



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Summer 2016

Edington Music Festival 21-28 August 2016: Shakespeare and the Saints

FROM THE single lines of plainchant, sung by the Schola in the chantry of Edington Priory morning and night, to the sound of the combined choirs in Walton's exuberant anthem *The Twelve*, you can hear a kaleidoscopic range of choral music at Edington this year. The 2016 Festival celebrates St Bartholomew (whose Feast falls during the Festival) and St Augustine (under whose rule the monastery at Edington existed) and marks the 400th anniversary of the death of Shakespeare. Themes from the 'Seven Ages of Man' speech from *As you like it* provide a focus for each day of the festival and have inspired the festival conductors to choose some of the most powerful liturgical choral music in the repertoire. During the week there will be opportunities to hear such masterpieces as Bach's *Lobet den Herrn*, Parry's valedictory *Lord, let me know mine end* and Howells' moving setting of words by Prudentius *Take him, earth, for cherishing*. Settings of the Mass sung during the week will include *Ego flos campi* of Clemens non Papa, Guerrero's *Missa de la batalla escoutez*, Victoria's *Missa O magnum mysterium*, Palestrina's *Missa Spem in alium* and Vierne's *Messe Solennelle*, and the Requiem Mass of Mozart will feature on Friday 26 August. The BBC Broadcast on Wednesday 24 August will include Walton's *The Twelve* and Francis Pott's festival commission *Mihi autem nimis*. The festival will also mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Bernard Rose, and the death of John Streeter earlier this year. We continue the tradition of featuring the 2014 Harrison & Harrison organ in music before the evening services, and I am delighted that Matthew Martin, Peter Stevens, Simon Bell and Charles Maxtone-Smith will join me in playing music from Bach to Martin. Visit www.edingtonfestival.org for further details, and please come and join us!

BENJAMIN NICHOLAS
Festival Director

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FESTIVAL Association Executive Committee I must pay tribute to the heroic efforts of our Secretary Sue Lowery to find dates suitable for us all to be free for a meeting by conference call. I am humbled by the way in

which members of the Committee manage to fit this into their extremely busy lives.

Naturally there are times when members cannot attend a meeting, and the reasons/excuses are as many and varied as their careers. However, none can come close to the last-minute absence of Ben at one meeting during the year, when the small matter of his becoming engaged seemed to take priority over one of our meetings!

This will indeed take some beating: we offer our congratulations and best wishes to Ben and Georgina. PMcG

Edington Arts

EDINGTON ARTS is now half way through what is turning out to be a successful, stimulating and wide-ranging 2016 concert series. As an organisation we may be small, but, if you don't notice the very energetic paddling beneath the surface, we are almost perfectly formed!

This season began in April with a superb recital from 'our own' Ashely Grote, finally getting his chance to give 'his' new organ a workout on a lovely programme which showed off the various colours of the organ to perfection. The concert was well supported both by all his local friends, and also by organists and music lovers from further afield. We were all more than impressed by his mastery of the instrument, but also by his impending (and ultimately successful) commitment to running the London Marathon in aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital.

In May we welcomed the former Royal Harpist Claire Jones for an evening of music and chat—and what a lovely evening it turned out to be. Not only is she a consummate musician and superb harpist, but she is an engaging, articulate and bubbly girl who's been through rather a lot in her relatively short life, some good (And His Royal Highness stood just THERE [at the end of her harp] and asked me to play for him'), and some bad (her 18-month struggle to recover from a career-stalling attack of ME). Her husband Chris, a composer and percussionist, had come along too, and they performed together on a couple of his pieces—great stuff, and out of the ordinary.

The last event completed so far this year was the choral workshop in June with Brian Kay, working on Lauridsen's *Lux aeterna* and

the opening movement of John Rutter's *Magnificat*. Almost no-one among the workshoppers had sung either piece before, and they were out of the comfort zone for many—but hard work from us, unfailing good humour and nerves of steel on the part of the maestro, canny and tactful accompaniment from his colleague Robin Baggs, and we turned in a really creditable performance at the end of the day. Everyone was exhausted, but the sense of achievement was palpable, and we've had many emails and phone calls from participants saying what a splendid and fulfilling day they had.

Which is great news, as next year, on June 10th, Andrew Carwood (The Cardinal's Musick and St Paul's Cathedral) is coming to take a workshop on Handel's *Dixit Dominus*. Soloists will be drawn, wherever possible, from amongst our Festival Singers, and Chris Totney will be accompanying. We've already had some verbal sign-ups, but forms will be available in the Autumn.

Still to come this year are the Marici Saxophones, an all-girl line up of classically trained saxophonists, on October 15th, and an Advent concert from the choir of Magdalen College Oxford on December 10th. Tickets and information for all concerts can be found on the Edington Arts Website, www.edingtonarts.org, or by phoning 01380 831256. There will be lots of information around during the Festival too.

Rogers Covey-Crump's thoughts about returning to the Edington fold

AS A YOUNG LAY CLERK at St Albans and in my gap year between dropping out from a chemistry degree course and arriving at the Royal College of Music I received the invitation via Christopher Zealley to fill a vacancy in the Nave Choir. It was a great thrill, both musically and socially, to join the predominantly Oxbridge establishment and my love of our Anglican musical tradition has never diminished despite my voyages into countless venues and many genres through my 31-year 'dayjob', The Hilliard Ensemble. In 1964 David Calcutt was still directing the Nave Choir and it has been heartwarming to monitor the distinguished careers of the likes of Simon Preston, Richard Seal and several of the original King's Singers who were involved, with me alongside, in the later 1960s.

