

# Sarisbury Choral Society

## NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020

**It's Thursday again! Welcome** to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! I hope you're continuing to keep well. Keep an eye on your emails from an official update from Eileen on behalf of the committee, but in the meantime, here's the usual mix of music information for this week. As ever, comments, improvements, suggestions welcome.

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### Music online

I hope that some of you have been able to join in with the recent come and sing events led by Hilary Campbell or Caius Lee as advertised in these pages. If you have, feel free to drop me an email to let us know about how it went!

A quick reminder to have a look at Richard Cooke's blog (Richard is conductor of the Royal Choral Society). The latest one focuses on the Double Concerto for violin and cello by Brahms.

<http://www.richardcooke.org/blog.htm>

I hope that many of you are supporting the self-isolation choir, led by Ben England. These (almost daily) videos are working through learning Handel's Messiah, in preparation for a unique performance on Sunday 31st May. Even if you don't participate in the performance at the end of the month, this serves as excellent practice for the WCMF concert in 2021.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5O5Mf4Cnb8>

Ben's other channel, named "Home choir" continues to upload daily singing videos for you to get on with. I've only been "promoting" the Quarantine Chorus videos which focus on music from our own

repertoire, but do use this period to try singing other styles, if you don't already. The latest one focuses on a short but sweet anthem called "If ye love me" by the 16<sup>th</sup> century composer Thomas Tallis.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm\\_KbzXiz80](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm_KbzXiz80)

## Singing regularly

Ever heard of vocal fry? No I hadn't either, so I'll let Roger Hale explain it instead!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAdbe9A7658>

## LSO always playing

New for this week, I thought I would let you know (if you haven't found it already) the wonderful online resources that our professional orchestras are putting together at the moment.

This week, I'm focusing on the London Symphony Orchestra who are streaming a concert from their archive every Thursday and Sunday evening. The concerts are only available on the LSO YouTube channel for 48 hours, so you do need to get on with it if there's a particular piece you want to catch! You might like to pencil in your diaries (which I'm sure are very full at the moment) that the LSO concert on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May is a performance of Brahms Requiem. I'll remind you of that again in a fortnight. All the details are here:

<https://lso.co.uk/whats-on/alwaysplaying.html>

On Tuesday of this week, the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus were due to be on tour performing Beethoven's ninth symphony. Not to be beaten by current circumstances, members of the chorus have put together a "Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> relay" video:

<https://www.facebook.com/LondonSymphonyChorus/videos/1007462163056622/>

## Piece of the week

Continuing the theme of looking at composers celebrating significant anniversaries this year,



this week I've gone for a piece of music that was written 100 years ago. It's an anthem called "O clap your hands" composed in 1920 by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

This anthem is a setting of verses 1, 2, 5 - 8 of Psalm 47 for four-part choir, organ, brass, and percussion. It was later rescored for orchestra and for organ. The music begins with brass fanfares. A joyful first section is followed by an more restrained middle section. The conclusion of the anthem is back in a triumphant mood, with repeated use of the words "Sing praises unto our King, sing praises." In contrast to other pieces I've written about previously, this won't take you long to listen to, coming in at just over three minutes!

Here's a helpful recording of the work complete with score. This one is

the original version with brass, organ and percussion:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdHoZwV\\_MiE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdHoZwV_MiE)

I don't think I've been very critical in these newsletters yet, but I feel I should be about this video! The diction of this choir is very good (particularly the K of King), but I think they sound completely miserable, as if this is the 25<sup>th</sup> take and they want lunch. I've been fair to them and listened to this video on two different days and I still think the same... but see what you think!

Here's another version, this time with the full orchestra, which is more joyful right from the first four notes. See which one you prefer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVZLzYxNr5o>

A slightly bizarre fact about this piece, which I didn't know until writing this newsletter, is that a very short snippet (two bars I think) of this anthem were used by the Beatles for "Revolution 9" (listen out for the cymbals within the first 60 seconds):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNdcFPjGsm8>

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## Special guest!

Today's special guest is Dr. Vicky Feldwick who is the Manager of the Music Centre at the University of Winchester.

*Where did you study music?*

"I studied my undergraduate at King Alfred's College, Winchester (World Musics with Archaeology) then went on to do a masters in Community Music at the University of York and then a PhD at the University of Winchester into music workshop evaluation".

*Who are your greatest musical inspirations?*

"This is a tough one because I'm not one for looking up at people. For my composition I often take inspiration from the buildings where the pieces are going to be performed or a story the music is going to tell. Saying that, some of the youngest children I've worked with have been a huge inspiration for my music making. The freedom of their own music making is wonderful to watch and be a part of. They just sing or hit things without a care for what others think".

*As a conductor, in a performance your back is to the audience. Are you still able to feel a sense of communication with your listeners?*

"The communication I feel is through the singers. The conductor isn't the performer, the singers are. You do what you need to do to make the singers give their best and communicate the music to the audience to ensure that the music is all it should be. I agree that it is really satisfying when you hear any appreciations but, for me, thanks from the choir knowing they are in safe hands is what I look for".

*How do you persuade your singers to engage with the audience?*

"If the singers are engaged with the music, then the audience will travel with them on the journey. The two-way conversation between choir and audience must have its roots in the singers engaging in the music itself".

*Which choral pieces would you take to a desert island?*

"That's a tricky one because there's always more to discover. Pieces I would choose are closely associated with fond memories, or maybe something I could conduct along to".

*How can we encourage people to join choirs and maintain membership?*

"Recruitment has to be about making sure people know we are there (which, for us is all about students and freshers week) and then letting them know what they will get out of it. And yes, the social and personal benefits often outweigh the musical ones. Then retention is about having a two-way flow of ideas between director and singers. Ownership is everything".

Many thanks to Vicky for her time in answering my questions.

Further information about the Music Centre at Winchester University is here:

<https://www.winchester.ac.uk/accommodation-and-winchester-life/student-life/university-of-winchester-music-centre/>

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## **And finally!**

This Saturday would have been our chance to sing Verdi Requiem in the Winchester concert of the Winchester and County Music Festival. As the Festival isn't taking place this year, you might like to spend an evening this week, watching or listening to the Verdi.

My personal video recommendation for you isn't the best quality, I'm afraid, but it's one with the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Sir Colin Davis at the Proms on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September 1997. This performance was a very emotionally charged occasion as the concert was due to be conducted by Sir Georg Solti, who died a week before. Emotions were further heightened as about a fortnight before, Princess Diana had died and had the final section of the Verdi at her funeral. It was chosen for her funeral as Verdi Requiem was the programme of the first classical concert that Prince Charles had taken her to.

The full performance is here... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvivSXH2XGc>

... and the extract from Princess Diana's funeral, sung by Lynne Dawson and the BBC Singers, conducted by Martin Neary (director of music at Westminster Abbey at the time and director of music at Winchester Cathedral 1972 - 1988) is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqvz3EtfGAo>

Enjoy your virtual concert and sing along!

Have a good week, stay safe keep singing!

*Graham*