

Choir Notes – October 2021

Only two rehearsals to report on this month, and no services, as the choir had a break from singing in August. Jeff tried to keep going at first, but it is such a busy holiday time that numbers were just too low. So, this means that we are rusty, like really rusty, given that the holiday season almost ran from the end of the pandemic lay-off, and then there was Sam's barn, where we were delightfully distracted from singing by doves and other birdlife.

To sing again without visors or masks! 'Twas glorious to be alive, to be able to hear ourselves and each other! We remain spaced out and facing resolutely forward to avoid blowing song-spume towards our neighbours, and we have to Covid-test the day before coming, but these are minor blemishes to an otherwise perfect reunion.



It is a while to our next service at Holy Trinity, so we start to train for our visit to St Paul's Cathedral, where our anthem is to be *Expectans Expectavi* by Charles Wood (1866-1926) (*left*). To me, he is less well-known than Stanford and Parry, who taught him at the Royal College of Music, or Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, whom he in turn taught, but EE (for short) is an emotional, while contemplative, piece. I hadn't realised before listening to Jeff explaining this piece that it is possible to be emotional and contemplative at the same time. Jeff tries hard to communicate the emotion of the piece, and I think that we do alright, but then he says "Ah well, we are out of practice, and will do better with time", so clearly it was quite appalling.

We then sing a piece by a New Zealand composer, John Richie (1921-2014). Jeff doesn't criticise us this time, but apologises for the piece, saying "I know it sounds odd, but it will sound nice, I promise". It is interesting, and a bit tricky, as well as different. It always takes a while to understand a new piece, but I think it will repay study when we have mastered it.

We also sing Stanford's setting in G of the *Nunc Dimittis*, also for St Paul's. This is lovely, and we are lucky that this and the *Magnificat* in G, which accompanies it and which we rehearse the following week, have solo passages, and we have lovely soloists - William for the *Nunc Dimittis* bass solo, and Louise for the *Magnificat* solo - and both are just so moving and wonderful.

The following week, apart from the Stanford, *Magnificat*, we work again on EE. We sing it better than last week. Jeff spends time even more thoroughly explaining the meaning and emotion of the words, and how the music complements and supports the meaning, which is important, as otherwise one tends to concentrate like mad on singing the right notes of the right length, and could just as well be singing the telephone directory out loud.

Choral singing is all about performance, and we now have two services to look forward to - on 26th September at Horsenden for their Patronal Festival, and at Bledlow on 3rd October for Harvest Thanksgiving. We had a small choir towards the end of the pandemic, but we look forward so much to the full choir gathering at Holy Trinity again.

Rob Hill