



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Autumn 2012

Festival Director

THOSE OF YOU UNABLE to be with us in August may be unaware that Ashley Grote, newly installed as the Director of Music at Norwich Cathedral, has had to give up the directorship of the Festival.

Many tributes were paid to Ashley at the end of the 2012 Festival, including a musical one superbly sung by a close-harmony group led by Ben Sawyer who also composed the highly entertaining piece in question.

We look forward to seeing Ashley again in the future, and congratulate him on his prestigious new appointment.

We are delighted that his successor is to be Ben Nicholas who has directed the Schola Cantorum these last two years. Peter Stevens will be taking on Ben's role directing the Schola Cantorum.

The 2012 Festival

THE THEME of the 2012 Festival was 'For everything there is a Season' and this was explored by means of a journey through the Christian year: 'Keep awake' (Advent), 'God with us' (Incarnation), 'Take up your cross' (Lent), 'Behold the Lamb of God' (Holy Week), 'He is risen' (Easter), 'God is gone up' (Ascension), and 'Come, holy Ghost' (Pentecost).

The musical working through of this concept brought many treasures. *Vox Dicentis* by E W Naylor at the Monday Eucharist alongside Hassler's attractive *Missa Dixit Maria* was followed on Tuesday by an unfamiliar Palestrina Mass (*Missa Nasce la goïia mia*) and some music we do not expect to hear in summer: *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* by John Gardner (who died last year) and Peter Cornelius' *The Three Kings*.

A more sombre mood prevailed on Wednesday and Thursday. After Wednesday's Mass (Byrd for Five Voices) the broadcast evensong included a commission from Ed Rex *Beneath the Cross* sung by the Consort, a double-choir *Nunc Dimittis* by Matthew Martin, originally written for the BBC Singers, a work which made a considerable effect, and a Lukaszewski anthem *Memento mei, Domine – Crucem tuam adoramus*. With some fine plainsong from the Schola Cantorum—their Psalm 38 with Dan Macklin as an impressive soloist in alternate verses was superb—this proved a very fine service.

The Sequence of Music and Readings on Thursday was based on the Stations of the Cross with a hymn, motet, chant, organ solo or reading for each. This proved a most moving service in which the silence and concentration of the congregation was palpable. The Consort, on fine form, performed Allegri's *Miserere*, John Sanders' *Reproaches* and Poulenc's four *Motets pour un temps de Pénitence*.

A joyous mood prevailed on Friday and Saturday as we reached Easter and Ascensiontide. The ever popular choral matins included Howells' *Collegium Regale* setting of the canticles, and the evening Eucharist brought a Mexican setting of the Mass by Juan Gutierrez de Padilla along with John Taverner's *Dum transisset sabbatum*. Highlights on Saturday were Finzi's *God is gone up* and Patrick Gowers' *Viri Galilaei*, sung by all three choirs.

It remains to mention two things: first, the excellent contribution of the Schola Cantorum throughout the week. They had some lovely chant to perform, particularly at matins and compline, and despite changes in the line-up this year achieved high standards throughout. And second, Peter Stevens' quite superb organ accompaniments and voluntaries, much appreciated by all.

JOHN BARNARD

Chairman's AGM Report for the year 2011–2012

AT THE END of the 2011 festival the Edington Organ Appeal was formally launched, and it has been met with a very generous response from many people. Much of the executive committee's time has been spent in discussing various aspects of this project, and exploring various ways in which funds might be raised. This showed itself most visibly in a very enjoyable evening at the Houses of Parliament on 19 April. Thanks are due to various people, both from the PCC and EMFA, whose efforts have helped the substantial progress of the organ appeal. It is good that the PCC of Edington Priory felt able to sign a contract with Harrison and Harrison in March.

It remains for me as Chairman to encourage those who might not have considered making a donation to the Appeal thus far to do so. Although a considerable amount of money has been raised thus far, there is still

some way to go. The proposed instrument will be a wonderful and worthy addition to the Priory Church, and a visible (and audible) expression of thanks from those of us who have gained so much from our association with Edington over the years.

Finally, I must record my thanks to all the members of the Executive Committee for their dedication and hard work during the past year.

PETER McGEARY

Treasurer's AGM Report for the year 2011–2012

THIS FINANCIAL YEAR has been another good one for the Edington Music Festival Association. We started the year with £74,709 in the bank and finished with funds of £223,108, an excess of income over expenditure of £148,409.

Our membership subscriptions are slightly up from last year, and the vast majority of this is paid by standing order. The collection plate income fell by around £1200, and we suspect this is because some donors gave to the organ fund rather than in the collection plate. We would like to thank the Joyce Fletcher Charitable Trust for another kind donation towards supporting youngsters for the 2012 Festival.

The Association no longer benefits from high interest rates, and this is expected to continue given the current financial climate. £1068 was received from Gift Aid claims this year; some further claims will fall into next year.

Our expense and running costs increased dramatically this year owing to the setting up of the organ campaign. During the financial year 2011–2012 the only grant was the 2011 Festival standing grant of £10,000. The Association also made initial payments of £61,353 for the organ design and construction.

The Association maintains a reserved policy as recommended by the Charity Commission, and this has been maintained at £1000. A new CAF/Scottish Widows account has been established to separate the reserves from normal funds and to benefit from higher interest rates.

This year has seen the Organ Project grow massively with £209,691 received. We are treating the Organ Project as a separate restricted fund under the umbrella of EMFA.

We have now secured nearly 90% of the total sum required. Raising the remaining funds will be a challenge, but the trustees are confident that this is achievable, and we implore everyone to support this worthy cause generously.

I would like to thank all members of the Association and other donors for their continued support and generosity, and also Alan Edwards for so kindly organising the collections during the Festival.

