



# Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Summer 2010

## *Festival Director's Introduction to the 2010 Festival*

IT HARDLY SEEMS A MOMENT AGO that we were bidding each other farewell at the end of the 2009 Festival, and 'au revoir' to outgoing Festival Director Julian Thomas along with Ellen and Dominic. I would like to record here my thanks to Julian for entrusting the reins of this very special Festival to me, and for his generous support and advice as I began work on the 2010 Festival that is now fast approaching.

As always, our worship this year will be lead by an exceptional group of musicians, all of whom give of their time and talents for the love not only of music, but also of the village and Priory Church of Edington which for many regular Festival goers and participants is a haven of peace and beauty in an otherwise busy world.

This year's services will examine the last sayings of Christ on the Cross: going far beyond the events of Holy Week, the 'Seven Last Words' have resonances that speak powerfully to us today. Even in his darkest hour, Christ extends forgiveness to the soldiers who mock him; offers the assurance of eternal life to the robber crucified alongside him; cares for his Mother who weeps for him. Fully God and yet fully man, he shares in our human emotions of abandonment and of thirst, teaching us that we too should thirst after the God who loves us. As he bows his head and commits his spirit to God, so we too commit ourselves afresh to our lives in God's service.

As each of our preachers addresses one of these sayings, we will explore them all through a rich repertoire of choral music that spans many centuries. The daily offices of Matins and Compline continue to be at the heart of the Festival, sung to plainchant by the Schola Cantorum directed again this year by Andrew Carwood. The Nave Choir directed by Matthew Martin will include music by Tallis, Victoria, Howells, Stanford and Wesley, the 200th anniversary of whose birth we celebrate this year. The Consort directed by Jeremy Summerly will give a complete performance of Domenico Scarlatti's exquisite *Stabat Mater* during the Thursday sequence of music and readings, and will begin the live BBC broadcast of choral evensong with the first performance of a new work by contemporary composer Graham Ross. We look forward to

welcoming to Edington for the first time Peter Stevens, Organ Scholar of King's College, Cambridge and Organ Scholar-elect of Westminster Cathedral who will be playing for this year's Festival.

I would like to end by thanking you as members of the Festival Association for your generous and continuing support. As a relative newcomer (a mere four years compared to the Editor's forty!), I am aware that the financial stability now enjoyed by the Festival has been hard-earned through the determination and persistence of many who wish to see the Festival flourish. Long may it continue to do so!

I look forward to seeing you in Edington again this August.

ASHLEY GROTE

## *An interview with Matthew Martin*

MATTHEW WENT TO SCHOOL at Dean Close in Cheltenham, before becoming organ scholar at Magdalen College, Oxford under Bill Ives (who conducted the Nave Choir from 1971 to 1976). After two years of postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music, he was appointed assistant organist at New College Oxford and Director of Music at the University Church. He then became assistant organist at Canterbury Cathedral before taking on his current role as assistant organist at Westminster Cathedral. He has been directing the Nave Choir since 2007 following on seven years as Festival Organist.

Matthew and I met for a conversation towards the end of Festival week in 2009. We started by discussing Bill Ives. 'He was a great influence. When I first went to Magdalen, he was pretty tough on me, but I liked his music and he took an interest in the fact that I wanted to compose. He said, "Write us a piece and we'll do it." He was very encouraging. He knew very well how to write for voices, and understood that I wanted to emulate him.'

Matthew was offered the job at New College after writing the winning composition for a competition, as a result of which he met Edward Higginbottom. 'At New College there was different slant on repertoire. They do a lot more early music, and the tone of the boys is much more Continental than at Magdalen which goes for a sweeter, more English sound in a smaller chapel.'

As for Westminster Cathedral, 'I'm used

to taking for granted that the singers can sight-read almost anything, and because of the repertoire that the boys sing—lots of plainsong and polyphony in Latin—they are able to sustain long lines, and they have to project.'

We talked about the challenge of deciding on repertoire for the Nave Choir. 'I played safe in my first year, but I think I got the balance just about right. In 2008 I put down too much war-horse Anglican repertoire, so this year I chose some more interesting stuff.'

I asked how one worked out what repertoire the Edington Nave Choir might already know. 'You guess. The most frightening thing is the broadcast. You often have a commission: there was the Francis Jackson piece this year which was actually quite difficult to learn because the lines are angular and it has some unexpected twists and turns.'

I wondered whether it was nice to come back to Anglican repertoire after the Westminster Cathedral experience. 'Yes, I miss some areas of repertoire there, Howells for example. Every piece at the cathedral fulfils a liturgical function, whereas for the anthem at an Anglican evensong you can do almost anything you like. For instance, we couldn't do Walton's *The Twelve* at the cathedral.'

As for moving from being Festival organist to conducting the Nave Choir, 'There was a different sort of stress involved. When you're playing the organ it's only yourself you have to take responsibility for. The most difficult thing is planning the choir rehearsals—knowing when to move on even when something isn't perfect.'

I finished by wondering whether Matthew was looking forward to getting back to an Anglican cathedral one day. For the moment though he professed himself very happy at Westminster Cathedral; and during Martin Baker's recent sabbatical Matthew conducted the Lay Clerks in a recording of a liturgical sequence for the Feast of the Assumption with Victoria's *Missa Gaudeamus* at its heart, a disc (Hyperion CDA67748—see *Compact disc offer* overleaf) which has been widely praised in the musical press.

We are privileged that Matthew has wanted to be involved at Edington for many years now, and we much look forward to his continuing work with the Nave Choir at the forthcoming Festival.

