

# Sarisbury Choral Society

## NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> JULY 2020

**Welcome** to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! Congratulations on making it through June... and welcome to July!

**A quick reminder** about the newsletter that I have been producing for my church choir, which is available on the Church website:

<http://stfaith.com/566-2/>

So to this week's newsletter... comments, feedback, suggestions are more than welcome.

### Online singing opportunities

With many of the opportunities that I have mentioned previously coming to a natural end, I thought that I might struggle to fill this section of the newsletter. However, there appears to be a "second wave" of online singing activity, so it gives me great pleasure to mention some newcomers amongst the regulars in this newsletter.



**LUMINOSA** A final mention this week for the virtual come and sing Faure Requiem hosted by the Luminosa Voices which takes place this coming Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> July. This is an all-day event, with sessions running from 10am - noon and 2pm - 4pm, with a "virtual pub lunch" in the middle (*I'm still struggling to get my head around how they're going to do a virtual pub lunch...*)

The day is being led by three professional singers, so there will be a lot of helpful information on vocal technique alongside learning the Faure. Apparently over 100 singers have already signed up, so you won't be on your own! Further details are here...

<https://luminosamusic.com/>

... and here's an update about the event from Rebekah Abbott who is leading the day:

<https://www.facebook.com/Luminosamusic/videos/670608070160104/>

You may remember that I've previously plugged the "stay and sing" events which have been led by Hilary Campbell. During July, Hilary is running three sessions which will operate like the "stay and sing" events, but this time, they're being hosted by Bristol Choral Society, which Hilary is the musical director of.



It looks like the first session next Wednesday (8<sup>th</sup> July) is already full, which is hardly surprising as Verdi's Requiem was on the menu. However, if you fancy a challenge, you can join the session on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July, which focuses on Handel's Dixit Dominus. Here are the details:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sing-with-bristol-choral-handel-dixit-dominus-online-event-tickets-109985058270>

**home**  
choir.uk

Last week, "old favourite" Ben England was very busy with the first week of the self-isolation choir summer school, so most of his daily singing videos on the "Home choir" YouTube channel were revision sessions. However, Ben managed to do a live session on Sunday:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUC4P-GBaLU>

Please keep on singing along to different styles. Ben is obviously giving up a lot of his life in keeping people singing during lockdown. Plus, singing daily is good for us!

The next "self-isolation" choir summer school will be up and running in the week beginning Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July. Further details of that are here:

<https://www.theseisolationchoir.com>

Elsewhere, the stay at home choir still have their Karl Jenkins projects on the go, where you can join in with movements from Adiemus and The Armed Man. There are lots of supporting materials for these once you sign up, from conductor Tori Longdon.



<https://new.stayathomechoir.com/projects>



Finally, choral conductor Jessica Norton is running some summer singing sessions, which sound like they will be very useful. Beginning on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July, these sessions will be run via Zoom. Further details here:

<http://jessicanorton.co.uk/>

It's great to see so many online singing opportunities still available over the summer; and totally coincidental that nearly all of the mentions this week are to female conductors! I haven't put my disclaimer in for a while, so I'll remedy that now by saying that I don't personally know any of the people running these sessions, this is just a result of searching on the internet on your behalf!

## Music online

Richard Cooke (conductor of the Royal Choral Society) has added to his blog since the last newsletter, where he invites us to explore the four ballades for piano by Chopin:



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



The Chichester Singers have been brave and put together some virtual videos. The choir is conducted by Jonathan Willcocks (son of the late Sir David Willcocks, mentioned in a previous newsletter as the patron saint of Christmas carol descants) who challenged the members to make a selfie-video of themselves singing their individual voice-part of Mozart Ave verum, while listening via headphones or an earpiece to the accompaniment played by their accompanist.

Apparently, many of them found it to be a rather terrifying, revealing and stressful experience; and I understand that Jonathan Willcocks was accused of conducting stealthy cyber re-auditions... but with the creative techie skills of Jonathan's son Charlie drawing 68 videos together, here is the result, which proves the enduring miracle of large-scale amateur choirs: that

the whole is so much more than the sum of the individual parts!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ5WC\\_zR6\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ5WC_zR6_4)

(Mozart's *Ave verum* does seem to be "the" piece to put together as virtual choirs!)

