

St. Faith's Church Choir

NEWSLETTER

FRIDAY 3RD JULY 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the organist!

Congratulations on making it through June... and welcome to July!

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

All about Hymns

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/UCKdRXZZXDmLJM6XBnUpIoog/videos>

You might be interested to see and hear how far Richard gets playing "For all the saints" using just one hand and one foot:

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



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

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

New for this week, but probably has been going for some time, I found a really good "hymn of the week" resource on the website of Chelmsford Cathedral. These have been put together by Canon Alison Kennedy who is responsible for the worship and music at the Cathedral:



<https://chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk/uploads/fairrest-lord-jesus.pdf>

Live streamed services

(some personal recommendations)

Last Sunday, quite a few places celebrated the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (transferred from Monday 29th).



Members of the choir of Chingford Parish Church (NE London) recorded a hymn with words about St. Peter:

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

Winchester Cathedral enjoyed getting the thurible out for the occasion and they dared to use a recording of the choir singing "For all the saints" to a different tune. I have to say that the tune they used is an excellent one by Stanford and, I think, fits the text better than the tune by Vaughan Williams. See what you think!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mq7GiwoHLIQ>



York Minster got into the festive spirit as well at their choral evensong, with music by York Minster "music legends", Edward Bairstow and Francis Jackson:

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

The theme for this weeks "choral classics" from St. Stephen's Church in Walbrook is "God be in my head". Rev Stephen Baxter presents as usual alongside the lovely voices of the choral scholars who sing two hymns and an anthem. I enjoyed singing along to the final hymn, which has a great tune and tenor part; plus the text, although written in the 1800s, are still relevant today, as they remind us that there is hope in the dark times.



<https://www.facebook.com/ststephenec4n/videos/604552200479366/>



The theme of this weeks "Great Sacred Music" service from St. Martin-in-the-Fields is Scripture. Rev Dr Sam Wells presents and St. Martin's Voices provide the music, which with one exception was all new to me. Proof, if proof was needed, that there's always a new hymn tune or text to learn! I particularly liked the final worship song which is about the companionship of the scriptures.

<https://www.facebook.com/stmartininthefields/videos/269764964327953/>

Anthem of the week and all that jazz

The anthem for this Sunday would have been a repeat performance of the setting of "Be thou my vision" by choral composer and conductor Bob Chilcott, who celebrated his 65th birthday on the 9th April this year. We last sang the anthem at the 9:30 service on Sunday 23rd February and we had spent a good month learning it, so I felt it deserved a second outing!

Space does not permit me to say very much about the words of this anthem, except to say how thankful I am that Bob Chilcott chose to set the familiar version versified in 1912, which is quite different to the original old Irish text and translation. (*Editor's note: I'm also thankful that I didn't have to help you learn Old Irish. I'm not a linguist. I wish I was...*) Good old Wikipedia has a wealth of further information about the text:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Be_Thou_My_Vision#Original_Old_Irish_Text

Bob Chilcott composed his setting of Be thou my vision about 20 years ago and it is dedicated to the memory of one William Chambers. The two main features of the anthem are the memorable, folksong-like, melody and the fact that the accompaniment is in itself also very lyrical and independent from the four parts.

My recommended recording of this piece goes to the choir of Trinity College from the University of Melbourne, Australia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMEAlzuEXWI>

Bob Chilcott began his musical career as a boy chorister and then a choral scholar at Kings College, Cambridge. In 1967, Bob Chilcott was the treble soloist for a recording of Faure's Requiem with Sir David Willcocks (who is the patron saint of Christmas carol descants) and you can hear him in action here (about 17 minutes in):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYC2uyxSC60>



From 1985 to 1997 he was a tenor in the Kings Singers and performed with artists such as George Shearing, Richard Rodney Bennett, John Dankworth, Art Farmer and the WDR Big Band. These experiences and influences had a major impact on the music he composes.

In 2004, Bob Chilcott composed "A Little Jazz Mass" for upper voices and jazz trio (piano, bass and drums). This work was so successful that a version was made for SATB choirs and published in 2006. I remember playing piano for what I guess must have been one of the first performances of the work when at University in 2005. You can hear Bob Chilcott conducting the piece on YouTube. Each movement is a different video (there are five) so to get you started, you can listen to the Gloria here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1tf6vNkqCg> and the Agnus Dei is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1hy2joWWdk>

Finally, for something completely different, here is Bob Chilcott's arrangement of "Waltzing Matilda" for choir and jazz trio. This is an arrangement where Matilda really waltzes along and I don't think you'll hear it the same again! I liked this (slightly rough and ready) live recording by the Civil Service Choir: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3Gkjc6RuiU> and although I also liked this choir which is more professional, I wished a few more singers would make the effort to smile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBbnU2OIK0s>

Featured Church!

