

Sarisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 4TH JUNE 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! Congratulations on getting through May... and welcome to June! As I type this, we are enjoying a slightly cooler temperature and it's been nice to have some rain!

Before I forget again, I have been meaning for ages to tell you about my other newsletter that I have been producing for my church choir, which is along the same format of these ones. If you'd like to have a look at them, they are available on the Church website here: <http://stfaith.com/566-2/>

So to this week's newsletter... and as usual, comments, improvements, suggestions more than welcome.

Online singing opportunities



Congratulations go to all who were involved with the "Messiah at Home" performance on Sunday evening, especially to Ben England and Mark Strachan who obviously put in a huge amount of work into this. If you haven't watched any of it yet, you still can here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X96ZS9_rbCE

The Self-isolation choir are currently on holiday until the start of their summer school. Further details here:

<https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/summer-school-2020>

Alongside all this, Ben continued to find the time to upload singing videos on the "Home choir" YouTube channel. Lots of videos to sing along to with different singing styles. Here are

**home
choir.uk**

two recent ones, including some "easy" Bach...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4q3DOdlOlw>

... and more Baroquery here:

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

How on earth Ben has time to do all this I will never know. I hope he is enjoying a quieter week!



Elsewhere, conductor Hilary Campbell is hosting another "stay and sing" this coming Saturday from 2pm to 4:15pm. The music choice is a slightly shorter than usual version of (the) Vivaldi Gloria (RV589):

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

I say (the) Vivaldi Gloria because he did write more than one! You can listen to "the other" Vivaldi Gloria (RV588) here (the choir get going about 6 minutes in):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkT2GGVW7JY>

The musicians of St. Edmundsbury Cathedral in Suffolk are running a virtual come and sing of Faure Requiem on Friday 12th June at 5pm. No need to use Zoom, or record yourself, or video yourself for this one, you just need to tune in to YouTube and sing along!



<https://stedscathedral.org/faures-requiem-come-and-sing/>



Finally, for this section, Roger Hale has uploaded yet another warm up video. Do have a look at these, they are a good way of keeping your singing voices going regularly:

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

Music blog

After taking time off to do decorating last week, Richard Cooke (conductor of the Royal Choral Society) has updated his blog. The latest post is about Vaughan Williams' Mass in G minor for unaccompanied choir, the first time an English composer had written an unaccompanied mass since the 16th century:



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

(Editor's note: following on from last week, I'm torn between putting together a choral classics blog or a podcast. I'm thinking a blog might be less hassle. I used to be indecisive but now I'm not sure...)

Choirs and COVID

On Monday I listened to a very interesting webinar called "The changing face of choirs - adapting to Covid-19" which was organised by the Association

of British Choral Directors. If you'd like to have a listen, its available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iGWOOQJo7o>

Orchestras online



Last week I pointed you in the direction of two different performances of Brahms Requiem. Now I've had the chance to listen to both performances, I think I preferred the one from 2001 by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. It was a close call though, as I thought the soprano soloist for the LSO (Sally Matthews) was slightly better than the NYPO, however the baritone soloist for the NYPO (Thomas Hampson) was outstanding. As we know through the Festival, it's amazing how different conductors take different approaches to pieces. Maestro Masur for the NYPO took the second movement very fast, whereas maestro Gergiev took the second movement a bit slow for my taste.

The LSO performance was only available for 48 hours after the "broadcast" date, so I'm unable to point you towards that now, but the NYPO performance is still available to watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEHIP4fUxvQ>

Choirs online

I've mentioned previously the work that Voces8 have been up to during lockdown, so I thought I might take a brief look at what other choirs have been up to.