The new upcoming project from newsletter regulars Voces8 sounds very exciting:



Further details, including how to buy tickets are here...

<https://voces8.foundation/livefromlondon>

...and a general introduction to the festival here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er0SsfWdhZc>



I haven't given Roger Hale a mention for a while, so I will today. Since I last looked, he's produced another video about modifying your vowels when you're singing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D47G1EO6nA>

Finally, another mention for conductor, organist and composer Paul Ayres and "Paul's Informal Choir Practice Online during these Quite Exceptional Times" which becomes the acronym PICPOQET. Some really good information here, especially linking warm up ideas with Music Theory.



I recommended the "chromatic scale" video last time, so this week I'll recommend the video about major and minor keys. Do try and join in, rather than just listening to Paul doing the exercises. They're very clever and inspiring... and the humour is great too!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpkcR9iW7HQ>

(I'll also briefly mention Paul's video on the introduction of *Zadok the Priest*, which is worth a look).

## Featured composer!

At the beginning of June, I looked at choral pieces in a jazz idiom by three contemporary composers who all have milestone birthdays in 2020. This week, I'm continuing the theme of "anniversary composers" with a short focus of the life of the Italian composer **Pietro Mascagni** who was born in 1863 and died in 1945, thus it is 75 years this year since Mascagni died.



Mascagni is best known for writing the one act opera *Cavalleria rusticana*. The work was written for a competition which was open to all young Italian composers who had not yet had an opera performed on stage. Submissions were invited for a one-act opera which would be judged by a jury of five prominent Italian critics and composers. The best three would be staged in Rome. Mascagni heard about the competition only two months before the closing date; and only submitted his score on the last day that entries would be accepted! The opera made the final three and was premiered on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1890 at the Teatro Constanzi in Rome.

History records that it premiered to a half empty hall. However, the audience included not only the most authoritative music critics in the country but also Queen Margherita (the Queen

Consort of the Kingdom of Italy), who was a great music lover. The performance was a sensation, with Mascagni taking 40 curtain calls and winning the First Prize.

The opera is probably best known for the lovely instrumental Intermezzo and for the Easter Hymn, which is performed regularly by choirs as a stand-alone piece. The story of the opera is one of love, betrayal and death; and this chorus functions in the opera to show the religious devotion of the hot-blooded Sicilians!

I'm going to point you in the direction of two very contrasting versions of the Easter Hymn. I'd be interested to hear your opinions on the two versions!

Here is the choir of King's College Cambridge...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJO4hSpfCZU>

...and here is a lockdown performance from the Bergen National Opera:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJDIjQZcnn8>

As well as Cavalleria rusticana, Mascagni wrote fourteen other operas, an operetta, several orchestral and vocal works, and also songs and piano music. He enjoyed immense success during his lifetime, both as a composer and conductor.

He also composed a *Messa di Gloria*, composed in 1888 (predating Cavalleria rusticana) and very rarely heard today. Helpfully for us, you can hear the whole mass on YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX\\_n8-EIWWc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX_n8-EIWWc)

If you are a fan of Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, you will almost certainly enjoy this!

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## Summer sing

Next week (Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July), there will be **NO NEWSLETTER** as we hopefully will be having the sing-a-long instead. You don't need to worry about using Zoom or anything similar, all you need to do is to **watch the YouTube video and sing along! Don't forget your scores for the folksongs** which have been sent out via the June newsletters.

At the time of writing, I have not yet produced the video. I am still putting together the "backing tracks" which you will be singing along to, which have been produced by four singers individually from their own homes, so I am currently editing them so the singers are starting and stopping at the same time! I hope to record the video over the next few days and **hope to be able to send you a direct YouTube link by Monday evening.**

I hope all of the above makes sense! If you have any queries, do drop me an email.

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## And finally!

That's all for this week folks. I hope you're still enjoying the newsletters

I'll leave you with another virtual choir video from the Chichester singers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akyuWzOKmC4>

Stay safe and keep singing!

*Graham*