

Sarisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 30TH APRIL 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! I hope these newsletters continue to find you safe and well... and I hope they aren't boring you. I'm enjoying putting them together, although they take significantly more work than preparing and leading a rehearsal! Comments, improvements, suggestions always welcome.

Online singing opportunities

I hope that some of you have been able to enjoy the great singing opportunities to sing together online during this unusual time. I do encourage you to make use of some or all of them if you can!

A reminder of the "Stay and sing" led by choral conductor Hilary Campbell this coming Saturday 2nd May (yes it is May already!) Music includes Parry's coronation anthem "I was glad".

<https://www.hilarycampbell.com/stay-and-sing>

Also a reminder of the "come and sing online" led by Caius Lee (organ scholar at St. Catharine's college, Cambridge) next Saturday 9th May. Repertoire is Faure's Requiem plus a new work by Anthony Gray dedicated to those who need our prayers at this time.

<https://www.florenceisp.com/faurerequiem>

I mentioned last week about Richard Cooke (conductor of the Royal Choral Society) who is writing a weekly blog for those who need a bit of musical diversion during the corona virus emergency. The latest one is about Mozart's Piano concertos and operas.

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

A strong recommendation to support (or hopefully keep supporting) Ben England's excellent Quarantine choir YouTube channel. Since last week, Ben has done a good video on *Cantique de Jean Racine* by Faure.

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

Ben England's other YouTube channel, the self-isolation choir, continues to work through learning Handel's *Messiah*, in preparation for a unique performance on Sunday 31st May. An email from Choraline tells me that 2,900 singers have joined the choir from over 50 countries. Apparently 500 of these are tenors. Who knew that there were 500 tenors in the world?! Latest update at lunchtime on 29th April: 3,177 singers, number of tenors unknown...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMRTHf8Qqhg>

New for this week... and something a bit different is a virtual "space for peace" taking place next Monday evening 4th May. This is a chance for singers and instrumentalists of all ages and stages to make music together. It's organised by staff from Winchester University who write: *"Instead of working against any time lag the internet has, this way of music making actually utilises it to create beautiful harmonies. We will celebrate each other, our connections, our music, our singing and promote peace in these difficult times. Space for Peace: Virtual involves the singing of up to seven*

simple chants, a drone on the note D, and improvisation. Each person decides on their level of participation". If you have any questions, please join the Facebook event here:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1088551851519009/>

I hope you find these links helpful. Do let us know if you use any of them and what you thought of them! As usual, I'll put in my disclaimer that none of the people that I don't personally know any of the people who are running these sessions, this is just a result of doing some research on your behalf!

Singing regularly

I've mentioned in previous newsletters about Roger Hale's really useful YouTube channel. Here's a new video, uploaded last week, aimed at keeping the singing voice going during lockdown.

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

Voces8 in association with Apollo 5 continue their daily "live from home" sessions. Last Saturday's video was another interactive song, based on the Big Ben chimes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV33O5aHjG0>

Quiz answer

The Kyrie which I invited you to identify last week is from Beethoven's Mass in C, which was the first half of the Winchester and

County Music Festival concert at Romsey Abbey in 2013. This was a particularly memorable concert for me as it was the first festival concert that I conducted.

Beethoven 250

As 2020 marks 250 years since the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven, I thought



I would spend this week and next to give you a brief overview of some of Beethoven's choral output, starting with the Mass in C.



To find out about Beethoven's Mass in C, we travel back in time about 250 years to the Austrian empire to meet Nikolaus II,

Prince Esterházy. However, any ladies reading this would do well to meet him with caution as Nikolaus was known for his debauched lifestyle... More notably, Nikolaus is remembered for his art collection and for his role as the last patron of Joseph Haydn. During this time, Haydn composed his most famous mass settings including the Mass in time of war, performed by us in the 2018 Festival concert at Romsey Abbey.

Following Haydn's retirement, Nikolaus continued to finance other composers, including Hummel. In

1807, Nikolaus commissioned Beethoven to compose a mass, continuing the tradition of masses composed for the Princess's name day. This became the Mass in C.

The rehearsals for the premiere didn't go well and the performance wasn't a success. Prince Nikolaus didn't like the work and later wrote to a friend, "*Beethoven's music is unbearably ridiculous and detestable; I am not convinced it can ever be performed properly. I am angry and ashamed.*"

Thankfully, the work receives a better reputation today, which is right as it has lots of good qualities, including exaggerated contrasts of mood, typical of Beethoven's musical style and the gentle pastoral opening of the work, which is duplicated at the very end of the work.

A good YouTube recording plus score is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2k8ekJXk4nXo3ZNeI8sYDT4bDs-VhyhY>

(Apologies for the long URL!)

Beethoven's Hallelujah Chorus

A few years before composing the Mass in C, Beethoven composed an oratorio called "Christus am Ölberge" (*Christ on the Mount of Olives*), which portrays Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane prior to his

crucifixion. It was first performed on 5th April 1803 at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna.

The oratorio is scored for soprano, tenor and bass soloists, with standard SATB chorus and symphony orchestra. The tenor soloist takes the role of Jesus (a natural tenor role), the soprano soloist a seraph (angel) (quelle surprise) and the bass soloist has the role of Peter (why are the basses always baddies?). A complete

performance lasts just under an hour.

The best known section of this work by far is the closing chorus "Welten singen Dank und Ehre", otherwise known as Beethoven's "Hallelujah Chorus". It has been recorded and performed by many choirs.

You can hear the final chorus here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK-IHpN1HBs>

I think you'll enjoy it!

Short Quiz!

Another quick quiz this week, another picture round, just one question!

Another Kyrie, based on a famous piece of classical music... but which one?

The image shows a musical score for a Kyrie section. It is titled "Adagio" and "p" (piano). The score is for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are "Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son". The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Clue: it's a piano piece

Answer next time!

That's enough from me. Have a good week, stay safe and stay singing!

Graham