

St. Faith's Church Choir

NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 26TH JUNE 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the organist!

I hope these newsletters are continuing to find you well... and I hope that they are helping to keep a link with each other. I'm still waiting for a complaint about them, which continues to be unnerving... maybe that's because nobody's reading them!

So to this week's newsletter... comments, feedback, suggestions are more than welcome.

Online singing opportunities

As mentioned last week, William Saunders from Bury St. Edmunds has finished his Saturday morning hymn practices for the time being, however they are still available to watch if you would like to.

Richard McVeigh seems to be still going strong with a three hour hymns and organ music session every Sunday evening starting at 5pm via his "Beauty in Sound" YouTube channel.



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkdRXZZXDmLJM6XBnUpIoog/videos>



The RSCM are continuing to offer a "hymn for the day" via their YouTube channel:

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

Live streamed services

(some personal recommendations)

This weeks "choral classics" from St. Stephen's Church in Walbrook takes the theme of "the gifts of God". Rev Stephen Baxter provides the words from what I guess is his lovely garden. If you have been following these broadcasts regularly like I have, you might notice how much his hair has grown (I know the feeling)! One of the hymn tunes featured is by Dr Francis Jackson who was director of music at York Minster from 1946 to 1982 and is still going strong at the tender age of 102.



<https://www.facebook.com/ststephenec4n/videos/2706485636237409/>



This weeks "Great Sacred Music" service from St. Martin-in-the-Fields is on the theme of Baptism. Rev Dr Sam Wells

offers wise words (with I'm assuming another lovely rectory garden in the background) alongside St. Martin's Voices, who provide the music. This week is a bumper edition which includes two hymns and two anthems. I really liked the worship song at the end, especially the key change (*Editor's note: yes, I do like some worship songs and dislike others, in the same way that I like some hymns written in a traditional style and dislike others*) and Canon Tom will like the chosen tune for the first hymn.

<https://www.facebook.com/stmartininthefields/videos/3185849654815129/>

York Minster continues to offer weekly choral evensongs. Last Sunday, the Magnificat was sung to the setting by Stanford in the key of G, which is the one with the lovely soprano solo (*Editor's note: Stanford in G was on my list to sing at a come and sing evensong in 2020. It remains on the list for 2021!*)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OhdL-YLLgQ>



I also dipped into another "socially distanced" choral evensong from members of St. James' Church choir, Malden, Surrey. I liked the setting of the Magnificat by Margaret Rizza and they premiered a new anthem by Christopher Gower who was director of music at Portsmouth Cathedral from 1968 to 1977, then at Peterborough Cathedral from 1977 to 2004.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPp5NX3D5SI>

On Wednesday, the church celebrated the birth of John the Baptist and as a result, a couple of virtual recordings appeared of the anthem "This is the record of John" by the English Renaissance composer Orlando Gibbons. Here is one of them, put together by John Hosking who is Director of Music at Holy Trinity church in Southport. (*True story: when I was at University in Colchester, in a conversation about where I was originally from, I was asked if Southport was halfway between Southampton and Portsmouth...*)



<https://www.facebook.com/jhoskingorganist/videos/10163619851860562/>

Anthem of the week

The anthem for this Sunday would have been a setting of the words "Christ has no body now but yours". The prayer was written by the 16th century saint, Teresa of Avila.



The music for this anthem is by the conductor and composer David Ogden. David is director of music at Westbury-on-Trym Parish Church in Bristol; and outside of lockdown, is much in demand as a conductor and director of choral and church music workshops, courses and festivals in the UK and beyond. David has worked extensively with the RSCM, including being the conductor of the RSCM Millennium Youth Choir from 2005 to 2014; and has also worked extensively with the BBC, including conducting, arranging and advising on "Songs of Praise" and "Call the Midwife".

David composed "Christ has no body now but yours" in 2002 for the 75th anniversary of the RSCM. Apparently, he completed it the night before a two-week cycling trip in India and it was faxed to RSCM Press from Heathrow airport!

Here is a recording of the anthem: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoV6R6qk4vY>

Special Guest!

Last week, our special guest was someone at the start of their musical career. This week, I've asked slightly different questions to organist David Woodman who is based in Southampton and has just reached a musical milestone!

When did you start to play the organ?

