



Hemiola

S t G e o r g e ' s S i n g e r s

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WELCOME TO OUR NEW LOOK HEMIOLA

Dear Friends and Supporters

I'm delighted to welcome you to the first issue of our new-look *Hemiola*, St George's Singers' newsletter.

Hemiola has been the Choir's internal newsletter for a number of years, keeping Choir members and our Friends informed of news, events (and the odd bit of gossip!), and helping to retain the very close community that is St George's Singers.

We've now decided that we would like to share our news with a wider audience. So from now on we'll be bringing you all the latest from St George's Singers, concert reviews and previews, articles on choral singing, features on individual Choir members, and news about some of the other musical activities our extremely talented Singers get involved in.

Hemiola will be published three times a year, and details of how to obtain a regular copy can be

found on the back page. I do hope you find something of interest in this issue.

Happy reading!
Anne Francis, Chair
St George's Singers



ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

PRESIDENT:

Joan Bakewell

VICE PRESIDENTS:

Sue Roper
Mark Rowlinson
Stephen Threlfall
Stephen Williams

MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

Neil Taylor

ACCOMPANIST:

Jeffrey Makinson

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LIBERTIES AND LICENCES BY ERIC NORTHEY

Fancy a bit of a sing-song in the pub after rehearsal? Get that penny whistle out to accompany the basses (and keep them roughly in tune)? Perhaps give a bit of rhythmic accompaniment on the cutlery from the chicken in a basket? Well, you might have to check that the landlord has applied for a Temporary Event Licence from the local authority, lodged it with the constabulary ten days in advance and coughed up £21 for the privilege. Otherwise, he might be facing a £20,000 fine and six months in jug. According to some people, that could

be the effect of the Licensing Act 2003, which came into force on 24 November 2005. It replaced the old, pretty informal "two in a bar" rule, whereby a pub or club could have two musicians playing quietly in the background whilst serving ale in the foreground, for which they didn't need a licence. The new law says if you want to sing and sup ale at the same time, you need a premises license, which could cost up to £350.

I'm not convinced it's as dire as the pessimists fear, but I got an email from the Sondheim Soci-

ety, who are forwarding a modestly worded petition to No 10 to keep the pressure on the Government for entertainment licensing to be simple and cheap. It's probably worth signing, just to keep the politicians aware of the many thousands of us who give and get pleasure from informal music-making. Signing e-petitions to the government might just be one way to influence their thinking and thus exercise our democratic rights. If you want to sign up, it can be found at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/licensing>.

FLORA CHAMBER CHOIR VISITS POYNTON



Flora Chamber Choir in national costume

St George's Singers are delighted to welcome the Flora Chamber Choir of Estonia to North West England this spring for their first tour of the UK. The tour reciprocates St George's Singers' visit to Estonia in 2004, when they performed with Flora to a packed audience in a beautiful church in the heart of rural Estonia.

Flora Chamber Choir was founded in 1989, and now numbers around 40 members. Its repertoire ranges from well-known classical choral music to modern pieces, including new compositions by Flora's Conductor Erki Meister. Folk songs drawn from Estonia's

cultural heritage also feature prominently in the Choir's repertoire, and are always a big favourite with audiences.

The connections between singing and sport in Estonia are strong, and since 2002, the choir has been collaborating with the Estonian Sports Society "Kalev" – the oldest Estonian sports association which was established in 1901 to improve sports and cultural activities. The choir rehearses in Kalev's Tallinn facilities and in return the choir performs at Kalev's sports events.

Flora are well known in Estonian and international choral festivals, and have been silver medal winners on two occasions. In 1997 and 2001 they were invited to the "Joutsan Joutopäivät" music festival in Finland as a guest of honour and the main performer.

The choir has two conductors. Erki Meister is a multi-talented musician, writer, composer and artist. Having trained originally as a painter at the Estonian Academy of Art, Erki turned to music, and since 1997 has con-

ducted many children's and adult choirs, as well as singing with RAM, the Estonian National Male Chorus.

Kaie Juurma studied music at Tallinn Pedagogical University, and in addition to conducting Flora, she is a violinist and member of the folk music group Cantelo.

For the last four years the choir has also been involved in a project entitled "Estonia's small apostolic orthodox churches". By giving concerts in these small, often dilapidated churches, the choir hopes to draw attention to the poor condition of these lovely architectural monuments.

Flora are putting on two concerts in Manchester: one in Didsbury, the second in Poynton, which will be a joint concert with St George's Singers. Tickets are available from 01663 764012, or by email tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk

Don't miss this opportunity to hear one of Europe's finest chamber choirs.

Flora tour concert dates:
Friday 18 May, 8.00 pm
Emmanuel Church, Didsbury
and
Saturday 19 May, 7.30 pm
St George's Church,
Poynton
Joint Concert with
St George's Singers

MEMORIES OF TALLINN 2004



Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Tallinn



Flora Chamber Choir and St George's Singers with conductor Stephen Williams



View over the roofs of the beautiful medieval city of Tallinn



Enjoying post-concert celebrations—somewhere in rural Estonia!

A TRUE MUSICAL HERO

When St George's Singers' former conductor, Stephen Williams, returned from a Winston Churchill Fellowship visit to Finland and Estonia in 2003, he brought back with him an irresistible enthusiasm for a composer of whom very few Choir members had heard.

That composer was Veljo Tormis, considered by Estonians as one of their most important 20th century composers and internationally recognised as a master of choral music.

Born in 1930, Tormis was 14

years old when the Russians invaded Estonia. The organ class he was attending closed, so he changed to choral conducting, then from 1951 to 1956 studied composition at Moscow Conservatory.

Estonian folk music provided his first true inspiration, and since the 1960s, Tormis has composed evocative song cycles and dramatic choral works that act as a monument for the collective memory, not just of Estonia, but for the entire Baltic-Finnish nations.

As part of St George's tour to Estonia in 2004, we paid homage to this national hero by performing his *Four Estonian Lullabies*, an experience made doubly moving by the composer's unexpected presence in the audience.

We believe he enjoyed the performance enormously—and graciously refrained from commenting on our Estonian pronunciation!



Stephen Williams and Veljo Tormis

ESTONIA—THE SINGING NATION

Since its foundation in 1989 Flora Chamber Choir has established a reputation as one of the leading choirs in a country which can justifiably be called the 'Singing Nation'.

Choral singing has always been a mass cultural activity in Estonia. The first national Song Festival was held in 1869, and still takes place every five years in the capital Tallinn at the Song Festival Grounds—an amazing purpose-built open-air arena that holds 24,000 singers on stage, and 100,000 in the audience.

But singing is more than just a cultural pursuit for Estonians. Throughout the last century and a half, choral singing has been inextricably linked with Estonia's struggle for independence and national identity.

Since the 13th century, Estonia has been fought over by Russia, Germany, Denmark and Sweden, and has been re-divided

several times between would-be invaders. This struggle for freedom culminated in 1988 with the 'Singing Revolution', when 300,000 people (out of a population of 1.4 million) gathered in the Festival grounds to make political demands and sing patriotic songs, many of which had been forbidden under Soviet rule.

Today around 30,000 people sing in more than 1,000 choirs throughout Estonia. In addition to the national Song Festival, regional and local song and

dance festivals are arranged in towns and villages annually all over the country, with choirs identifying themselves by the traditional clothes from their local districts.

Estonians have inherited a wonderful talent of self-expression through choral music, as can be seen in the spontaneous audience singing that occurs at the Song Festival.

At heart, Estonians just love singing.



Estonia's national flower, the blue cornflower



The Estonian National Song Festival Grounds

"The soul of a country is in its folk music. The country that has abandoned its folk music to commerce deserves a Coca Cola wake." Dr Maya V Patel

I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity, to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating like that.

Paul McCartney



St George's Singers in harmony

While singing in itself is good, the real reward comes to those who sing, feel and think with others. That is what harmony means.

Zoltan Kodaly

I'D LIKE TO TEACH THE WORLD TO SING BY IVOR SETTERFIELD

What's the UK's most popular recreational activity? You've probably guessed, rightly: sport. But the second? Any idea? It's singing. There are more than 25,000 choirs and over half a million singers in the UK. They get some of the health benefits of the sporty types - increased lung capacity, better posture and so on. But they also get the sheer joy of singing in a group with friends.

Singing is self-expression at its most free and immediate, and its popularity shouldn't be a surprise. We are all born with the fundamental urge to express ourselves through our voices.

Growing up, most people become increasingly constrained in their vocal expression, feeling self-conscious about their natural sound.

The rewards of overcoming self-consciousness and personal misgivings and releasing our natural voice are always worth the effort and risk. It is often very moving to witness how this journey of self-discovery can make people's confidence and self-esteem rise.

But for the majority of us, singing has even more to offer when its forum is expanded from that of the individual to the group. Put together a number of people who want to sing in a choir and the power of the experience of music-making soars. Involvement in a choir can open up the world of music to many who would otherwise not have dared venture there, both in terms of performance and variety of genre. A choir that really works together - where there is cooperation, determination, discipline and imagination - will draw the best from every individual involved and create something much

greater than the sum of its parts.

A choir that has worked together week in, week out, to hone and perfect their skills will - like any team - want to perform. This is why we have concerts: not because musicians are wedded to stuffy concert-halls and the social snobbery so often associated with classical music. No! The urge to have someone hear, receive and appreciate our musical expression is as innate as the impulse behind a baby's cry. Any accomplished musical ensemble without someone to hear it is lacking its *raison d'être*.

The thrill of performance and the (legal) high performers get after a concert are addictive. In fact, the trouble with the choral singing bug is that the enjoyment of singing and participation can often outweigh the pleasure of listening: we can go on and on recruiting new choristers who want to put on concerts to which other people are unlikely to come. We need to raise the profile of choral singing in the UK - it's still widely perceived as distinctly uncool. That may be in part because of the nature of our choral tradition in this country: while it is strong, it is also historically rooted in the church. Not that I am suggesting we can or should sever this link - after all, where would we be at Christmas without carol singing, the sound of many voices joining together with its unique sense of solidarity and celebration?

Outside of December, the closest thing we have to this annual musical phenomenon is the quasi-religious support of football fans singing on the terraces. Their voices are not only a group celebration but also a

way of claiming collective involvement with the action on the pitch. In terms of more formalised music-making, we must think of new ways to reclaim our choral tradition for today and move it forward.

But the popularity of any musical genre is all about how we experience it. There is nothing to beat the atmosphere and immediacy of music when performed live, however good our home entertainment systems may be.

The challenge we face is to make choral concerts as exciting as, say, rock concerts can be. Perhaps the key notion is "must-see" rather than simply "must-hear". In such a visual age, audiences need more than aural gratification to keep them engaged and enthused. For choral concerts, we need to think about the setting as much as the musical programme, even if it's as simple as performing by candlelight. Imagine a rock concert without dynamic lighting effects, and how that absence of visual excitement would reduce the energy of the music. Using the same techniques in classical is not a new idea: Handel did it with his *Fireworks*.

But whatever we think about the image of choral music-making, the excitement it can generate is a rich vein that remains to be fully tapped. Programmes such as Five's *The Singing Estate* and the BBC's *The Choir* are demonstrating to millions the individual and social benefits of choral projects. I urge you to tune in and then try it for yourself. You never know where it might lead.

NEXT SEASON—EARLY PREVIEW

Bach, Brahms, Rachmaninov—next season promises to be yet another exhilarating year as Musical Director Neil Taylor puts the finishing touches to our 2007/8 programme.

The season opens with a 'Choral Journey through 20th century England', featuring music from the earliest days of the century right through to modern English composers.

In March, we move to a brand new venue with a concert at the

newly restored Gorton Monastery (so-called Manchester's 'Taj Mahal'). The concert, two weeks before Easter, will include Rachmaninov's *Vespers* and other appropriate works for the Lent season that we expect to sound sublime in this magnificent building. We're delighted that our President Joan Bakewell will be joining us in this concert with readings to accompany the music.

In May we're off to Dublin on tour, then in June the highlight

of the season will be Bach's sublime *Mass in B Minor* at the Bridgewater Hall with the Manchester Camerata orchestra.

All this, and our usual Singing Day (Brahms' *Requiem*), and Christmas *Carols and Brass by Candlelight* with the VBS Poynton Brass Band.

Full details of concerts, tickets and other event information can be found in our Season Brochure.

The St George's Singers 2007/8 Season Brochure will be available in June. To register to receive a copy, please contact the Publicity Officer (details on back page) or join the Choir's Mailing List on our website, www-st-georges-singers.org.uk.

FAREWELL MARCUS!

This September St George's says goodbye to Assistant Musical Director, Marcus Farnsworth, as he leaves Manchester to do a Postgraduate Diploma in Vocal Studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Marcus began his musical training as a chorister at Southwell Minster, continued his education at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, and then read music at Manchester University, graduating in 2005 with first class honours and winning the recital prize.

Since graduating, Marcus has continued his vocal studies with David Lowe, and has taken part in master classes with Nancy Argenta, amongst others. He appears regularly throughout the country as a baritone soloist in opera, oratorio and solo recitals, with a repertoire reaching from baroque through to the present day, including premieres of many new works. He is also a Lay Clerk in Manchester Cathedral Choir, a member of the BBC Daily Service Singers, and the vocal group Ex Cathedra. Marcus is also very active as a

choral conductor, directing no fewer than three ensembles of his own. His Gaudium chamber choir have performed in venues across the country, including St Paul's and Chester Cathedrals and Southwell Minster. In December 2004 they toured to Tenerife, and in October 2005 they were invited to the International Choral Festival in Alzenau.

