



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Summer 2008

*A warm welcome to our summer
2008 newsletter.*

Choral Evensong on Radio 3

MANY OF YOU WILL BE AWARE of the news that BBC Radio 3 will be moving the live broadcast of Choral Evensong back to its traditional Wednesday afternoon slot. Unfortunately for us, this change is scheduled to happen just after the festival (to coincide with the end of the Proms), so this year we will again be recording our service on Thursday, for transmission on the final Sunday. All being well, by next year we will be back to the familiar routine of a live Wednesday broadcast. (Please see the festival leaflet or the website for full details and times of the week's services.)

Please note that this year's Musical Evening will be on Thursday 21 August.

Peter Barley

WE offer our warmest congratulations to our former Festival Director, Peter Barley, who gets married in Limerick Cathedral on 5 July. We have had the enormous pleasure of getting to know his fiancée Catherine Nix at recent festivals, and we wish both Peter and Catherine well for their special day and their life together.

Festival Director's Introduction to the 2008 Festival

PLANS FOR THE 2008 FESTIVAL are well under way. The theme this year is simply The Lord's Prayer. One of the things that has struck me in my years as director is that, during the festival, we actually have time to reflect in detail on those parts of the liturgy which so often just become routine—hence the choice of such a familiar text. I hope it will be an interesting challenge to us all.

I am delighted we have, once again, been able to commission a new work for the festival. It will be a setting of The Lord's Prayer (in Latin) by Nico Muhly, a young American composer, who has already had a number of pieces broadcast both in the UK and America. The Consort will be performing it as a second anthem during the prayers on the broadcast service.

As usual, we will be marking a number of anniversaries during the course of the week,

including those of Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Blow and John Sheppard. Much as we would like to be able to feature heavily the organ music of Olivier Messiaen (whose centenary of birth falls this year) the organ is just not quite right for it, so we will be including his motet *O sacrum convivium* instead, and hope that you find your fill of his organ music through the rest of the year!

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at this year's festival.

JULIAN THOMAS

Edington Music Festival Association

THE ANNUAL General Meeting of the Edington Music Festival Association will be held in Edington Priory on Monday 18 August 2008 commencing at 15.00 hrs.

AGENDA

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 2007 Annual General Meeting
4. Matters Arising
5. Chairman's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
Financial Report and Adoption of Accounts
7. Election of Officers
8. Plans for 2008/2009
9. Any other business
10. Date of next AGM

Any member wishing to place an item on the Agenda is asked to submit this in writing by letter or email to the Secretary by 8 August 2008.

JOY L COOKE

*Honorary Secretary, Apt 16 Wyndham Court,
Newton Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4HB*

Email: joycooke@aol.com

Treasurer's report

*Summary of the report to the AGM—
August 2007*

THE financial performance of the Festival Association continued to progress well through the financial year 2006/7 with an excess of income over expenditure of £3929. Membership is slightly up on previous years with 210 current members, and income from subscriptions is in line with previous years. We continue to receive some income from CD sales.

Since 2005 the Association has received income from the collection plates at services through Gift Aid envelopes. In the 2006/7 accounts the collection plate income is significant as both the 2005 and 2006 Gift Aid envelope contributions from the services fell into this year's accounts (£9399 and £9397 respectively). These figures cover only the contents of the Gift Aid envelopes themselves—any cash donations not in envelopes continue to go to the Festival Society directly—and do not include the Gift Aid reimbursements from the Inland Revenue which will be recorded the 2007/8 accounts. The Gift Aid claims from previous years are now up to date.

The Association's running costs continue to be very low, consisting mainly of printing and mailing costs and some ongoing website costs. The 2006/7 accounts include a significant catch up on grants to the Festival Society from recent years where the grants had been agreed but the financial transactions had not previously been completed.

Since its inception the Association has been concentrating on establishing its operations and building up a fund to ensure the longevity of the festival. We maintain a pragmatic reserves policy of £12,000 which will provide security in the event of a worst-case event—the last-minute cancellation of a festival. The Executive Committee is now considering its strategy for the future, and longer-term initiatives include the possibility of sponsoring a choristership and more advanced investment mechanisms. In the shorter term we are constructing a dedicated music library in the Parvis, improving the Association website and completing our wardrobe of robes.

I would like to extend the thanks of the Executive Committee to the members of the Association for their generosity and support without which the Association would not be in such a secure position. We look forward to your continued support and to ensuring the long-term prosperity of the Edington Music Festival.

JUSTIN LOWE

*Copies of the accounts may be obtained on application
to the Honorary Secretary, Apt 16, Wyndham Court,
Newton Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4HB*

Ashley Grote

FIRST THE BIOGRAPHICAL STUFF ... Ashley was a treble in the chapel choir at King's College, Cambridge, went to Uppingham School as a music scholar, returned to King's as Organ Scholar and, after a stint as Organist-in-Residence at Tonbridge School, moved on to Westminster Abbey as Assistant Organist. Since Easter this year he has been Assistant Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral.

