

HEMMIOLA



ELIJAH

REVIEWS AND COMMENTS

Chairman:
Altrincham Choral
Society
**"An awesome,
awesome
evening"**



CHOIR WEBSITE www.st-georges-singers.org.uk
editor Richard Taylor (Bass), email - lyme@ntlworld.com

Manchester Evening News – Monday 30 November

St George's Singers of Poynton staked a weighty claim as the most enterprising choral society in the north west with last night's Elijah at the Bridgewater Hall.

A starry line up of soloists joined them under Stephen Williams' direction. Sir Willard White, in the title role, gave it that declamatory passion which is his trademark and fits the role of the righteous prophet ideally. Mark Padmore, tenor, is if anything more sought after, for his peerless diction and purity of tone, in sacred music.

Mary Plazas, soprano, and Sara Fulgoni, contralto, brought their classy operatic skills - the latter relishing her episode as Jezebel even a little more than angelic purity. But it was the superbly drilled massed voices of the chorus which made the performance. Manchester Camerata provided (with limited string numbers) an acceptable accompaniment, not always quite in sync with the voices, and Darius Battiwalla's rendering of the organ part made a rich and, on occasion, stunning contribution.

Robert Beale

Letter from Gavin Reid – General Manager Manchester Camerata

Dear Mrs Taylor
Many congratulations for a great triumph at the Bridgewater Hall yesterday evening and thank you so much for inviting Manchester Camerata to be a part of it.

It is a wonderful achievement to generate quite such a full and enthusiastic audience. It adds such excitement to a performance. You must be absolutely delighted. You must also be thrilled with the choir's performance. The sound was tremendous and very moving, particularly the opening chorus without scores - it made a great impression.

It was lovely for us to be a part of your great night and we look forward to more opportunities of working with you in the future

Gavin Reid – General Manager

Letter from Richard Howarth – Leader Camerata Orchestra

Dear Mr Taylor
I was leading the orchestra (Manchester Camerata) for your performance of Elijah last evening at the Bridgewater Hall. Many congratulations to the choir for a superb show of choral singing at the highest standard. I can say that it was the very best Elijah that I've been involved with - in over 30 years orchestral experience! My wife, who was in the audience, was completely bowled over by the performance. I've had the pleasure of accompanying some very good choirs, but nothing like this. Please forward this to Stephen, if you would. I was extremely impressed by the way he coaxed the very best from the choir with the massed forces yesterday. Stephen promised to tell me the secret of his success! There may be a quid pro quo to pay of course.

Good luck for the future - although with Stephen at the helm, luck is probably not the word to use - I hope to have the pleasure of working again with St George's Singers.

Best wishes
Richard Howarth

REVIEW - Donald Judge

Macclesfield 2, Bollington 1, Prestbury 1, Poynton 1... No, not football scores, but how many oratorio choirs are flourishing in parts of that alleged cultural backwater, The Borough of Macclesfield. All featured in concerts during November and December, the most ambitious of which was St George's Singers' performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at Manchester's prestigious Bridgewater Hall on Sunday November 29th.

Elijah is a favourite of choirs and audiences alike, and no doubt this helped them fill the house, as did the presence of Sir Willard White. A compelling *Elijah*, his rich bass voice was complemented by the lighter tone and superb diction of tenor Mark Padmore. Mary Plazas and Sara Fulgoni completed an outstanding quartet, while young Robert Williams, resplendent in Manchester Cathedral Choir robes - perfect apparel for climbing mountains and watching for rain - sang *The Youth* with great accuracy and assurance.

Manchester Camerata, led by Richard Howarth, played with vigour and sensitivity, enhanced by some exquisite woodwind solos and thrilling and perfectly judged support from Daniel Battiwalla on the organ.

Stephen Williams conducted the performance with a mixture of dramatic drive and sensitivity to solo singers' penchant for rubato. There were numbers, mainly in part one, where one could have wished for brisker speeds (or the maintenance of the opening tempo), but overall, this was a splendid and convincing rendition.

The St George's Singers' fan club had turned out in force: thus, it was the Choir itself that received the greatest applause. Deservedly so, as tuning, attack, diction, balance, and tone were virtually flawless. This was most noticeable in a capella or lightly accompanied numbers. The semi chorus in *Lift thine eyes* was outstanding, and the same singers completely transformed their tone in *Glory to God*: with eyes closed, they could have been the boy trebles and altos of a cathedral choir.

From the opening *Help, Lord* (all the more powerful for being sung from memory) to the majestic closing *Amens*, this was a triumph for the Poynton Choir.

Donald Judge

Letter from Robert's (The Youth) parent

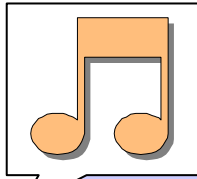
We were all extremely proud of the way Robert conducted himself. Not only his solo (which far surpassed my expectations of him) but generally the way he carried himself on the stage.

May I also convey my congratulations to all the choir members who performed so exceptionally. It was the first time I have heard your choral society and was 'knocked out' by their brilliance of sound and crispness of intonation. Also your publicity machine which did such an excellent job of pulling in such a large audience. You were rewarded by a very nearly full house. I don't ever remember taking so long to exit the building as we did on Sunday. Well done to them! I think you can all be justly proud of an evening that we will all look back on with fondness for many years to come.

Letter in Manchester Evening News - Wednesday 1 December

Our congratulations to the St George's Singers, Poynton, for the magnificent performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. It was a bold and brave project and gave everyone present a wonderful, lifetime musical experience. All involved were excellent - the choir, the Camerata orchestra, the soloists, the organist, the conductor and the Bridgewater Hall staff.

Janey Loverseed and John Russell



Letter from Astra Zeneca

My husband and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to attend Elijah and share the wonderful experience of the evening. Your choir gave a superb performance and also looked relaxed, totally professional and happy! We also appreciated the pre-performance reception and interval refreshments. My warmest congratulations to you all. I wish you every success for the future.

From the Mayor of Macclesfield

Congratulations on the success of your concert. You must all be extremely pleased that everything came together so well on the night. Thank you for a great evening and some tingling at the back of the neck moments. But the thought now comes to everyone, how do they follow that? I look forward to you finding the answer

Letter from Margaret and Jack Hutchcroft

Please convey our congratulations and thanks to Stephen and the choir for a wonderful and memorable performance of Elijah. What a triumph! Promoting and performing a concert of this magnitude required great courage and we admire you all for facing the challenge so successfully. The stature of the soloists confirms the reputation of St George's Singers. We look forward to your future ventures with great interest and anticipation

From PricewaterhouseCoopers

Our guests and I thoroughly enjoyed last night's performance at the Bridgewater Hall. It was an ambitious project which was very well done, as evidenced by the applause at the end of the performance and the reviews that I have read today. I am delighted that PricewaterhouseCoopers has been able to support the St. George's Singers and please pass on my congratulations to everyone concerned.

**Email from Georgina Williamson,
Programming manager of the Bridgewater Hall**

"Please pass on our congratulations to Stephen and the choir. The performance was of an exceptionally high standard, and the choir made a beautiful sound. We were impressed with the organization of the concert from start to finish, and with the professional attitude of the choir.

I hope you are able to perform here again - it has been a pleasure working with you. I wish you all the best with your Christmas concert and with your future programme."

Letter from Judy Hill

I felt I must convey my sincere congratulations to St. George's Singers for a superb performance of Elijah on Sunday. From the first entry (without books!) to the final note they sang really beautifully and the excellent audience obviously appreciated every moment of the concert. I know Tim (my husband) would have been thrilled with the evening. Please pass on my congratulations to the choir.

Thank you also for inviting me to the reception and allowing my friends to come also. We all enjoyed renewing old acquaintances and feeling, at least a little, part of a choir which is obviously going from strength to strength.

From Roger Williams - Augmenter

Heartiest congratulations to you and St George's for the stunning success last Sunday. Speaking personally, it was one of the best musical events of this (or any other) year. It was wonderful to slot into such a slick "machine" as St George's, and sing with a chorus on peak form. I am aware that the geniuses of Mendelssohn and Williams (S) played a big part! Performing to a packed house was an added, and totally unexpected, bonus. (Could the committee be hired out to other such worthy societies, or are you protecting local know-how?). Many thanks for inviting me, and making me so welcome.



From Sam - augmenter

Just a quick note to thank you for giving 'the augmenters' the opportunity to join you for what was a fantastic concert. I really appreciated the chance to sing with a big choir in such an exciting work. Thanks also to the whole choir (and especially the sopranos) for making me so welcome.

From Dave Shields - another augmenter

Just a quick note to say how much I've enjoyed singing with you this term, and how honoured I feel to have had the privilege of being involved in such a wonderful experience. And thank you all for making us "augmenters" feel so welcome (as you always have, of course!)





CAPTION??

Letters and emails from visitors, friends etc

Classic FM ticket winner

“Thank you very much for the tickets. It was a wonderful evening and I thoroughly enjoyed everything, but I must say the female ensemble singing ‘Lift thine eyes’, was very, very beautiful”

From Kate Robinson -Altrincham Choral Society

“I attended Elijah last night and

thought your choir was simply marvellous. We are singing the same in a years’ time, and you really inspired me”

Jim Flett - Making Music

Just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed Elijah on Sunday, and to congratulate you on such a successful outcome to your project.

Letter to Margaret Adshead

“Just a note to say how much we enjoyed the Elijah performance last night. The choir was tremendous, it’s the first time we had heard it, and the discipline, presentation and performance were quite extraordinary.....
Congratulations on a superb evening, everyone in the hall seemed to be enthusiastic about it, the ovation the choir received was well and truly deserved”

Email to Don Sanders

It was a wonderful evening. The choir sounded very good, the orchestra were clearly enjoying themselves and the soloists were great. Stephen clearly knows his stuff and I hope he enjoyed it as much as the choir seemed to. The overwhelming impression I had at the end was that everyone was grinning because they’d had such fun!

Letters to Geoff and Sue Taylor

What an absolute triumph the evening was. The music was fabulous. The choir so crisp and yet showed a complete range of tones. Quite wonderful.

It was an inspiring evening and couldn’t have been better..... I know how much blood, sweat, tears and terror of disaster these events involve and take my hat off to Geoff and the committee.

We both enjoyed every minute of the performance. Thank you so much for bullying us into coming.

Email to Helen Korndorffer

Just to tell you how very, very much Jon and I enjoyed "Elijah"; the whole performance was absolutely stunning and extremely moving, and the choir performed so magnificently, producing

a truly glorious sound. It was a really impressive and memorable occasion.

Email to Anna

I must say you were all very professional before the performance began and didn’t chitter-chat, pick noses or similar. I could hear Stephen telling you all in rehearsals to SIT ABSOLUTELY STILL. Well, we noticed.....When the choir first chimed in, it was amazing. The power was fantastic. I honestly had the hairs on my arms stand up. I didn’t expect the volume. Excellent. All the soloists were great. The audience loved it. The man sitting to my right kept saying how wonderful it was and he wrote notes all over his programme. It must be wonderful to work on something like that and see it take shape and then to experience the Bridgewater Hall with the soloists and the orchestra. You must be pleased. Congratulations to everyone.



Other comments:

Telephone call to Kate Taylor from Georgina Williamson following her email (above)

She rang to congratulate us on "the most polished performance of anything she's ever seen, the standard was astonishing and way above anything she was expecting..... the most well behaved choir she has ever seen... the choir obviously have great respect for Stephen, who is an amazing conductor....absolute pleasure working with us"

Overheard from a member of the audience

"Weren't the choir wonderful - so much better than the Halle. Mind you, the Halle are getting a bit reedy these days."

A member of the audience (complete stranger) who grabbed Lynn in the foyer and said:

"Thank you so much for such a fantastic concert, the choir were absolutely amazing and were definitely the best part"

Former Halle member who wasn't at the concert (because he doesn't like Elijah!)

"I hear you're now the best choir in Manchester"

Music teacher and ex Halle member;

"It was a fantastic concert – especially the start. The soloists were OK but lacked sparkle compared to the choir"

Audience member

"I was getting worried in the overture. I thought 'Don't they know they've got to sing?' Then you stood up and it was incredible!"

Audience member

"It was absolutely fantastic – the audience was rapt – you could have heard a pin drop"

Audience member

"The man next to me followed the performance all the way though on a score. At the end he closed the score and said 'Mendelssohn would have been pleased with that!' "

Audience member

"The choir looked impeccable. I was very impressed by the appearance and composure of all"

HMV in Manchester

After the concert Phil went into HMV to buy herself a new CD of Elijah.

"Oh this has just been on at the Bridgewater Hall" said the assistant, "did you see it?"

"Actually I was in it" replied Phil.

"Well it must have been good because there's been a run on Elijah – we've sold loads n the last week."

PWC Clients

"The choir was the best bit,,,words were much clearer for the choir than the soloists"

"Fantastic. The performance was so powerful I was blown away"

"The audience was really buzzing on the way out"

"I don't go to things like this but I had such a great time"

"Thank you for such a wonderful time. I have never been to anything like that before. We drove there not knowing what to expect but the performance was amazing"

Friend of Nick's

"A great experience So this is what you do on a Tuesday.....!"
"The conductor seems like an ordinary guy. Not at all stuffy!!!"

Friend of Cliff's

Cliff went to the Hazel Grove High School Xmas fair last night. One of the senior teachers said to him: "I've just got one word to say to you."

"What's that?" said Cliff.

"Elijah."

Turns out he only bought his ticket one and a half hours before the performance, was absolutely knocked out, thought the choir superb etc etc etc.

Friend of Bridget's from York Cantore singers

The Elijah was magnificent! I loved all of it - thank you for letting me share the experience with you. I would love to sing a big choral work with the St George Singers - it would be fantastic - bear that in mind if you need any more sopranos in the future.

Friend of Mike's

Last night was sensational!! I was very impressed indeed. It has been a while since I have heard Elijah but it all came flooding back.....The copyless start was a wonderful idea and it certainly came off. The communication with the audience was complete.It was an excellent occasion, four superb soloists, an exceptional semi-chorus and a wonderful performance all around. My heart goes out to the 17 tenors, they worked their socks off and were overcome at times but rose splendidly to the occasion.

From a letter to Kath Gatenby:

Thank you so much for the Elijah programme - I'm still feeling cross/disappointed I missed it. Last night was the annual St Cecilia Orchestra Christmas extravaganza. Ripon Cathedral was absolutely packed despite loads of extra chairs. The St Cecilia has a paid leader, Danny McCann Williams, who also plays with the Camerata - I noticed his name in the programme. I was chatting to him yesterday - he said the performance of Elijah was amazing and the St George's was by far the best choir in the area. That was before I said I had a friend in it! He said I'd missed a real treat.'

Friends of Irene's

"we thought you had a Cathedral Boys Choir singing the top soprano line in Lift Thine Eyes"

"the opening chorus was simply stunning"

"Mark Padmore is the best tenor we have ever heard"

"the gentleman next to me kept bursting into tears and saying - 'what a wonderful sound!' "

Friends of Debra's

"interesting, in the local paper, the choir were 'sold' as support to Willard White, whereas it was clearly the other way round"

"it was so right that the choir got the loudest applause"

"the semi-chorus took my breath away"

"if I'm honest it was way, way beyond anything I was expecting"

"when are you there next?"

"and he looks so young!"

"and to think you're just from Poynton"

James Windsor -aged 12 (?)

"It was a bit long - but it was good"

Editor's note

For the unacquainted – George is the choir mascot who joined us in Helsinki and has been with us ever since. He can be spotted at most concerts if you look very carefully!

So there I was, dangling from a very large organ at 11.00am on a Sunday morning thinking to myself; this is a bit odd, even for an elk!!

And then it all became perfectly clear. All these humans of all types came into the room and started singing to this tiny bloke in the distance waving his arms about. I knew then that this was going to be a day I would never forget.

The morning seemed to go well for all concerned. There was laughter, smiles and lots of people walking on and off stage. I have to say that in elk land we perfected the art of walking long ago!

Then, nothing....the hall was empty and I had some peace and quiet for an hour. It was heaven. Nobody pointing at me, prodding me, cuddling me, or asking me to do anything but soak up the hugeness of the arena I was sat in.

1.57pm

All change. The humans came back practising their walk again. I was impressed this time as everybody seemed to manage it perfectly well! There were people below with lots of lovely instruments and then I had my first look at the great man himself. Mark Padmore. What a presence – what looks. I wanted jump from my organ and give him a huge cuddle myself. Willard sang well, and loud, and louder, and louder. At this point I was confused. Willard asked the choir to call someone and they did. He obviously didn't hear them because he asked again – they duly replied. He asked again. Now, if he was on my patch in Elkland I would have told him to sling his hook and get his antlers tested!!!

The rehearsal went on, and on, and on, and then nothing again. The place was empty and I tried to rationalise what had just happened for the last three hours. I gave up quick when Mark returned to the stage. I think he forgot something but I knew it was for one last long, lingering look at me. I knew that. He knew that and nothing more was needed to be said.

I spent the evening behind the chairs of the second tenors. (Now they really are a rum lot of human beings!!). It was a great concert and I really enjoyed the whole thing. Mark was fab, of course, and I felt I had bonded with the human race. Willard signed my chest at the end and I was safely tucked up in bed by 2am. Now I know that the reindeers think they have a varied life, lots of travel etc but life on 28 November 2004 would be the envy of Rudolf himself!!!

Thank you St Georges



St Georges Forthcoming Treats

Friday 11 March 2005, 8pm

Gretchaninov - Vespers

A pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov in St Petersburg, Gretchaninov has been described as the most representative composer of his generation writing for the Orthodox service. His stunning setting of the Vespers is part of the All-Night Vigil service, and was composed, premièred and published in 1912, preceding Rachmaninov's setting by 3 years.

The Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Oxford Road, Manchester.

Saturday 28 May 2005, 7.30pm

St George's Singers and Orchestra on Tour

Britten - Saint Nicolas
Arvo Pärt - In Memoriam Benjamin Britten
Mozart - Serenade K361
Tenor - Michael Bennett

Aldeburgh Church.

Sunday 29 May 2005, 7.30pm

St George's Singers and Orchestra on Tour

Mozart - Requiem
Britten - Simple Symphony
Sasha Johnson Manning -
Wind Symphony (World Première)

Blythburgh Church.

Monday 30 May 2005, 5.15pm

St George's Singers and Orchestra on Tour Choral Evensong

Lincoln Cathedral.

Saturday 25 June 2005, 2pm and 4pm

Steve's Sensational Swinging Singers - Family Concert

Songs from the shows; with jugglers and dancers galore! Fun for all the family; bring an instrument!

Poynton Civic Hall.

And who is bragging now??

I got 7 (seven, yes seven) kisses from Willard. I'm never going to wash my face again.

**I've just had the funniest phone call ever from the Bridgewater Hall: there was some lost property left in Willard's dressing room - ladies' clothing!!! It wasn't me - honest !!!!
Kate x**



And on a final note:

When asked of a younger audience member
"Did you enjoy that?"
"More like endure that!"

No name supplied!!!

Editor

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