

Sarisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 7TH JANUARY 2021

Happy 2021! I hope the newsletter continues to find you well.

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the zoom carolling session on 16th December. I hope you enjoyed it.

Watch this space to find out if we are going to attempt any more zoom sessions.

In the meantime, here is this week's newsletter. Comments, suggestions welcome!

Online Singing Resources

For 2021, I have made a resolution to myself that the newsletter will be shorter. Therefore, I will no longer be mentioning any singing resources online in the newsletter, but just focusing my thoughts on selected choral works.

However, a host of online singing opportunities (including warm up materials) are available via links on the members section of the choir website. Do have a look at them!

If you liked that, you'll like this (part one)

I'm going to let you in on a secret, here are two comments that choral conductors hate to hear: "*oh we know this piece*" and "*oh that's ok we've sung this before*". It may well be that you have sung this piece before, but it doesn't necessarily mean that everyone has sung it before or has even heard of it!

So for the next few weeks, I'm taking as my starting point a choral work that you might know; and direct you to some other pieces that you may not know. David Mellor used to do something similar on a programme for Classic FM, which had the same title as this article, so apologies to Classic FM for stealing the idea, but it's a good one!

My starting point this week is **Faure's Requiem**, which although well known in choral music, actually has quite a long history which you might not know and was the subject of much revision, a bit like the various versions that exist of Handel's Messiah.



Gabriel Faure (1845 - 1924) began work on his Requiem in 1887, purely, in his own words, "*for the pleasure of it*", though the death of his mother in the same year and of his father two years before may well have given impetus to its composition. At the time, Faure was organist at the Madeline Church in Paris and gradually gaining recognition as a composer, although was spending much of his time teaching privately.

The first version consisted of five movements: Introit & Kyrie - Sanctus (dated 8th January 1888) - Pie Jesu - Agnus Dei (dated 8th January 1888) - In Paradisum (see photo right which shows the first page of the manuscript of this movement). The first performance took place on 16th January that year; at a funeral service at the Madeline. The Requiem continued to be performed at the Madeline in this version until the end of the 19th century, but Faure also prepared an expanded version for the use of grander occasions. More about this in a future newsletter!



So if you like Faure's Requiem, you might like to listen to his **Messe Basse** for female (or boys') voices. The Messe Basse is really another name for a Missa Brevis (short mass), although strictly speaking, a Messe Basse is a Low Mass i.e. one without music! Like the Requiem, this piece has quite a history...



The work started life in 1881 as a joint project by Faure and the French composer Andre Messager (1853 - 1929; pictured left). Of the original five movements (Kyrie - Gloria - Sanctus - O Salutaris - Agnus Dei), the Kyrie and O Salutaris were by Messager, the others were by Faure; and the original scoring was for three-part female choir with soloists, accompanied by harmonium and solo violin. Shortly after the first performance, the work was orchestrated, mainly by Messager. The final version completed in 1906 replaces the original accompaniment for organ. It omits Messager's movements (read into that as you will) and has a "new" Kyrie by Faure and a Benedictus based on the Gloria which was abandoned.

Here is a lovely recording of the final version, complete with score so you can sing along:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYHSPAgxs4IIf>

If like me, you didn't know about the first version, you probably don't know that the original collaborative version still exists under the title *Messe des pêcheurs de Villerville* (Mass of the fishermen of Villerville) and you can hear it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkkFORhjzo4>

So that's kept the Sopranos and Altos happy... but what about the Tenors and Basses? Well, let's point you in the direction of the fantastic **Messe "Cum Jubilo"** composed in 1966 by **Maurice Durufle (1902 - 1986)**. This is written for a choir of baritones, who actually sing in unison throughout and organ or orchestra. Durufle was a chorister at Rouen Cathedral Choir School and the choral plainsong tradition at Rouen Cathedral became a strong and lasting influence. With that in mind, listen out for the use of Gregorian chant throughout this piece, something that Durufle used time and time again in his compositions. I absolutely love the Kyrie and Agnus Dei in this piece... and would go as far as saying that **this piece is one of my top ten favourite choral works**. Click on the link in blue to listen (videos 14 - 18), but try to resist the temptation to listen to the Requiem, as I'll be coming back to Durufle in a future newsletter: [Durufle: Complete Sacred Choral Works - YouTube](#)



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

Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham