

St. Faith's Church Choir

NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 12TH JUNE 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the organist!

Thank you to those of you who have sent me feedback about the newsletters.

A few of you have apologised that you haven't managed to look at all of the links.

No apologies needed! Feel free to dip in and out of the links as much as you want.

A quick reminder that I have been producing a newsletter for my two other choirs, which is along the same format of these ones. If you would like to have a look at them, they are available on the website of my "Thursday" choir here:

<https://www.sarisburychoralsociety.com/grahams-corona-chronicles/>

So to this week's newsletter... and as ever, comments, improvements, suggestions are more than welcome!

Online singing opportunities



William Saunders from Bury St. Edmunds continues his Saturday morning hymn practices. If 10am on a Saturday isn't a good time for you, the sessions are always available to watch again at any time. William has chosen another lovely selection of hymns this week, so do tune in if you can.

<http://william-saunders.info/2020/05/21/hymn-practice-congo-live-on-saturday-mornings/>

Richard McVeigh continues to offer hymns and organ music at your request via his "Beauty in Sound" YouTube channel every Sunday evening from about 5pm. Again, if 5pm on a Sunday evening isn't a convenient time for



you, it's available on YouTube to watch again whenever you like. Richard's sessions are good ones to dip in and out of, as they generally last about three hours! It requires a lot of concentration and stamina to play the organ for that long!

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UckdRXZZXDmLJM6XBnUpIooq>

Editor's note: many, many years ago (as in 25 years ago) I did a sponsored organ play for ten hours, but that's another story!



The RSCM continue to offer a wealth of resources to use during lockdown, including a "Hymn of the Day" on their YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/RSCMCentre/videos>

This Sunday is RSCM Music Sunday; and as previously advertised in the newsletter, the RSCM are hosting special service with lots of music at 6pm this coming Sunday.



You will be able to watch the service here...

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

... and will be available to watch at any point after Sunday evening.

Here's a reminder of the Big Easter Evensong that the RSCM put together:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2Oo1tUSQos>

Live streamed services

(some personal recommendations)

I'm continuing to enjoy spending time dipping in to services during this period of lockdown.

Following on from my ramblings last week about the "Hymn to the Trinity" by Tchaikovsky, a couple of church choirs put together some virtual versions of this anthem. I liked this version, sung by members of the choir of St. Michael and All Angels, Bassett (Southampton)...

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

... and here's a link about the choir:

<http://nsab.org.uk/music-at-st-michaels/>



The chosen anthem for Trinity Sunday from members of the choir of Chingford Parish church in NE London, was Locus iste by the 19th century composer Anton Bruckner...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GoOtqgYCN4>

... and here's a link about their (substantial and inspirational) church choir:

<http://parishofchingford.org.uk/music>

This weeks "choral classics" from St. Stephen's Church in Walbrook featured music and readings on the theme of the Trinity, presented by The Rev Stephen Baxter. The musical menu includes what I think might be a favourite hymn at St. Faith's (certainly one of Tom's favourites anyway), plus a lovely setting of the Sanctus.



<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=264627287929961>



This weeks "Great Sacred Music" service from St. Martin-in-the-Fields in

London is on the theme of prayer. Rev Dr Sam Wells provides wise words alongside St. Martin's Voices, who you can see as well as hear for the first time!

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2778901149014168>

I virtually enjoyed going to Christ Church, Southgate (North London) for their Choral Evensong...



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



... and to York Minster for their choral evensong, with a great sermon by the Dean of York, the Right Reverend Dr Jonathan Frost. (*proof that I do listen to online sermons. No spoilers here though!*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4N32ZQ5nJ4>

Both of these choral evensongs contain the anthem "I saw the Lord" which is a vivid depiction of verses from the sixth chapter of the book of prophet Isaiah. The music is written for double choir, which means two choirs of four voice parts, with each choir on either side of the choir stalls (so a bit of a choral sing off). The music is composed by John Stainer who we know better as the composer of "The Crucifixion". If you like (or more than like) Stainer's Crucifixion, then you'll enjoy this!





