

Salisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 3RD JUNE 2021

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor!

I hope the newsletter continues to find you well.

My apologies that there has been a gap in weekly newsletters. The conductor's diary got very busy recently! I hope to offer a weekly newsletter during June. If the summer sing takes place, then I'll probably take a few weeks off from being a writer again. Watch this space!

It was very good to see familiar faces for the zoom session on Wednesday 12th May. I hope you found the session enjoyable and helpful and I hope that you found the contribution from Thomas Neisser particularly useful.

From the Archives: 2011

We continue our reminiscing by trawling the archives from **2011** for Salisbury Choral Society and Winchester City Festival Choir.

This is the first time in this series that I can write clearly about Winchester City Festival Choir as I began work with you in February 2011. Just before I started, Winchester City choir held their annual concert at the Harvey Hall, St. Swithun's School Winchester on **Saturday 29th January 2011**. The main item on the programme was Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* which formed the second half of the concert. The first half of the concert was a real mix of music; short choral gems such as Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine* alongside a handful of opera choruses ranging from Dido's *Lament* (by Purcell) and The Easter Hymn (by Mascagni). A special mention for one of the "choral gems" in the first half, which was Totus Tuus by the Polish composer Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (1933 - 2010). This piece was composed for the High Mass that Pope John Paul II celebrated in Warsaw when he returned on a third pilgrimage to his homeland in 1987. Górecki is one of those contemporary composers like Arvo Pärt and John Tavener who have returned to composing with simple harmonies, much influenced by the likes of Tallis and Byrd.



If you're not au fait with the *Messa di Gloria* mentioned above; and even if you know it well, here is an excellent performance to enjoy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW51OwAIsAA>

For **WCMF 2011**, the Festival chose two of the great choral works for the concerts. It certainly seemed appropriate to have two big works for the 90th anniversary of the Festival! Salisbury Choral Society joined forces with Overton and Compton and Shawford for JS Bach: *St. John Passion* at Romsey Abbey, conducted by **John Sutton**. The performance of the Bach had a strong line-up of soloists, which included tenor **Simon Wall** (who combines a solo career



alongside being a lay clerk at Westminster Abbey) as the Evangelist; and the very famous bass soloist **Michael George** who was Christ. As a slight aside, I tried to book Michael George for Sarisbury Choral's 70th birthday concert in 2019, but sadly he retired from singing in public in 2016. Meanwhile, Winchester City Festival Choir joined forces with Botley, Itchen Valley and Twyford to perform Haydn: Creation in Winchester Cathedral, conducted by **Derek Beck**. This was the first concert that I rehearsed WCFC for and it seemed highly appropriate to be beginning



at the very beginning with Haydn's Creation, a wonderfully joyous work! I forget who the tenor soloist was, but I think the soprano soloist was **Cecilia Osmond** and the baritone was **Jamie W. Hall** who sings regularly with the BBC Singers and until fairly recently, was conductor of Romsey Choral Society. Jamie has recently recorded Schubert's Die schöne Müllerin with Malcolm Archer at the piano and has been offering "Bathrobe Recitals" during lockdown:

<https://twitter.com/JWHallBaritone>

In **June / July**, the Winchester City Festival Choir had its annual "summer sing". We worked on two short sacred choral works, which were a setting of Tantum Ergo by the French composer Déodat de Séverac (1872 - 1971) and a lovely setting of Ave Maris Stella by the



Norwegian composer Edvard Greig (1843 - 1907). Alongside this, we had a go at movements from The Making of the Drum by Bob Chilcott (b.1955). This work was commissioned by and dedicated to Michael Smedley and the Oxford Pro Musica Singers on the occasion of their 20th anniversary concert on 22nd November 1997. More about this piece in a future newsletter!

In **October**, Sarisbury Choral really pushed the boat out for a "Come and sing Carmina Burana" at Sarisbury Green Community Centre, as part of the Voices for Hospices. For this concert, we were



joined by three soloists, **Katherine Boyce** (soprano), **Paul du Plessis Smith** (counter tenor; pictured left) who is a lay clerk at Winchester Cathedral and **Will Houghton**



(baritone; pictured right) who is a lay clerk at St. Albans Cathedral. We were also joined by two youth music groups; **Southampton Young Singers West** and the **Supersonic Percussion Ensemble**, both groups which are now a distant memory. The two pianists for the occasion were **Ian Richardson** and **Rosie Midgley**. Looking back now, I'm exhausted just thinking about this event, I must have had more energy ten years ago...

In **December**, Sarisbury Choral "kept it simple" with a programme of carols at St. Paul's Church,



Sarisbury Green, with **Martin Penrose** at the piano, **James Eaton** at the organ and a guest appearance from a soprano called **Jocelyn Somerville**. Winchester City also had a carol concert at Littleton, I think this was the first time that this happened, but I'm happy to be proven wrong about that! We had a group of brass players join us from Richard Taunton Sixth Form College (all of whom have long since graduated from University). Alongside the carols, we slotted in an airing of A Hymn to the Virgin by Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976). This was to form part of our concert in the new year. This piece is for choir and semi chorus who are designed to be distant from the main chorus, so we took advantage of the very resonant entrance hall at Littleton for the semi chorus to enjoy. The semi chorus were (I think): Julia Baker, Jane Thompson, Wendy Shone, Elspeth Brown, Charly Ryan, David Maycock, David Walton and David Thompson. Apologies if I've got that wrong!

That's all for this week folks, I hope you've enjoyed having a newsletter again this week.

Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham