

Choir Notes

With the choir in summer recess there is not much in the way of activity in August - that was until one choir member posted news of an 'installation' in Norwich cathedral that prompted much emailing from some who thought it all looked good fun to those who felt it an abomination, a feeling shared by certain members of the clergy who variously felt the fairground ride a 'mistake'; "for such a place, steeped in mystery and marvel to buy in to sensory pleasure and distraction, is to poison the very medicine it offers the human soul".



The said installation, a vintage 16.7m (55ft in old money) helter-skelter manufactured in 1947, was erected in the nave of the cathedral this August. The Very Revd Jane Hedges, Dean of Norwich Cathedral, defended the decision by saying that it was hoped to encourage people into the cathedral and I rather liked her comment that it was the first time that members of the public could stand close to its medieval roof bosses – forget the dizzying joy of whizzing down the slide. Of course, I've always thought when singing at Norwich, if only I could see the roof bosses at close quarters!



Perhaps the biggest 'attraction' of them all is in Spain, the so-called 'Cathedral of Faith', in the town of Mejordada del Campo, a small town near Madrid. Justo Gallego was a Trappist monk until tuberculosis forced his departure in 1961, so it is incredible that he has spent much of his life building the cathedral on land that he inherited from his parents. Inspiration for the build has ranged from St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City to the White House in the US! The build is all the more impressive when you consider that it comprises a crypt, a complex of chapels, cloisters, lodgings and, on the main building, a dome, 40m in height and 12m in diameter, all constructed without the use of a crane; most of the building materials and tools used for construction are re-cycled – the columns are made from old petrol drums. It is a mark of Gallego's faith and continuing devotion that even as recently as 2017 at the age of 92 he was still there supervising the work, whilst his friend, Angel Lopez, has vowed to continue the work when Gallego is gone. No one knows for sure what will ultimately happen to the cathedral as there was never any planning permission and the local council has declared it unsafe, but the local planning chief has called it 'emblematic'.



And so, neatly on..... to our visit to St Albans Cathedral on 26th and 27th October for which we will start practising in earnest, paving the way for *their* attraction - Space Voyage, a light projection illuminating the inside and outside of the building and depicting a journey through the universe to mark the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing. Perhaps one anthem ought to be A Gaelic Blessing - "Moon and stars pour light on you" - but I'm sure that you'll think of others more appropriate. The Very Revd Dr Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans, said that cathedrals were "built to remind us that we are small and finite in the universe, yet surrounded by the incomprehensible grandeur of creation".

And I will leave you with that thought, before going on to mention a summer wedding.

One of the pleasures of singing for the choir is when a wedding is held in Holy Trinity, and the family requests a few of us to lead the hymns and sing during the signing of the registers. Being in the chancel, we are very close to the bride and groom. On 31st August, at the wedding of Gemma Strathdee and Adam Warr, the choir sang "We pledge to one another", and an arrangement of "How great thou art", before our own Jem hushed the congregation for Gemma and Adam with a beautiful rendition of Schubert's *Ave Maria*.

Kathryn Macneil (Alto)