"I started at St. James Road Methodist Church, Shirley, Southampton on the first Sunday in June 1960. I had been learning the organ for approximately two years prior to that date under the then organist of the church. He was unfortunately killed in a bad road accident while on holiday. He told me before going away that I was now good enough to play for my first service. I am still on the organ stool and **celebrated 60 years as organist** on Sunday June 7th this year. A letter of congratulation from Professor Ian Tracey (Liverpool City organist) was a great surprise for me, which was read out in our streamed service on 7th June. After 60 years I still regard it as a huge privilege to be organist at such a wonderful church".



Who are your greatest musical inspirations?

"A difficult question, but without doubt the great J.S. Bach for his incredible organ music, and from the choral repertoire I would have to pick Edward Elgar for his masterpiece 'The Dream of Gerontius', and J.S. Bach for the 'St. Matthew Passion'. The reason I joined Southampton Choral Society in 1986 was to sing these great works".

Is playing for a Methodist service very different to playing for an Anglican service?

"There is not a great difference playing for a Methodist service as against an Anglican service; the hymns are very similar. The only real differences that I have noted when playing for an Anglican service are the sung psalms and chants, which sadly we don't have in the Methodist Church. Our Communion services are all said, as against a precentor chanting the creed etc., and a choir joining in with responses".

Could you tell us a bit about your work with a local church organ builder?

"In 1997 after finishing full time work early with Southern Water, I was offered a job by Griffiths and Cooper who were then registered at Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight to install solid state organ systems in organs that were being rebuilt or cleaned and overhauled. I had previously had some experience with low voltage organ wiring when I was assisting Tony Foster-Waite. Latterly until three years ago I worked for Griffiths and Co, Portsmouth after the split up of Griffiths and Cooper.

The work involved wiring many multiway cables and connections for Keys, Stop Control knobs, pedal boards, pistons, stand-alone wind chests and many other bits and pieces. Often the numbers of connections in cables would add up to hundreds of which of course all had to be in the correct place, as well as wiring up all the connections for the digital hardware and software. I had the privilege to work in many churches all around the country and in the Channel Islands. Local churches have included my own church, Avenue St. Andrews URC Southampton, St. James West End, Southampton, St. Mary's Alverstoke and Wesley Grove Methodist in Jersey. The largest organ I have worked on was at St. Paul's Knightsbridge, which has a large 4 manual instrument by Father Willis in which I installed the latest digital system.

The latest system I installed was the very latest Solid State Logic Multisystem II at my own church during the lockdown period, finishing it in time for Easter Sunday morning. What a joy to sit in an empty church, open the doors and let the Easter hymns drift out for anyone passing by to hear".

Which choral pieces would you take to a desert island?

"I was Glad (Parry), Messiah (Handel), The Dream of Gerontius (Elgar), the settings of the Requiem by Brahms and Mozart... the list is endless!"

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

"I think possibly by making the choir's programme as interesting and fulfilling as possible. Balancing the repertoire between well-known pieces and newer compositions. The choir has to be a family, however large or small with everyone feeling that they really belong. Humour needs to be balanced with the serious side, so that choir practice is enjoyable for all".

Many thanks to David for his time in answering my questions and many congratulations to him on reaching such a musical milestone!

In his answers, David refers to Professor Ian Tracey who is the Liverpool City Organist. Over the last 25 years, Ian Tracey has been down to give an (almost) annual organ recital at David's church, hence the connection! I remember going to some of the recitals as a teenager, long before I got to know David and his wife Liz.



Here's a video of David blowing the cobwebs away on Easter Day:

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

Here is the video with the letter of congratulation from Ian Tracey (about 43 minutes in):

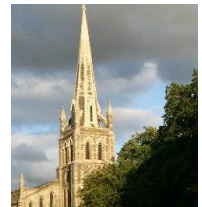
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgXIzho1_SA

To read more about the very busy church that David plays for: <https://stjamesroad.co.uk/>

And finally!

I'll give the last word this week to members of the choir of Chingford Parish Church, who contributed a virtual recording of "The Lord bless you and keep you" for their service last Sunday:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quPGSZ1xEnQ>



You might also be interested to see members of the same choir coming to the rescue of the director of music when the toilet in the church vestry recently ran out of toilet roll... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azUu6wITJM8>

Stay safe everyone... and keep singing!

Graham