

Salisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 10TH JUNE 2021

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor!

I hope the newsletter continues to find you well.

From the Archives: 2012

We continue our reminiscing by trawling the archives from **2012** for Salisbury Choral Society and Winchester City Festival Choir. Apologies if this reminiscing is before your time in your respective choir, but it gives us a chance to look back at what we've achieved in the last decade or so, plus it's a chance to discover choral music that you might have missed out on singing!

It was a real pleasure and privilege to preside over my first "proper concert" with Winchester City Festival Choir in **January** (or it might have been the beginning of **February**)! The concert was held at the Harvey Hall, St. Swithun's School Winchester and the programme was, with one exception, based around music connected with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The first half was a real mixed bag: Schubert's setting of the [Magnificat](#), a [Litaniae Lauretanae](#) (K109) composed by Mozart when he was 15 and Britten's Hymn to the Virgin, composed when he was 16. The "odd one out" not connected with Mary was Tavener's Song for Athene. To give the choir a bit of a rest, two soloists sang a couple of movements from Pergolesi's Stabat Mater.


The main item on the programme was [Haydn's Maria Theresa Mass](#) which formed the second half of the concert. This setting is also known as the Theresienmesse and was composed between the completion of his two magnificent oratorios, The Creation and The Seasons. The origin of the nickname Theresienmesse is open to speculation, but is usually attributed to the work's supposed association with Marie Therese, the wife of the Emperor Franz II.


We enjoyed the accompaniment of a fine orchestra, ably led by Liz Flower who leads the orchestra for the WCMF concerts. Our four soloists were [Alison Hill](#) (one of conductor David Hill's daughters), [Carris Jones](#) (now an Alto Vicar Choral at St. Paul's Cathedral), [Nick Madden](#) (who recently became famous overnight as the tenor who sang in the quartet for Prince Philip's funeral) and [Timothy Dickinson](#) (who works regularly with various opera companies). It was altogether a very good evening!




For **WCMF 2012**, the Festival chose five works, which were spread over the two concerts; three dating from the 19th century, one from the 20th century and one from the 21st century. The Cathedral concert was first in 2012; and Winchester City Festival Choir joined forces with Compton and Shawford, Overton and Twyford for a French programme, conducted by **Derek Beck**. The French programme was [Bizet's Te Deum](#), [Poulenc's Gloria](#) and [Gounod's St. Cecilia Mass](#) also known as his Messe Solennelle. The Gounod and Poulenc are two of my favourite works in the repertoire (possibly top twenty) and it was great to great stuck into them. I hope that, when we're allowed, we can sing these two pieces again soon!

A week later, Sarisbury Choral Society joined forces with Botley and Itchen Valley to perform [Dvorak's Mass in D](#) in the first half and [Karl Jenkins: Stabat mater](#) in the second half; both halves of the concert conducted by **David Burgess**. This was a big sing for the choirs, there were hardly any time when they weren't singing, but this concert was a resounding success, particularly the performance of the Jenkins. The soloist for the Jenkins was [Belinda Sykes](#) who sang and played for the world premiere of the work. Belinda is the founder of a London-based medieval and folk band called [Joglaresa](#), who are known for their scholarly and imaginative re-creation of medieval music. Their music spans a range of European, Middle Eastern and North African medieval and folk genres, drawing especially on Arabic, Sephardic and Andalusian traditions. They are also notable for their innovative programming and use of improvisation.

In **June / July**, the Winchester City Festival Choir had its annual "summer sing", which focused on  [A Little Jazz Mass](#) by [Bob Chilcott \(b.1955\)](#) (pictured left). Almost exactly a year ago, I wrote about this piece in the newsletter (see the newsletter dated 4th June 2020), so I won't repeat myself here, except to say that this was a very successful summer sing and we were joined by **Adrian Osman** on bass and **Alex Pope** on drums alongside Gilly at the piano, so we were able to perform the piece with jazz trio!

In **October**, Sarisbury Choral joined forces with a number of other musical users of the Sarisbury Green Community Centre for a very light programme of music, which included [Three Hungarian Folksongs](#) by the composer [Mátyás Seiber \(1905 - 1960\)](#) (pictured right) who was born in Hungary, but lived and worked in the UK from 1935. His work linked many diverse musical influences, from the Hungarian tradition of Bartók and Kodály, to jazz, folk song, and lighter music, via Schoenberg! We also sang an arrangement of "Turn! Turn! Turn!" by Pete Seeger and "Bridge over Troubled Water" by Simon and Garfunkel. We had as our pianist for this occasion **Ed Slot**, who is Gilly's son. 

In **December**, Sarisbury Choral presented "The Sound of Christmas" with a programme of 14 carols at St. Paul's Church, Sarisbury Green, with **James Eaton** at the organ and a guest appearance from mezzo soprano **Fiona Jeppsson** (pictured left). Among the carol arrangements that Sarisbury Choral performed in 2012 were David Willcocks' version of [I saw three ships](#) and Walford Davies' arrangement of [The Holly and the Ivy](#). Following on from the success of last year's concert, Winchester City had a carol concert at Littleton, which was kept fairly simple, except that we managed to slot in a version of "Hark the herald angels sing", which was an arrangement by Chris Williams of a Gavotte by Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683 - 1764). 

That's all for this week folks, I hope you've enjoyed having a newsletter again this week.

Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham