

Choir News – March 2017

The Choir spends February practising for our concert on 22nd April. I do not want to say too much about that, as the programme may not be entirely set yet, but I have already mentioned the *Geographical Fugue* by Ernst Toch, singing which is like walking diagonally across a busy intersection in Lower Manhattan with traffic coming simultaneously but at unpredictable intervals from four directions (i.e. sopranos, altos, tenors and basses). Much music (though this is spoken- no tune - but still a kind of music) is based on symmetry, but with the odd surprise thrown in, and this piece is no exception, but the lack of music gives less on which to concentrate and keep time. It is fun, and with luck there will be no car crash, but do come and listen on 22nd April, and clap (or hoot) if you like it, so that Jeff might give it an encore.

I have also mentioned the *Cantique de Jean Racine*, which Fauré wrote when only 19. I confess that Fauré is not my favourite composer, as his music is too beautiful and perfect, and I prefer a rougher edge. However it is far better than Stanford's *Glorious and Powerful God*, which we sing at Matins at Bledlow on 26th February. I think to be fair to Stanford the problem is the words. Our text does not say what well-meaning, but lacking in poetic ability, person wrote the words. Music, and all arts, are a harsh environment, with high standards. Everyone loves listening to great music and great performances, but there is so much good music around that no one wants to listen to the second-rate, and no one wants great pieces of music spoiled by rubbish performances full of mistakes. That is why we practice, and rely on Jeff's massive experience to only let us sing pieces within our capacity. Choir practices are tranquil, even though involving effort and concentration, and even with Jeff saying things like "basses, why do you look so miserable". I expect before he says such things, he has suffered in silence hoping we smile, but then he says it, and we are grateful. One does not think all the time what one's face looks like, and you need to be told. Singing is a pleasure but Jeff makes it a delight.

We are singing *Compline* at Horsenden tonight, but this should have gone to *The Messenger* yesterday, so I cannot hold it back to report this month.

Lastly, I cannot resist telling you that we are performing Howard Goodall's version of Psalm 23 at the concert (*The Vicar of Dibley* theme). Keri singing the words "for ever" solo at the end would melt the heart of a stone statue. Do come and listen..