

Choir Notes: October 2019



The choir was invited back to St Albans Cathedral to sing the Saturday Evensong on 26th October and the Choral Eucharist the next day. Normally we would sing the Evensong on a Sunday, but St Albans had a special service that evening called ‘Mass on the Moon’, a multi-sensory Eucharist for the ‘Space Voyage’ installation ‘giving thanks for the gift of creation and repenting of our collusion in its destruction’. Their music is not listed on the website but it would be interesting to see what was chosen. At least we got a chance of walking

on the lunar surface which had been spread out before the steps leading up to the altar when we were taking Eucharist – the priest asked for those in high heels to tread carefully!

Saturday’s music revolved around some old favourites of the choir’s, namely Martin How’s *Canterbury Responses, Set 2*, and the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* by Walmisley in D Minor. The choir sang it at their first cathedral visit to Christ Church, Oxford in 2007. Jeff announced that the *Magnificat* had caused a tear to appear in his eye, and not because of the moon dust. He had recently been presented with a modern psalter with some new chants and ‘pointing’, and no doubt they will keep us on our toes over the next few years. The anthem ‘*Save us, O Lord*’ by Bairstow was a new one and felt hauntingly poetic in the wonderful acoustic of the quire. England had beaten New Zealand in the RWC in Japan earlier in the morning and their success was nearly matched by Evensong.

It continued the next day for the Choral Eucharist, although Wales could not get their nose in front against South Africa just before the service started. The service was dominated by Hummel’s *Mass* in B flat, which we understand is rarely sung, but it had a good reception from the congregation. Cynthia’s expert playing of the organ part (it is often performed with a full orchestra and choral society) supported the 25 singers who had worked hard to learn what was at times a tricky piece, but one that was immensely rewarding. The evergreen favourite, *Locus Iste* by Bruckner, was almost understated in comparison, but its quietness and reverence created a marked difference.

Thank yous, as ever, go to our inspirational choirmaster, Jeff, and organist, Cynthia, who treated us to Bach’s *Tocatta and Fugue* in D Minor on Saturday and the same composer’s *Fugue* in D Major on Sunday. Both filled the cathedral with wonderful music and many not attending the services stopped what they were doing just to listen. Derek cantored his way nimbly through the How and Cathy sang her solo line in the *Mass* beautifully, while the Walmisley Quartet of Deb, Kathryn, Dave and Mike S. kept their shape and pitch admirably.

We welcomed a local couple who sing with Jeff’s Cantemus cum Spiritu choir to sing with us, together with some of our regular supporters. At the end of a successful weekend we gave a farewell card to Bridget le Huray who has moved from the area to south west London, but she knows that she is most welcome to sing with us as a visiting choir; her knowledge and experience has been understated, and beneficial to us all.

It was back to the 100% regulars at the Remembrance Sunday Service at Holy Trinity on 10th November when, after the laying of the wreaths, the anthem was ‘*So they gave their bodies to the Commonwealth*’ by Peter Aston. A reprise of three notes of the *Last Post* and an ending that drifted into silence underlined the importance of such annual services. The Christmas diary is looking busy and rehearsals are well underway.

Anon