

Salisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 15TH APRIL 2021

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor!

I hope the newsletter continues to find you well.

From the Archives: 2010

We continue our reminiscing by trawling the archives from **2010** for Salisbury Choral Society and Winchester City Festival Choir.

As I mentioned previously, It's a bit tricky to write about Winchester City Festival Choir in 2010, 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!

2010 seemed to be the year for pairing well known works of the choral repertoire with works by newer composers. Winchester City Festival Choir started the ball rolling in **January 2010** by pairing Faure's Requiem alongside a setting of the Benedicite by the English composer, conductor and arranger Andrew Carter.



Andrew Carter was born in 1939 in Leicester and studied music at Leeds University before settling in York and joining the choir of York Minster as a bass songman. In 1965, he founded the Chapter House Choir, which he conducted for seventeen years, and for whom he penned many of his early published arrangements.

Andrew Carter's setting of the Benedicite was commissioned for the 1989 Singing Day in Edinburgh by the British Federation of Young Choirs. Carter was inspired by the restoration of roof bosses at the southern transept of York Minster, which had been destroyed in a fire in 1984. They depict around 60 images of creatures. The music is written to convey a child-like perspective of the wonders of Creation. Benedicite was published in 1991. In Andrew Carter's words: *Benedicite is simply the Latin title for All the world, praise the Lord. The English Prayer Book takes thirty-three verses to say so; I chose a few of the old verses and added a sprinkling of new verses to make eleven movements.*

This work brings a lot of memories back to me, as I sang in a performance of Andrew Carter's Benedicite at University in 2005. Indeed, I was slightly disappointed when I took over as conductor of WCFC that they had only recently performed it! Alas, there isn't a full recording of it available on YouTube, but there are selected movements:

Movement I: [O all ye works of the Lord](#)

Movement II: [O all ye green things](#)

Movement III: [Sun and Moon](#)

Movement IV: [Badgers and Hedgehogs](#)

Movement XI: [O let the earth bless the Lord](#)

Sadly, there isn't a recording of movement X which is all about Grannies and Grandads... or movement VI depicting Whales and Waters, which features an instrument called the Waterphone. I'll let you research about that yourselves!

WCFC continued the path of "well-loved choral works" by joining forces with Compton and Shawford, Itchen Valley and Twyford for Verdi: Requiem in Winchester Cathedral for WCMF in **May**, conducted by Derek Beck. This was the first time that I played trombone in the Festival orchestra! I seem to remember that this was a very good performance of the Verdi, with a lineup of soloists that included soprano **Clare Seaton**.



Meanwhile, Sarisbury Choral Society joined forces with Botley and Overton to perform Durufilé: Requiem and Rutter: Magnificat in Romsey Abbey, conducted by **David Burgess**. The lineup of soloists on this occasion were bass **Jimmy Holliday** (who works regularly with the BBC Singers and other leading choirs) and mezzo soprano **Elinor Carter** who, by coincidence, is the daughter of composer Andrew Carter! I waxed lyrical about the Durufilé a fortnight ago, so to discover Rutter's Magnificat, here is [the composer himself introducing the work...](#) and for a little taster, my favourite movement from the work: [Of a Rose, a lovely Rose](#).



In **December**, Sarisbury Choral headed to St. Paul's Church, Sarisbury Green for their annual concert with quite an innovative programme! In the mix were two Georgian carols (perhaps best known as "West Gallery" carols), including [There were shepherds abiding in the field](#) by one Thomas Jarman (1776 - 1861). The main work of the evening was Christus natus est by the British composer Cecilia McDowall (b.1951).



Christus natus est was composed at the suggestion of conductor George Vass and first performed by St. Albans Choral Society on 8th December 2002. The piece is scored for soloist, SATB choir and children's chorus; and like many contemporary choral works, has three different instrumentations for differing budgets! Sarisbury Choral pushed the boat out and performed alongside the **Maritime Brass Ensemble**, organist **Colin Davey** and percussionist **Alex Pope**. We didn't quite pull off having a children's choir, which was covered by members of Sarisbury Choral. Our soloist was **Fiona James**, now Fiona Jeppsson and living in Sweden! Christus natus est lasts about 15 minutes and presents a sequence of five carols, all celebrating the birth of Christ. The carols, some familiar, some not, suggest different atmospheres ranging from tenderness to exaltation. McDowall makes use of one of her own Christmas carols "Of a rose", to make instrumental links between the five traditional carols and has reconceived the harmony of all five carols.



I enjoyed reacquainting myself with this piece while writing this newsletter through this "lockdown" performance by the **University of Essex Choir**, soloist **Milly Forrest** and at the console, an organist comrade of mine, **Iestyn Evans**: [click here to listen](#). Definitely worthy of a repeat performance when we can, I think Sarisbury Choral even have a set of 40 copies ready and waiting in their music cupboard at the Community Centre!



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

Stay safe, keep singing... and don't forget the next zoom session on 12th May!

Graham