



Hereford Cathedral Choir Association Newsletter March 2018

Dear Members

This is certainly turning out to a year to remember for the choir. There is no shortage of news given such a full schedule and the men and boys have performed at a number of prestigious events. In a small change to the usual format, there is a new section where one of the choristers pens his own highlights of the term, which we hope you will enjoy, called *A View From The Quire*.

Setting our minds back, the choir worked incredibly hard throughout the Advent and Christmas services, including singing at the Guards' Chapel in London, the carol services and the three services on Christmas Day. There was a very jolly Christmas lunch in College Hall for choristers and their families, joined by the Dean who also kindly played the piano for the boys and joined in the rather demanding party games.

The lay clerks gave an impromptu *a cappella* performance in College Hall on Christmas Day which was enjoyed by everyone and was particularly inspiring for the boys. This gave a flavour of the Lay Clerks' Concert that followed in February ('A Magical Mystery Tour'), with a secular element that tested Stephen Challenger's knowledge of popular music, by his own admission! It was wonderful to hear the impressive scope of their musical talent and a very successful evening, raising almost £1000 in support of the choir.

The first Evensong of 2018 back in January was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. For many choirs this would be a daunting prospect but Hereford stepped up to the plate again and several emails and letters of congratulations were received, including from Dr Bill Ives, former organist of Magdalen College, Oxford.

The performance of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* followed which was challenging work with a relatively young choir of just twelve boys. This was a staggering achievement, more so because only two of the choristers had sung it before. The performance went well and laid strong foundations for the next planned performance in 2020 when many more of the boys will have had prior experience of performing the work.

The choir also sang at the Gala Evening in support of the Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust concert at Buckingham Palace in the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales in February. The Cathedral Choir was joined by Hereford Choral Society and accompanied by the English Chamber Orchestra. This prestigious event received appreciative feedback from the audience and members of the orchestra. It was certainly a night to be remembered by the choristers who returned to Hereford at 1am, several of them with ABRSM music examinations awaiting them at school the following day.



The make-up of the choir never stands still and two experienced senior choristers, Rory Riley and Monty Williams, left the choir very early in the term. The boys were thanked for their service and will receive the traditional valediction at the end of the academic year. Meanwhile, Toby Diggle joined as a probationer chorister and soon found himself on the fast track at Evensong.

The Chapter granted Peter Dyke a six-week sabbatical to mark his 20th anniversary as Assistant Director of Music. Mr Dyke will resume his duties at the end of March. In the meantime, his responsibilities are being covered by Organ Scholar Joel Trekell and a number of visiting organists including Roger Judd, former Assistant Organist at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle; Dr Roy Massey, Organist Emeritus and Dr James Lancelot, former Organist of Durham Cathedral.

A View From The Quire

“My name is Hamish and I am ten and have been a chorister since September 2016. I was ruffed last summer.



This winter we have had great fun in the snow because some of the rehearsals and services had to be cancelled for the boys due to the bad weather as so many of the choristers live out of town at the moment and have to get in by car. I didn't mind too much though because we got to have

a snowball fight in our cassocks in the Cloisters and I got to sledge in Castle Green all Sunday morning!

I really enjoyed the recording for Radio 3. It was amazing because it was our very first Evensong of term after the Christmas break and we had just had to say goodbye to two of the senior choristers. It was pretty exciting though, especially because there was a bit of trouble with the recording

lights coming on at the wrong time but fortunately Mr Bowen noticed. We also got to look around the outside broadcasting vehicle afterwards. We often get to places the public don't get to see and that is one of my favourite things about being a chorister.

My favourite piece of music has been *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* by Brahms. We sang it as an anthem at Evensong and also for Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace. Performing at the Palace with the Choral Society and the English Chamber Orchestra was something I will never forget. I absolutely loved hearing the orchestra tuning up; I like how it sounds imperfect to begin and then all comes together. The sound of the timpani drums at the start of singing the National Anthem made my hairs stand on end too and it was the best I have ever heard it sung! The Ballroom was all white and gold and I even got to see the famous painting of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their children (by Franz Xaver Winterhalter) walking through the Palace! I feel pretty lucky when things like that happen.

I also did my Grade 3 Piano exam the following day and am almost ready now for my Grade 2 Theory exam. I am so grateful to the choir for everything I am learning about music."

Looking Forward

With Holy Week fast approaching, a busy time awaits the choir. For several years the choir has given performances of Bach's *St John Passion* and *St Matthew Passion* in alternate years in the cathedral on Tuesday of Holy Week, with Marches Baroque and a distinguished line up of soloists. Tickets are available for this year's performance of *St John Passion* on Tuesday 27 March at 7.30 pm either in person from the cathedral shop, or alternatively via the cathedral website:

<https://www.herefordcathedral.org/Event/st-john-passion>.

A full programme of the services for Holy Week can be found on the main cathedral website.