

Salisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! I hope this newsletter finds you well.

Here is this week's newsletter, which covers music from the Renaissance to the Beatles.

As ever, comments, feedback, suggestions welcome!

What's On Listings



The stay at home choirs are inviting you to register for their festive winter project: <https://new.stayathomechoir.com/projects/christmas>

The self-isolation choir are up and running with their "Elijah at Home" project: <https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/elijah> Don't forget to have a good browse at the wealth of singing opportunities just waiting for you to participate in, including a Requiems at Home project: <https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/requiems-at-home> and a chance to participate in a performance of Mahler's wonderful Resurrection Symphony: <https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/symphony-no-2-mahler>



Ben England continues a wide variety of singing videos on the Homechoir YouTube channel and has mixed it up a bit for the autumn with some new episodes. For a change, I thought I'd give the "Fun Friday" video a plug. It helps to have a cockney accent for this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWa5uIYxCSU>

Here's a reminder of the very exciting online festival titled "Live from London" featuring some of the very best vocal ensembles. This Saturday (26th), is the turn of Stile Antico with a programme titled "Treasures of the English Renaissance": <https://voces8.foundation/the-sixteen>



The St. Martin's Music Festival continues with an online concert that features a performance from the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields:

<https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/whatson-event/reconnect-overcoming-distance/>

A reminder of an online workshop for all ages, which will be led by members of Tenebrae and their conductor and artistic director, Nigel Short...

<https://www.tenebrae-choir.com/events/2020/10/18/calling-all-singers>



... and a reminder to get involved with a come and sing Handel's Messiah with the London Handel Orchestra conducted by Laurence Cummings:

<https://www.london-handel-festival.com/show/virtual-come-and-sing-messiah/?event=18001>

Finally, this week's new singing opportunity comes from the University of Southampton Voices (in association with Vox Holloway) who are running online rehearsals on Harvey Brough's arrangement of "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band". More information available here... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twszSTndMBY> ...and here: <https://voXHolloway.com/2019-programme/>



Brahms Requiem (part three)

As we discovered (or rediscovered) in the last exciting episode, Brahms decided not to use the familiar Latin text of the Requiem Mass, but instead chose appropriate texts from the Bible. This places this work in a unique position within the tradition of choral works with orchestral accompaniment that were composed in the 19th century. Brahms' major predecessors



Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann all expressed their religious sentiments in music through the Latin texts of the Mass or Requiem. Robert Schumann (pictured left with Brahms) composed large scale choral music using secular texts; and actually had the idea of composing a German Requiem as a future project; an idea that Brahms claimed to know nothing about!

To find out where Brahms' inspiration came from, we have to go back to the Protestant church music of the Baroque period. One of his major influences was the German composer and organist Heinrich Schütz who is regarded as the most important German composer before Johann Sebastian Bach, as well as one of the most important composers of the 17th century.



Schütz was born in 1585 in a town called Köstritz, which is now known as Bad Köstritz in Eastern Germany. The house where he was born is now known as the Heinrich Schütz House which is now a museum about his life and work (see picture left). Schütz began his musical studies as a boy chorister; and then went on to study law at the university town of Marburg before going to Venice in 1609 to study music with Giovanni Gabrieli for three years. Schütz was subsequently organist at the city of Kassel in Germany from 1613 to 1615.

In 1615, Schütz moved to Dresden to work as court composer to the Elector of Saxony. In 1628 he went to Venice again, where he met and studied with Claudio Monteverdi. In 1633 he was invited to Copenhagen to compose the music for wedding festivities there, eventually returning to Dresden in 1635. He made a return visit to Denmark in 1641, returning to Dresden in 1648.

In 1655, Schütz accepted an ex officio post as Kapellmeister at the town of Wolfenbüttel. He retired to live with his sister in Weißenfels. However, the Electoral Court often called him back to Dresden. He died in Dresden in 1672. His house in Weißenfels is now a fine museum of his life (see picture right).



Heinrich Schütz anticipated Brahms' choice of text that the latter used for his German Requiem. At the time of Schütz, these texts would have been very familiar to church musicians. Here are some Schütz examples:

Here is his setting of Die mit Tränen säen (they that sow in tears shall reap in joy), words which appear in the first movement of Brahms Requiem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W318-vpOus8>

Here is his setting of Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen (how lovely are thy dwellings), words which appear in the fourth movement of Brahms Requiem:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PduhcZ35TxY>

Here is his setting of Selig sind die Toten (blessed are the dead), words which appear in the final movement of Brahms Requiem... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j7F5R44ObA>



... and here is another setting of Selig sind die Toten, which is combined with the words of the song of Simeon from the Gospel of Luke (Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace). This is the third and final movement of his "Musikalische Exequien" (funeral music), composed for the funeral service of Count Henry II of Reuss-Gera (pictured left): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77e1NgPjRbQ>

Another of Brahms' major influences was, unsurprisingly, Johann Sebastian Bach and I will point you in the direction of some examples and comparisons in next week's newsletter.

Talking of Brahms...

As the Winchester City Festival Choirs forthcoming performance of the Brahms Requiem is cancelled, why not join in with them and rehearse it anyway?

Here is the second in a series of Brahms Requiem rehearsals which were put together earlier in lockdown by Simon Halsey who is chorus master of the London Symphony Chorus and the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus, amongst other work with choirs here and in Europe.



In this video, Simon Halsey takes you through the second movement of the Brahms. I'll point you in the direction of the other videos over the next few weeks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8LznrC-AbY>

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

Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham

PS. Don't forget the choir AGM later today!