



# Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Summer 2018

*Edington Festival 2018—This year the Festival takes place from 19 to 26 August*

## *Beauty came like the setting sun*

*A reflection on the ending of the Great War  
a century ago*

ALMOST EXACTLY a hundred years ago the four years of carnage which Europe—and indeed the rest of the world—had endured entered its final, but far from bloodless, chapter. The so-called spring offensive with which the German high command had hoped to crush the allied forces before the arrival of American troops was repulsed. Erich Ludendorff, probably Germany's most determined general, launched five great attacks intended to drive a wedge between the British and French armies. It was the biggest artillery bombardment in the entire war and it very nearly succeeded. The Kaiserschlacht, or Kaiser's battle as the Germans called it, began in the early hours of 21 March 1918 and the Germans fired well over a million shells in the first five hours of the battle and on that first day the German forces took more ground than the allies had gained in twenty weeks of fighting over the same terrain. The British forces were outnumbered three to one by the German army and the retreat which followed 'was as bad a reverse as the British army suffered in the whole war—as bad, many felt, as any in its entire history'. On April 11 with the British High Command facing the real possibility of German troops on the shores of the Channel, General Haig issued the most famous order of the war:

There is no course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one of us must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.

Maybe Haig's Churchillian rhetoric worked for the German attack was held back, though the fighting was as intense as that endured at the Somme or Passchendaele, with some quarter of a million British casualties, and the French suffering more than 100,000 and the Germans 320,000 in under six weeks. The final phase of the war started with the Battle

of Amiens (also known as the third Battle of Picardy) which began an hour before dawn on August 8 1918. With American reinforcements pouring into Europe and the use of tanks for the first time in any numbers breaking the stale mate of trench warfare, the British and Empire forces struck at Amiens achieving near total surprise. The battle was a protracted business with the battered German army fighting on for another three months, but being forced back by a succession of allied offensives striking different sectors of the Western Front. At last the end was in sight.

This year will see many commemorations of the events of a century ago at cenotaphs and memorials around the country but also in churches and concert halls. Inevitably the poetry and music of those who lived through, fought in and in some cases died in the Great War will help not only to recollect the horror of those four years, and the 'pity of war', but also to recover a sense of what it means to be human and hope for the future.

In our daily selection of poetry to aid our reflection during this festival are works from Great War poets. Some of those poets like Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke and Edward Thomas did not survive the blood-letting, indeed Owen was killed by a sniper's bullet just a week before the Armistice was signed. Others like the composer-poet Ivor Gurney, survived the war, but the harrowing experience of his combat years scarred him for the rest of his life, and he died in a Dartford asylum. Vera Brittain, the author of *Testament of Youth* was a VAD nurse serving in France during the war and both her fiancé and one of her brothers were killed in the fighting.

One poet who survived, and indeed won the Military Cross for 'conspicuous gallantry' in the Great War was Siegfried Sassoon whose relationship with, and influence upon, Wilfred Owen when they were patients together at Craiglockhart hospital in Scotland, has been immortalised in her novels *The Regeneration Trilogy* by Pat Barker. It's particularly appropriate that we give a place to Sassoon in our anthology, and indeed that the festival has commissioned a

musical setting of his words, for his family lived not far from Edington at Heytesbury and he was educated at Marlborough College (before going on to Clare College, Cambridge). Sassoon died at Heytesbury and he is buried in the Roman Catholic section of the church yard at Mells in Somerset. Decorated for his courage in battle, his courage in opposing 'the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed' in his *Manifesto (Finished with the war: a Soldier's Declaration)* was rewarded by being sent for medical treatment suffering from shell shock.

He recounts in his fictionalised autobiography *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* how he threw his MC into the River Mersey as a protest at the war but nevertheless, recovering from hospitalisation, after a spell in Palestine he returned to the Western Front only to be wounded by 'friendly' fire in July 1918 so that he was invalided back to Britain for the remainder of the war.

In 1918 Sassoon published a poem *I stood with the dead*:

I stood with the Dead, so forsaken and still:  
When the dawn was grey I stood with the Dead.  
And my slow heart said, 'You must kill; you must kill:  
Soldier, soldier, morning is red'.  
On the shapes of the slain in their crumpled disgrace  
I stared for a while, through the thin cold rain ...  
'O lad that I loved, there is rain on your face,  
And your eyes are blurred and sick like the plain'  
I stood with the Dead ... They were dead; they were dead;  
heart and my head beat a march of dismay;  
And gusts of the wind came dulled by the guns ...  
'Fall in!' I shouted; 'Fall in for your pay!'

Reading this, a General from Military Intelligence wrote that though Sassoon was found to have recovered from a nervous breakdown 'it would appear his mind is still in chaos and that he is not fit to be trusted with men's lives'. This comment probably says more about the nature of official hysteria than about Sassoon's state of mind. A hundred years on we remember the times through which he lived in the poetry and prose that he and his fellow writers have left to us in the hope that the tears and horror will drift away and that 'the singing will never be done'.

JEREMY DAVIES  
*Chairman*

## Thoughts from an Old-Timer at Edington

1985 might seem to some to be a while ago for a 'First Edington', but there are a number who can claim far greater superiority of knowledge and experience than the under-signed. However, at the invitation of the Newsletter's producers, here are some candid thoughts.

Peter Stevens' knowledge and love of the chant has nourished the backbone of the Festival, the Schola Cantorum, beyond words. This level of connection with any music and its provenance and root is rare even in the more mainstream and secular domain. What a Blessing he is. Moreover, it was clear that not far behind him is our new Festival Director. It takes a person of massive sensitivity, intelligence and flair to 'get' the Festival within hours, and not even having attended before. Though it be theologically unfashionable at this current time, nobody can say that Providence has not been at work in sending us Richard Pinel. The new Rector of the benefice completes a formidable forward-looking team. These are rich days. Jeremy Summerly will be missed this year. He has become a master, a claim I believe he may now make confidently through his accounts of Brahms and Fauré last year. Matthew Martin is another person who owes the Festival much for his own development year on year, as am I. Obtaining confident singing from any group of young people becomes harder and harder with every year that the computer beguiles us further into complacency and lack of self-reliance. Matthew is simply brilliant. I went to the wrong University to be a person who counts wrong notes, let alone spots them, but our Organists Simon Bell and Charles Maxtone-Smith laid down a challenge to even the saddest most ambitious oneupmanship merchant.

Butterfly reminiscences ... The Dean of Canterbury's moving 2002 sermon *Two Peters*, drawing together the key-bearing Saint and our own late lamented McCrystal, having met neither of them—truly magisterial. 1985 was a triple-whammy: my first festival, a rollicking sermon from Bishop Freddie Temple, Bishop of Malmesbury (*See in desuetude*), and the Schola going horrendously wrong on a live broadcast ... the Office Hymn ended up a fourth, and members of the Schola sounded like they were giving birth ...

David Trendell RIP once produced a pastiche Kyrie to go with a polyphonic Mass that lacked one, and NOBODY noticed. He also managed to synchronize his bow to the thurifer with the bringing-off of the last

chord of Harwood *O how glorious*, producing a spluttering noise from the chancel recognised by everyone as Carwoodian in quality. The Nave Choir men once all swapped parts in RVW *Let all the world* and NOBODY noticed; not even the conductor, who shall remain nameless.

*Deo Gratias* for the depth and fun of Edington. *Quis cantat, bis orat. Quis cantat, bis bibat.*

PAUL BROUGH

*Schola. Paul will be conducting the Consort this year*

## Edington Music Festival Association

THE ANNUAL General Meeting of the Edington Music Festival Association will be held in Edington Priory Church on Monday 20 August 2018 commencing at 14.30 hrs.

### Agenda

- 1 Prayers
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of the 2017 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 2018/2019
- 9 Any other business
- 10 Date of next AGM

Any member wishing to place an item on the Agenda is asked to notify the Secretary no later than Monday 13 August 2018.

SUE LOWERY

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## Edington Arts

THEIR NEXT concert is on 13 October when a Russian choir, from St Petersburg will be performing. The basso profundo reputedly descends to the G below bottom C with ease. The programme will be half sacred and half traditional Russian folk music. Tickets are already selling well for this, as they are for the Advent Concert on 1 December, which will be sung by the choir of Keble College Oxford, directed by the festival's own Matthew Martin

Ring Chrissy Allanson-Bailey on 01380 831256 or email Sue Lowery at [sue@edingtonarts.org](mailto:sue@edingtonarts.org) to secure your tickets for these concerts.

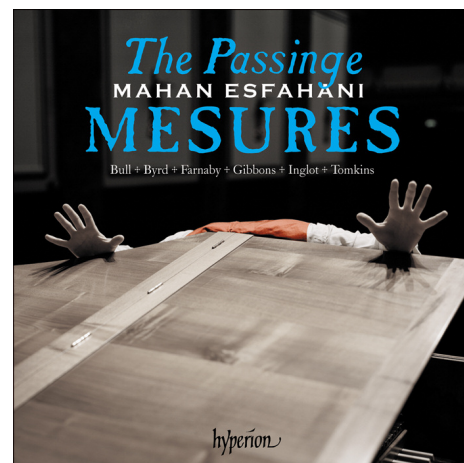
As always, full programme details are on the website [www.edingtonarts.org](http://www.edingtonarts.org), and there will also be a leaflet available in the Church during the festival giving details of all Edington Arts concerts through to the end of 2019.

## Subscriptions and Gift Aid

PLEASE DON'T FORGET to pay your 2018 subscription which is now due. If you pay by cheque or cash and would prefer to set up a standing order please either contact Sue Lowery or download a form from the festival website and return the form to her or hand it to her during the festival.

If you no longer pay sufficient UK income or capital gains tax to enable EMFA to reclaim Gift Aid on your subscription could you please let Sue know as soon as possible.

## CD Offer



IF YOU THINK YOU DON'T LIKE Harpsichord music (Beecham's 'copulating skeletons', anyone?), then think again. Mahan Esfahani was born in Tehran in 1984 and has made it his life's work—so far!—to bring his instrument's repertoire to the mainstream. Winning a Gramophone Award with his debut album in 2014, and multiple other accolades along the way, his captivating new album explores the mathematical and emotional roller-coasters of the so-called 'English Virginalists'. Following a stint as Artist-in-Residence at New College, Oxford, Mahan is now professor of harpsichord at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

Discs are £12 each (inclusive of postage & packing) and the programme includes works by Thomas Tomkins, John Dowland, Orlando Gibbons, Giles and Richard Farnaby, William Byrd, John Bull and William Ingot, and won't be in the shops till November. If you would like to receive a copy now, please send a cheque payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to Sue Lowery, 10 High Street, Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire BA14 6EL (01380 871549).

## Email addresses

AS ALWAYS we are very keen to have your email address which we would use for festival related matters only. *Please remember to let us know if you change your email address—a number of newsletters have been returned.*