

Choir Notes June 2023



We have a rest after Easter, and we next meet on 21st April. We practise Giuseppe Bernabei's (1665-1732) *Magnificat Tertii Toni*. He was the son of a more prolific composer, Ercole Bernabei, who moved to Munich from Rome in 1674. Giuseppe spent most of his life in Bavaria as Kapellmeister (conductor) to the Bavarian Court. So he lived and worked in the Baroque period. The music is like Baroque architecture and painting, florid and fancy, and I imagine it would be fun to sing it in a Bavarian mountain castle chapel, surrounded by snow-covered peaks.

After the Bernabei, Jeff runs through the first section of the *Nunc Dimittis Tertii Toni* 'Quia Viderunt' by Christóbal de Morales (1500-1533). The first section does not include a bass line, so the basses get to listen to everyone else working hard.

Cynthia is absent, and much missed, though we still have a good hard-working rehearsal, after which Jeff might have needed to put a bag of frozen peas on his head, perhaps tying it on while falling asleep, praying for Cynthia's return. Christmas present for Jeff - a hair net to keep frozen vegetables in place?

We work hard on the same pieces on 28th April. We are singing them at Evensong at Saunderton on 30th April. Music can paradoxically be both easy and difficult at the same time. It should be easy to sing these pieces, but we are less used to such old music, and you have to count like mad to keep in the right place. The pieces are less than perfect by the end of the evening, but Jeff says it will be fine, which indeed it is on the Sunday. Jeff is marvellous at knowing that we are getting there and predicting good outcomes, even from unpromising rehearsals. We also sing *Cantate Domino* by Pitoni, an old favourite, which we practise once at rehearsal, and once to warm up on the day. We are all now used to singing the Ayleward Responses without looking at the music, so we can watch Jeff throughout, and he can control us all the better.

For the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla on Saturday 6th May, we were asked to sing a new anthem at our service the following day. While we all enjoyed the wonderful music, old and new, before and during the service at Westminster Abbey, many church choirs like us had chosen to sing the new "*Sing for the King*" anthem composed by Joanna Forbes L'Estrange. She had been commissioned by the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). The text had been carefully chosen from verses within Psalm 72 and Psalm 149. She called it "*The mountains shall bring peace*", from Psalm 72, to represent the King's faith and well documented passion for nature.

Cynthia enlightened us to the fact that God, or Yahweh in the Old Testament, was a geological god and that his wrath and judgement was seen through volcanos, earthquakes and tsunamis etc. The text in Psalm 72 is looking toward a time when there is no such judgement or wrath, and the peace of the volcanos shows God's contentment that man is more just.

Although there was only time for one rehearsal, by all accounts the anthem came across well. The choir was very aware that the Lord Great Chamberlain of England (Lord Carrington), who had presented the spurs to King Charles as part of the Coronation service, was in the congregation. Those members of the choir who had attended the Manor House garden open day four weeks earlier had had an opportunity of learning about the history and preparations for 6th May from Lord Carrington and his son Robert. It was explained to those looking at the fascinating memorabilia, which are to be kept on display, that the magnificent ermine Coronation robes were not to be worn. However, a last-minute change of heart meant that they were worn on Saturday, but as Norbert remarked, sadly they could not be worn in Holy Trinity on Sunday!

Jeff will be writing about Norbert and his support to the choir and church music in next month's *Messenger*.

*Our next cathedral visit will be to Guildford, where we shall be singing Evensong at 5.00pm on Saturday 10th June.

Rob Hill and Greg Moore