

On 21 May the Choir went to sing at the marriage of choir member Becky Miller's brother Michael to Kathryn Birch at St Lawrence Church, West Wycombe. It is beautiful, and acoustically fine also. It was easy to sing in this church, and one could hear every word of what was said and sung. The day was beautiful and the views from the hilltop wonderful.

As usual at wedding services, the choir had a fine view of the bride and groom, particularly the bride who faced us. It is lovely to see the bride on her big day committing herself to her husband for the rest of her life, at times holding back her tears of joy, and struggling with emotion. I am sure I would say the same about the husband, had the Choir sat on the other side, and had an equally fine view of him. The Choir was led the congregational singing of the various hymns, including Jerusalem, and Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah", and we also sang "this marriage" by Eric Whitacre, a contemporary American composer, born in 1970, and quite different from standard choral repertoire, being largely a series of chords, in a relaxed, uncomplicated and rather mystical tone.

Then on 26 May we were back to practising for our Queen's Birthday concert on 11 June (to be reported in our next issue), working hard to complete the programme. I noticed that Keri Byrne, our soprano soloist in "Hear My Prayer" by Felix Mendelssohn, was absent. I thought, "well we won't practise that". Geoff immediately announced "Hear my Prayer", and I heard members mutter "who'll sing the solo?", which is of course traditionally sung by a boy treble. My father grew up in Liverpool, and recounted hearing Ken Dodd as a young treble choirboy singing this after dinner to his father's Masonic lodge. Geoff sang the solo! Down an octave! And how thrilling. The rehearsal was like a master class by Jeff. He says we must feel the music and make it expressive. From the moment the words "the enemy shouteth ... the Godless come fast... Iniquity hatred upon me they cast...the wicked oppress me" started, one could feel the anger, injustice, and paranoia, and the choir sang the words back with ferocity. It was as if Jeff was expressing his personal feelings about his life (I hope not).

Then the sweetness of "Oh, For the Wings". It reminds me of the book Jonathan Livingston Seagull (popular in the 1970s) by Richard Bach. I know that seagulls are different from doves, but the idea of floating among the clouds effortlessly is appealing, whether suggested by Bach or Mendelssohn.

I know little about acting, or how actors learn to not hold back their emotions: most of us are rather inhibited. I do not know how much of the Jeff effect is training and practice, and how much innate, but it works. The choir is lower in numbers than it would like to be. You, dear reader, could come and share the Jeff effect. I suggest you give him a ring on 07830 096375 if you want to join in.