Finally, slightly breaking with tradition again, a mention for a reflection about Music by Rev Canon Dr Jo Spreadbury who is the Precentor at Portsmouth Cathedral. Canon

Jo talks about the joy of singing and encourages us to sing every day, even during lockdown. Something I can fully endorse!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntrmyRk8hwg>

Anthem of the week

As the Gospel reading for this Sunday is about Jesus sending out the twelve disciples to proclaim the gospel, the anthem for this Sunday would have been "Go forth into the world in peace" by John Rutter. This anthem was composed in 1988 and dedicated to the choir of Clare College, Cambridge on the eve of their first tour to America.



For more about Rutter's connection with Clare College, see page 2 of the newsletter published on 8th May.

The words are from the Book of Common Prayer:

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen.

More about the history of the prayer here: <https://johnian.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/go-forth-into-the-world/>

Here are the choir of Clare College Cambridge themselves singing it:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Yk5V_jUys

(Editor's note: I'm a cat person, so I just had to get John Rutter's cat in the newsletter!)

Special Guest!



This week, I posed my infamous six questions to Martin Penrose. Martin is organist and choir master at St. Thomas' Church, Lymington. In addition to this, Martin tours Britain with the cellist Philip Daish-Handy and is regularly a guest entertainer on P&O cruise ships as part of the Nova Foresta Duo. Martin is also involved in a school choir, runs a school orchestra, accompanies, teaches and plays for weekday services around Hampshire.

About ten years ago, Martin and I used to teach Music in a Primary School in Southampton and we used to overlap each other, hence our connection!

Where did you study music?

"After what would now be considered a gap year, working for the BBC Music Library in London, I was going to take up an offer from Trinity College of Music to study organ and piano accompaniment. However, my mother persuaded me instead to follow in the footsteps of my father and train as a journalist. So, all my musical training was done privately - organ lessons with Jeremy Blandford and piano lessons with Margaret Radnor. I gained diplomas from both Trinity College and the RCO and took up music full time thirteen years later in 1991".

Who are your greatest musical inspirations?

"I have always greatly admired the organ playing of the late Peter Hurford and I very much enjoy the piano playing of Angela Hewitt and Kathryn Stott".

As organists, we're often hidden away from sight! Are you still able to feel a sense of communication with the congregation?

"The instrument I play regularly is in a west end gallery, so I often spend most of the service on my own, although I generally go downstairs to accompany the choir on our small chamber organ during the Communion. People are often kind enough to tell me that they've enjoyed the music when we meet for coffee after the service".

As a director of music, are you still able to play the organ for services or are you always conducting and choir training?

"I train the choir, but I'm lucky enough to have a very talented assistant choir mistress who conducts for me, so I generally play for all the services. I 'keep my hand in' by conducting unaccompanied pieces from time to time".

Which choral pieces would you take to a desert island?

"Dyson in D and Wesley's 'Blessed be the God and Father'".

How can we encourage people to join a church choir and maintain membership?

"I think the best way is regularly performing music to the best of our ability, and I find that draws people in".

Many thanks to Martin for his time in answering my questions!

Here's a link about the church choir at Lymington: <https://lymingtonchurch.org/choir/>

And finally!

This coming Sunday will be the thirteenth Sunday since the church choir has been in lockdown. Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity have all been and gone. We are, I'm sure, all missing singing and fellowship together on a Friday evening and a Sunday morning.

The Government have today outlined "guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic". In the guidance, it states that any "practices such as choir practice" are not currently permitted. It also states that "activities such as singing and/or playing instruments should be avoided". Which all sounds a bit depressing...

It's not all complete doom and gloom though. As far as organists are concerned, from tomorrow we are "able to use buildings for practice with appropriate social distancing". I also welcome the next sentence: "The government is continuing to work on scientific and medical advice around how such activities (singing) can best be managed safely and further guidance will follow on this shortly". So I believe that there is a light at the end of the tunnel; and with continued patience the time will come when we are able to sing and worship together again. I look forward to that day, but only when its safe! I hope that the newsletters are helping to keep us together.

As Canon Jo says in her reflection: **go on, try singing something today!**

Stay safe everyone... and keep singing!

Graham