JOHN BARNARD

## Edington Music Festival Association

THE ANNUAL General Meeting of the Edington Music Festival Association will be held in Edington Priory on Monday 23 August 2010 commencing at 3.00 pm.

### AGENDA

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 2009 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 2010/2011
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 13 August 2010.

JOY L COOKE

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## An interview with Vera Tyler

ONE OF THE FEATURES OF THE Edington Festival is the Musical Evening and Buffet Supper which takes place on the evening of the Radio 3 broadcast of Choral Evensong. Last year, as every year since 1991, the event took place at the home of Eric and Vera Tyler.

Vera began by reminding me that the Musical Evening had begun back in 1984, the brainchild of Mary Vivien, and originally took place in the Monastery Gardens. We both had vivid memories of the following year when, at the same venue, there was torrential rain during the event. Vera reminisced, 'One of the ladies was wearing a lovely new pair of pink sandals. I was quite envious. By the end of the evening we were all ankle-deep in mud, and the poor shoes were ruined!'

For some years the Musical Evening went to various venues around the village, some more suitable than others, since parking could be a problem. When Eric and Vera had their property at Millside built, they immediately realized it was the perfect environment for this event.

I asked Vera what she thought the Musical Evening did for the village. 'I rather wish more village people would come,' she replied. 'but quite a lot do come year after year, and we try to keep the price of the evening moderate.' We discussed the people who help with the preparation of the food, many of whom are not regular worshippers at the Priory Church. 'People are very willing

to be drawn in if you give them a job to do, and also we keep the proceeds in the village—minibus, parish hall, church.' A group of seven prepares the main courses using local produce, but no fewer than twenty people make desserts for the occasion. 'Those in the marquee don't know quite what is going on in the kitchen, which is just as well!' commented Vera. 'But there have been no disasters ... And if you leave someone out, they tend to phone up and say "Aren't I making a pudding this year?"'

We discussed space in the marquee. 'We already have a larger marquee than we used to have, but there is still a long waiting list each year. It's the music that does it. We wouldn't sell the tickets just for the buffet. Everybody says what a unique evening this is. I've heard that comment hundreds of times.'

I imagined that the event must be quite a burden for Eric and Vera. 'People say "What a horrendous thing to be doing. However do you deal with it?" But it does not seem that horrendous to us, and it's great fun. No, it never worries me, because we have done it for so long, everybody knows what they are going to do, and the same group has been together for a number of years. We meet in July and fix the menu. We do have to get a new set of waitresses every year because we try to get them aged about 14 to 16.' I asked about this particular age range. 'They expect more money when they are older! We pay them £10 each.'

We ended by discussing John Pepler's contribution to the success of the evening. 'He is the key man,' said Vera. 'People want to sit with their friends. He has to sort all that out to get the right people sitting on the right table—he has a big job to do. And he does such a good job on the night—he's a super treasurer too.'

The Musical Evening and Buffet Supper have become for many of us a highly enjoyable feature of the Edington Festival experience. Without people like Vera who take such pleasure in helping to make it happen we would be sunk. So to Vera and all who help her go the heartfelt thanks of us all.

JOHN BARNARD

## The Handbag

AS I STAND in the porch welcoming people to the Festival and selling Companions, it is interesting to note what happens when you tell someone you'd like £3 please. The average man reaches into his trouser pocket, produces some coins, quickly decides whether £3 is there or not, and if not goes for his wallet from which he produces a banknote. With few exceptions it is all pretty swift and efficient.

With ladies, the technique is different. First there is the handbag, then somewhere at

the bottom there is a bulging purse cum wallet. The purse section is small, and some of my clients take a time to find and open the right bit, and decide that they don't have £3 in change there. So then it's matter of finding a banknote. With so many different compartments available, and with no apparent way of knowing which is which, many ladies—perhaps most—go through their credit cards, their library card, their Café Nero card etc. before they track down the fiver I am hoping for.

I particularly think of one lady last summer who had arrived with a large bag in her left hand—somewhat over half the dimensions of what you are allowed to take on a Ryanair flight—and under her right arm two cushions. It was, I admit, stupid of me to offer her a Companion under such circumstances, and I soon realized the best move would be for me to hold her cushions whilst she searched her bag for money.

The bag clearly contained lots of things, and her purse, whilst there, was not easily found. But eventually (and with the queue building up behind her) a very small purse appeared. Inside were lots of coins, more than one might reasonably want or need, but the aperture of the purse was so small that the moment she tried to put her fingers in they got stuck before they could grasp the coins below. I would have suggested that she turn the thing upside down, but I was fearful that the whole lot would end up on the floor. So I let her struggle on until she finally and with great difficulty produced three £1 coins.

Maybe we need a 'Please have your fare ready' sign! And wouldn't it be fun if we put the price of the Companion up to £3.35. Or perhaps not ...

JOHN BARNARD

## Compact disc offer

THREE OFFERS THIS ISSUE: the first is Matthew Martin's recording with the Westminster Cathedral Lay Clerks, described by *Gramophone* as a 'benchmark recording' and 'another superb addition to both Hyperion's and Westminster Cathedral's illustrious Victoria discography'; secondly, we have Stephen Rice and The Brabant Ensemble in the first ever disc devoted to the neglected Renaissance master Pierre Moulu; and finally, a bargain ten-disc set featuring all of the Fayrfax, Taverner, Mundy and Sheppard recordings made over the years by The Sixteen.

The Victoria and Moulu discs are £12 each; and the ten-disc set is £40. If you would like a copy of any of these recordings please send a cheque payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to the Editor of this newsletter: John Barnard, 34 Queens Walk, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1XS.