I hope that you've enjoyed reading the interviews from various people in the church music world over the last couple of months! I've decided to give the interviewing a break during July and instead, I thought I'd write a bit about the churches that I've been involved with over the last 36½ years.



I don't remember the first time I started going to church, but apparently as a toddler and at infant school age, I used to stand on a pew and conduct the hymns in church. The church in question is **St. Andrew's Church, Hamble** (or to give the church its full name: The Priory Church of St. Andrew the Apostle, Hamble-le-Rice) which is just in the Diocese of Winchester (the river Hamble seems to be the dividing line between the two dioceses).

St Andrew's is of ancient origin with evidence of Roman occupation and the remains of a Saxon Church and by the 9th century a stone parish church had been erected on the site of the present building. During the early 12th century a cell of six Benedictine monks became established having arrived from the Abbey of Tiron in France and the Saxon church was considerably enlarged. The church still has a link with the Abbey Church of Thiron-Gardais in the Eure-et-Loir department in northern France today.

The main entrance on the north side of the church is through a fine Norman arch with chevron mouldings protected by a porch from 1402. On the arch and the outer door there are numerous crosses made centuries ago by local fishermen. As they went out to sea they would make a mark on the door. When they returned safely they would cross the previous mark.



The nave and tower date from the 12th century, the chancel and porch from the 13th and the Lady Chapel from the 19th. Newer additions from the 20th and 21st century include two very large tapestries made by members of the church and a new font cover in the shape of a ship's wheel.

St. Andrew's has some lovely stained glass including this more modern window, which is dedicated to the training ship TS Mercury that was anchored in the River Hamble from 1913 to 1968; and the 5000 boys that it trained for service at sea in both the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy. For 42 years, the Captain-Superintendent of the ship was the great England cricketer and all-round sportsman C.B. Fry. Just in case you're wondering, TS Mercury was towed out of the River Hamble in 1970 and is now restored and preserved at the Chatham Historic Dockyard under its original name of HMS Gannet.



As well as strong links to the sea, there are strong links to the air too. In the church is a memorial plaque to Sir Edwin Alliott Verdon Roe who is buried in the churchyard. Alliott Verdon-Roe was a pioneer English pilot and aircraft manufacturer and in July 1909, became the first Englishman to fly an all-British full-size aeroplane!

I made my serving debut as a boat boy (liturgical not naval) on Sea Sunday 1993 when the church used to have a procession down to Hamble Quay and bless the river. I played for my first service in 1994, for the Thursday morning communion service which was (and still is) a said service with hymns. I eventually progressed to playing for Sunday services when the organist at the time was on holiday.

In October 1998, when I was 14, following a breakdown of communication between the organist and the vicar, I was rather thrown in the deep end and ended up playing for the lion's share of the services (including at least a dozen weddings a year) and was regularly taking choir practices and conducting the choir in services. We achieved a lot during four years, we managed to double the number of singers and reduce the average age of the choir, we hosted an ecumenical Harvest Songs of Praise in (I think) 2000; and at least once a year, I used to organise a concert involving the choir and



Colonel David Pickworth who was a member of the congregation often played the bagpipes. *Bagpipes + Organ = successful and loud combination!* My final service was on Sunday 15th September 2002, plus a concert that evening which brought together people that I knew through the church, college and even some of my music teachers up to that point.

I do have photos from this period, but they're at my mum's house. I'll try to retrieve some when I'm next there! I don't think there are any of me conducting as a toddler... For more information on St. Andrew's Church: <http://standrewshamble.org/> Coincidentally, the current incumbent at St. Andrew's (since 2014) is Fr. Graham Whiting who knows Bishop John very well!

And finally!

Sadly, for us, we still aren't able to sing together in churches: *"Activities such as singing... should be specifically avoided in worship or devotions and in rehearsals. This is because there is a possible additional risk of infection in environments where individuals are singing or chanting as a group, and this applies even if social distancing is being observed or face coverings are used"*. However, I take comfort and hope in that *"The government and the medical and scientific communities are urgently engaged in research around transmission risk and how such activities can best be managed safely, and further guidance will follow when available"*. So we continue to be patient and in the meantime enjoying singing together spiritually via the online services that Canon Tom continues to offer. Thank you Tom and Clare!

Stay safe everyone... and keep singing!

Graham