



# Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Autumn 2013

## *The 2013 Festival*

UNDER THE HEADING of 'Appear and Inspire', the 2013 festival focused on six female saints and qualities associated with them: Julian of Norwich (*Mysticism & Vision*), St Teresa of Ávila (*Intelligence & Learning*), Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (*Service of the Poor*), St Cecilia (*Music*), St Teresa of Lisieux (*Humble Service in small things & Love*), and the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Obedience & Faithfulness*).

The Consort's musical highlights included Pierre de Manchicourt's *Caro mea* at communion on Monday, and on Tuesday Victoria's *Missa Dum complerentur*, a wonderful work which not a single member of the Consort had encountered before. One would not have known it from their singing. The Wednesday broadcast evening began with this year's commission by Neil Cox, *The fruit of silence is prayer*, based on words of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. It was a fine piece, worthy of repetition. Matthew Martin's *A prayer of St. Teresa* with text by Teresa of Lisieux provided a moving introit both for Friday's Matins and for Sunday's BBC broadcast of Morning Worship.

As always the Consort carried the major load at Thursday's Sequence, offering both Bernard Rose's *Feast Song for St. Cecilia* and Britten's *Hymn to St Cecilia*. By this stage in the week Jeremy Summerly had left us to undertake a musical project in Palestine, and Paul Brough had taken over the reins. Beautiful performances of Gibbons' *See, see, the word is incarnate* and of Messiaen's *O sacrum convivium* at the final Eucharist set the seal on consistently wonderful singing from the Consort under both conductors.

The Nave Choir under Matthew Martin, in very good form throughout with a strong team of trebles, offered at Monday evensong William Mathias' *As truly as God is our Father* based on words of Julian of Norwich. This was probably unfamiliar to all of us but was well worth hearing. The anthem on Wednesday, broadcast by the BBC, was William Harris's *Strengthen ye the weak hands*, which received an excellent performance. The Britten centenary was marked by his *Tē Deum* and *Jubilate* in C at Friday matins, and Friday evening saw a large congregation gather for the Duruffé Requiem, superbly sung by the choir and wonderfully accompanied by our new festival organist, John Challenger.

Stanford in A adorned Saturday's evensong as Jackson in G had done on Monday; and Mozart's Coronation Mass was sung to a full church at the concluding Eucharist of the Festival. The Nave Choir maintained the highest standards throughout the week, not least in its beautiful psalm singing.

The Schola Cantorum, with Peter Stevens now in charge, maintained high standards both at Matins and Compline, and in its contributions to the Eucharist and Evensong. Peter's gentle conducting style elicited a particular sensitivity from the choir, and at Thursday's Eucharist and Saturday's Matins he accompanied the Schola's plainsong on the chamber organ bringing to the Festival a hint of Westminster Cathedral, a place he knows well! Particular thanks are due to Chris Totney, now bowing out of the Festival, for his voluntaries on the chamber organ at Matins and Compline over several years.

John Challenger, our new Festival organist, worked wonders in an enormous range of repertoire, and we are privileged to have yet again found a top-notch performer willing to work with the limitations of the Henry Jones organ. But for the last time! The new Harrison and Harrison organ will have been installed by next summer.

Ben Nicholas, our new Festival director, had devised a most interesting theme for our week's worship and this was backed up by a judicious selection of music. Ben's warm and affable manner brought a sense of relaxed calm to the Festival; and, as Peter Roberts said at Sunday's buffet lunch, the changeover from Ashley Grote to Ben could not have been smoother.

And the weather? Well, for once it was a warm, sunny week. We had deserved that after many years of cold and rain!

Do be sure you have noted the correct dates for 2014: August 17th – 24th.

JOHN BARNARD

## *Treasurer's Report 2013*

THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1 May 2012 to 30 April 2013 has been another good year for the Edington Music Festival Association. We started the year with £223,118 in the bank and finished with funds of £154,796. During this year we started paying regular instalments to the

organ builders which resulted in an excess of expenditure over income of £68,322.

Our membership subscriptions are slightly down on last year, and the vast majority of this continues to be paid by standing order. The collection plate income fell again, this year by around £600 (the previous year it dropped by £1,200)—we believe this is because of reduced festival attendance, and that donors have given to the organ fund rather than the collection plate.

The Association no longer benefits from high interest rates on current and deposit accounts and this is expected to continue given the current financial climate. Special high interest accounts have been established for the EMFA reserves fund and the organ fund. £39,030 was received through Gift Aid claims, mainly relating to organ fund donations.

Our expenses increased again this year owing to the organ fund running and fundraising costs. During the financial year 2012–2013 the only grant was the 2012 Festival Standing Grant (£9,000). The Association also made payments for the organ construction of £160,571.

The association maintains a reserves policy as recommended by the Charity Commission and this has been maintained at £10,000. A new CAF/Scottish Widows account has been established for the reserves fund to separate reserves from normal funds and to benefit from higher interest rates.

This year has seen the Organ Project grow further, with donations of £62,441 received this year. We are treating the Organ Project as a separate restricted fund under the umbrella of EMFA, and this restricted fund is shown in the accounts. In addition to our CAF Cash and Gold accounts we have established a CAF/Scottish Widows deposit account to benefit from higher interest rates on the organ fund balance. By the 2013 Festival we only had around £20,000 to raise.