So, in the anniversary year 2015 I was touched to receive an SOS to fill a gap in the ranks once again. Everything was pretty familiar and I seldom thought about a certain age gap with my 'staff' colleagues—I think only Father Paul Rose was my senior in years. Matthew Martin is a significantly talented musician and I was kept on my toes by him and the bright sparks around me. An unexpected aspect was rehearsing with an audience of 'punters'—perhaps that was their solution to keeping out of the all too frequent rain! Of course that degree of interest is a tribute to us all at a time when cathedral music is sometimes thought to be under threat. However the enthusiasm and commitment of young singers does give confidence that our tradition can be maintained. Although the recruitment of boy choristers fluctuates in time and place the stream of both male and female choral scholars emanating from our major universities is undiminished—St Paul's Cathedral Choir even has two female altos on its deputy list!

I am enjoying coming full circle since entering semi-retirement, as I have done as a deputy at St Albans, and I am even more touched to be invited back again to Edington in 2016.

RHLC-C

An extract from the Sermon given at the Funeral Eucharist of Revd John Streeting, a long standing friend of the Festival, by Revd Peter McGeary

THERE'S A PIECE of organ music by Herbert Howells that has haunted me since I was at school, and has been haunting me for the past few days. It's the second of his second set of *Psalms-Preludes*, written just before the Second World War. The piece takes its inspiration from on a verse of Psalm 139: 'Yea, the darkness is no darkness wth thee, but the night is as clear as the day: the darkness and light to thee are both alike.' The mood is restrained and introverted; the surface of the water seems barely to move, while underneath a great deal is going on harmonically and contrapuntally. Beneath an apparently dreamy and formless exterior lies real sophistication and substance. It's a strangely elusive piece, very easy to play badly. Which is why I suppose so few organists play it.

That was the first piece of music that I heard John Streeting play. It was a very long time ago, at a concert in St John's Wood Church in London where he was about not to be Director of Music any more, and to go off to theological college to train for the ministry. I knew as soon as he started playing that he had the measure of the piece, and that I was listening to a very fine player indeed.

What I did not know at the time was what a fine composer he was. John was passionate not just about Howells, but about the many composers who have given of their creativity to the service of the Church, particularly the Church of England. John wrote music that was there to do a job; his music was there to enrich the worship of almighty God, and to draw people closer to what we might begin to call the transcendent.

Being a musician was his profession for many years, and after ordination it became his hinterland. It's very important that priests have a hinterland, otherwise they become boring. They start taking the Church—or at least the earthly manifestation of the Church—far too seriously. John's hinterland produced lots of compositions and much else besides. I am especially fond of the Youtube clip of him in a pub playing Purcell on two pianos—one hand per piano—whilst smoking his pipe.

Many of you will be here this afternoon because John was or had been your parish priest. You do not need me to tell you how good he was at that. He had a natural ability to talk to anyone. I have an image of him walking down the street or sitting in a pub with a pint, chatting away to complete strangers, not to get them finely honed for mission and ministry, but just because they were worth talking to; and thereby tacitly sending out the message that God too might think they—you—were worth the bother. His naturally hospitable nature meant that the Church, of which he was called to be a walking sacrament, was seen to be there for anyone and everyone, it was not just a private club for God's frozen chosen.

Now this used to be called 'Anglican'. There are disturbing, conformist tendencies abroad, intended apparently to make the Church more clear and focused in its message or its use of resources. Sadly all too often clarity is exalted in place of generosity and love.

John would have had none of this. He was, in the very finest sense, a dinosaur. Good. There are not many of us left. We roam the land, looking for like-minded creatures. We are all different from one another, but we hopefully keep the flame alight for a proper inclusivity, a proper liberality, a proper humanism, in the Church ...

Judas Iscariot distinguishes himself from the other eleven apostles by being the only one who thought that he knew what he was doing. It seems to me that one of the most important convictions that you must hang on to if you are ordained is the fact that, theologically speaking, you do not and cannot know what you are doing. If you let go of that conviction, if you think for one

minute that you are any good at the 'job', then you are on the slippery slope to the view that sees ordained ministry as a set of skills to be acquired or techniques to be learned, rather than what it is: the intense and troubled yielding to the love that will not let you go.

John yielded. You and I are the beneficiaries. *Revd John Streeting will be remembered by many visitors Edington not only as a priest but also a composer whose music was often performed at the Festival. His Funeral Eucharist was held in Axminster Priory Church on 30 October.*

Edington Music Festival Association

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Edington Music Festival Association will be held in Edington Priory Church on Monday 22 August 2016 commencing at 14.30 hrs.

Agenda

- 1 Prayers
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of the 2015 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 2016/2017
- 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 Monday 15 August 2016.

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Subscriptions

IF YOU HAVE NOT YET PAID for 2016 please don't forget that the minimum subscription has been raised to a minimum of £15 pa and that Standing Orders should be amended where appropriate.

CD offer

OUR CD offer this issue

presents two glorious Masses by John Taverner in performances from Westminster Abbey Choir under the watchful baton of James O'Donnell.



Discs are £12 each. If you would like to order, please send a cheque payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to Sue Lowery, 10 High Street, Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire BA14 6EL (01380 871549).