I enjoyed the "Sing The Score" videos presented by Robert Hollingworth who is the director of the vocal ensemble I Fagiolini. They are being very daring and not offering "popular" works, so if you



are a singer who especially likes to learn something new, then these videos are for you. I really enjoyed the one on "Was ever wretch" by the 16th century composer Thomas Tomkins...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfyIp7Wvc1I>

... and I thought the tenor section might like to learn this one:

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



The Sixteen have been very busy uploading a

huge amount of material on their website:

<https://thesixteen.com/quarantine-with-the-sixteen/>

There's really too much to mention here, except to point you in the direction of the very good video on top tips for singers on breathing by Eamonn Dougan who is the Associate Conductor for The Sixteen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmY9vfDFDLc>

Choral Jazz

Following on from my musings about the Ascension Jazzmass by Rod Paton; and as promised, here are a few pieces which bring the idioms of sacred choral music and jazz together. By coincidence (I love coincidences), the composers I'm mentioning all have (or have had) significant birthdays this year!

Firstly, Bob Chilcott who celebrated his 65th birthday on the 9th April. Chilcott was a boy chorister and a choral scholar at Kings College, Cambridge. In 1967, Bob Chilcott was the treble soloist for a recording of Faure's Requiem with Sir David Willcocks and you can hear him in action here (about 17 minutes in): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYC2uyxSC60>



From 1985 to 1997 he was a tenor in the Kings Singers and performed with artists such as George Shearing, Richard Rodney Bennett, John Dankworth, Art Farmer and the WDR Big Band. These experiences and influences had a major impact on the music he composes.

In 2004, Bob Chilcott composed his "A Little Jazz Mass" for upper voices and jazz trio (piano, bass and drums). This work was so successful that a version was made for SATB choirs and published in 2006. I remember playing piano for what I guess must have been one of the first performances of the work when at University in 2005.

You can hear Bob Chilcott conducting the piece on YouTube. Each movement is a different video (there are five) so to get you started, you can listen to the Gloria here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1tf6vNkqCg> and the Agnus Dei is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1hy2joWWdk>



Next, the composer and jazz pianist Will Todd who celebrated his 50th birthday on 14th January. He is probably best known for his Mass in Blue composed in 2003 and today receives many performances across the world.

Again to get you started, here's a version of the Gloria from the Mass in Blue in a live performance from 2010 by Romsey Choral Society in Romsey Abbey, with Will Todd playing the piano: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vay_92RZrh0

Finally, in a slightly different vein, John Rutter celebrates his 75th birthday on 24th September and is one of the most famous choral composers alive today. For my choral jazz offering, have a listen to his "Birthday Madrigals", composed in 1995 to celebrate the 75th birthday of the great jazz pianist George Shearing. Here, Rutter uses texts from the era of the Elizabethan Madrigal and Shakespeare alongside musical influences from jazz, madrigals and part-songs. Here is a link to the first movement (there are five in total): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXrb2DZaLtc>



(Editor's note: I'm a cat person, so I just had to get John Rutter's cat in the newsletter!)

Virtual summer school

During June, I'll be sending you a link to a score of a short piece to have a go at! The aim is to have a "come and sing" in the style of the event organised by St. Edmundsbury Cathedral on page 2 of this newsletter. So you don't need to record yourself, just learn the notes and be ready to sing along in July! I've chosen folksong arrangements from the British Isles and we'll work our way around the country as we go. This week, we begin with the English folksong "Early one morning".

The link to the score is here: <http://www.adrianoseccomusic.it/arrang/SATB/early.pdf>

The link to a "synth audio" recording is here:

http://www.adrianoseccomusic.it/arrang/arrang_audio/earlyonemorning.mp3

Out of the goodness of my heart, I have put together learning files, which are available on the members only section of the choir website. The "synth audio" recording above is at quite a slow tempo (the score says this tempo), so the learning files are at a moderate tempo (crotchet = 84 for those of you who are missing my conductor notes on pieces).

I hope you enjoy learning these and will let you know when you'll be able to join in from your home.

And finally!

I'll leave you this week with some more Bob Chilcott. Here is his arrangement of "Waltzing Matilda" for choir and jazz trio. This is an arrangement where Matilda really waltzes along and I don't think you'll hear it the same again!

I liked this (slightly rough and ready) live recording by the Civil Service Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3Gkjc6RuiU>

Although this is more pro, I wished a few more singers would smile in this one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBbnU2OIK0s>

That's all for this week folks. I hope you're continuing to enjoy the newsletters.

Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham