

The choir has August as a holiday, and as I write this in early September, there is little to report.

I sang little in August, so the first rehearsal (7<sup>th</sup> September) was like reaching an oasis in a desert, and taking a deep drink, perhaps dunking my head in cold water. It is lovely to see the choir returning full of enthusiasm, though one or two were away, who I hope will turn up next week.

We are now practising for a trip to Ripon Cathedral on 7 October, but there are more pressing matters, as we have been asked to sing at the funeral of John Leggett on 11 September.

Funerals are sudden, which prevents lengthy rehearsals, and the music needs to be simple. We are asked to sing Thuma Mina, a South African song.

Even though straightforward, it is outside our normal comfort zone, and the bass part has some high-pitched humming, hard for me. Jeff thinks we sound okay: I do not quite feel I have got it, so I look on YouTube, where there are many versions, all different from ours. I get the general idea, however, and then Greg sends round a base tuition recording, which is perfect. Thank you Greg.

We start on a piece by Morten Lauriston "O Nata Lux". First rehearsals can be rather mechanical, but we begin to get a feeling for the piece, which is like other music by Morten Lauriston: you need to keep the brakes on. Jeff comments that Mr Lauriston uses a narrow range of notes, which is noticeable. You go up and down scales very slowly. But it works.

Then the funeral.

Meeting after the summer holidays makes you think why do I do this week after week. For me, the answer is that I almost have to. We all live in various different spaces, for most a workspace, and a family space, but I need another space where I can go (a pleasure space?), not to get away from the first two spaces, but to enrich them also.

That is why I sing, but why in a church choir at Bledlow? The answer is that it is a wonderful place to sing. The choir members are ordinary people, who vary in singing ability, but are equal in enthusiasm. The added ingredient that makes Bledlow special is Jeff, whose efforts to get the meaning of the words, and the emotion, creates from time to time (most of the time) emotional oases, where you can sink yourself in feeling. This is available to anyone, so why would anyone not come week after week, if they can.

And I like the usefulness of it, and the frequent performances.

The funeral would have been an emotional without us, but the peaceful Thuma Mina must have given contrast to Robert Plant, Alison Krauss, and the Beatles. These appeared by computer, as it would have been difficult to get them to Bledlow at such short notice. Given time, I imagine the choir could have sung Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band: it might have sounded like Purcell. But Thuma Mina did not sound quite like an African choir either.

I could not hear the tributes well in the Chancel, and did not know John, but it was a great pleasure to sing for him and his family, as every person is wonderful, and should be remembered by and celebrated for their family and friends left behind.