



# Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Spring 2007

## *Festival Director's Introduction to the 2007 Festival*

IN THE 2006 FESTIVAL we focused on Jesus's great 'I AM' teachings in St John's Gospel; this year we continue the theme of Jesus's teaching, but through the perspective of his parables. The gospel readings at Eucharist will feature a selection of the parables themselves, whilst the daily themes explore broader subjects, such as 'Faith', 'Judgement' and 'Forgiveness'.

A number of important anniversaries also provide sub-themes, in particular the 300th anniversary of the birth of Charles Wesley, whose texts will feature prominently. Musically we will be celebrating, amongst others, Dietrich Buxtehude, Jean Langlais and Thomas Morley; and the whole gamut of composers will be represented from Allegri to Wolf and Palestrina to Pärt.

This year I am delighted we have been able to commission an introit for the Nave Choir from Grayston Ives (using a Charles Wesley text). Those of you with long Edington associations may recall that he wrote a number of highly successful works for us in the 1970s, and we look forward to his renewed connections with the festival.

There are a number of small changes to the schedule of the week this year stemming from BBC Radio 3's decision to move the Choral Evensong broadcasts from Wednesdays to Sundays. For various reasons it is not practical for us to do a live Sunday broadcast from the festival, so we will be recording Evensong 'as live' on Thursday afternoon for transmission on the final Sunday (as we all head home). Consequently, the traditional Wednesday and Thursday have swapped places, so the BBC recording, Musical Evening and late Compline will be on Thursday, with the Sequence of Music & Readings on Wednesday evening. It should be noted that this is something of an experiment this year and we will be reviewing how it works for future years.

Finally, we welcome Matthew Martin to his new role as Director of the Nave Choir, following Robert Quinney's 'retirement' last year. Matthew has been festival organist for some years so is well versed in the idiosyncrasies of the festival; he will be ably replaced on the organ bench by Ashley Grote, Assistant Organist at Westminster Abbey.

JULIAN THOMAS

## *Treasurer's Report for 2005–2006*

THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2005–2006 proved to be yet another great year for the Association from a financial perspective. Our income remains consistent with the previous two years. There has been an increase in the number of subscriptions paid by direct debit and this is the first year we are really benefiting from our charitable high interest back accounts. We have maintained a healthy income from CD sales although this is not to the same level as the previous year. The income from CD sales is expected to reduce to a background amount in future years as most friends of the festival have now purchased their Schola CDs—but it should be noted that some people are purchasing more Schola CDs as they have worn out the initial discs from overuse! These accounts do not include funds that were collected from the 2005 festival collection plate gift aid envelopes as these will be included in the 2006–2007 accounts into the following financial year.

Our expenditure remains roughly in line with the previous year with a slight increase in expenses mainly due to resolution of long standing historical expense claims dating back to the formation of the Association. We also purchased another batch of Schola CDs having already sold the first instalment! These CDs will continue to provide a small but steady revenue stream to the Association over a number of years.

At the end of the financial year our total assets were funds of £23,487.32 which are held across the Barclays and the two CAF accounts. These funds include a healthy working capital base and our reserves fund which is currently set at £12,000.

The financial future for the Association continues to look promising. It should be noted that there are a number of grant requests that have been agreed and committed to which have not hit the accounts yet. However these will be more than offset by the gift aid refunds which are currently in progress. One change that will become apparent over the next year or so is that the annual income will increase significantly because the collection plate gift is now largely donated via gift aid to the Association rather than directly to the Festival. There will be a corresponding reduction to the income in the

Festival accounts which will put the Festival in a position where it is likely to make an annual loss. The Executive Committee is working with the Festival Committee to identify ways for the Association to take on a greater burden of the costs of the Festival to address this situation.

On behalf of the Executive Committee I would like once again to thank the members of the Association for their continued support. Without your support the Association and the Festival would not be in such a solid and secure position.

The 2006–2007 report will appear in the autumn newsletter.

