

# Salisbury Choral Society

## NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor!

I hope the newsletter continues to find you well.

Here is this week's newsletter. Comments, feedback, suggestions welcome!

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### What's On Listings

In a bid to try and keep the What's On Guide column brief, here are links to sites that I regularly mention (hopefully just click on the links which will take you to the right place online):

[Stay at Home Choir Projects](#)

[Self-Isolation Choir](#)

[Ben England Home choir](#)

A reminder of the Come and Sing "Spem in Alium" on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November hosted by the **Vasari Singers**. click [here](#) for the full details.

Following the success of the **Voces8** Live from London festival during the summer, a Christmas Festival and "Bach for Christmas" are being planned! Click [here](#) for more details.

**Opera North** are running a festive edition of "From Couch to Chorus". Click [here](#) for more information.

#### NEW LISTINGS FOR THIS WEEK:

**The Bach Choir** continue their choral workshops, led by their musical director, David Hill. Their next session takes place on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November. Further details available [here](#).

**The Sixteen** are inviting you to join them in A Choral Odyssey, which explores some of the UK's most fascinating buildings and the unique stories that bind them to our choral heritage. All the details are [here](#).

I've drawn your attention previously to the "Sing the Score" videos from Robert Hollingworth and **I Fagiolini**. Another one is [here](#), based on "Rest" by Vaughan Williams.

Finally, for something a bit different, you might like to join in with the **Cambridge Jazz Festival Choir** in a live interactive online choir session with professional singer and musician Andi Hopgood (who I remember being a fellow student at University). Why not get involved with another musical style during lockdown? Click [here](#) and sign up!

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# Singing during lockdown

Here is a reminder of some warm up videos for you to try: [click here for link to YouTube](#)

These videos are courtesy of **Susan Yarnall** who is a former singing teacher at St. Paul's Girls School, London and is currently a singing teacher at Chichester University. There are over 100 warm up videos for you to have a go at on this YouTube channel. Each one lasts about two minutes and will hopefully give you something to think about.



I hope you find these videos helpful. Please let me know if they are or aren't! As nobody contacted me about them last week, I'm assuming they're either ok or nobody has tried them out yet... or nobody reads the newsletters anymore!

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## Music for Remembrance



As we've just had Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, here are some suitable music suggestions to match! I've narrowed it down to four choral works, but as an optional extra, you might like to remind yourself of "**A World Requiem**" by John Foulds (1880 - 1939; pictured left), which I mentioned in the newsletter way back on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Yes, the newsletter has been going for that long!

Firstly, a brief look at **The Spirit of England**, which is a work for chorus, orchestra and soprano or tenor soloist. The work was composed by Sir Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934) and sets text from the 1914 anthology of poems called "The Wincing Fan" by the English poet Laurence Binyon (1869 - 1943; pictured left). The second and



third movements ("To Women and "For the Fallen") were composed in 1915 and premiered in Leeds in 1916. The first movement ("The Fourth of August") was not completed until 1917 and the complete work was first performed on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1917 in Birmingham.

Here is one of a couple of recordings on YouTube: [Spirit of England on YouTube](#). Listen out for a reference of the Demons Chorus from The Dream of Gerontius in the first movement.

If you like this, you might like to have a listen to "**With Proud Thanksgiving**", also by Elgar, which is a revised version of the third movement of Spirit of England. The revised version was commissioned in early 1920 for the unveiling of the Cenotaph in London on Remembrance Day later in the year; an occasion which incorporated the burial of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. The work was to be composed with military band accompaniment, but in the end, the work was not used for the Cenotaph ceremony. We understand that Elgar was advised not to score it for military band because it was highly unlikely to get another performance! Elgar orchestrated the work in 1921 and we believe that it was finally premiered in May 1921 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Royal Albert Hall. [Click here to listen](#).



We'll skip a generation now to hear to **Dona nobis pacem** which is a cantata by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958). Vaughan Williams is pictured left in 1917 as an officer in the Royal Garrison Artillery. On the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, at the age of 42, Vaughan Williams volunteered for military service. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and drove ambulance wagons in France and later in Greece.

The work was composed in 1936 to a commission from the Huddersfield Choral Society and was first performed at their centenary concert on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1936. Dona nobis pacem is both a prayer and a warning. On a universal level, the cantata is a prayer that mankind will mature to discard warfare and strife. In the context of the 1930s, it is a warning that the political situation of the time was sliding towards another war.

The text of Dona nobis pacem comes from a variety of sacred and secular sources. The Agnus Dei from the mass and the Bible (mostly Old Testament, but one quotation from the New: "Glory to God in the Highest") are paired with texts by the American poet Walt Whitman (1819 - 1892; pictured right) and the British



Radical and Liberal statesman John Bright (1811 - 1889; pictured left). Although Dona nobis pacem was composed in 1936, the fourth movement "Dirge for Two Veterans" dates from 1908, but Vaughan Williams, sensing perhaps that it belonged in a larger work, set it aside until it found its natural place in Dona nobis pacem.

I've tried to find you some particular points to listen out for, but there are just too many... so [just go and listen to it here!](#) I will just mention the dominance of the drums in the second and fourth movements (Vaughan Williams' hearing was damaged by the continual noise of the guns in WW1 and lead to deafness in later years) and the orchestration of the last movement, suggesting pealing of bells; possibly foreshadowing church bells that were silenced during WW2, but rang out jubilantly, as in the music here, on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945.

My final choice is a work composed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century called "**In war, resolution**". The words are taken from the title page of the "History of the Second World War" by Winston Churchill. The anthem was commissioned by the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral for the dedication of the new Winston Churchill memorial gates, designed and built by James Horrobin for the crypt of St. Paul's in 2004. The first performance was given by the Cathedral choir in the presence of three former British Prime Ministers and Churchill's daughter, Lady Soames. The music was composed by the English composer, conductor and organist [Malcolm Archer](#) (b.1952; pictured right) who was Director of Music at St. Paul's Cathedral at the time.



Here are the Convivium Singers in action, conducted by the composer. [Click here to listen](#)

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## Live Music Making?

I've mentioned in the last couple of newsletters about the Wednesday lunchtime concert series that I'm coordinating at St. Faith's Church, Havant.

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November (Armistice Day) its due to be my turn to play the organ, with members of the church choir. I mentioned last week that I might be able to live stream a concert without a live audience and that is going to be the case! By the time you receive this newsletter I will have already "live streamed", but do watch again via the church Facebook page, or at the church website:



<https://www.facebook.com/stfaithschurchhavant>

[www.stfaith.com](http://www.stfaith.com)

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

Stay safe and keep singing!

*Graham*