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

JUSTIN LOWE  
*Association Treasurer*

## Organ Appeal

AT THE LUNCH ON THE LAST DAY of this year's festival, I was thrilled to announce that the Organ Appeal had, that morning, reached its target. This is wonderful news, and made for a fitting end to a most enjoyable festival. We are enormously grateful to all who have given to this appeal, and to the Friends of the Priory Church who have been so generous. At next year's festival, we will celebrate the arrival of the new organ, and it is entirely appropriate that Ashley Grote, who did so much to bring this project to fruition, will give the opening concert on Saturday 23 August.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ashley, Sue Lowery, Anne Curtis, Justin Lowe, Peter Roberts and Robin Wilson for the huge amount of time they have committed to this project—we owe them an enormous debt.

On Wednesday 26 March, our Festival Organist, John Challenger, will give an organ recital in Salisbury Cathedral, where he is the Assistant Director of Music. The concert will be in aid of the Edington Music Festival, and there will be an opportunity to purchase tickets for the recital and reception in the new year.

BEN NICHOLAS

## Sunday Worship on Radio 4

IT WAS AT THE INVITATION of the BBC that this year we broadcast the morning service from Edington on the final Sunday of the Festival. The theme revolved round the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King. I asked Canon Chris Chivers how this had come about. 'The BBC asked Ben Nicholas whether he would consider it and he discussed it with the choir directors.

I pointed out that the theme was not an obvious match with the festival choirs and their particular repertoire. But Ben and I looked at the music which had already been selected—we were trying not to create the need for more rehearsal—and we began to see possibilities. Matthew Martin's piece for instance (which the Consort sang) was already down for earlier in the week, and *Deep River* from Thursday's Sequence fitted well.

At first we were going to use the *In paradisum* from the Durufé Requiem, but then we decided for the balance of things that it would be better to get the Schola to do it to plainsong. The challenge was to find something to involve all the choirs, but to do it in such a way that it didn't feel the service was being contorted to achieve that end.' (The Nave Choir sang Francis Jackson's Magnificat in G which had formed part of Monday's evensong.)

Much of Saturday afternoon was taken up with rehearsals before a complete run-

through of the service was attempted. This turned out to be over 3 minutes too long, and afterwards there was a gathering around the grand piano to decide what to cut. One verse from each of the three hymns went, and we discussed long and hard over the possibilities for tightening up the spoken parts of the service. I asked Chris what it felt like to have people trying to cut out bits of his carefully prepared text. 'It doesn't bother me. With sermons too I often find it's the best bits that have to be cut to get the balance of things right.'

On the Sunday everyone appeared in the church for a 7am final rehearsal, looking somewhat less bleary-eyed than one might have expected. By 8am a sizeable congregation had filled the body of the nave, and the singing on the actual broadcast—and not least that of the three hymns by all present—was very impressive. In the event the timing worked splendidly, although that meant that the nation got to hear only the very first bars of Peter Stevens' fine playing of the concluding Buxtehude voluntary.

In the light of the extra demands placed on the choirs by this second broadcast, I asked Chris whether he felt it had worked.

'It felt better than I thought it might do. I know there was some concern about changing the routine of the Festival and putting things out of kilter, but that was to be weighed against the need to make the Festival more widely known to people. *Sunday Worship* has an audience of between one-and-a-quarter and one-and-a-half million. Choral Evensong is listened to by a few hundred thousand.'

The choirs' night's sleep may well have been foreshortened, but there was a bonus in terms of a fabulous English cooked breakfast offered in the Parish Hall after the broadcast. That was certainly much appreciated. And the BBC in the shape of producer Simon Vivian was delighted with the quality of the service.

Let's hope that the aim of making the Festival more widely known might work, and that we might as a result see some new faces next year.

JOHN BARNARD

## John D'Arcy

JOHN D'ARCY has been Festival information secretary for roughly 30 years now. One of his main tasks is issuing the festival leaflets to various local places: information offices, churches, cathedrals, and all sorts of organisations that might further the Festival's interests.

John also deals with various queries—although he points out that the volume of these has much reduced in recent years as most people are able to find the information

they need on the Festival website. There are also 20–30 people each year who write in to request an advance copy of the Companion. Some of the people concerned are not able to come to the Festival; others do intend to come and are keen to know exactly what is to be sung when.

Year on year John invites a range of people to come to Festival evensongs, and his guests are treated to a splendid supper afterwards. In this way he does a wonderful job of making the Festival known to people who may have been unaware of it or who have never seriously thought of coming before. Some of John's supper guests stay overnight, and the Old Vicarage is endlessly buzzing with life, not least because John also hosts two Festival participants of whom I have been privileged to be one for 25 years now.

John's love of the Festival and his commitment to it shine through. Nothing is ever too much trouble for him, and he is one of those people who delight in saying 'yes' whenever possible—as those who come to play croquet on his lawn will know! He is one of the Festival's most loyal servants, and we are indebted to him for the work he does on our behalf.

JOHN BARNARD

## Advent Concert

THERE IS TO BE no Advent concert offered by the Festival choirs this year. We know that many people will be disappointed by this decision which has been made purely in the light of an inability to find a December date when sufficient performers are free.

## I'm sorry I haven't a clue

THOSE OF YOU who enjoy this crazy comedy quiz on Radio 4 will know the item where contestants are asked to sing the words of one song to the tune of another. We got close to an Edington variant on this at this year's Monday Eucharist when, for the final hymn, the choir copies offered *Jerusalem the golden* whilst the Companion (and the hymn board) had *Love divine, all loves excelling*.

Anyone could have noticed this before the Eucharist began, but no one had done so; and it took James Preston, a former Schola member visiting us for a couple of days, to note the discrepancy half way through the service in question.

Fortunately Ben Nicholas was nearby, and the Peace offers an excellent opportunity to sort out problems without anyone noticing. Ben got the message round to the choirs that they were to sing *Love divine* (by heart, because they had no hymnbooks) and the result was impressively committed and fervent!