



# Hemiola

St George's Singers

## JOIN US ON AN AFRICAN ADVENTURE

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### ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

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Sue Roper  
Mark Rowlinson  
Stephen Threlfall  
Stephen Williams

#### MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

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#### ASSISTANT MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

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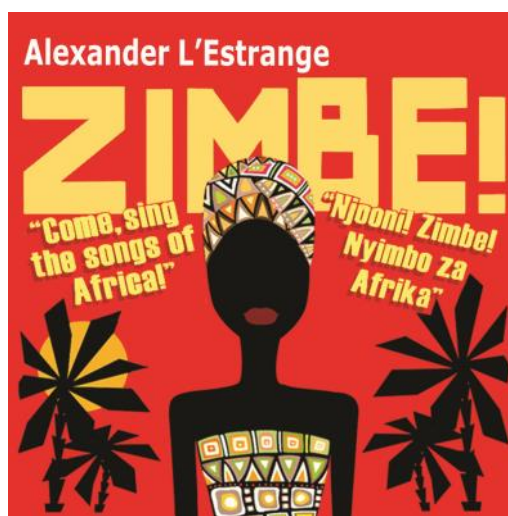
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[www.st-georges-singers.org.uk](http://www.st-georges-singers.org.uk)



After the rigours and ethereal splendours of *Spem in alium*, our next concert promises something a little different for choir and audience alike: an African adventure!

On 22 June at Gorton Monastery St George's Singers will be joined by the children of Bradshaw Hall Primary School in a work that has its origins in the everyday life of the people of Africa. *Zimbe!* is the work of British composer, Alexander

L'Estrange. Written in 2008, this 40-minute choral fusion of African song and jazz has already received over a hundred and fifty performances worldwide within its first five

years. Along with *Zimbe!* we're singing the *Five Spirituals* by Tippett, some traditional African songs arranged by Justine Doyle, and reprising our newly commissioned work, *Footprints*, by Will Todd.

To accompany our African concert, we've come up with an Africa-themed edition of *Hemiola*. Inside you'll find articles written by and about Choir members who, through their own experiences and their work with charities and organisations, have close and affectionate links with the people of Africa. We hope you enjoy reading it!

So, if you're looking for a really different experience, come to the monastery on 22 June. Foot-tapping, clapping and whooping is obligatory!

## NEW SEASON'S PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

Our programme for the 2014-15 season has been announced, and promises another year of contrasts and excitement.

2014 is of course the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, and it is therefore fitting that our first concert enables us to share in the nation's commemorations. 'Requiem for the Fallen' on 15 November presents a selection of music by British composers, many of whom lived through

the war years.

Christmas sees our traditional carol concert with Bradshaw Hall Primary School and VBS Poynton Band, then in spring we turn to the master again – Bach's *Magnificat* at RNCM, accompanied by the rather less well known *Membra Jesu Nostri* by Buxtehude. If you don't know this work, then Lent is the perfect time to acquaint yourself with this beautiful work of contemplation.

The season ends with one of the most beloved choral works of all: *The Dream of Gerontius* at Gorton Monastery. With a fabulous line-up of soloists (Anna Harvey, Josh Ellicott and Marcus Farnsworth) we suggest you put Sunday 21 June 2015 in your diary right now!

Pick up a copy of the season brochure at our next concert, download it from our website. See you next season!



## ZIMBE! AFRICAN WARMTH BROUGHT TO GORTON

We at St George's Singers are renowned for our versatility and sense of adventure. So, what else would we decide to sing after the ethereal wonders of Renaissance Tallis than a work with its origins in Africa!

*Zimbe! Come sing the songs of Africa* by Alexander L'Estrange is a remarkable work, based on traditional African songs, and bringing together singers of all ages performing together, stylistic fusion, communication with the audience, the importance of rhythm and groove and, perhaps above all, infectious energy. It was commissioned by Justin Doyle for Dorking Choral Society and has been performed regularly ever since.

L'Estrange's roots lie in the British choral tradition – he was a chorister at New College, Oxford, and sang in Magdalen College choir – and he has built a successful international career as a jazz musician. His compositions reflect this diverse musical make-up, and his choral output is testament to the eclectic mix of styles which shaped his musical education: the English cathedral tradition, with echoes of jazz, pop, musical theatre or world music.

The songs of *Zimbe* cover a wide spectrum of experience and emotion, but they are chiefly memorable for their focus on the everyday life of the African peoples, and their struggles to survive. So a particularly apt musical partner for the work is the wonderful *Five Spirituals* by Michael Tippett.

Sir Michael Tippett (1905–1998), was truly an original creative mind. Although his initial compositional influences owe much to Sibelius and 20th-century neo-classicism, as well as jazz and blues, his musical voice is distinctly his own.

It is impossible to separate Tippett the composer from Tippett the political socialist, pacifist, Jungian reader, and philosopher. Of paramount importance is Tippett's conviction

of a deeply spiritual dimension in each and all of humanity: a life that encompasses both the 'light' and 'dark' sides, each of which we have the task and spiritual journey of recognizing and knowing. He said, 'I believe in the reality of the spiritual world experienced by some intuitive, introspective apprehension of a kind which, in the past, was formulated generally by dogmatic, revelatory, received religions.'

Tippett did not consider himself a Christian, but resonated with the themes of Christian literature (notably *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan), and with biblical themes and verses depicting the oppression of the Jews, from which he drew analogies with the oppressed and persecuted of his time. His horror of warfare, particularly in its deformation of the human character, resulted in his serving a short prison term for refusing even non-combatant service in the early years of World War II.

On the day war was declared between Britain and Germany (3 September 1939), Tippett began work on his oratorio, *A Child of Our Time*. The impulse for the work (and for its title) was a story, *Ein Kind unserer Zeit* (1938), by a young German writer, Odo von Horvath (1907–38). The real-life story told of a young Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, who assassinated a German diplomat in Paris in an act of despair and protest against the treatment of his parents and some fifty thousand Jews deported back to Poland. The Nazis' answer was the infamous pogrom, *Kristallnacht*.

The work is shaped by the *Messiah* of Handel, and by the function of the choir and the chorales of Bach's *Passions*. Tippett did not wish to use church hymns because of what he considered too narrow a collective voice of the faithful. It was a radio broadcast of the African-American spiritual *Steal Away* with its dynamic

phrase, 'the trumpet sounds within-a my soul' that gave the clue. He had found what he sought to function as the world-voice of 'everyman.' He chose five spirituals from the collection, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, edited by James Weldon Johnson, 'for their tunes and words, which provided the exact congregational metaphor for five calculated situations in my scheme'.

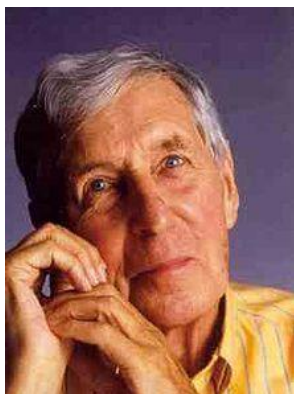
The settings of the spirituals required study and thought. Tippett recalled the powerful use of the spirituals, particularly *Go Down, Moses* in the film *Green Pastures*, and listened to recordings of the Hall Johnson Choir (featured in the film) and to the Mitchell Christian Singers. In seeking to retain the immediacy of impact yet signify a broader 'congregation' of humanity, Tippett eliminated verbal dialect. Soloists soar out of, over, and back into the chorus texture, and the text, like a banner hanging in the wind, impresses itself on the listeners, who find themselves swept up in and surrounded by the restless, flowing, iridescent sound – a congregation for our time.

The other main item in the programme will be Will Todd's *Footprints*, which received its première by St George's to great acclaim last December, and which, with its jazz rhythms and words of comfort and consolation, match the mood of the evening perfectly.

Alongside St George's will be the fabulous young singers from Bradshaw Hall Primary School, who (we gather from Neil) are word and note perfect. (So, no pressure on the grown-ups then!) And we're delighted that Alexander L'Estrange's own band, Call Me Al, will be accompanying the choirs for the performance.

So, even if it's raining outside, the wind is howling, and summer looks but a distant memory, you'll find it hot and sunny in the Monastery – so come and join in the fun!

Alexander L'Estrange's latest exciting commissioned work will mark the opening of 2014's Tour de France (coming to Yorkshire in early July).



Sir Michael Tippett



## THE ORIGINS OF ZIMBE BY ALEXANDER L'ESTRANGE

The seeds of my affinity with African music and the gospel tradition were sown in the early 90s through a chance encounter on a train. Opposite me was a woman with a book of manuscript paper on her lap. I asked politely whether she was a musician and she replied that she was on her way to lead a music group at a prison. She was working on African and gospel music but, although she knew many excellent songs, she was really an artist/sculptor, not a musician, and was rather lacking in confidence when it came to leading a singing workshop. 'I could help,' I offered.

Her name is Wren Hughes and we struck up a working relationship. She introduced me to songs, tapes, books and friends with a plethora of songs to share.

I immediately fell in love with the music. Together we ran

singing groups in Oxford, London and beyond, and I quickly became immersed in arranging, teaching, performing and sharing African songs.

I subsequently produced a collection of choral arrangements for Faber Music entitled *Songs of a Rainbow Nation* and it was in response to performing these arrangements that Justin Doyle, then conductor of Dorking Choral Society, commissioned me to write a more substantial piece based on African and gospel themes. Inspired by the use of music in the recent TV adaptation of *The No1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, I decided that my piece would aim to reflect some of the manifold ways in which music plays a part in everyday life in Africa – from the rising of the sun to its setting, both literally and figuratively. I wanted to capture the essence of the African spirit

through glimpses into the human experience – simple children's playground songs from Ghana, a Xhosa lullaby for mothers of the victims of apartheid, a raucous drinking song from Zimbabwe, sensuous wedding songs and some beautiful funeral and worship music.

'Zimbe' is the anglicized version of the Swahili word for 'Sing them'. Just as others have shared these wonderful songs with me, so I am passing them on. Scored for SATB choir, unison children's choir and jazz quintet, the settings reflect my own diverse musical make-up. The songs I have chosen are all imbued with the spirit, energy and simplicity that is so typical of the African tradition. They are fun, moving and infectious – tuneful, easy to learn and impossible to forget.



Composer Alexander L'Estrange

**'I wanted to capture the essence of the African spirit through glimpses into the human experience.'**

## GETTING TO GRIPS WITH YOUR AGOGOS

One of the things that makes *Zimbe!* such an exciting work is the extensive use of percussion. Some of them are pretty recognisable, such as maracas, tambourines and triangles, and lots of people may even



have played along with Cliff Richard when the bongos were big in the 1950s!

But what about some of the other more exotic instruments that we may have seen and heard, but not been able to put a name to ...?

An **agogo** (from the Yoruba meaning 'bell') is a single or multiple bell typically played by striking them with a drumstick. It is now used throughout the world but has its origins in traditional Yoruba music from west Africa. Each bell is a different size, allowing a different pitched note to be produced

depending on which bell has been hit. First used in Yoruba music, it was considered a symbol of power all over the central part of

Africa and Nigeria.

A **rainstick** is a long, hollow tube partially filled with small pebbles or beans that has small pins or thorns arranged helically on its inside surface. When the stick is upended, the pebbles fall to the other end of the tube, making a sound reminiscent of rain falling. The rainstick is believed to have been invented by the Aztecs and was played in the belief it could bring about rainstorms. Rainsticks are usually made from cactus, most usually (and for the gardeners amongst us!) *Eulychnia acida* and *Echinopsis pachanoi*.

A **mark tree** is used primarily for musical colour. It consists of many small chimes of varying lengths mounted hanging from a bar. The chimes are played by sweeping a finger or stick through the length of the hanging chimes. They are mounted in pitch order to produce rising or falling glissandos. The chimes do not produce a definite pitch, as they produce in-harmonic (rather than harmonic) spectra. The mark tree is named after its inventor, studio percussionist Mark Stevens, who devised the instrument.

The **conga** is a tall, narrow, single-headed African drum. These drums may have originally been salvaged barrels, and are now used widely in South America, particularly in the Carnival rhythm called conga (or *conga de comprasa*), and are the principal instruments in rumba. So now you know what they all are – have fun identifying them at the concert!





## RESURRECTING MY SWAHILI – 50 YEARS ON BY URSULA BIRKETT

**In an attempt to improve our Swahili pronunciation in readiness for *Zimbe!*, Neil called on alto Ursula Birkett, who learnt Swahili whilst living in Tanzania when she was first married. Here she recalls life in another world, in another time.**



Ursula and baby Stephen in Tanzania

Bagamoyo, Tanzania, today. The town was founded at the end of the 18th century and was one of the most important trading ports along the East African coast. Today the town is being considered as a world heritage site.



Long ago and far away I was part of the waning British colonial past, a District Officer's wife, a memsahib. Like many another aspiring Colonial civil servant, my future husband Peter had read Sir Arthur Grimble's *A Pattern of Islands*, and thought he'd really like a life like that. Viewed from Britain in the 1950s, it sounded wonderfully free and varied, with interest of every kind, quite unlike the rather post-war constrained England of the time.

Having decided that I could imagine such a life for myself (insofar as I could envisage it at all), I married the man. I waved him off by Union Castle ship to pass some basic exams, while I worked myself out of my job in London, then followed on the next circuit round Africa of the same ship. After a journey of a month, given strikes and other holdups, from Dar es Salaam the train upcountry to Lake District, 100 miles south of Lake Victoria, took three days and two nights at a stately pace that allowed close inspection of miles of empty Africa, with occasional wildlife. Finally, arrival at 3 am, and there was Peter, by the light of hurricane lamps (no electricity). So real adult life started.

We lived in a bungalow with wide eaves (shade), concrete floors (cool), PWD (Public Works Department) furniture, gas cylinder-powered cooker (better than the black hole cookhouse with wood fire as used by the servants), and paraffin-powered fridge and lamps. Hot water for bathing came from a 'Tanganyika boiler', ie a large drum outdoors with a fire lit under it when required, the water then piped into the house. We had a house servant, Juma, small, bullet-

headed, very black. On a later station with a different servant I realised how important that was for me personally, not just doing your government bit by providing employment. Abdullah went off to get married, and for several weeks I did the housework with no mod cons and a fractious small child, in that heat – I was glad when he came back.

We never had an ayah for Stephen, but we did rise to a garden servant, whose name was Mbegu ('Mr Seed'), possibly too good to be true and a colo-



From the Birkett family album – Bagamoyo

nialist's renaming? Although the house servant of the time usually did the shopping, I shopped too. English was spoken in the Indian shops, but with servants and in the market it was Swahili or nothing.

Peter, naturally, had learnt the language on the preparatory course. I read the grammar, worked through reading texts – 'Kisiwa chenye hasina', *Treasure Island*, then sank or swam as best I might. While better than what was dismissively called 'kitchen Swahili', it was far from the language of government and administration. There were a few other Brits and English speakers everywhere we lived, but they were rarely there.

We were moved from our first station, way upcountry, down to the coast near Dar es Salaam, for the birth of Stephen. This was Bagamoyo, opposite the southern tip of Zanzibar, the dhow harbour at the end of the old slave trail out of central



Africa. (The name possibly means Bury my Heart, 'moyo', thus referring to the slaves?) It had a classic curve of white beach, with leaning palms, dhows floating gracefully past, and a coral reef offshore where the water boomed at low tide. When the tide turned and the reef boomed, we waited for the wind to come coolly in off the sea, bringing some relief from the heat and damp, constants at 3 degrees south of the equator and a few hundred yards from the Indian Ocean – still no electricity, so no fans, let alone air con. The Arab influence is strong on the east coast, there were some Arab remains, and the older buildings showed Arab influence. The language was spoken in its purest form there, and in the mouths of the cultured was like music.

For our final few months we moved inland again, to a provincial centre – where some of our laid-back behaviour drew censure as letting the government side down: bare feet in public! And here we found electricity, traded in the battery-driven gramophone, could listen to more music, and there was even a small choir. We savoured the delight of light at the flick of a switch, which even now I do not always take for granted. Morogoro is at the foot of a mountain, and as dusk fell (brief and prompt in the tropics), the wind would rush down, blissfully cool.

People sometimes ask if I enjoyed living in East Africa. 'Enjoy' is a strong word, but it was an experience that changed the way I see the world, for keeps (and, I think, for the better).



## THE STORY OF ST JAMES SCHOOL

A few weeks ago visitors arrived at our Tuesday rehearsal: Gerry Hambridge, well known to many people in Poynton, and Mr James, the head teacher of St James Junior School and Orphan Care in Nakakabala, Uganda. They had come to tell us about their work and ask for our help in spreading the word.

Gerry has worked in Uganda, and has known James and his family, for many years. James set up the school in 2008, when he found that many children were not getting an education, as the nearest public school was a long walk from their homes. It now has 300 children aged 5 to 14, plus 30 orphans living on the premises who would otherwise have no stable home.

The school is surrounded by swampland that James farms with the older children to provide food for the orphans, and

to ensure each schoolchild gets a cooked meal – possibly the only meal they get some days. Through Gerry's personal fund-raising, the school has been provided with desks, books, teaching aids, latrines, beds and mosquito nets for the orphans (malaria is still the biggest killer of children in Uganda). Goat, pig and chicken projects have been set up so that when the animals produce young they can be sold to raise money for the school, and make it self-sufficient. Already several offspring of the goats have been exchanged for six cows – and owning cows is the equivalent of money in the bank!

Money was also raised to install solar lighting, enabling the pupils to study into the evening when it grows dark at 7.00pm. And the next project is to provide permanent brick class-

rooms, replacing the temporary ones open to the elements, which provide no protection from the wind, rain and storms of the rainy season.

Gerry does not work for an official charity, though she has been supported by a number of local schools, but is simply an individual working to make the lives of children in Uganda a little better. She will be coming to our *Zimbe* concert, and would be delighted to talk to you about her work in Uganda.

[gerrysuganda@gmail.com](mailto:gerrysuganda@gmail.com)



Mr James with his class



Even the 5-year-olds collect water

## UPDATE ON CORRIE'S WORK IN UGANDA

Dear Friends ...

This morning I woke up at 5am to the sound of rain on the tin roof of my house, and soft rain soon turned into a 20-minute deluge. The last time it rained was before Christmas. January is the hottest month of the year, with temperatures reaching 35°C in the shade... As a result of this lack of rain, food production is reduced and fewer varieties are available in the market at higher prices. Pineapples, the region's main fruit, have gone up in price by 100 per cent and now cost around 50p each. For some people, that is a day's wages.

... This year I was one of the doctors working over the Christmas period and it turned out to be very busy. Clinics or theatres were closed for business, or at least could not do any surgery, so many more patients were referred to Kiwoko during that time. I spent many hours in theatre, but still managed to cook a Christmas

dinner for some of the other doctors!

... Work and life in the maternity unit continues to keep me busy. Some people can be referred from health centres which are more than 50 miles away. This weekend one mother delivered a set of quadruplets at the roadside. One of the babies did not survive but the other three are doing well at the special care baby unit.

Most women who are referred to Kiwoko arrive here on the back of a motorbike, wedged in between the driver and an accompanying relative, as well as everything else one needs for a stay in hospital: bedsheets, blanket, cooking utensils, bucket, food etc. It is surprising how many people and things can be loaded onto one motorbike. ... After they have had their babies, women travel home again in the same way, but now with a baby to hold whilst on the back of the motorbike. It's not the safest mode of transport,

but a car is not affordable for many people.

Uganda is one of the countries in the world with high rates of deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth – of both mother and babies. In the UK and other western countries, there is a national confidential enquiry to discover the issues surrounding any deaths. A similar system was set up in Uganda but has not been working well due to under reporting and many health centres being unaware that the system even exists. The Ugandan government is now trying to breathe new life into the system and in Kiwoko, we are also determined to participate in this programme. ... This is going to be a major undertaking, as about 10 per cent of our babies are either stillborn or die in the first week of life. Maternal deaths in the hospital itself are thankfully few, and last year only three mothers died out of 2,300 deliveries.

Love, Corrie

**Corrie Verduyn, who sang with St George's Singers when she lived in Manchester, is now working at Kiwoko Hospital in Uganda. A doctor of obstetrics and gynaecology, Corrie is using her skills as the clinical lead for women's health in the region, including prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Here are some extracts from her most recent newsletter, dated February 2014.**



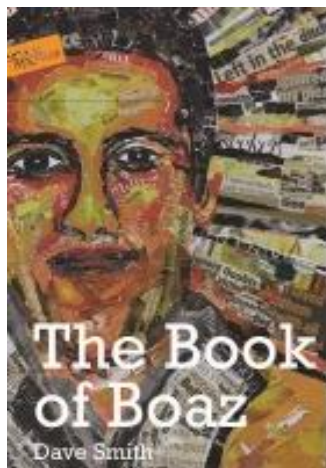
Dr Corrie



## THE POWER OF SONG BY JO GARBUTT

The 'rainbow nation' that is Africa is, like *Zimbe!* a paradox of celebration and sorrow. Within its many countries there are people-groups that live in peace and plenty, whilst others experience constant hunger and the terrors of war. Some are even forced to flee for safety.

A number of these 'asylum seekers' come to the UK. This is not always by choice. Once here they are dispersed by the border's agency, and a number come to Manchester and the surrounding area. Although they may eventually be granted leave to remain, some have no means of support until their



cases have been heard. (This in spite of the UN Declaration of Human Rights that states 'everyone has the right to seek . . . in other countries . . . freedom from persecution'.)

A number of charities provide food and shelter and find ways to enhance their quality of life: a recent issue of *Hemiola* (Nov 2013) carried an article by Judy Tomlinson about Lis Murphy's work with asylum seekers who have suffered torture.

'Musicians Without Borders' is a brilliant example of an initiative that offers 'food for the soul' within the larger framework of practical charitable support.

I remember Lis's first attempts to get a choir together at a Drop-in centre in Salford. At the time I worked for the Boaz

Trust, an exceptional organization that accommodates destitute asylum seekers in a number of houses or with hosts in the wider community. I had heard about Lis from an Iranian lady who was lonely and depressed, but was beginning to find companionship and even some joy in the singing group.

I was curious to know more about this 'choir' but always seemed to be too busy to go and see it for myself, until one day I had to take a client to report at the UK Immigration office.

'Reporting' is something that asylum seekers dread. Even if they have an appeal lodged with a solicitor - on the grounds of imprisonment, persecution or even death if they are sent back home - they can be detained at the reporting centre and threatened with deportation.

My client, an elderly Zimbabwean lady, already sick and mentally fragile, was obviously agitated as I helped her out of the car and although she emerged from the office after half an hour, she was in no fit state to be on her own. I thought of the drop-in centre nearby and took her there.

Liliane (not her real name) looked around curiously. When I offered her a drink she shook her head and sat down in a corner. The singing had just begun - Lis used her violin to play a phrase, recited the words of a simple song and then sang it with the disparate group in front of her.

I asked Liliane if she would like to join in but she was scornful. 'This is not my language . . . who are these people?'

Oh dear, had I made a mistake? Would she get up at any moment and demand that I take her home?

I turned my attention back to Lis, whose energy and enthusiasm had started to connect with the singers. After a few minutes I noticed Liliane's foot beginning to tap, her hands moving on her lap as if she might consider clapping.

The African men were joining in now, this song was in one of their languages. The Iranian ladies were not daunted, they carried on, stumbling a bit over the words, laughing, but keeping in time to Lis's beat.

Suddenly Liliane got up. With great deliberation she marched across the hall to the front of the choir where she sat down. She looked around, then raised her hands to clap and began to sing. It was a wonderful moment - one that I shall never forget. I sat and watched as someone who was hurt and broken began to find solace in her own peoples' songs.

The memory came back as I read a quote from a member of 'Stone Flowers':

'The group has transformed me . . . (playing) is the only feeling that reminds me of who I am and what I am'.\*

\* used by permission of Musicians Without Borders

**You can read more about the Boaz Trust in the recently published *The Book of Boaz*, by Dave Smith. Dave founded the Boaz Trust in 2004, after meeting growing numbers of destitute asylum seekers who had no recourse to public funds and no where to turn for help. As a Christian charity the Trust is motivated by Jesus' instructions to care for the poor and marginalised in our society. The charity's name is taken from the Book of Ruth. A man called Boaz welcomes Ruth who is a foreigner in the land, and shows her kindness.**

**[www.boaztrust.org.uk](http://www.boaztrust.org.uk)**





## HOPE REWARDED!

So, we pulled it off! *Spem in alium*, in 40 parts, in a circle round the vast expanse of St George's Church on 22 March 2014 (a date for the archives!). Even more remarkably, we sang it not once, but twice. Our concerts are nothing if not value for money!

Throughout afternoon rehearsal, everyone had the 'big one' at the back of their minds: how were we going to manage the *Spem* in the evening?

*Spem in alium* – putting all our hope in Neil!



In the event, the logistics worked superbly. Neil stood in the middle of the central aisle, with the eight choirs spread round the outer aisles.

There was a lot of shuffling around to start with to make sure everyone could see – a problem alleviated in rehearsal by a very big pair of green fluorescent gloves which Neil waved around to get our attention at the crucial moment. Decorum dictated this would not be appropriate for the concert, but despite the lack of conducting aids, his direction was faultless, and not one of the choirs missed an entry. Some of us were concerned that, standing so close to some of the audience members, they would only be able to hear one or two of the parts. That did not seem to detract from their enjoyment though, and all of us got an

especial round of applause from our closest listeners.

The Tallis was not the only astonishing music. Many of us were swept away by the wonder and sheer beauty of Jonathan Dove's *Seek him that maketh the seven stars*. To judge by the audience reaction, they too felt that this was something special!

Neil built up a great rapport with the audience with his ad hoc commentary introducing the pieces, making the concert in the words of one audience member, 'more friendly and accessible'.

An amazing evening that we will remember for a long time to come.



40 parts take up an awful lot of space on the piano!



## 'A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING' AND OTHER TALES BY GWYNETH PAILIN

'A brand plucked from the burning' – a phrase applied to John Wesley, who as a young child was saved from his burning home – can now be applied to one of our *Spem* copies retrieved by a quick-thinking alto as it accidentally joined some rubbish on a fire. It's back with the others in the box now, quite usable but with its singed edges looking like some mock historical document!

Accidents can happen on tour too! It's not really a good idea to have toiletries and music in the same suitcase or you could find, like one of the basses did, that you arrive home with some sweet-smelling copies. 'No thank you' said the Library. A new one was despatched and the tainted one remained the property of the bass – appropriately enough it was Britten's

### *Flower Songs!*

We regularly hire out music to other choirs which occasionally reappears with some new copies. I don't always ask what happened! Once sent a damaged copy for inspection, I had to say 'Sorry, no thank you'. It was replaced but we now have an extra copy of Ellington's *Sacred Concerts* well soaked in orange juice!

Sometimes music seems to have a will of its own like the set that stayed happily in the bar at the Bamford Arms for a few days or the set which got so involved with our wonderful staging that it went off with it into storage.

But it's actually a rare occurrence for us to have to replace anything – for which many thanks – but I sometimes won-

der how the Library would have responded to the excuse 'it's down a salt mine in Poland' (yes, we did sing in one) or 'it's on an Irish ferry' (yes, we did rehearse en route to Dublin). In the event, the ever-vigilant eyes of choir members means that any music which looks abandoned gets picked up – for which many thanks again!

But one burning question remains: just how does music find its way into someone else's bag without either person knowing?

[The identities of the individuals concerned have been removed for reasons of confidentiality. However, for a small contribution to the Librarian's holiday fund ... Ed]



Nero—the first incendiary musician

## ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS



**Hot off  
the  
press!**

### Sporting heroes

Well done to two of our elite (!) athletes for their recent performances in the Great Manchester Run on 18 May. David Robson ran with a team from Price-waterhouseCoopers in aid of Reuben's Retreat, and raised over £8,000, of which Dave himself raised over £400. Dave was delighted with his time of 1 hour 33 minutes.

Our new Assistant MD Joe Judge also ran, in aid of the Midlands Air Ambulance, and has raised £315 to date. Both extend many thanks to everyone in the Choir who supported them and kindly donated to their charities.

### Welcome and farewell

Welcome to Laura Shaw in the soprano section, who joined in March.

And farewell to Helen Rollison, who is moving to Cambridge. Helen has sung alto with the Choir for many years, and has also been a stalwart of the recorder group – and housekeeper for choir mascot, George. Good luck in your new city, and hope you find a good choir to sing with! (Anyone want to take in a homeless moose?)

We say farewell also to tenor Mark Hesketh, who is leaving St George's Singers due to work commitments. We are sorry to see him go and thank him for his contribution to the tenor

section and for representing them on the committee.

### Cheshire Consort

Sue Taylor, coordinator for The Cheshire Consort since it was set up in 2006, is standing down from the job she has now done for eight years.

Sue has done a fabulous job liaising with couples, sorting out music,

the  
Cheshire  
Consort

marshalling the vocal and instrumental forces and being the 'face' of the Cheshire Consort, which has raised significant sums for St George's Singers.

Many thanks, Sue, for all your hard work, your extensive musical knowledge and sensitive handling of nervous brides, grooms and mothers! Anyone interested in taking on what is a very rewarding and important job for the Choir, please speak to Sue.

### New home for charity shop

The St George's Singers online charity shop has moved home, and can now be found on

[www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk). More information on using the site will be provided over the summer.

### Congratulations to Jeff

We were thrilled to hear that Jeff Makinson had become engaged to Lucy. We wish them every happiness – and look forward to the future wedding. No shortage of singers or organists at that particular ceremony we would imagine!

### And congratulations to Alan!

And a very special happy birthday wish to Alan Swain, who is 80 this month. We would never have been able to present our concerts in the professional way we have over the last 15–20 years without Alan's phenomenal expertise, attention to detail, and unselfish commitment to the Choir. Sound engineer, electrician, stage designer, carpenter, lighting engineer, DIY guru – Alan has been our 'go-to' person for countless concerts and events. And that's before we acknowledge his vocal contribution to the tenor section. A man in a million. We salute you, Alan!



Jeff and fiancée Lucy on tour in Edinburgh

### TAYLOR'S #TAGS

**This needs rawness and shoutiness – as if you're off note. So basses, you shouldn't have any problem.**

**Basses – all I could think of during that was the Four Yorkshiremen sketch. It's 'ilanga libuya' not 'eeh, by gum'.**

**It's not Tallis, is it?**

**N: Tenors – all you have to do is watch my hands!**

**Tenor: You keep moving them too quickly.**

**N: I'm a lightning conductor.**

**Tenors – you don't have to sound like Hinge and Bracket – just use your normal voice!**



## TEA TIME NOTES BY PETER FARRINGTON

A big thank you to all who brew and wash up each week at rehearsal!

What does it cost to keep the choir singing each week? Well, from September 2013 to June 2014, plus Singing Day, socials and extra rehearsals – that's 38 weeks – the total expenditure on provisions was £230.50. This includes around £50 on biscuits, £20 on tea and coffee, and the rest on utensils, plates

etc for various events.

However, the outgoings were far exceeded by the sums taken, meaning that, up to the end of May for the current season, £210 was banked for the choir. In other words, it costs the choir absolutely nothing, and even generates funds.

And since 1999, your Tuesday cuppa has generated over £5,000 for St George's.

Another bonus—the price for your tea and coffee has not changed since 1999, and is still a tremendous bargain at 20p and 25p respectively.

So, a big thank you again to all the tea volunteers. Let's keep up the good work for the choir – and don't forget to put your name on the tea rota for next season! And thanks too for all the stamps. Keep saving them!



## A TRIBUTE TO MARK LONSBOROUGH

FROM HIS FRIENDS CATH BRYANT, DAVID ROBSON, ALI MCLAY AND JOE KEANEY

We first met Mark Lonsborough, as we've met many of our closest friends, in the ranks of St George's Singers. Mark joined the bass section of the choir in 2000 and it didn't take him long to become a key member of the section – not just musically but also socially, in the finest traditions of St George's Singers!

Mark had been flute and piccolo player in the Poynton British Legion Band, and was an electronic engineer and senior manager at Ferranti Systems – a job that gave him plenty of challenges but which he loved.

Mark was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2001. His consultant informed him that he had between 2 and 5 years to live. Mark's life changed in an instant and yet, even in the throes of this horrific illness, he showed his characteristics so strongly: determination, humour, bravery and love.

In the fullness of time Mark gave up the job he loved, left the choir and moved house to a flat near his elderly mother. Eventually (and to his frustration) there came a point when Mark needed to engage carers. Whilst in one sense this was a huge setback for Mark, as is often the way of things it was also a happy time; it resulted in him meeting someone who changed his world forever and became the love of his life – Lindsey and Mark fell in love. The immediate change in Mark was plain for all of us to see. Lindsey had given this already determined man a turbo charge. The first time we talked about his illness was in the Bamford Arms (where else?) when he was coming up to be re-auditioned for SGS and he was concerned that his increasing difficulty in standing and being able to hold his music would mean he would have to leave the choir. It made us appreciate how much the singing and the choir meant to him, and we impressed on him that non-singers can get as much pleasure out of the choir as singers.

Many of the choir will remember the sight of Mark's wheelchair in the audience at concerts and his big smile afterwards as he suggested a celebratory glass of red wine.

Mark loved touring with SGS and there are many happy memories of him in Krakow in 2002. He was still walking then but MND was taking its toll.

We were on our way back from a concert when he fell, tripping on uneven pavement. He cracked open his chin and was unable to get up. A very kind passer-by called an ambulance and off we went to the Krakow equivalent of the minor injuries clinic. Mark was given stitches and a massive dose of painkillers. The suggestion that he may want to consider going home or just be an audience member was dismissed immediately.

Nothing was going to stop Mark enjoying himself or singing the music he so loved.

In June 2006, Mark was 50. He had a party at his Adlington flat and of course the usual SGS chums were there, along with Mark's family and friends. It was a beautiful evening and we all sat outside in the garden. We had taken some music to sing, which went well, but the attempts to light the barbecue didn't go quite so well. Mark sat with his bushy eyebrow raised in mock censoriousness and a mischievous smile – surely his defining facial expression. Mark never lost his love of life or his sense of humour. Ali remembers phoning him one day and asking if he fancied a trip out and then a pub lunch. By this time he was using a wheelchair. Oh, how they laughed as he gave step-by-step instructions of how to get him out of the wheelchair and into the car. It took them half an hour but they got there in the end. Once at the pub, Mark asked if Ali could help him visit the loo and, true to form, his main concern was not how easy or difficult this would be but rather, because it might take some time, that the bar staff

might think they had left and remove their half-drunk glasses of red wine.

In November 2009, we had the huge honour of singing at Mark and Lindsey's wedding. They moved into a lovely house on Dickens Lane in Poynton and there followed the happiest years of Mark's life. While many people would have become depressed, grumpy or sanguine about the daily degeneration of their health, Mark decided no one was going to tell him when he was going to die and set about trying to buck his prognosis, which he did with spectacular success. Mark enjoyed a happy social whirl of drinks and meals with his friends, endless banter and many laughs with his team of carers and relaxed and contented home life with Lindsey and her sons, Ben and Sam. When David, Ali, Joe and I descended on them, I always left their house with not only a big smile on my face, but also a feeling of having got my own problems into perspective.

During Mark's later years he renewed his desire to sing and was put in touch with a music therapist. This had huge health benefits in maintaining (or even increasing) his lung capacity and therefore allowing him to continue to speak and breathe. At Mark's birthday party in 2013 he treated us to an incredibly musical recital of the songs he had been working on with his music therapist. For a man who, at this point, was really struggling with speech, this was a massive achievement. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. If there is such a thing as a 'good death', Mark had it. He died peacefully in the East Cheshire Hospice in April 2014, surrounded by staff he knew and who loved him as a patient and friend and his adored wife Lindsey. He had the opportunity to say goodbye to his children, step-children



and many of his closest friends and he was at peace.

Ali and Joe recall the last time they saw Mark, at the East Cheshire Hospice; he had given up the struggle with a puréed meal and was far more interested in cracking open the newly arrived bottle of red and sharing the chit-chat ping-ponging across the room. His eyes and ears were alert and sparkly – despite the superhuman difficulties in speaking he was still across everything that was going on and was lapping up the banter. And, of course, Lindsey was there at his side, encouraging, coaxing, smiling and interpreting.

Mark was very proud of his Yorkshire roots and felt that they gave him the bloody-mindedness needed to give MND a run for its money! At no point during his illness did Mark lose his determination to carry on, his sense of humour or his love for his wonderful wife, Lindsey, her boys and his friends. He was a true friend. He exuded calmness and joy, even in the most difficult circumstances. Never was the formulation 'after a long illness, bravely borne' so apt but so inadequate. Mark, we miss you.



A sight that became all too common on tour: Dave on the phone trying to find where the coach was parked



Our recital at Edinburgh Castle was widely publicized on the guard-house door

## EDINBURGH TOUR: ST GEORGE TAKES ON ST ANDREW

**Thursday 29 May**

Well, it's 5.30 pm in Poynton car park—so it must be tour time again! Around 40 Singers got on the coach for the journey to Edinburgh, the rest making their own way by car, train or plane. Provisions from Waitrose before we left, then coach driver Andy drove us smoothly away and we all settled down for an uneventful trip. Rest stop at Tebay on the M6 – highly recommended, as the home-made farmers' market produce is delicious – then over the border into what we kept being reminded throughout our tour could soon be a foreign country. The detour at Moffatt that took us through the 'scenic route' would have been wonderful if it hadn't been dark! Still—good try, Andy.

The hotel was a welcome sight at about 10.45pm, just across the road from the statue of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and we met up with many (but not all) of the independent travelers had arrived. Jeff's non-arrival was particularly concerning...!

**Friday 30 May**

Slight confusion over timings meant that some of us had to scramble to get to the rehearsal at 9.30 am. The hotel had provided the Wallace Room for us which might have done for an Anglo-Scottish skirmish, but



Outdoor recital in Hospital Square at Edinburgh Castle



proved a little cramped and not a little warm for 60 singers! Neil worked hard on the Tippett (especially the second alto line in No 3 – which none of us will now ever forget!), but let us go before we all expired through heat exhaustion, to catch the coach to Edinburgh

Castle, and our outdoor recital. And big relief when we got outside: Jeff and fiancée Lucy had arrived late the night before, and were off in

search of breakfast.

After a quick tour of the Castle, we all met in Hospital Square just after the One O'Clock Gun, which is fired (no kidding!) at 13.00 hrs every day. The tradition began

in 1861 to provide ships in the Firth of Forth with an audible time signal, helping ships set the maritime clocks needed to navigate the globe long before satellite navigation was available. Unfortunately, the gun is **not** audible from the ladies toilet in the café, so one of the altos didn't quite make

it back in time for the start!

Fortunately, the weather was good, and the peripatetic audience appreciative. The Tippett was a little shaky (though we nailed No 3!), but we were all delighted to be given a certificate from the Castle for our 'world-class performance'.



Then free time for the rest of the afternoon. Some took the opportunity to go on the hop-on, hop-off bus tour round the city, others just went back to bed, and some explored the numerous cafes, bars and cosmopolitan restaurants that Edinburgh has to offer.

By 5.00 pm we had assembled at Canongate Kirk on the Royal



Mile, the parish church of Edinburgh Old Town, where the Royal Family worship when in the city (and whose pew was immediately commandeered by Geoff Taylor for the day!) Staging was unloaded from the coach, and we entered the church to be met by a blue haze: clearly the verger had acquired a discounted batch of

cont/...





.../cont

sky blue paint and didn't want to waste it.

Rehearsal for an hour and a half went relatively smoothly, although Neil did have us slightly puzzled by announcing that he wanted to go through *Like as the Hart*. A frantic search through our voluminous piles of music did not reveal any such piece, at which point he decided he meant the **other** Howells – the one we'd actually rehearsed and brought with us.

Then back to the hotel to



Jeff working wonders in Canongate

change into concert gear. By now we had realised that getting from one side of Edinburgh to the other did not involve going in a straight line, but rather embarking on a mystery tour up and down the many hills, round the one-way streets, and along the multiple diversions. Fortunately the concert couldn't start without us, so we knew we wouldn't miss the beginning, and we returned to the church with a few minutes to spare.

A small audience (largely made up of people we'd brought with us on the coach!) thoroughly

enjoyed our performance, and the golfers (or 'choral widowers') had made it back from the golf course to swell the numbers. Jeff made fabulous sounds on the smallest organ in Scotland, so good in fact that Neil decided to ditch the interval in favour of an extra organ piece.

(Not sure if Jeff gets time-and-a-half for that one!)

After what was a long concert at which we sang everything in our folders except the Tippett the coach

dropped us back at the hotel, and a number of us headed for the nearest Italian restaurant, before bringing a very long day to a close in the bar.

#### Saturday 31 May

A big day in Edinburgh! In honour of St George's Singers' visit, the new tram system was officially inaugurated. Originally budgeted at £375m, with a completion date of 2010, the system has now finally been launched, is expected to cost c £1bn, and has been reduced to one line – to the airport. The Edinburghers themselves appear underwhelmed by their new tram network, so most of the people waiting on the tram stations were visitors. Still – good to see Edin-



Outside St Giles in the Edinburgh sunshine ... and a pair of natty tifers!



burgh following Manchester and Sheffield, albeit a little late. (Though where they're going to put the 27 trams they've bought is something of a mystery.) Today was altogether a less exhausting

schedule, and we were delighted to be joined by the last arrival on tour: Wendy Flavell had been unable to come until Saturday morning, when she arrived from Gatwick, but her partner Steve had gallantly driven up the night before with all her luggage and music.

We all meandered down to St Giles Cathedral for rehearsal at 11.00am. A beautiful building with a lovely, serene atmosphere, and not a hint of blue in sight. Jeff this time was in control of an enormous beast, which sent vibrations through the floor as we sat in the choir stalls. Neil's query 'Are we having the 32ft reed

moment on the bottom C?' was met by a laconic 'Yes' from the organ loft. Neil also asked Jeff **not** to play the intro to *I was Glad*



The organ in St Giles



Tea time at Rosslyn Chapel with the Green Man



**I'd like to share with you all two moments that you as singers will have missed.**

**In St Giles Cathedral a little girl about the age of 4 or 5, clearly taking ballet lessons, pirouetted her way gracefully through the *Cantique de Jean Racine*, shaping her movements and extending her arms in time and in tune with the music.**

**In Stirling, as you sang the Will Todd and asked 'are you there beside me?' a young mother with a wonderfully quiet, contented baby took the words as a cue to start breastfeeding.**

**Ah!**

**All human life in the audience at a St George's Singers concert, eh?**

**Joe Keaney**

cont/ ...







Jenny doing some digging in search of dead geologists (well, each to their own thing) in the tranquil Greyfriars Cemetery



After the recital, it was more free time. A large group took the opportunity to visit Rosslyn Chapel, a stunning 15th century chapel, full of the most wonderfully elaborate carvings, including musical angels, green men, a dance of death, and the famous Mason's and Apprentice Pillars.

The chapel was the inspiration for *The Da Vinci Code*, but the building needs no fevered conspiracy theory to make it an amazing space. Though there are some intriguing musical interpretations of some of the

sculptures that may bear further investigation ... [perhaps in the next issue!]

Others embarked on rather less conventional sightseeing. Jenny Limond and Kate Fuggle went to a graveyard, now part of Greyfriars cemetery and known as the Covenanters' Prison.

When Jenny explained she was a geologist, the caretaker gave them a private tour, as she wanted to see the grave of James Hutton, the 'father of modern geology'. Coming from Edinburgh, he was buried in Greyfriars Kirkyard but as was customary at the time his remains were moved at a later date to be close to his friends. (Presumably so they could get together for an occasional glass of spirits!)



have time to do any extra practice) just made it back in time, and we clambered on board the coach, which took us by the usual circular route from the hotel to the Apex International in Grassmarket. We were welcomed with a glass of champagne, and then someone found out it was Lucy's birthday, so we all sang 'Happy Birthday' to her.

And talking of spirits, other tourists went sightseeing in a favourite Edinburgh drinking establishment: Panda and Sons, best described as the cocktail capital of Edinburgh. Cath Bryant and Stephen Graham



Then it was up to our private dining room on the fifth floor, giving us a spectacular view of Edinburgh Castle, which was lit up as night drew on. The meal was delicious, the speeches short, and the presents witty and (with one notable exception) sophisticated.

dragged Neil along, as the responsible adult in the party, and it is thanks to Neil that we have

the (almost) complete list of drinks consumed. (We know

he has a phenomenal memory, but this is above and beyond ...).

And so to Saturday evening, and the official choir dinner. The golfers (today including tenor Phil Eger-ton who told Neil he was 'on a course' and wouldn't

ticated. Thanks to Cath and Jo for giving up their time to go shopping (!) and once again finding exactly the right present for the occasion—despite the lapse in taste!

.../cont



The choir widowers (Forshaw, Hodgson and Bluck) discussing next year's trip to Munster. Golf in Ireland, brilliant ...



Standing (just) outside Panda and Sons



### Panda and Sons cocktails in order of consumption:

'Super Tonic', a homage to the humble G&T (Caorunn gin, almond syrup, lemon juice, Martini Extra Dry Vermouth, Angostura bitters and Fever Tree tonic water).

'Be yourself, relax and return home', a gin martini that appeared in a flask full of rosemary smoke, with tomato juice, Byrrh Grand Quinquina and bitters. Tasted a little like paraffin.

One called '50 Shades of Wray' that, along with Wray & Nephew White Overproof rum, included a couple more varieties...

'The Emperor's New Clothes', with Zacapa rum, Umeshu plum sake, peppermint tea, lemon juice and honey, and a dash of Bob's Abbots Bitters.

A tequila-based one, then another gin one, perhaps two... then one served in a tin can ...

### Sunday 1 June

Sunday dawned bright and sunny—which is more than could be said for some of the Singers. Breakfast was taken at a leisurely place, though fortunately the coach didn't depart until 12.30 pm.

There was one moment of panic in the breakfast room, when Alan and Grace both complained that they were suffering from blurred vision. Thoughts turned immediately either to something they had eaten or even toxic fumes they had in-

haled in their room. We were just beginning to think about calling an ambulance when Alan suddenly realised he was wearing Grace's glasses, and Grace ... (Well, we expect this sort of thing from Alan, but really Grace – get a grip!)

The last day of the tour, but not yet time to head south. Instead, we left Edinburgh for a journey north to the city of Stirling.

After the glorious weather of the previous days, it was disappointing to see the clouds gather and the raindrops fall. Those who travelled independently managed to have time for a trip round the city but for the rest of us it was straight into rehearsal.

Another lovely sacred building, this time with the biggest organ in Scotland. Neil had made a couple of changes to the programme: in came Dove (thank you Neil!) at the expense of some of the Tippett (even more thanks!).

However, he was still determined to get the rest of the Tippett right, a striving for perfection in rehearsal that clearly impressed a chap sitting in the church, who decided we were serious about our singing, and came to ask if he could record us. We don't know who he was, (apart from the fact that he wasn't Jonathan Dove's dad) but he did say we were by far the best choir he'd heard sing at Holy Rude for some time!

And so, our final concert of the tour saw a good audience. Neil had to cut *I was glad* from the programme, as we were running over, and people had trains to catch, but the audience really enjoyed our performance, and some of them gave us a standing ovation!

for organising it so brilliantly, to Neil for honing everything to perfection and making the tour such a musically exciting event, Jeff for working wonders yet again on the organ pipes – and Lucy for masterly page-turning.

And so – to Münster! Let's just make sure we head off east to Germany and not west to Ireland.



Our final concert at Holy Rude



Waiting for the visitors to leave  
Rosslyn Chapel

**Dear Dave and Anne,  
Please pass on my sincere  
thanks to Neil and all the choir  
for allowing me to be part of  
your tour to Edinburgh. I  
enjoyed it enormously  
because you made me so  
welcome and it was wonderful  
to be part of such a good choir  
again, singing beautiful music  
under the direction of your  
outstanding conductor.  
Thank you both too for your  
hard work and organisation.  
Onwards and upwards!  
Mary Andrew**

The judges marking our performance at  
Holy Rude in Stirling



Then it was the usual mad rush to get changed, pack concert gear and dash to the coach – and the tour was over.

Many, many thanks to Anne and Dave Francis



Some of St George's Singers committee  
Edinburgh Tour 2014



## THE COSTA RICA CONNECTION

BY JOSUÉ RAMÍREZ AND GEOFF TAYLOR

About ten years ago Christian Fröhlich, a German financial executive, was sent by his employers to sort out a subsidiary firm in Warrington for three years. Fortunately he was advised not to live in Warrington and he chose a waterfront flat in Salford Quays, partly in order to pursue his musical

choir in Costa Rica – El Café Chorale – and asked if St George's would consider hosting a visit by this choir. They were coming to Europe to compete in choral festivals. Knowing that he was now in Manchester they had asked him if they could visit, chiefly, it seemed, to enable them to see

younger choir members who had already been singing all day, taking up their guitars, we could have gone on for hours. As it was, we said goodbye to new friends after midnight as they boarded their coach, fortified by the remains of the St George's buffet, for their overnight journey to Heathrow.



El Café Chorale continues to be a success story, winning the prestigious National Music Award of Costa Rica three times, and regularly winning choral competitions in Europe and south and central America.

In 2000 the director of the choir, David Ramirez, Professor of Choral Conducting at the Universidad Nacional, San José, founded Coro Intermezzo, a choir of enthusiastic singers aged 18–33, half of whom are either professional musicians or music students. It has become one of the most important projects of the Instituto Costarricense Pro Música Corai, the institute founded by wife-and-husband team Darlene and David Ramirez, and home of a generation of choral performers.

Darlene directs the children's choir, Concordia Choral. Many of her former members are now singing with Intermezzo or El Café Chorale and some are even junior choral directors, emphasising the importance of the opportunity to learn the basics of choral singing at a young age.

David Ramirez is an honours graduate of California State University, Los Angeles, and one of his aims is to develop fusion between Latin American and European styles of choral singing. He introduces European audiences to the vast and

interests at the Bridgewater Hall.

One evening, in the ticket queue, he picked up a flyer for *Elijah* – our first venture at the Bridgewater Hall, as he had sung the work in Germany. Helen Rollison happened to be standing behind him in the queue. Noticing what he was reading she encouraged him to come as it would be very good. He went one better than that: joined St George's Singers to sing *Elijah* and became a valued, popular and enthusiastic member.

After a year or so he told the Chairman of his connection with, and admiration for, a

Old Trafford! Unusually for someone making suggestions to the Chairman, Christian offered to undertake all the work involved in the project himself – finding hosts, booking venues, and handling travel arrangements. St George's Singers responded with their usual generosity and enthusiasm and welcomed El Café Chorale into their homes for several days.

The visit was a huge success, musically and socially. Those who participated in the joint concert at St George's Poynton, and the party afterwards, will remember the joy of the occasion. If we hadn't had to vacate the hall, the party, with the

**The concert with  
St George's Singers and  
Intermezzo is on  
Saturday 5 July at 7.00 pm  
in St George's Church,  
Poynton.  
On Sunday 6 July  
Intermezzo perform at  
Mellor Parish Church at  
7.00 pm.  
Admission to both  
concerts is free—so do  
come along and hear this  
amazing young choir.**



varied repertoire of Latin American choral music, and all styles of European choral music to central and south American audiences. Coro Intermezzo explore an eclectic repertoire, including a capella renaissance canzonetta and polyphony by Victoria and Palestrina, for example, through gospel and negro spirituals up to 21st century music by Whitacre and vocal jazz with piano accompaniment. Their accompanist, Josué Ramirez, is an honours graduate of the University of Louisville, and will be playing some solos in their concerts in England.

The choir performs in the most important concert halls in Costa Rica, sharing the stage with choirs from Mexico, Guatemala, China, USA and Germany. Last month they performed Mozart's *Coronation Mass* in Costa Rica's National Theatre with the University of Louisville Symphony Orchestra.

This year Coro Intermezzo applied to compete at the prestigious International Musical Eisteddfod in Llangollen and passed the stringent audition process. They asked if they could visit Poynton immediately before the Eisteddfod and Anne and Dave Francis and Sue and Geoff Taylor offered to arrange this. They arrive on 4th July and are stay-

ing with members of St George's Singers who have generously offered to put them up and drive them around.

On 5th July they will be walking into Lyme Park, singing in the courtyard and enjoying a guided tour of Lyme Hall before heading off to St George's, Poynton for a joint concert with St George's Singers – followed by a party of course.

Sunday is a day in Marple, walking the canal towpath and performing in the Mellor Parish Centre. Monday is Manchester day – Old Trafford, of course, The Lowry, Media City (we're trying to arrange an *In Tune* appearance) and, hopefully, a recital in Manchester Cathedral or the Royal Exchange theatre.

On Tuesday 8th they travel to Llangollen where the Eisteddfod runs until 13th July. They will compete in the Youth Choir section on Friday 11th July (provisional time 9.30 am) and in the Mixed Choirs section (provisional time 11.15 am) on Saturday 12th. Should they win either section they will compete against the other section winners in the 'Choir of the World' competition on Saturday evening.

The Eisteddfod field has many stalls selling music and dance-related items, Welsh souvenirs, and food and drink. There are

many informal performances of folk dancing and singing throughout the day.

Daily Ground tickets giving access to the Competition Pavilion and Eisteddfod Field from 8.30 am to 7.00 pm cost only £11 (£9 senior) and can be booked in advance by telephone 01978 862003.

Llangollen is only 1½ hours from Manchester and there is ample parking a few minutes walk from the Festival site. Come and support Coro Intermezzo and enjoy a day or two of high quality choirs of all types – mixed, male voice, folk, gospel, female and barbershop. You will also see some awesome folk dancing groups from all over the world.

After Llangollen Coro Intermezzo will travel to Germany for five days of concerts and tourism arranged by Christian, including a couple of days in Münster – our tour destination next year.



From Costa Rica to Llangollen



The combined choirs run by David and Darlene Ramirez – Children's choir, Bravissimo, Youth choir, Intermezzo, and El Café Chorale sang Mozart Requiem with an orchestra from the University of Louisville, USA, Josué Ramirez at the organ.

**El Café Chorale continues to be a success story, winning the prestigious National Music Award of Costa Rica three times, and regularly winning choral competitions in Europe and south and central America.**

## St George's Singers

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St George's Singers was formed in 1956 by Rev Eric Chapman and Geoffrey Verney, organist and choirmaster of St George's Church, Poynton in Cheshire, where the Choir still rehearses every Tuesday night. Geoffrey's dream was to build a community choir, capable of performing major choral works to a high standard and which would attract singers and audiences from neighbouring towns. Geoffrey died in 1964, but his legacy was nurtured by his successors Duncan Eyre, Ray Lomax and Stephen Williams, and is continued by our present Musical Director, Neil Taylor. St George's Singers is now recognised as one of the leading and most innovative choirs in the North West of England, performing an astonishingly varied repertoire, and with around 100 members drawn from an area far beyond the community of Poynton. We present at least four major concerts a year, in venues including The Bridgewater Hall, Gorton Monastery, Manchester Cathedral and Royal Northern College of Music, hold annual Singing Days, and tour regularly in the UK and abroad. St George's Singers continues to explore and expand the boundaries of choral music, and communicating the sheer enjoyment of singing together. Entry to the Choir is via audition, and new members are welcome to come along to rehearsals at any time.

### ST GEORGE'S CONCERT DIARY 2014-15

**Saturday 15 November 2014**  
St George's Church, Stockport  
REQUIEM FOR THE FALLEN

**Saturday 6 December 2014**  
St George's Church, Stockport  
CAROLS & BRASS BY CANDLELIGHT

**Saturday 17 January 2015**  
St George's Church, Poynton  
SINGING DAY - MOZART CORONATION MASS,  
HAYDN TE DEUM

**Saturday 7 March 2015**  
Royal Northern College of Music  
BACH MAGNIFICAT,  
BUXTEHUDE MEMBRA JESU NOSTRI

**Sunday 21 June 2015**  
Gorton Monastery  
ELGAR THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

**Ticket Hotline: 01663 764012**  
Email: tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk, or online:  
www.st-georges-singers.org.uk

## FESTIVAL NEWS!

### Poynton Festival

Early notice of a special occasion in our home town of Poynton. In September this year, Poynton will be holding its Music Festival, and St George's Singers have been invited to perform at the event.

The festival takes place over the weekend of 27-28 September 2014, and St George's Singers will be performing at 4.00 pm on the 27th in the Civic Centre.

The programme hasn't been finalized yet, but will probably include a varied programme of music suitable for an afternoon of song.

More information will be available on our own website nearer the date, and also on Poynton's own website at [www.poyntonweb.co.uk](http://www.poyntonweb.co.uk).

### Southwell Music Festival

A reminder that our Vice-President, Marcus Farnsworth, is organising a major music festival in his home town of Southwell this summer. The festival runs from 22 to 25 August, and features some of the UK's leading young singers and musicians, including Sophie Bevan, Andrew Staples, Andrew Foster-Williams and many more. The festival programme includes midday, evening and late evening concerts, masterclasses, choral and or-

chestral concerts, and a performance of Haydn's *Creation*.

There is also a 'Come and Sing Haydn' event, to which choral enthusiasts are welcome to perform alongside professional artists in Haydn's *Mass in Time of War* (*Paukenmesse*). This costs only £15 for participants, and takes place on Monday 25 August in Southwell Minster. Rehearsal starts at 10am, and the performance is at 2pm.

More information can be found at [www.southwellmusicfestival.com](http://www.southwellmusicfestival.com). (NB: Southwell is only 1½ hours from Poynton – an easy drive to a fabulous venue and a great day's singing.)