JUSTIN LOWE  
*Hon. Treasurer*

## *Andrew Carwood—new appointment*

WE WARMLY CONGRATULATE Andrew Carwood on his appointment as Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral from September 2007. Sadly for us, it means he will be standing down as Chairman of the Association and as Director of the Schola Cantorum after the 2007 Festival.

## *A History of the Schola Cantorum*

... continued from the previous newsletter ...

IN 1984 the arrival of Geoffrey Webber as Festival Director brought about a crucial change. Evensong was moved from 7.30 to 8.00 p.m. and Compline followed, after the shortest of breaks, at 9.15 p.m. Immediately yet more people stayed to Compline and the nave was frequently quite well filled.

In theory there was little reason why the improvement in standards which had been so marked at Compline over the early years from the late seventies to the mid eighties should not have been matched at Matins, but the early hour was not in the Schola's favour. Rehearsals were held in the crypt as early as 8.15 a.m., and in those days when there was much smoking in The Lamb, few of us could get our voices to operate properly so early in the morning. It was hard work in every way, and congregations were small. Peter McCrystal understandably wanted the Schola to rehearse away from the public eye (or ear!), but I suspect the real improvement in terms of musical standards at Matins began when, in the mid eighties, we started to rehearse in the chancel. The acoustic gave us greater confidence at the early hour, and we began to sing better.

Looking back on the first ten years of the Schola's existence, I wonder why it took so long for the standards to approach those we now know. I think there were two main reasons.

First, Peter McCrystal was keen that the Schola should not just sing the offices at the beginning and end of each day, but that it should also take a full part in the Eucharist and Evensong (the latter sometimes replaced by a Sequence of Music and Readings). These were the 'main' services, and the only services when the Schola would be heard by the Nave Choir and, after its inception in 1983, the Consort. From that point of view, taking part in and performing well at these services was important. But it did of course mean that the Schola was preparing for and singing at four daily services. It was a heavy load, too heavy for the quality of the choir, and the weaknesses sometimes showed.

Second, and perhaps more significant, there were many changes in personnel and indeed in the overall size of the Schola. The 1979 Companion lists fourteen singers, in 1980 there were nine, in 1981 just eight, in 1982 ten, and in 1983 eight again. Inevitably these fluctuations caused many changes in those invited—indeed for some years the only three names consistently listed in the Companion were those of Tony Ayres, James Simpson and myself. (Tony and James had been founder members of the Schola Cantorum in 1978. Tony last sang in 1985, James in 1986.) Some of these changes reflected the difficulties of providing accommodation for so many musicians; but it must also be said that several singers were 'upwardly mobile' within the festival, hoping that the opportunity might come for them to sing in the Nave Choir or the Consort.

One might have thought that Matins and Compline would in time look after themselves, but there were always too many singers fresh to the festival and to the chant for this to be the case, so careful rehearsal of the 'bread and butter' material was always necessary. Nonetheless standards were rising, and this was particularly noticeable at the Eucharist where a simple plainsong mass could be most affecting. Peter McCrystal liked to impress, and he would sometimes have us sing very softly and very slowly, or very loud and very high. There were always new ideas, and when they came off—as they often did—the effect could be stunning. The compliments started to flow, and we began to be seen as more than just the 'third' choir.

Moreover, a certain stability was gradually establishing itself, not only in the Schola but also within the festival as a whole. The concept of a three-choir festival (Nave Choir, Schola Cantorum and Consort) had begun in 1983 and continues to this day. It has proved thoroughly successful, and the passing years

have enabled refinements to be made—not least in giving each of the choirs certain services off, allowing the singers an opportunity for some extra rest (or rehearsal!) and stopping the week from becoming merely relentless. For the Schola, this has meant a free evening on Monday (until Compline, that is) and a free morning on Friday, when Choral Matins is sung at 11.30 and the Eucharist takes place in the evening.

But these improvements took a while to evolve, and in the meantime the Schola was under pressure, not least in 1987 when we were used to illustrate Dr. Mary Berry's talk to the Friends of Edington Priory Church on the final Saturday. We demonstrated the chant with 14 examples chosen by Dr Berry, and sang Vespers for the Feast of the Beheading of John the Baptist, which necessitated a long extra rehearsal in the early afternoon. Despite the privilege of meeting and working alongside Dr Berry, mutiny was not far off, given that we were also singing at the usual four services! (We had virtually no free time between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m.)

The numbers in the Schola stabilised at eight from 1983–1990, at ten from 1991–1999, before rising to twelve from 2000 onwards. Length of service began to increase. In the period from 1980–1995 Michael Rayson, Matthew Train and Lawrence Cummings each sang for seven years, Cyril Harriss for nine years, Peter McMullin for ten years, and Michael Simpson for eleven.

Adrian Thomas, the longest serving current member of the Schola, first sang in 1991 whereafter the arrival of Justin Lowe and Charlie Minogue in 1996 and Oliver Piper in 1998 created the backbone of the Schola as we now know it. (Julian Thomas sang for ten years from 1993–2002 before becoming Director of the festival, Nick Flower from 1997–2004 before joining the Consort.) This reduced turnover rate has been enormously beneficial to the maintenance of high standards.

Peter McCrystal directed the Schola Cantorum for 20 years—from 1978 until 1997—and it is to him and his sense of vision that we owe the principal debt of thanks for what we enjoy today. He had the ability to rehearse the choir in such a way that we were able and willing to work repeatedly at the same things without losing interest or freshness. Peter also grasped the importance of supporting his singers in the wider festival context and instituted the Schola lunch on Fridays, taking us all out for an excellent meal at a local pub. By his final year in 1997 he was able to bequeath to Andrew Carwood a strong and contented Schola Cantorum. Those of us who knew him continue to mourn Peter's untimely death in 2002.

Andrew Carwood has been able to build

on these strong foundations in his years as director of the Schola. Standards, already high, have become higher still; and the number of people attending Matins goes up year on year such that nowadays the chancel is regularly full to overflowing. For Compline there are often 150 to 200 worshippers.

In 2003 the Schola remained behind in Edington after the festival for an extra two days to record a compact disc of Matins and Compline along with miscellaneous chant sung at that year's festival. The blend of the voices, the unanimity of phrasing and the perfection of tuning on that disc constitute a lasting tribute to Andrew's direction.

As the Schola Cantorum of 2007 leads the worship at the festival it can look back on 30 years of vision, commitment and sheer hard work. Long may it continue to thrive.

JOHN BARNARD

### *Francis Orton*

IT IS WITH GREAT SADNESS that we have heard of the death of Francis Orton, who with his wife Helen attended the Festival regularly over the past 25 years. We are indebted to Helen for the following:

Francis was a 'son of the manse', and always loved church music. It was through Peter Wills that we were introduced to Edington, and we quickly became 'hooked'. During the 1980s Francis became increasingly disabled with Multiple Sclerosis and, partially through lack of suitable accommodation we were not always able to attend the Festival, but we were there whenever possible; and in recent years we have been able to attend regularly, up to and including the 50th anniversary Festival in 2005.

Edington was an enormously important part of Francis' life, deepening and enriching his faith, and he often talked about it with friends and colleagues. He looked forward each year to that week in August and was extremely disappointed if we could not be there.

### *Compact disc offer*

OUR 'CD OFFER' THIS ISSUE is an exciting new recording from Stephen Rice's ensemble The Brabant Ensemble: their disc of music by Manchicourt is centred around his *Missa Cuidez vous que Dieu* and is receiving glowing testimonials in the musical press. We hope that Stephen's long involvement with the festival will make this disc of even more interest to readers.

If you would like a copy, please send a cheque for £12 (per CD) payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to the Editor of this newsletter: John Barnard, 34 Queens Walk, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1XS.