

Sarisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 23RD APRIL 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! As I've had no complaints yet, I'll keep going with the newsletter format. Having said that, comments, improvements, suggestions always welcome!

Online singing opportunities

I hope that some of you have been able to enjoy the great singing opportunities to sing together online during this unusual time. I do encourage you to make use of some or all of them if you can!

Choral conductor Hilary Campbell is running another "stay and sing" on Saturday 2nd May, 2pm - 4:15pm. She is keeping with the coronation anthem theme, with a focus on Parry's I was glad. There will also be a chance to sing Parry's Jerusalem and Handel's Hallelujah chorus is thrown in for good measure!

Full details here:

<https://www.hilarycampbell.com/stay-and-sing>

Ben England continues to upload some excellent videos to get involved with. His self-isolation choir project focuses on learning Handel's Messiah and I will be encouraging you to use this YouTube channel over the next 12 months, in preparation for our performance of this in May 2021.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfocHZTpBcD1CIZ4EJ6kT4A/videos>

Do have a look at his "Quarantine Choir" YouTube channel. In particular, the Quarantine chorus videos. I personally enjoyed dipping in to the one where he was rehearsing "As torrents in summer" by Edward Elgar:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2pDlj_r7ho3iPDvOLwgsbq/videos

A new initiative to mention this time is a choral workshop of Faure's Requiem, taking place on Saturday 9th May at 2pm (the venue is your home). The event is being led by Caius Lee

who is organ scholar at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge. In addition to the Faure, you get the chance to sing in the world premiere of a new work by composer Anthony Gray who was a finalist in the BBC Radio 3 carol competition. Further details are here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/come-and-sing-faures-requiem-online-tickets-102948957102>

Voces8 and Apollo 5 get a mention in this heading this week, with an excellent singalong video of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, accompanied by the Academy of Ancient Music, complete with online score:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUcK2R2ev_g

Finally, for this section, not a singing opportunity this time but a "piece of the week" (not necessarily choral) offered by Richard Cooke who is conductor of the Royal Choral Society which is interesting reading:

<http://richardcooke.org/blog.htm>

As before, I'll put in my disclaimer that none of the people that I don't personally know any of the people who are running these sessions, this is just a result of doing some research on your behalf!

Singing regularly

More from Roger Hale again this week, his previous videos have been aimed at choir warm up activities, but here's another one specifically for

individual singers which I think you'll find helpful:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kagrh7pii6g>

Please have a look at these excellent videos by Roger Hale and do join in. Singing in a choir isn't just a hobby which you might do once a week, it's like having gym membership; the more you use the facilities (in this case your voice) the more you get out of it!

More Requiems

I'm sorry to be so morbid to talk about Requiems again! This is probably the final week that I'll be making links to Verdi and his Requiem setting. I hope it has been interesting to see these links, which we certainly wouldn't have been able to do in "ordinary time".

I was reading an article the other day about the composer and conductor Jonathan Willcocks (son of the late Sir David Willcocks who is the patron saint of Christmas carol descants). He was asked what he would recommend "complete choral novices" to listen to in order to find out why choral music is so exciting. His answer: "I'd start with Verdi's Requiem for sheer drama". So I thought I would point you in the direction of two relatively unknown Requiem settings containing sheer drama.

First up is the *Grande messe des morts* by the French Composer Hector Berlioz (born in 1803 and died in 1869). This work was composed in 1837, originally commissioned to commemorate the soldiers who lost their lives in the French revolution of 1830, but eventually receiving its premiere at a ceremony which commemorated the death of General Damremont and the soldiers killed at the Siege of Constantine in 1837.

Berlioz triumphantly trumps Verdi in terms of orchestration for this piece, including 16 timpani, two bass drums, 10 cymbals and four tam tams for a percussion section; and four brass choirs made of four trumpets and four trombones each to be positioned at the four corners of the concert venue.

The brass choirs are heard to good effect in the *Tuba mirum* heard here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vk8AyJBoi4I>

Legend has it that the conductor of the premiere, one Francois Habeneck, stopped conducting during the *Tuba mirum* while he took a pinch of snuff, prompting Berlioz to rush to the podium to conduct the rest of the work himself!

You can listen to the whole work here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxoMUCNJFh4>

My second "supersonic" listen is *A World Requiem* by the English composer John Foulds (born in 1880 and died in 1939). This piece was

composed between 1919 and 1921 and was conceived as a memorial to "the glorious dead" of all nations in the wake of World War One. The text was compiled by his wife to whom the work is dedicated. It uses words of the Requiem Mass alongside other Bible passages, extracts from *Pilgrim's Progress*, a Hindu poem and a few passages written by Foulds' wife herself.

The work received its first performance under the auspices of the Royal British Legion on 11th November 1923 at the Royal Albert Hall, with a cast of up to 1,250 instrumentalists and singers. The work was repeated for a further three years and constituted the first Festivals of Remembrance, which still take place today. After a long period of neglect, the work was revived by the BBC, in conjunction with the Royal British Legion, with a performance at the Royal Albert Hall on 11th November 2007.

As already mentioned, this is another Requiem setting which calls for large forces and, like Berlioz and Verdi before him, John Foulds employs off stage brass. They are heard to good effect in the fifth movement of the first part titled "Audite" where the baritone soloist calls for all the peoples of the world to live in peace with one another. Foulds does this by having the baritone soloist calling people from the four corners of the world, with an accompanying fanfare

from a different set of brass players, positioned in the four corners of the concert venue.

You can hear this here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JXs-Vz75w>

You can hear the full work here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfqJ58yjHJ4>

As the text is not as familiar in this piece, you'll probably find it helpful to have either a copy of the words:

<https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/CH5058.pdf>

or if you fancy it, you can have a look at the vocal score:

[https://imslp.org/wiki/A_World_Requiem,_Op.60_\(Foulds,_John\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/A_World_Requiem,_Op.60_(Foulds,_John))

I think that's enough comparisons to Verdi and his Requiem, so I'll focus on a different composer and piece next time!

Short Quiz!

A quick quiz this week, this is a picture round with two questions.

Who composed this Kyrie written below?

Which Mass setting does it come from?

The image shows a musical score for a Kyrie section. It includes parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Basso, and Piano. The tempo is marked "Andante con moto assai vivace quasi Allegretto ma non troppo." The lyrics are "Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, e - lei - son, e - lei - son, e - lei - son!". The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *cresc.*, and *f*.

Clue: we have sung it in my time as conductor.

Answer next time!

Until then, have a good week and stay safe.

Graham