

Choir Notes: November 2021



On Sunday 26th September we go to St Michael & All Angels at Horsenden (*left*) for Matins, three days ahead of the prescribed patronal festival date. Church services here are lovely for the choir, and I hope therefore for the congregation too, as the acoustic is easy and we are in a small group, so we can all hear everything. It is easier than Holy Trinity, and also very pretty. We sing a setting of Psalm 150 by Stanford (1852-1924). I missed the rehearsal, but we have sung it before. And the anthem is *Expectans Expectavi* by

Charles Wood (1866-1926), which I discussed last month, but writing their dates again, I see that Stanford lived to 72, but Wood to only 60, which is sad, as composers so often go on writing music - and sometimes their best music - into old age.

On 30th September we are at Holy Trinity to rehearse for the Harvest Thanksgiving service. There are several lovely pumpkins on the font. The hymn choice available to celebrate Harvest is quite small, unlike Easter and Christmas, as also is the appropriate anthem choice, but Jeff has come across a new one called *Summer Ended*, by Charles Wood! Is that spooky, having two anthems in a row by him? It's like the traditional London bus, you wait ages and then three come at once, so we may now expect another. We practice this, after which Jeff says that it can either be ordinary or it can be beautiful, but you have to LOOK AT ME, ALL THE TIME. The sopranos have some striking high passages, and I am thinking that they sound like angels soaring overhead, while we basses are gnomes mining underground for gold to make wings for them to fly on. Is this a result of having sung at St Michael & All Angels, that I see angels? Derek is the only tenor at present, and he has some soaring high bits, but surmounts them with verve and gusto. Jeff says when we get to the line "And the goats shall leave the sheep", a sheep noise would be appropriate, but then he giggles, so that's alright.

So to Holy Trinity on 3rd October for the Harvest Thanksgiving service, where there seems to be a huge number of donations of produce. Horror! Jeff has lost his voice and is croaking after having sung in an evening concert in Caernarfon last night, and then driving back to Saunderton afterwards. Have you ever driven back from North Wales to Buckinghamshire? It's a long way, with poor roads in Wales (last time I went anyway). He looks like he had only ten minutes sleep, but, as he is superhuman, he is his normal perky self, though after our first run through he says "Come on, sing it as if you've practiced it before". It's hard to get into anything first time on a Sunday. I think it slightly unnatural to sing cheerily early on a Sunday, but we try again, and Jeff's goad has worked, as we do it much better. Alan, standing in for Norbert, who is away, likes it, so changes the service so that the gifts of produce are not, as was intended, brought to the altar while we sing the anthem; he wants the congregation to settle down so that they can listen properly to it. It is very nice to be appreciated (as we often are, but that makes it no less nice every time that it happens).

Later the same day, Jeff sends us WhatsApp messages saying that he has failed a Covid lateral flow test. Oh dear, that could be the cause of the croaking. We have to await bulletins and pray for his recovery, or better still that the LFT is wrong, but Jeff teaches children, and there is often a spread of illness when the children return to schools in the autumn.

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