concert, it's the other way round; the performer touches the audience's hearts to lift their souls ...' I cannot recommend this book too highly.

John Henderson

You will find reviews of recent printed music publications in *Sunday by Sunday* (no. 103). All the latest reviews are available online at www.rscm.com/reviews

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Journey to Freedom

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