Until he became Festival Organist in 2007, Ashley had never been to Edington—for which he is duly apologetic! But when we met he was very enthusiastic about the Edington experience. 'To bring cathedral-style services to a church of this size, to a parish church, is a wonderful concept.' And he praised the selection of stops available on the organ: 'It has everything you really need to make the English cathedral repertoire work.'

I broached the traditional complaint of festival organists—that they cannot easily practise because there is always something going on in the church. 'I get up at 7am, throw on some clothes, make myself a cup of tea which I bring to church with me and rehearse from 7.15 until the Schola arrives at 8.30. I then go back to shower and have breakfast before returning at 10am' The other main option—to rehearse after compline—is not Ashley's cup of tea. Understandably he does not relish practising late in the evening when everyone else is relaxing in the pub.

Ashley's affable and unflappable style has gone down very well with all of us involved with the festival, and we look forward to a long and happy association.

Where do the trebles come from?

IT'S A COMMON QUESTION, and the answer is that they come from various cathedral and collegiate choirs, with many of which we have had long and fruitful contacts.

Some of the boys will have come to the end of their period of service, and Edington week will mark their swansong as a treble. This has advantages and disadvantages: typically such boys will be highly experienced, but there is a heightened danger that their voice will break shortly before or even during festival week. It has happened!

Other boys are approaching what will probably be their final year in their regular choir, and Edington can offer to such boys the experience of working on what is often unfamiliar material, building sight-reading skills and general confidence and competence.

The festival recognises the overarching importance of caring for the trebles and ensuring that the experience of singing in Edington is in every way an enjoyable one. We do not forget that the boys are giving up a week of their holiday to do what they would normally regard as their 'work'. And when a commissioned work to be broadcast live on radio 3 proves more demanding than anticipated, their skills are put to the test in a major way. In compensation, they are superbly cared for by their host families in the village, and taken on exciting excursions in the afternoons. It is rare for a boy not to enjoy the Edington experience, as is evidenced by the interviews below.

Interview

with Cameron Lowrie (*St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin*) and Nicholas Mannoukas (*Southwark Cathedral*), trebles in the 2007 Nave Choir

UNUSUALLY only one treble in this year's Nave Choir was on a repeat visit, and he was here for a third time. 13-year-old Cameron sings at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin where Peter Barley is Director of Music.

He exudes a quiet enthusiasm for the festival, valuing the opportunity to make new friends—the reason he wanted to return—and enjoying the challenge of learning music which is not in the Dublin repertoire. He admitted to finding the high standard a bit frightening at first, but said he learned to cope; and he warmly commended the programme of afternoon activities laid on for the trebles.

Nicholas displays a bright-eyed enthusiasm and reckons to have known about half the music in this year's programme. He had come with no preconceived ideas of what Edington might be like, but thought the village 'a lovely place'. Like Cameron he was full of praise for the afternoon programme of activities, and was equally enthusiastic about the quality of the food in the parish hall and the warmth of his hosts' welcome. Asked whether he would recommend the Edington experience to anyone else, he replied, 'I would. It's brilliant.'

Cameron shares his enthusiasm: 'I just think it's a great experience to come here; and when I get back I'm going to tell everyone in my choir how good an experience it is, and if they get the chance not to turn it down.'

With young men like Cameron and Nicholas wanting to come to the festival, the future looks very bright.

JOHN BARNARD

Companions to earlier Festivals

I HAVE A STOCK of past Companions for most years from about 1980 onwards, and if any of you is missing one or two from your collection, do feel free to contact me *before* this year's festival either by post (see CD offer for my address) or by email (therealj@tiscali.co.uk) and I will search the attic for you. Please note that I am not offering to post them, but am happy to bring them to Edington this August.

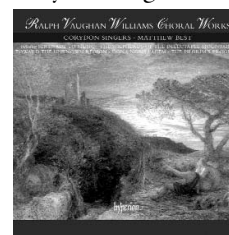
JOHN BARNARD

2009 Festival

THE AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY Monday moves to 31 August next year, so do be sure to note that the dates of the 2009 Festival are: Sunday 23 August to 30 August.

Compact disc offer

OUR 'CD offer' this issue is something very special: a 4-CD boxed-set of iconic Vaughan Williams performances by the Corydon Singers.



Issued to mark the 50th anniversary of RVW's death, this collection is tantalizing: it starts with the hugely popular recording of the *Serenade to*

Music, and includes such favourites as the *Five Mystical Songs* and *The Hundredth Psalm*. There are also two intriguing pairings: in *Dona nobis pacem*, Vaughan Williams warns of the impending doom of WWII, in *A song of thanksgiving* we hear his moving response to its successful conclusion; in *The shepherds of the delectable mountains* we hear an early working of Bunyan's literary masterpiece, later extensively reworked in the landmark 1942 BBC radio production of *The Pilgrim's Progress* featuring Sir John Gielgud and reprised here, this time in condensed form. Throughout the collection, RVW's mastery in setting great texts to music is evident, and has prompted the sort of glowing reviews that make this set a must have.

If you would like a copy of this 4-CD set, please send a cheque for £20 (RRP £28) payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to the Editor of this newsletter: John Barnard, 34 Queens Walk, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1XS.