Marcus' Coupland Consort appears regularly on BBC Radio 4. And in September 2004, Marcus directed the music for BBC Radio 4's *Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela* in Northern Spain with the Pilgrim Consort. In his spare time, he also conducts the Manchester University Chorus!

Marcus has given many wonderful performances with St George's Singers as a soloist and conductor. None of us will forget the folk songs in Aldeburgh, the Abbot from *Carmina Burana* or last Christmas's brass band *Messiah!* We're tremendously sad he's going—but we know that great things lie ahead for this supremely talented musician. Good luck Marcus!



Marcus conducting St George's Singers' ladies in Holst's *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* at our Jubilation concert in 2005 at the RNCM



Marcus (right) in more characteristic pose with Stephen Williams (centre) and tenor Michael Bennett on tour with SGS in Suffolk 2005

RADIANT LIGHT—CONCERT PREVIEW



Photo: John Crossley www.americansouthwest.net

Grand Canyon Sunset

Our final concert of the season, *Radiant Light*, is an exciting programme of 20th century American choral music and coincides with the 400th Anniversary of the founding of

the first American settlement in Jamestown, Virginia.

The earliest documented music in the American colonies was psalm singing. Many early composers were amateur singers following European models, whilst others developed a native style which would have been considered bizarre in Europe.

During the mid 19th century German immigrants dominated musical theory, although in the South, Yankee tunes and spiritual songs were kept alive. Most composers studied in Europe, returning home to compose and teach in European style, until, inspired by Dvorak's comments during his visit to the US in the 1890s, composers began to create a distinctly 'American' music.

So what characterises American music? Syncopation, asymmetrical rhythms and long, irregular melodies reflecting the wide open spaces of the American landscape, and the values of personal freedom. Unlike European music, with its centuries of evolution, the music of America is that of hundreds of immigrant groups, all of which developed in isolation before being exposed to each other during the American Civil War. It embraces native American tribes, African slaves, immigrants from Europe and Asia, each contributing their own traditions to the musical melting pot, and using the vernacular styles of ragtime, blues, gospel, jazz and country.

By the 20th century, many major mainstream composers, such as Copland, were being strongly influenced by America's rich folk traditions, whilst Cage, Glass, Adams and Reich were experimenting with minimalism and new media. From this rich heritage, *Radiant Light* presents some of the most important choral composers from the 1920s up to the present day.

Aaron Copland's *Four Motets*, written in 1921 whilst he was studying in Paris, pre-date his conscious turn to Americanism, and bear many European influences. Samuel Barber, a contemporary of Copland, wrote lush, elegant and conservative works, and his famous *Adagio for Strings* will be performed in its choral version, *Agnus Dei*.

Eric Whitacre's *Cloudburst*, a setting of a poem by Mexican Octavio Paz, is an adventurous work, using an a capella choir to sing, clap, finger-click and thigh-slap through a thunderstorm, accompanied by handbells, percussion and piano.

Lux Aeterna by Morten Lauridsen, one of America's most performed contemporary choral composers, is a work of quiet serenity, unified by an emphasis on hope, reassurance and illumination.

This concert will also be the last chance to hear Marcus Farnsworth singing with St George's Singers before he leaves for the Royal Academy of Music. A concert not to be missed.

Radiant Light!
Saturday 23 June, 7.30 pm
St George's Church, Stockport
Barber: *Agnus Dei*
Bernstein: *Chichester Psalms*
Copland: *Four Motets*
Lauridsen: *Lux Aeterna*
Whitacre: *Cloudburst*

Ticket hotline: 01663 764012
tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk

BERNSTEIN AND *CHICHESTER PSALMS*



Leonard Bernstein

In 1965 Leonard Bernstein, one of the great figures of 20th century American music, took a sabbatical away from a busy conducting schedule to meditate on the current state of music. Commissioned by the Dean of Chichester for the Chichester Festival, the *Chichester Psalms*, in turns vibrant and serene, but always life-affirming, was written in Hebrew for choir, boy treble, soloists and orchestra. It also contains one of the hardest passages ever written for choral tenors!

"For hours on end I brooded and mused on materiae musicae, used and abused..... Pieces for nattering, clucking sopranos

With squadrons of vibraphones, fleets of pianos played with the forearms, the fists and the palms. And then I came up with the Chichester Psalms. These psalms are a simple and modest affair, Tonal and tuneful and somewhat square, Certain to sicken a stout John Cager With its tonics and triads in E flat major. But there it stands the result of my pondering. Two long months of avant-garde wandering— My youngest child, old fashioned and sweet. And he stands on his own two tonal feet."

Leonard Bernstein, New York Times, 1965

CREATION—THE REVIEWS

The following extracts are taken from a review of our recent performance of Haydn's 'Creation' at the Royal Northern College of Music with the Manchester Camerata.

“The St. George’s Singers have been in existence for fifty years and judging by this performance their tradition and professionalism could easily allow their popularity to stretch for another fifty.

“Under their new conductor, Neil Taylor, the quality of singing by over 100 voices is very fine and on a par with the Hallé Choir. This fact was particularly true for this vibrant performance.

“Leading the choir were a fine pedigree of confident soloists:

Rachel Nicholls, Richard Edgar-Wilson and Matthew Brook. Rachel Nicholls is a confident singer with powerful voice (and mezzo undertones to her soprano) whose fine breath control successfully fills out wide phrasing. Her aria, *‘With verdant clad’* was well paced, and the Mozartian *‘Most beautiful appear’* was utterly delightful.

“Richard Edgar-Wilson is a light tenor with good clarity and has good focus and pace. His aria, *In native worth and honour clad* was particularly well sung and held the audience’s attention. Of these soloists, the one that brought colour as well as delicate humour to the oratorio was Matthew Brook, a velvety resonant bass.

“Throughout the whole oratorio, Neil Taylor sustained good control of both orchestral and vocal forces, and managed to provide some fine moments in the finales of both parts.

“The choir was well-rehearsed and strong in voice (as one might imagine 100 voices might be.) It brought added depth to the piece and delivered wide-ranging dynamics with a nice balance preserved in pianissimo sections.

“This performance was well attended, and deservedly so as an appreciative audience demonstrated.”

Raymond Walker
Reproduced by kind permission of MusicWeb International



St George’s Singers’ Musical Director Neil Taylor

Your performance of *The Creation* was superb. It is the first time I have heard you, and I hope it will not be the last.
Member of the audience at RNCM

AN ORFFULLY GOOD SINGING DAY

St George’s Church in Poynton was packed out when St George’s Annual Singing Day in January attracted more than 200 singers to rehearse and perform Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana*.

Under Neil Taylor’s superb direction, the choir was joined by percussionists from Chetham’s School of Music, soloists Marcus Farnsworth and Nicola Mills, with piano accompaniment from Jeffrey Makinson and Graham Eccles.

As well as the singing, the other major draw was the homemade food—and Sue Taylor, Peter Farrington and Deborah Sallo-way marshaled the kitchen troops superbly.

With singers coming from as far away as Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Herefordshire, this was one of the most successful Singing Days ever.

Comments from Singing Day participants:

“Everything about the day was perfect due, no doubt, to how much time and effort was put in by the organizers and caterers, and also to the talent and enthusiasm of the conductor, accompanists, soloists and percussionists.”

“The Singing Day really lifted my spirits at this depressing time of year, and I already have next year’s date in my diary.”

“The experience of singing with so many other people was fantastic. All three friends who attended were amazed at the professional performance which had been put on in so many hours.”

“An awesome singing experience. The Singers are truly fortunate to have such an expressive Conductor—I felt truly included in both the rehearsal and the performance.”



Neil Taylor, Marcus Farnsworth, Graham Eccles (at the piano) and members of Chetham’s percussion group in rehearsal for *Carmina Burana*

The 2008 Singing Day is on Saturday 19 January, when Brahms’ *German Requiem* will be performed in English. To receive advance information, please register with our Mailing List on www.st-georges-singers.org.uk

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS



What is a Hemiola?

- 1 An ancient Greek ship with one and a half banks of oars (from the Greek word *hemiolos* meaning 'one and a half')
- 2 A rhythmic device in which two bars of triple meter (eg 3/4) are articulated in the manner of three bars in duple meter (eg 2/4). Adds drama and tension to the music by temporarily upsetting the metric flow without leaving the original meter.

RUNNING DIVA

Former Chair of St George's Singers, Helen Korndorffer might have moved to Scarborough, but she still manages to keep us on our toes! Helen is running in this year's Race for Life in aid of Cancer Research UK on 17 June. If you want to sponsor Helen, log on to her web page at www.raceforlifesponsorsome.org/runningdiva.

Go for it, Helen!

NEW MEMBERS

Three new recruits have successfully passed auditions to join the Singers:

Catherine Fullalove (alto)

Sylvia Johnson (alto)

Bill Golightly (bass) - welcome back Bill after a longish break.

Welcome to you all, and happy singing!

ONLINE SHOP

One way St George's Singers raises funds is via our online charity shop. For every purchase made through the shop, which features major high street and online brand names such as Tesco, M&S, HMV, John Lewis and Amazon, a donation is made to the Choir.

Our online shop can be accessed via our own website at www.st-georges-singers.org.uk or at www.buy.at/sgsonline.

SINGING FOR CLIC SARGENT

A scratch choir, a volunteer orchestra, free rehearsal facilities and generous soloists all added up to an enormous sum of money for the children's cancer charity, CLIC Sargent.

St George's Singer Penny Anson and Andrew Dean, formerly SGS Assistant Musical Director, organised a performance on 6 April 2007 of Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* in aid of CLIC Sargent. Around 125

singers took part, drawn from choirs around Manchester. The musicians came from Manchester Grammar School, Chetham's School of Music as well as professional orchestras, and the four soloists—Richard Scrivens, Mark Ellse, Judith Tinston and Angela Rowley—all gave their services free of charge.

The concert, at the Church of our Lady and the Apostles in

Shaw Heath, Stockport, was such a success that there was standing room only. In total, the concert raised a massive £4,000 for the charity, and according to Penny, "it was just a wonderful, enjoyable and rewarding experience".

CLIC Sargent was formed in 2005, merging CLIC and Sargent Cancer Care for Children, a charity originally founded by Sir Malcolm Sargent.

ROBERT MILLINGTON PIANO INAUGURATION



Rob Millington

On Sunday 3 June 2007 the Robert Millington piano will be inaugurated at St George's Church Hall in Poynton with an afternoon piano recital by Neil Taylor, Jeff Makinson, Tim Kennedy and Marcus Farnsworth. The piano was generously donated to the Choir by Andrea Millington whose husband Rob, a long-serving member of St George's Singers, sadly died in 2005. The recital is open to all Choir members and Friends.

Rob began singing in a church choir from an early age having been discovered by his teacher who was also the choir master. His older brother Frank was in the choir too and singing became an important part of life for both of them. Rob was very modest about his voice and never aspired to become a soloist despite many compliments and encouragement from vocal coaches. Rob met Stephen Williams through church music circles and was encouraged to

join SGS when Stephen was appointed as director. Rob was very appreciative of good accompaniment and it contributed greatly to his enjoyment of weekly rehearsals. It seems very fitting that due to an unexpected legacy to Andrea from Rob's aunt, herself an accomplished pianist, it has been possible to buy a better piano for the Choir. The family are touched that the Choir have dedicated the piano to Rob's memory.

KATE HEADS FOR THE HILLS

Our Radiant Light! concert in June will be the last performance with St George's Singers for soprano Kate Taylor. In July Kate, her husband James and their two children move to Zurich in Switzerland, where James has been re-located with his firm.

Kate joined St George's Singers in 1995, shortly after getting married and moving to Macclesfield from Exeter, where she read her music degree. Choral singing has been part of Kate's life since she was at school, when her Head of Music badgered her to go on an Uppingham Choral Course run by Ralph Allwood. She sang with the Rodolfus Choir in its early years, then with Warwick University Chamber Choir, before joining the Exon Singers in 1991, with whom she still sings.

Kate has played an important part in the Choir's musical and social life. She's taken on many solo roles over the years, including the Maid in both Passions, the Fauré *Requiem*, and (most nerve-wracking of all) the

Reich *Clapping Music*.

Until last year, Kate was also our indefatigable Concert Secretary, instilling fear into any wayward bass not carrying his folder in the correct hand!

Kate's best experiences with the Choir? "I have so many happy memories! Making wonderful friendships that have enriched my life; working with Stephen; almost all the concerts, but particularly *Paul Bunyan*, *St John Passion*, Jubilation, the first Carols by Candlelight, *Elijah* (of course!), *St Nicolas* in Aldeburgh, and the Ellington.

"I'll never forget the seven kisses from Willard White, Mark Padmore and James Gilchrist. Or the vision of Jacqui Dankworth wearing a pink flowery dress, lime green leggings and fluffy house socks, washing her hair in the hand-basin of the Ladies at Manchester Cathedral, with bemused members of the audience looking on as she tried to dry it under the hand-drier. In the end she used my choir rugby shirt as a towel!"



Kate getting to grips with a new role

St George's Singers has been a big part of Kate's life for 12 years, and she will miss everyone enormously—particularly the laughter. "I'm told I'll have to have my sense of humour surgically removed on entry to Switzerland, so please do come and visit and help replace it!"

Everyone at St George's wishes Kate and her family every success in the future—and thanks her for her enormous contribution to the Choir.

JUST THE RIGHT TENOR!

Tenor Mark O'Leary finally managed to hit the right note when he married fiancée Jane on 31st March. The couple spent their honeymoon in Madeira—within balcony waving distance of Anne and Dave Francis! Dave takes up the story. "It was 10.30 pm. Anne and I had done our longest levada walk that day, nine miles of mountain walking, and were ready to turn in when the phone rang and I heard Mark's voice. He explained that due to overbooking they had been moved to our hotel—and did we fancy a drink in the bar! They told us what a marvellous wedding day it had been, about Mark's Irish cousins who had 'gategashed', the great draft Guinness crisis, the 'How much do you know about Mark and Jane quiz', John Wilson's best man's speech, and—the piece de resistance—a group of St George's Singers delivering a specially re-written version of Morley's 'Now is the Month of Maying' – and upholding St George's silly song tradition!" Many congratulations to Mark and Jane from the whole Choir.



ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS



View over the Western Ghat mountains, Kerala

TRAVELLING FOLK

St George's Singers' are a terribly well-traveled group. In recent years they've been spotted everywhere from Alaska to the Antarctic, Costa Rica to Costa del Sol.

Alto Lynn Knowling headed off to Kerala in Southern India in January—followed a week later by our Librarian Gwyneth Pailin who was taking exactly the same trip!

Lynn is an avid blogger, as well as being pretty handy with a

camera. We've included a few photos here, but if you want to see more wonders of this beautiful tropical paradise, log onto www.getjealous.com/lynks. (OK, Lynn, you've succeeded!)

At the same time, our Publicity Officer, Susan Hodgson, was off on safari in South Africa. Wandering into St George's Cathedral in Capetown one day, she started talking to the lady preparing the flowers for that afternoon's wedding, and enquired about the local 'St George's Singers.'

It just happened that the flower lady was a founder member of the choir, and—would you believe it—Capetown's St George's Singers are touring the UK in May this year.

Could this be a sign, Neil? Looking for tour ideas? After Dublin in 2008!

Capetown's St George's Singers will be performing Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* in Liverpool on Saturday 26 May.



The beautiful Kovalam beach, in Kerala



Marimba band, the Waterfront in Capetown



Lynn on the verandah of the Windermere tea plantation



Principal horn, Lalibela Game Reserve, Eastern Cape

EARLY MORNING SERVICE

Around 50 St George's Singers got up really early one Monday morning in February and headed off to Emmanuel Church, Didsbury for 8.15 am to record the Daily Service for BBC Radio 4. The programme goes out live on Long Wave at 9.45 am each day, broadcasting Christian worship and music, and every Monday an outside choir is invited to sing.

On this occasion, the music included two hymns and the spiritual *Deep River* by Michael Tippett from his oratorio, *A Child of our Time*.

After a quick rehearsal to check sound levels and balance, and to time the music to ensure we finished in time for the 10.00 am pips, we were ready to go.

There was one slight moment

of panic, when MD Neil Taylor realised we had no-one to do the reading. But Anne Francis bravely stepped into the breach, doing such a good job that someone listening to the programme thought she was a professional broadcaster!

A most enjoyable experience for us all—and hopefully for the listeners as well.

GORTON MONASTERY

About 12 miles up the A6 from St George’s Singers’ home in Poynton lies the East Manchester region of Gorton, in the heart of which stands one of the most amazing buildings in Manchester. A derelict Franciscan Monastery that, along with the Taj Mahal, is on the list of the world’s 100 Most Endangered Sites.

A £6 million project to rescue and restore Gorton Monastery to its former glory is now well underway, and St George’s Singers are lending their support with a concert next March.

The Franciscans first came to Gorton in the 1860s, dedicating their lives to the poor, sick and needy of what was then a struggling village. The Monastery was built between 1863 and 1872, and was designed by Edward Welby Pugin, son of Augustus Pugin who designed the Houses of Parliament. The Monastery is now regarded as one of EW’s masterpieces.

During the heyday of Gorton Monastery, from 1872 to the 1960s, the Franciscans served the needs of local people, providing for their physical, spiri-

tual and (perhaps unusual for the time) even their musical needs. The Monastery provided three schools, a parish hall, youth clubs, theatre and music groups, brass bands and choirs.

By the 1960s, however, the demolition of the surrounding terraced housing had resulted in the re-location of the population and dwindling church numbers. By 1989 only six elderly Friars remained, and soon afterwards the church was closed and sold to property developers, who subsequently went bust. Pugin’s masterpiece was left to the elements, the thieves and the vandals.

Then a white knight arrived in the unlikely shape of Paul Griffiths, who gave up his £200,000 a year job as Chief Executive of one of the UK’s largest cake manufacturers to set up a Trust and save the Monastery. A Monastery altar boy in his youth, Paul had been devastated to see the state of the building, and was determined to restore it for the community. Paul’s wife, Elaine, joined him at the Trust, and together they, and a team of dedicated volun-

teers finally raised the money they needed in 2005.

The concept for Gorton Monastery will see it restored as the centre of social and spiritual life in the local community. The building will host conferences, meetings, banquets, weddings and concerts, but will also, through the adjacent Angels Community Centre, play a major part in the regeneration of the Gorton and wider East Manchester community, offering art classes, music groups, complementary therapies and much more.

St George’s Singers’ Chair, Anne Francis, went along to inspect progress on the restoration, and came away awestruck. “Despite the devastation wrought over the years, the spiritual essence of the building can still be felt as soon as you walk in. This will be a stunning venue for our concert next year, and we can’t wait to get in to hear the sound reverberate round this wonderful space.”

More information can be found at www.gortonmonastery.co.uk



Joan Bakewell, St George’s Singers’ President and one of Gorton Monastery’s supporters



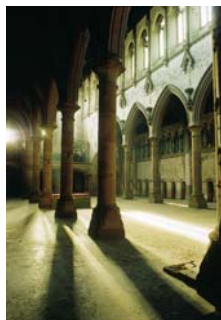
Anne Francis (left) and SGS Concert Secretary Jo Bluck (right) with Gorton Monastery Project Director Elaine Griffiths



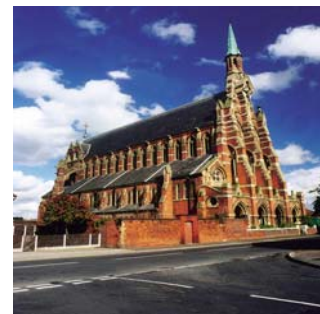
Detail from the mosaic floor



The High Altar before restoration



The nave of the Monastery church



Gorton Monastery

St George's Singers

For more information, please contact:

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Find us on the web at:

www.st-georges-singers.org.uk

To receive a regular copy of *Hemiola*, complete the Mailing List registration on the website, or contact the Publicity Officer.

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 true 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 more recently, Stephen Williams.

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 120 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 and Royal Northern College of Music, hold annual Singing Days, and tour regularly in the UK and abroad. Now under Musical Director Neil Taylor, St George's Singers continues to explore and expand the boundaries of choral music.

Entry to the Choir is via audition, and potential new members should contact the Secretary, Anna Marsden, to arrange to come along to rehearsal.

MANCHESTER SINGS!

ST GEORGE'S CONCERT DIARY

Friday 18 May, 8 pm
Flora Chamber Choir

Emmanuel Church, Didsbury

Saturday 19 May, 7.30 pm

St George's Singers with
Flora Chamber Choir

St George's Church, Poynton

Saturday 23 June, 7.30 pm

Radiant Light!
St George's Church, Stockport

Ticket Hotline: 01663 764012
tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk

FREE MASTERCLASSES

As part of The Spirit of Norway Festival, Chethams presents the opportunity for young singers to explore Norwegian songs and take part in FREE vocal masterclasses with leading Norwegian soloists **Ann-Helen Moen & Marianne Andersen**. Open to young people age 18 and under, grade 6 and above.

Friday 6 July, 10am – 12noon
Chetham's Baronial Hall.
Contact Sylvia Lösche on 0161 839 6548, sylvialosche@chethams.com.
For further details on the Festival, visit www.spiritofnorway.co.uk.

ST ANN'S HOSPICE

Many members of St George's Singers sing regularly with St Ann's Hospice Festival Choir to raise money for St Ann's Hospice in Cheadle. Their summer concert, a programme of English music, will be on 9 June in Stockport Town Hall. The next major event is at the RNCM on 6 October 2007 to sing Handel's *Messiah*. The target this year is to raise £15,000—that represents just one day's running costs for the Hospice—through singers' payments and ticket sales. Contact Sue Sawyer on 01625 263904, susansawyer@ntlworld.com.

PLAY IT AGAIN

The BBC's 'Play it Again' comes to Salford in June, when the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and BBC Singers present a free event, open to adults and children over 8, and which caters for all singing and musical abilities.

For more information, ring 08000 960 570 or visit the website at www.bbc.co.uk/music/playitagain.