JUSTIN LOWE

An interview with Ashley Grote

ASHLEY HAS MOVED from his job as assistant to Adrian Partington at Gloucester Cathedral to being Director of Music at Norwich Cathedral, a post he took on shortly after the end of this year's Festival. What was he most looking forward to?

'I am really looking forward to having just the one focus: the cathedral music and the cathedral choirs. In Gloucester I have had a very varied diet. As well as playing at the cathedral I have been directing the youth choir, accompanying the Gloucester Choral Society and the Three Choirs Chorus, whilst also directing a chamber choir and the Ross on Wye Choral Society. All of these things have been such valuable experience, but I also feel I have been torn in too many directions.

'There is a lot of goodwill in Norwich, morale is good, there are fine singers in the choir, and the song school is arguably the finest in the country. Norwich is also a vibrant city—the only one for miles around of course, and so much happens there.'

I moved conversation on to the organ project. Ashley was warm in his praise for so many people, but principally Robin Wilson. 'There were moments early on where it was difficult to earn everybody's support because there were all kinds of concerns, and once we did have people's support there were then the legal considerations. Robin has worked tirelessly. Without his energy and the hours he has spent talking with people and getting the local community behind the project, there is no way it could have gone ahead. On the EMFA side, Sue Lowery has given hours and hours to do things that frankly I have not had the time to do. And then there is Anne Curtis without whom we would not have got £50,000 from the Arts Council. Justin Lowe too, crunching the numbers and knowing how to distribute money between accounts. Peter Roberts with his legal know-how, so important with regard to contracts. All these people have had such important roles. It's been a true team effort.'

I wanted to know more generally what Ashley would remember of his time as Festival Director. He spoke of the year-round work, but also the privilege of establishing

a theme and gradually building it into a Festival programme, working on the liturgical side with people like Peter McGeary and the musical side with the three choir directors. 'What is really satisfying is when you get to Festival week and something that you had forgotten you had chosen makes you stop, and you think "I'm so glad we did that." These are moments when the different elements combine and produce something really special.

I am sorry I cannot carry on and see the organ being built, because in a way that's the fun bit. I will miss the Festival, but I feel it is the right decision to hand it on now. With Ben Nicholas taking over as director, the Festival is in good hands. One of his strengths is that he is such a nice person and he has a great ability to communicate and encourage, and whilst he is a very fine musician he also has this gift of being a people person. Peter Stevens taking over the Schola is absolutely right too: he is steeped in the Roman Catholic tradition with the plainchant. It's his daily bread and butter at Westminster Cathedral.'

We are enormously grateful to Ashley for the immense contribution he has made both as Director and previously as Festival Organist, and most particularly for his work in driving forward the Organ Appeal which he has done with a telling mixture of charm and tenacity. We wish him every success in the future.

JOHN BARNARD

Adrian Hutton

WE SAID A FOND FAREWELL to Adrian at the conclusion of this year's Festival. Adrian has been a mainstay of the Nave Choir for as long as anyone can remember, but behind the scenes he has worked indefatigably in other ways. He first came to the Festival as a visitor in 1987, joining the Nave Choir in 1989 under slightly unusual circumstances: Robin Blaze was at the last minute unable to come to Edington, and Adrian found himself being invited to sing as a counter-tenor! From then on however he assumed his more familiar role as a bass.

Adrian has done a wonderful job over the years gradually acquiring a set of robes for the Festival use by the three choirs. Twenty years ago robes were still being lent out by a range of places, but Adrian has managed to assemble a large set for Festival use by exploring opportunities to acquire robes no longer needed by various church, cathedral and collegiate choirs. With his amazing range of contacts, he has now got us to the point where we have enough for all the singers, as well as several spares. So Adrian leaves the Festival a wonderful legacy in this important area.

Adrian has also been regularly involved in purchasing and setting off fireworks for the Saturday display—he tells some hair-raising stories about past years before Health and Safety took hold!—and of course in singing at the Musical Evening, introducing items with his inimitable brand of humour.

We shall miss Adrian in so many ways and are immensely grateful for all he has offered to the Festival over the years.

Phoenix Press/Organ Project offer

FESTIVAL-GOERS will have noticed publicity material from Phoenix Press, offering 20% of sales to the Organ Project. Phoenix Press is happy to extend this offer to members of the Edington Music Festival Association via this newsletter. It publishes three volumes: *The Wessex Psalter* (£23.99), *The Gibbons Songbook* (£14.95) and, just released, *Cloud of Witnesses* (£13.95), a collection of motets for Saints' Days and Festivals with a foreword by Jeremy Summerly.

If you wish to order, kindly add £3 p&p per volume, make your cheque payable to *Phoenix Press*, and send your order to Sue Lowery, EMFA Administrator, 10 High Street, Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire, BA14 6EL. For those of you living within easy reach of Edington a delivery service may be available, thereby avoiding p&p charges. And remember: your order benefits the Organ Project!

Further details from www.phoenixpress.co.uk or Nick Hale, on 01380 813924.

Music and Readings for Advent

MUSICIANS from the Festival will be returning to Edington on Friday 7 December to perform a Concert of Music and Readings for Advent, in aid of church funds. The concert begins at 7.30 pm.

Tickets priced at £10 are now available, and further details can be obtained from Clare Norfolk-Brown (01380 830733) or Nicholas Buckman (01380 831401).

Compact disc offer

THIS ISSUE we're offering a three-disc set from Winchester Cathedral, recorded under David Hill in the 1990s. Sir Charles Villiers Stanford remains a central figure in Anglican church music, and this collection contains a generous selection of his sacred choral music—settings for Matins and Evensong, motets, anthems and hymns—all for just £18. If you would like to order, 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.