

Sarisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 28TH MAY 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! I often think between newsletters that I'll struggle to have enough information for the next one, but this time, I have so much content that I'm deliberately leaving out things for future editions! As always, comments, improvements, suggestions more than welcome.

Online singing opportunities

This section starts with the usual plug for the great work that Ben England is doing during this period of lockdown.

Ben continues to upload singing videos on nearly a daily basis via his "Home choir" YouTube channel.

Ben's latest Quarantine Chorus video is on the "et in terra pax" from Vivaldi's Gloria.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6FmCQAIbTo>



This Sunday is the official online performance of Handel's Messiah sung by the self-isolation choir, which I hope

**home
choir.uk**

some of you are members of! Even if you're not, do tune in as I'm sure it will be a great occasion, especially as Ben has brought together a very impressive team of soloists.

The final full choir rehearsal was on Monday and concentrated on some of the trickier moments in Messiah (hint, it's all a bit tricky)!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMrobshWWz4>

The performance on Sunday will be available at the self-isolation choir website, rather than the YouTube channel.

<https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/>

Another warm up video from Roger Hale, this is one to help you get a richer tone with your singing voice (health warning: this one



goes very high, so do drop an octave when you've had enough!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaWk-ZYOAqE>

I haven't given *Voces8* a plug for a while, so they get two mentions this week! The first is this great interactive video which I encourage you to have a go at. The piece is called "Blake's Bossa" and its led by Blake Morgan who is one of the tenors in *Voces8*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVI4Serxtqk>

Orchestras online



Last week I introduced you to the wealth of resources available on the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra website:

<https://cbsoco.uk/cbsostaytuned>

Last week, I focused on a couple of things in the "watch" section of the website. This week, I'll point you in the direction of the "listen" section where there are very interesting podcasts to sample. As I'm typing this, I'm listening to one of "The Classical Top 5" podcasts.

<https://cbsoco.uk/cbsoco-recommends-podcasts>

(Editor's note: I'm considering putting together a choral classics podcast...

If you think that's a good idea, then let me know. If you think it's a terrible idea, let me know. If nobody lets me know, I'll either abandon the idea, or I may inflict it upon you anyway!)

I promised that I would remind you about the London Symphony Orchestra online resources. Their next two upcoming concerts look like they will be well worth a watch.



On Sunday 31st, if you're not involved with the self-isolation Messiah, LSO are streaming an archive performance of "The Damnation of Faust" by Berlioz at 7pm.

On Thursday 28th, they are streaming an archive performance of Brahms Requiem at 7:30pm.

If you'd like to watch one or both of these concerts, don't forget that they are only available for 48 hours after first broadcast.

<https://lso.co.uk/whats-on/alwaysplaying.html>



By sheer luck, on Monday evening I happened to come across another performance of Brahms Requiem which was being streamed from the archive of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (Monday being Memorial Day in the US). The concert was originally broadcast on the 20th September 2001 and it was the first concert that they gave following the tragedy of 9/11. It seems appropriate that this should be available again during these times.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEHIP4fUxvQ>

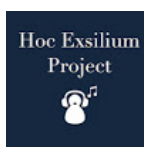
I'm sorry if this is a bit of a Brahms overload for you, but it doesn't do any harm to listen to contrasting versions of the same piece. I would be interested to hear your views on the conducting styles in both videos!

Last week's "pieces of the week"

Following my notes about two works suitable for Ascension, a feast of recordings of the motet called "Coelos ascendit hodie" by Charles Villiers Stanford became available!

My personal favourite was this new one, painstakingly put together by Sachin Gunga, who is Sub Organist of Portsmouth Anglican Cathedral.

This is the third of his "Hoc Exsilium Project" recordings and I strongly recommend having a look at the previous two videos as well.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4GydpvDpZk>



Last week I also mentioned the rarely heard "Ascension Jazzmass" by Rod Paton and I lamented

the fact that there are no recordings or videos available online so I can share it with you. Lo and behold, since writing this newsletter, I have had by complete coincidence a conversation via Facebook with Rod Paton and a recording is now available online!

<https://soundcloud.com/user3925558/sets/ascension-jazzmass?fbclid=IwAR29LCK31PMgsJgblL1Q5wDjxDJ4VvzPUmsVXE1bD8FnrpACI6CdhgCXeJY>

Apologies that the URL is very long!

I said that I would write more about the use of jazz in sacred music (especially masses) this week, but space does not permit me! I'll save it for another day.

Special guest!

We are very privileged this week to hear from **Graham Wili** who is the Music Director of Berkhamsted Choral Society, Chorleywood Choral Society and the Leconfield Singers. He is also director of English Philharmonia and is a frequent guest conductor at home and abroad.



Where did you study music?

"I studied at the Royal Northern college of Music".

Who are your greatest musical inspirations?

"Singer Fritz Wunderlich; incredible technique and beautiful sound with amazing musicality... and conductor Colin Davis; inspirational, kind and wonderful!"

As a conductor, in a performance your back is to the audience. Are you still able to feel a sense of communication with your listeners?

"Yes, you have to communicate to the audience through those you conduct. So you need to inspire and direct your singers and instrumentalists to communicate the music to the audience".

How do you persuade your singers to engage with the audience?

"Know the music well and be technically on top of it. Understand the music and where it is going both each phrase and overall geography of the piece. Eyes up and share / communicate the emotion of the music to audience with facial expression - be involved."

Which choral pieces would you take to a desert island?

"Elgar: The Dream of Gerontius, Walton: Belshazzar's Feast, Verdi: Requiem, Mozart: Requiem, Pearsall: Lay a garland, Lauridsen: Sure on this shining Night... I could go on and on there are so many!"

How can we encourage people to join choirs and maintain membership?

"Constantly keep in the public eye. Regular open workshops and bring and sings.



Make concerts accessible - aim advertising at families and those you would like to join. Have a varied and interesting programme of concerts and events. Always looking to do something a little different from time to time, that will attract audiences. Summer tours have always gone down well and a great social event."

Many thanks to Graham for his time in answering my questions. Maybe we could do a joint collaboration with his three choirs one day.

Here are links to some of Graham's many jobs!

English Philharmonia: <http://www.englishphilharmonia.co.uk/>

Berkhamsted Choral Society: <https://berkhamstedchoral.com/>

Chorleywood Choral Society: <https://chorleywoodchoral.co.uk/>

Leconfield Singers: <http://www.leconfieldsingers.co.uk/>

And finally!

I said that I would give Voces8 a second plug... so to finish this week, you might like to watch a recent Voces8 interview with the soprano Dame Emma Kirkby:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cacVIoDw7Uw>

That's all for this week folks. I hope you're continuing to enjoy the newsletters.

Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham