

St. Faith's Church Choir

NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 10TH JULY 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the organist! I hope this newsletter continues to find you well, even if you're reading it in the hairdressers or the pub!

Here is this week's newsletter... as ever, comments, feedback, suggestions welcome!

Hymn singing



A quick reminder that Richard McVeigh continues his live request show of hymns and organ music every Sunday evening starting at 5pm via his "Beauty in Sound" YouTube channel...

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkdRXZZXDmLJM6XBnUpIooq/videos>

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

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



Canon Alison Kennedy from Chelmsford Cathedral in Essex continues her "hymn of the week" series, with a hymn called "Let us build a house" by Marty Haugen:

<https://chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk/uploads/church-at-home/let-us-build-a-house.pdf>

Live streamed services

(some personal reflections and recommendations)

Last Saturday was the first day that public worship was able to return to places of worship. Some jumped at the chance at getting in there straight away (Portsmouth

Cathedral had five back to back Eucharists!) Others, are taking a more cautious approach and reopening for private prayer and public worship when they're ready. Whatever path is chosen, I hope that live streamed services continue for the foreseeable future, as many places of worship have grown their congregations through it!

To mark the reopening of Chelmsford Cathedral, the Dean and canons held a vigil service and lit their paschal candle for the first time, which is normally done at Easter:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8b-qUpDndg>

I enjoyed hearing a variety of anthems from various choirs last Sunday.



Members of the choir of Chingford Parish Church (NE London) recorded "Above all praise and majesty" by Mendelssohn, which is often sung at Ascension or the feast of Christ the King:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LZYRY_q1dA

Members of the choir of St. Michael and all Angels, Bassett (North



Southampton) recorded "Oculi omnium" by the Irish composer Charles Wood (I also recommend the whole service from this church):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DJmvcpuU1Q>



Members of the choir of Christ Church, Southgate (North London) recorded "Beati quorum via", a beautiful anthem by another Irish composer, Charles Villiers Stanford:

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

I've been very impressed with the places of worship who have managed to put together choral evensongs during lockdown. One such example is St. Wulfram's Church, Grantham.

The anthem was the setting of "They that go down to the sea in ships" by Herbert Sumsion, which I wrote about in a previous newsletter:



<https://www.facebook.com/stwulframs/videos/594609741479364/>

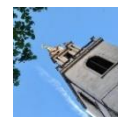


Even further afield than Grantham, York Minster put together a

special choral evensong commemorating the founding of the NHS:

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

The theme for this weeks "choral classics" from St. Stephen's Church in Walbrook is "healing".



Rev Stephen Baxter is back out in the garden this week to present, with the lovely voices of the choral scholars (who aren't in his garden) singing music by Malcolm Archer and Margaret Rizza plus a hymn from the Iona community (with a sparkling organ part).

<https://www.facebook.com/ststephenec4n/videos/915790165497780/>



The theme of this weeks "Great Sacred Music" service from St.

Martin-in-the-Fields is "holiness". Rev Dr Sam Wells presents and St. Martin's Voices provide the music, which includes music by Schubert, Parry and Stanford alongside a hymn to the tune "blow the wind southerly".

<https://www.facebook.com/stmartininthefields/videos/3366224240288617/>

Anthem of the week

With this Sunday's Gospel reading being the parable of the sower, the anthem for this Sunday would have been a repeat performance of "Thou visitest the earth" by the English composer and organist Maurice Greene. We last sang the anthem at the 9:30 service on Sunday 16th February, so I felt it was time to recycle it, especially as Mac was indisposed last time and wasn't able to sing the solo.

Maurice Greene was born in 1696 in London and began his musical life as a chorister at St. Paul's Cathedral. During his time as a chorister, the "Organist and Master of the Choristers" was Jeremiah Clarke, who is best known today for the Prince of Denmark's March (or Trumpet Voluntary) which gets regular outings at weddings. During the last three years of Clarke's life, he somehow found time to be "joint first organist" at the Chapel Royal! On the death of Jeremiah Clarke in 1707, Charles King was appointed Master of the Choristers and Richard Brind



became organist. Maurice Greene studied the organ with Richard Brind and, after the latter died in 1718, Maurice Greene became his successor as organist at St. Paul's.

History records that Maurice Greene had a busy working life. In 1727 he became "first organist" at the Chapel Royal while still being organist at St. Paul's. In 1730 he became Professor of Music at Cambridge University and in 1735 became "Master of the King's Musick". He died in 1755.

