

Choir Notes – September 2024



The choir has a break every August, because so many people are away - including Jeff - that we cannot continue. In the run-up to the break, we were busier than usual, with Evensong at Saunderton on 30th June, participation in the concert at Holy Trinity on 13th July - arranged by Lucy Czakan in aid of Revd Norbert's Asilomar

Foundation (above: www.link-international.org/Asilomar) to help farming in his village in Kenya - and we sang at Holy Communion, again at Bledlow, on 21st July.

The Sir James MacMillan's "*A New Song*" was nearly, but perhaps not totally, there by our last Thursday practice. The choir reported that it went well at Evensong (I could not be there). Jeff is marvelous at pacing the choir to achieve a result bang on time. I was sad to miss the Hylton Stewart (1884–1932) canticles which were easier to learn than the MacMillan, but satisfying to sing.

We then practiced for the concert. Jeff told us about his concert with Aylesbury Choral Society the previous weekend, for which the choir was a little under-rehearsed. He told us how he had related to the Aylesbury choir that it has been proved that all living organisms communicate with light and that perhaps, when Jesus told us not to hide our light under a bushel, he might have been trying to tell us to communicate more fully, and to sing with that intention. They went for it and gave a great performance and, he said, the sopranos in particular looked and sounded radiant. He urges us to sing with our hearts, which takes courage - sing as if you've got no clothes on, but you don't care!

We practice "*The Rose*" by Ola Gjeilo. Jeff asks us to make no effort. We have to make an effort to make no effort, as usually making an effort causes much of the choir to screw up their faces. This is smooth and silky, not like road-mending. Much singing training strives to correct things, but this is erroneous: if you get the feelings in the music, you get it right.

On 3rd July we continue to rehearse for the concert: the choir is getting to know the pieces better so able to watch Jeff like a hawk (well, almost). The concert raised a little over £3,000 for the Asilomar Foundation, enough we hope to help build an underground water tank for them. Our part seemed over in a flash as we sang all six quite short pieces in a row.

Our last service of the summer was a Communion service. We had practiced concert music exclusively until the last rehearsal, so we have to pull something easy from our repertoire, which is Samuel Sebastian Wesley's (1810-1876) *Lead Me, Lord*, easy and beautiful to sing, a musical equivalent of being wrapped in lovely soft warm cotton wool, and kept safe.

We also had the monthly Saturday morning Coffee-Time Concert on 27th July, when Anna and Beatrice Sideris-Dupuy sang songs by Richards Wagner and Strauss, a lesson in singing with feeling, as often promoted to the choir by Jeff to improve our performance – reply: strike a light, gov'nor, it's hard enough reading the words and music - you want feelings too?

So a busy last month, moving towards a climax; but how can you tell when you reach a climax when things just keep getting better all the time?

We hope to see some of you at the next Communion service.

Rob Hill