

# Sarisbury Choral Society

## NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor!

I hope the newsletter continues to find you well.

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### From the Archives: 2009

As I have completed writing about my personal "top ten" choral works with connections, I thought it might be good for the next few weeks, to reminisce about some of the music that we've performed together. I've decided to begin trawling the archives from **2009** for both choirs.

In January 2009, I became the conductor of Sarisbury Choral Society, after three and a bit years as accompanist and occasional conductor when my predecessor (Robin Phillips) was away. Robin announced his decision to step down in the autumn of 2008 and I recall getting a text one day from the chairperson at the time which said something like "from January you will be conducting the choir", followed by another text which said "happy with that?" The rest is history!

It's a little bit harder to write about Winchester City Festival Choir in 2009, as I wasn't involved with the choir until February 2011, but the choir website has a very extensive list of "past works" so I'm able to work with that!

2009 was an excellent year for composer anniversaries. It was the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of **Henry Purcell (1659 - 1695)**, the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of **George Frederic Handel (1685 - 1759)**, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of **Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)** and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of **Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)**. So choral conductors were really spoilt for choice when it came to choosing music in 2009!

Winchester City Festival Choir chose to feature the music of Handel and Purcell in their annual concert in **January 2009**. The chosen works were Purcell's Ode for St. Cecilia's Day and Handel's Dixit Dominus.



The Ode for St. Cecilia's Day (also known as "Hail Bright Cecilia") was composed by Henry Purcell for the 1692 celebrations of the patron saint of music. From 1683, St. Cecilia's Day (22<sup>nd</sup> November) was the occasion for an annual service at St. Bride's Church in the City of London followed by a musical entertainment, usually at Stationers' Hall (near St. Paul's Cathedral), for which anthems and odes were specially commissioned from the leading composers of the day. Purcell himself contributed [Welcome to all the Pleasures](#) and

[Laudate Ceciliam](#) in 1683 and later [Raise, Raise the Voice](#) and [Hail! Bright Cecilia](#), the grandest of all his odes, which was written in 1692. Click on the links in blue to hear the Caecilian odes!

Handel composed his [Dixit Dominus](#) (Psalm 110) in April 1707 while Handel was living in Italy. The work is scored for five vocal soloists (SSATB), five-part chorus, strings and continuo. It is most likely that the work was first performed on 16 July 1707 in the Church of Santa Maria di Montesanto in Rome (the church on the left in the photo). Click on the link in blue to listen. This is definitely not easy to sing!



The Festival jumped on the anniversary bandwagon as well for the Romsey concert in 2009. Winchester City choir were joined by (I think) Itchen Valley and Compton and Shawford to perform Handel's oratorio Judas Maccabaeus, composed in 1746. The first performance took place on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1747 at the Royal Opera House, and Judas Maccabaeus became one of Handel's most popular oratorios. The famous bit of Judas Maccabaeus [See, the Conqu'ring Hero Comes!](#) was composed during the summer of 1747 for Handel's next oratorio, Joshua. As the chorus proved to be so popular, Handel added it to Judas Maccabaeus as well.

While this was happening at Romsey, Sarisbury joined with Botley, Twyford and Overton to perform a concert of peace: "[Dona nobis pacem](#)" by [Vaughan Williams](#) (see the newsletter from 11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> November for more on this work) was paired with "[The Armed Man](#)" by [Karl Jenkins](#). I suspect that the Jenkins had been on the cards for the Festival for a while; and they finally got round to it in 2009. On the subject of forward planning, the conductors of the WCMF choirs recently had a meeting to discuss the repertoire for the concerts in 2024!



As well as composer anniversaries, it was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Sarisbury Choral Society in 2009. The choir celebrated with a special concert on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September at St. John's Church, Locks Heath. The programme featured, unsurprisingly, the music of the "2009 anniversary composers": [Haydn: Excerpts from "Creation"](#) - [Purcell: Rejoice in the Lord alway + a trumpet tune](#), courtesy of **Jack Hobbs**, teenage grandson of **Jo Hobbs** who was chairperson of Sarisbury at the time - [Mendelssohn: Verleih uns Freiden & Hear my prayer](#) - Handel: [Let the bright seraphim](#) & [Let their celestial concerts all unite](#) from the oratorio Samson + the [Hallelujah Chorus](#) for good measure!

Our soprano soloist was **Sophie Jones**, who studied A-Level Music with me at the then Taunton's College (now Richard Taunton Sixth Form College), Southampton. One of our "in house" soloists was **David Young**, who sadly passed away just before Christmas 2020. The accompanist was **Martin Penrose**, who was (and still is) Director of Music at Lymington Parish Church. Martin also joined Sarisbury Choral for their 2009 Christmas concert. This was the first time for a while that Sarisbury has used St. Paul's Church, Sarisbury Green for a concert. Since 2009, we have been regular users! Martin played the piano for this concert, while **Colin Davey** was up in the organ loft. Colin is now Director of



Music at Wimborne Minster. The programme included "[Christmas Pudding](#)" by **Jonathan Willcocks**, which if you don't know, is rather fun and worthy of reviving / learning sometime: [http://www.jonathanwillcocks.com/?page\\_id=165](http://www.jonathanwillcocks.com/?page_id=165)

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That's all for this week folks, except for an important WCMF update!

Stay safe and keep singing,

*Graham*

## Update from WCMF Re. CENTENARY SEASON 2021 – 22

### Key information to put in diaries / on calendars NOW!

<i>What</i>	<i>Where</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Time</i>
Taster Day	ZOOM	Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> January 2022	<u>5pm</u>
Joint Rehearsal I	<b>Chandler's Ford Methodist Church</b> <i>Winchester Road, Chandler's Ford</i>	Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	<u>2pm</u>
Joint Rehearsal II		Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	<u>2pm</u>
Joint Rehearsal III		Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2022	<u>7:30pm</u>
<b>MESSIAH CONCERT</b>	<b>THE ANVIL, BASINGSTOKE</b>	<b>SUNDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2022</b>	<i>tbc</i>
Centenary Social	tbc	Summer 2022	tbc

### Some Questions from WCMF for you to think about:

1. **Would you be interested in reinforcing the WCMF publicity committee to help us promote this special season?**
2. **Can you recommend people that WCMF can approach to sponsor aspects of the Centenary MESSIAH?** Specific elements include the conductor's and soloists' fees, the orchestra's expenses, the hire of the ANVIL and poster and programme provision. We will provide potential sponsors with detailed information about the concert and its participants along with ways their contribution to our costs could be acknowledged. This will be a prestigious occasion and worthy of Sponsors' attention.
3. From 2023, the Festival's next centenary will start with re-naming the Winchester & County Music Festival (WCMF). It will become the Hampshire Choral Festival (HCF). The Festival will then seek a website manager to succeed David Anderson, who has maintained the WCMF site for many years. **Might you be interested in taking on this important role?**

The Festival Secretary is looking forward to a deluge of responses: [ppellereau@gmail.com](mailto:ppellereau@gmail.com)

### A Message of Goodwill from the WCMF Chairman, Derek Beck:

*The pandemic has robbed us of two Seasons of Festival activity. It is therefore good to celebrate this major anniversary with a special one-off performance combining all of our constituent choirs. MESSIAH is both joyous AND challenging. What could be better for our musical birthday party? Please inform all your own supporters of the date and venue (Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2022) and adjust diaries and kitchen calendars accordingly.*

*WCMF wish everyone a safe and happy return to choral activities in the very near future.*