"Thou visitest the earth" sets verses from psalm 65 and is part of a longer anthem called "Thou O God art praised in Zion". Sadly, my attempts to find the full version of the anthem have drawn a blank, but here's quite a nice recording from the choir of New College Oxford with tenor soloist Tony Spence who is nearly as good as Mac. The anthem begins four minutes in, but do enjoy the very nice organ voluntary that precedes it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaPraFx7y6k>

If you like this anthem, you might like to have a listen to Maurice Greene's setting of verses from psalm 39, "Lord, let me know mine end". As you can probably tell from the title, it's not as jolly as "Thou visitest the earth", but is very beautiful. If you're a fan of "This is the record of John" that I mentioned a fortnight ago, then you will be a fan of this too.

Here's a lovely recording from the choir of St. Matthew's Westminster...

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

... and here's a link to the score if you'd like to sing along:

http://www1.cpd.org/wiki/images/4/47/Greene-Lord%2C_let_me_know_mine_end.pdf



If like me, all this information about Maurice Greene is new to you, perhaps when you next sing "Thou visitest the earth", maybe imagine yourself singing it at St. Paul's Cathedral or at the Chapel Royal, which is where it would have been first performed. It's worth remembering that during Maurice Greene's time at St. Paul's, the rebuilding of Cathedral was being completed by Christopher Wren, so the present St. Paul's as we know it would have been a brand new building!

I mentioned above about Maurice Greene being the "Master of the King's Music". This is a post that still exists today and is basically the musical equivalent of the poet laureate. The job description of the "Master of the Queen's Music" as it is at the moment is variable, but it's generally expected that the post holder will write music commemorating important royal events and to accompany other ceremonial occasions. They may also act as a musical adviser to the Sovereign. Probably the most famous holder of the post was Edward Elgar who was "Master" from 1924 until his death in 1934. The current holder of the post (since 2014) is Judith Weir who is the first female holder of the office. As I've been writing about psalm settings, here's Judith Weir's setting of psalm 148 for choir and solo trombone (*Editor's note, yes I do play trombone*):



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9I9T88AUHKQ>

Featured Church!

During July, I thought I'd write a bit about the churches that I've been involved with over the last 36½ years.



Last week I attempted to give you a virtual visit of St. Andrew's Church, Hamble. This week, we travel roughly 160 miles north east to visit **St. Leonard's Church, Lexden** which is about a mile west of the town centre of **Colchester, Essex** and was the church that I attended when I was at university from 2002 - 2005.

I'm not a very academic person and struggled with A Levels. So choosing a university was actually easy for me, as there were only really two places that would take me! One was Bath Spa and the other one was Colchester Institute which was the one I chose. The nearest Church of England church to my "student house" was St. Leonard's and I spent a very happy three years as part of the church family.

The original church was a small medieval building, standing in the heart of the old Lexden village. There are records of rectors of Lexden dating back to 1300. During the 19th century, Lexden was changing from a small village to a fashionable suburb of Colchester and as a result, the old church was demolished in 1820 and the present church was built in the Gothic style designed by M.G. Thompson and it was consecrated in 1821. A new (grander) chancel was built in 1893, together with the Lady Chapel and the Organ Chamber.



Today, the church is very busy with lots going on, even during lockdown! They even managed to have an online summer fete: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsZ8wkuqhtA>



For 18 months, I enjoyed being a member of the congregation, which was a new experience for me as before that, I only really remember being a server or an organist at church! But I was eventually press-ganged into the church choir, which I also conducted on a few occasions. I especially remember conducting "Of a Rose, a lovely rose" by John Rutter at the 2004 Advent Carol service. Since my time at Lexden, the Advent Carol Service has been one of my favourite services.

The rector at the time was Rev Stephen Carter who was also Area Dean of Colchester. On hearing that I was an organist, he used to take me along to St. Andrew's Church, Fingringhoe (a small village about five miles south east of Colchester) to play for their monthly sung evensong service which he led (the church was in an interregnum).

My final service at St. Leonard's was Sunday 12th June 2005 and I left the church and university with very happy experiences and memories.

The church website is here: <http://www.stleonardslexden.org.uk/> with lots of lovely photos of St. Leonard's; also at "A Church near you":

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/6466/>



That's all for this week folks. Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham