



# Hemiola

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

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## ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

### PRESIDENT:

Joan Bakewell CBE

### VICE PRESIDENTS:

Sue Roper  
Mark Rowlinson  
Stephen Threlfall  
Stephen Williams

### MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

Neil Taylor

### ACCOMPANIST:

Jeffrey Makinson

Registered Charity no 508686

Member of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies

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

## THE POWER OF MUSIC BY HOWARD GOODALL

I can't remember a time when I didn't sing. From my earliest memories there was singing at home, at school, in the playground, at parties, at church, more or less everywhere.

Sadly that is not the case for many of the children and young people growing up now. Why is that? Music is probably more prevalent than ever – from the private soundtrack of an MP3 player to relentless ear-candy in every shop and public space.

I am told that in many cases the answer is because teachers were told they couldn't sing as children or have not received enough training to give them the confidence they need both to sing and to lead singing.

Although there are plenty of great resources for teachers, it is often hard to find them. And those who do want to lead singing need better support and understanding from colleagues, heads, governors and parents. Children need to know that everyone around them likes to sing before they too will venture to open their mouths.

### Singing is good for you

Singing is good for you. Singing helps accelerate learning and boosts the 'memory muscle'. It can help with literacy and numeracy, encourages team work, and builds community spirit. Singing improves a child's con-

fidence and is even proven to be healthy – helping with breathing, posture, and general well-being. A singing school is an achieving school, a happy school. Where singing is at the heart of daily life in a school, it makes a difference to that school as a whole and to individual pupils in all year groups. Scientific studies have shown that learning a piece of information attached to a tune embeds that information more rapidly and with greater longevity than without it.

### Taking the initiative

How do we make every school a singing school? Two years ago we began to look at singing and how it could be a part of helping to provide a better music education offer to children and young people. The Music Manifesto researched and developed a set of recommendations. In response, the then Secretary of State for Education, Alan Johnson, made a pledge of £10m to realise our recommendations. We suggested a threefold initiative. First, a high-profile public campaign to show parents, governors, head teachers, teachers, even the children and young people themselves, why singing can be such a valuable tool in the educational, social and emotional development of all children and young people. Secondly, accessible, easy-to-use resources freely available



Howard Goodall, the Singing Ambassador

through publications and the internet; a first stop for all things singing. Thirdly, investment into a comprehensive training programme which not only highlights the many excellent existing training opportunities, but also provides additional ones where appropriate, so that everyone who wants to lead singing can gain more skills to do so.

### From aspiration to reality

So, the Music Manifesto National Singing Programme was born—and given the name Sing Up—and has begun to realise the recommendations.

It is our goal that, as we approach the next decade, children and young people will be able to say that they can't remember a time when they didn't sing, and we hope that you will want to be a part of this singing revolution.

[www.singup.org.uk](http://www.singup.org.uk)

*Article first published in Sing Up magazine*

# ANGELIC VOICES AT GORTON



The packed audience in the nave of the Monastery

St George's Singers' long-awaited concert *The Speech of Angels* at Gorton Monastery finally took place on 9 March— and with a fiendishly difficult programme, and singing unaccompanied throughout the entire concert, the Choir turned in what is

probably one of its best performances of recent years.

This was the first time the Choir had performed at the Monastery, and lack of familiarity with the venue meant that the day did not go without a few hitches. Forgotten safety rails for the staging necessitated an emergency dash back to Stockport to prevent the basses falling off the back of the platform! The dark corners of the cloisters resulted in the last-minute re-siting of the programme sellers. And Terry Waite caused a minor panic with an unexpected change in his transport plans!

But all this was forgotten as the buzz of the audience died away, Neil gave the signal and

the gentlemen of the Choir opened the concert by processing in from the cloisters, chanting *Pange Lingua*—as monks have done for centuries past.

And immediately, everyone realized that the great wonder of this building was the quality of the acoustics. The sound reverberated around the high arches of the nave, but was so clear that individual Choir members could hear every note their neighbours were singing—unlike in many churches and cathedrals.

The prelude to the concert was Gorecki's *Totus Tuus*, a piece of outward serenity and peace that belied the enormous physical effort being expended by the Singers in breath control. Then on to the main work of the evening, Rachmaninov's *Vespers*. Neil Taylor had divided the work into five sections, interspersed with readings from our guests, Joan Bakewell and Terry Waite, which included poems and prose by Hopkins, MacNeice, Thomas, Larkin, Herbert and Eliot. This also gave the Singers the chance for a much needed rest in a work that demands total con-

centration throughout on the intricacies of the words in Old Church Slavonic, as well as the complex and ever-changing rhythms and harmonies. The concert was brought to a fitting and triumphant end by the Choir singing Tavener's *Nunc Dimittis*. Amongst the sell-out audience were the Mayor and Mayoress of Macclesfield, singers themselves, who said quite genuinely that it was the highlight of their year in office and a real privilege to be there—a sentiment echoed by the Choir themselves. This was truly a night to be remembered.



Mayor and Mayoress of Macclesfield with Anne-Marie and Phil Bailey, their SGS hosts at the concert



Processing in from the cloisters to open the concert

**"I just wanted to write and congratulate the choir on a truly wonderful performance at Gorton Monastery. I remember only too well the challenges of singing in many parts, unaccompanied, for long periods of time, in a strange language – it's wonderful yet it's no mean feat and I think last night was among the best I've heard the choir perform. I could see how many sang 'with their eyes' and communicated the meaning of the work. It was splendid."**



Our distinguished readers, Joan Bakewell and Terry Waite



The Monastery exterior by night

## STOP PRESS: REPEAT PERFORMANCE PLANNED

With many people unable to get tickets for the Gorton, the Choir has decided to give a repeat performance of this concert on Saturday 20 September 2008, at 7.30 pm.

The programme of music will be exactly the same, although

we cannot yet confirm who will be delivering the readings.

Tickets are priced £15, £12 concessions, and £1 students and children, available from St George's Singers' Ticket Secretary on Tel 01663 764012, email [tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk](mailto:tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk).

## THE ELIJAH DIARIES BY DAVE FRANCIS

At the beginning of the season, SGS were asked by our Vice President Stephen Threlfall, Director of Music at Chetham's School, to take part in a prestigious project involving Paul McCreesh, members of his Gabrieli Consort, and three performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, at Chester and Manchester Cathedrals and St George's Chapel, Windsor. Well, we had sung the work recently, and the opportunity to sing at Windsor was not to be missed.

Just two flies in the ointment! The Windsor concert was the day before our Rachmaninov *Vespers* at Gorton Monastery and one of the two compulsory rehearsals was on a Tuesday – our own rehearsal night. Neil gamely said we could go ahead and an intrepid (ie foolhardy) group of thirty signed up.



**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February: The first rehearsal.** An interesting experience! We squashed into the hall at Chets - literally! - taking turns to have a seat. Paul McCreesh started with the Chet's orchestra – with members of the Gabrieli Consort intervening from time to time with pointers for orchestral players. Every so often – but not very often – the choir was asked to sing. It was soon clear why we had been invited. The experienced singers of SGS and Chester could give it some wellie to support Chets' youngsters. Paul McCreesh focused on the orchestra but we sat, pencils in hand, silently waiting for instructions.

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February: Second rehearsal.** We really ought to be in Poynton practising the

*Vespers* – all those Russian words! But the soloists are here. 'Elijah' (Andrew Foster-Williams) looks a bit small and insignificant – we remember the excitement of singing with Willard White – but then he sings. Wow! What a voice.

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> February: Concert at Chester Cathedral.** An enormous stage has been erected in the Cathedral which it takes about half an hour for us all to mount. A large audience arrives and the concert starts. It's fantastic to sing in such a large choir and 'Elijah' does a wonderful job, acting the part out, pointing in anger to the choir and making us feel as if we really are Israelites.

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February: Concert at Manchester Cathedral.** Another superb performance. The

Chet's orchestra is really great. BBC cameramen are busy filming. Some of the orchestra are in the finals of the 'Young Musician of the Year' competition and the BBC want to see them in action. (When it goes out on television in May members of St George's can be seen giving it their all). After the concert Paul McCreesh asks if we can find any extra tenors for Windsor and former Choir members Cliff Windsor and Nick McClean step into the breach.

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March: Concert at the Chapel Royal, Windsor.** A very early start for us all – except for the three Singers flat on their backs with flu. We meet at the Civic Centre for the coach, clutching not only our *Elijah* scores but also the Rachmaninov *Vespers*. (The Gorton concert is tomorrow and some of

us are still struggling with our Russian). Half way down the motorway we meet the Chet's coaches at the service station and have a chat with Stephen Threlfall about *Elijah* and other things on which we would like to collaborate in the future.

The rest of the journey sees us chanting the words of the *Vespers*, especially movements 9 and 15 which we all decide are the most tricky. Getting into Windsor is quite tricky too – we all have to go through the security check and carry our passes with us at all times. Nick McLean is arriving separately, and we're worried he won't be allowed in – but he makes it. The local choral society serves up sandwiches in the cloisters, then we're into the Chapel for rehearsal.

We're all familiar with *Elijah* by now and after a quick warm up with Martin Bussey, Paul McCreesh sets us off. It's an extraordinary experience being in Windsor Castle, the ghosts of past monarchs seem particularly close. After the rehearsal an excellent supper in the choir school and then there's time to explore Windsor before the concert. A quick change in the cloisters and then it's on for *Elijah*, Take 3. A different 'Elijah' this time but another tremendous performance, and a great thrill to be taking part.

A quick get away afterwards – we've a long journey back and a big concert the next day. More *Vespers* practice on the coach then a hurried goodbye in Poynton and home to collapse in bed. It's been a long haul but what an experience. Here's to the next time!



Paul McCreesh—as the choir sees him



St George's Chapel exterior



Still can't get this wretched 'Vzbrannyovoevode' right. Can't we just sing rhubarb, rhubarb? No-one will notice!



The Manchester Cathedral concert—St George's Singers with the Chetham's choir



# DUBLIN TOUR REPORT

## DAY ONE

Car, coach, ferry, coach, hotel, dinner—out on the town! Discovered that Dublin on a Saturday night has ceased to be the home of Irish music, and has turned into hen and stag party hell. But undaunted, we will venture forth again tomorrow.



Do you think Graham's alright up there?

George's Singers, and we turn in the best concert of the tour (we've clearly got the hang of this by now). Final words of thanks and presentations to everyone—



## DAY TWO

Stroll round Dublin in beautiful morning sunshine, or visit to Guinness Storehouse before lengthy rehearsal at St Ann's Church. Acoustics a bit odd—altos blame sopranos, basses blame tenors (no change there, then)—but Neil says we're fine. Bringing the staging was a master-stroke. At last—a

tour with a visible conductor! Dash back to hotel for something to eat (relief to discover that Ryanair has safely delivered our accompanist Graham Eccles and choir members who

## DAY THREE

Singing finally starts in earnest. Lunchtime recital at St Patrick's well received, though bit disconcerting when one lady clearly thought the sopranos needed help and came to join in. Free afternoon for the Book of Kells, shopping, more sightseeing, then back to St Ann's for evening concert. Audience not



especially Dave for organising such a fantastic tour—then off for a quick lunch before coach to the ferry and home. Just one word left to be said as we deliver presents from Dublin—slainte!



The gentlemen looking pretty pleased with themselves



First stop on the pub crawl



massive (but more than we got in Helsinki!) Final evening in the hotel bar—time for one last Guinness.

## DAY FOUR

Final day—and it's pouring down. Last minute things to do in Dublin: the Joyce museum, Trinity College, St Stephen's Green. Then check out, load bags onto coach and off to Christ Church Cathedral for final recital. Serious mopping in operation as we enter, but nothing stops St

chose to fly!) then out on the Musical Pub Crawl. Two 'official' pubs then onto an unofficial third. Attempts to sing Finzi without the score laudable, though not recordable, but Neil delivers true Yorkshire grit with Ilkley Moor. Irish musicians look bemused, but Guinness flows freely—and we learn the difference between a reel (black and decker) and a jig (jiggity, jiggity). Surely that will come in handy for the next ceilidh!



Christ Church Cathedral



A well-known purveyor of shellfish



George and his minders enjoying the sun on the ferry to Dublin



Lunch at Bewleys, that famous Dublin institution



Thanks for everything Dave. Your final task is to get this set of fragile Waterford crystal wine glasses back home!

## THE VIEW FROM THE PEW BY JOE KEANEY

The great thing about going on a choir tour is that by the end of it you get to know the music - and that's even if you've only come along to listen.

The other pleasure, which all the men will appreciate, is watching the conductor. Of course you singers have the advantage of being able to see the whites of his eyes while I only get to see the short back and sides but some of Neil's conducting techniques left me intrigued. For instance what is it about him pulling at the lobes of his ears then? Was he suggesting you were all making a pig's ear of it, were paying attention and therefore all ears, that his conducting skills were falling on deaf ears or was he just hoping to have someone's (anyone's) ear?

That said, old cloth ears here enjoyed all three concerts. The

*Totus Tuus* might have felt interminable for some of you singers but the way it hung suspended at the back of St Patrick's Cathedral was really moving - I'm sure even acerbic Dean Swift would have been affected.

Indeed what struck me at the two lunchtime concerts in particular was the pleasure visitors expressed in coming to a venue on their tourist itinerary and stumbling on a free choral concert as well. For the foot sore and, at Christ Church, the rain sodden, the *Lux Aeterna* will have been a glorious lift.

That's the bonus about being on tour - not only do I get to mix with the choir members but also to meet the people who turn up at the concerts as well. That said, I was thrown at the St Ann's Church concert to be greeted with a "Bon soir". I trust he found the concert "très

bon". Indeed compliments flowed after all the concerts and I was able to bask in the reflected glory of it all. CD sales were brisk too. Steve Bluck and I shifted 18 units at 10 euro a pop at the three concerts and we're currently negotiating our cut with the committee.

Beyond the concert venues, the pub crawl on the Sunday night was a highlight, although meeting two honorary Irishmen from Dumfries and Timperley was a little disconcerting.

Of my Joycean wanderings through the Hibernian metropolis, discovering the cricket pitch at the back of Trinity College was an unguarded pleasure - interesting to reflect too that Ireland is probably the only colonial possession of the old Empire to have resisted the lure of bat upon willow and apt too that it survives in a place that was at the heart of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy.

Needless to say the weekend involved too many late nights and too much eating and drinking, with the bacon and cabbage at the Blarney Inn getting this particular punter's thumbs up. And the old adage that the Guinness tastes better in the Old Country was spot on also.

So, in summary, a successful and happy tour - and weren't the beds real comfy?



Eating again Jo?



Presents and applause for Neil and Graham

### THE MAGIC OF TOURING

**Dermott McGuire of Canberra, on holiday in Europe, came to our St Patrick's Cathedral concert quite by accident. A tenor with the Australian National University Choir, Dermott said that it had been one of the most wonderful parts of his holiday, and ranked alongside a similar concert he'd attended in Leipzig with the Munich Chamber Choir.**



In the gardens of St Patrick's Cathedral after the lunchtime recital



Final lunch at the Blarney Stone

## THE DUBLIN QUIZ (FOR THOSE SOBER ENOUGH TO REMEMBER)

1 Who worked his or her way through all the Irish whiskies in the hotel bar?

2 Exactly how big is the 'Stiffy by the Liffey'?

3 Who was the only tenor who remembered *Locus Iste* on the ferry?

4 And which tenor narrowly missed being named and shamed?

5 Where in Dublin would you find the tart with the cart, the dish with the fish, and the dolly with the trolley?

6 Who did the dance of the

red scarves in St Ann's church?

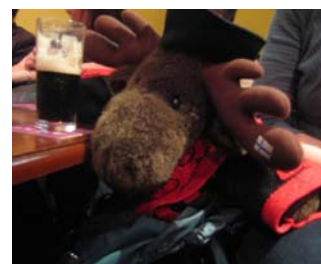
7 Whose ears got longer as the tour progressed?

8 Which bass had three cooked breakfasts one morning?

9 Who left his euros on the mantelpiece at home?

10 What is the difference between a reel and a jig?

### CAPTION COMPETITION



Send your captions to the Editor at [publicity@st-georges-singers.org.uk](mailto:publicity@st-georges-singers.org.uk).

### Bach ephemera

- 1 In German Bach means 'brook'.
- 2 Over 70 members of the Bach family earned their livelihood from music from 1550 to 1845.
- 3 Bach fathered twenty children, ten of whom died in infancy.
- 4 Bach said: "It's easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument plays itself".
- 5 Bach wove the letters BACH (Bb, A, C, B) into the musical notation at the end of *The Art of the Fugue*.
- 6 Bach was the fifteenth Johann in his family, but the very first Sebastian.
- 7 Bach died in 1750 after a failed operation on his eyes to correct cataracts.
- 8 Bach's music has been used in over 200 films.
- 9 Bach once walked 200 miles to Lübeck to hear Buxtehude play the organ.
- 10 "Why waste money on psychotherapy when you can listen to the B minor Mass?" - Roger Torke



Johann Sebastian Bach

## BACH B MINOR MASS: CONCERT PREVIEW

"The greatest musical work of art of all times and of all nations". Hans Georg Nägeli, the first publisher of the *Mass in B minor* might well have added "... and the most enigmatic", since the reason for its existence remains a tantalising mystery that enthralled musicologists to this day.

When Bach prepared the score of the Mass in the late 1740s there could have been no prospect of it receiving a complete performance, or being used as part of any liturgy. Whilst the Lutheran liturgy did allow the use of the Latin mass, it was usually only the *Kyrie/Gloria* or *Sanctus*, Luther himself having banned the sections of the ritual relating to the sacrifice.

On the other hand, the work did not follow the prescribed Roman liturgical format, thus rendering the Mass unusable by Catholics. And at over 100 minutes in length the piece was simply too big to be included in any service, whether Lutheran or Catholic. So why did Bach write the *Mass in B minor*?

The *Mass in B minor* was not 'composed' as a discrete work. It was 'compiled' by Bach from pieces he had composed throughout his long career. Its origins go back to 1733. Public music making had been suspended in mourning for Augustus II, Elector of Saxony, so Bach used the opportunity to work on a 'Missa', a portion of

the liturgy sung in Latin and common to both Lutheran and Catholic rites, and which consisted of the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria*. This he dedicated to the new Elector in the hope (unfulfilled at the time) of being given a court appointment.

It is not known when Bach decided to expand the 'Missa' into a full setting of the mass, but by 1748, two years before his death, Bach had finished the task of selecting, adapting and refining earlier and scattered compositions into a coherent, and magnificent work of art.

In the final years of his life, Bach increasingly directed his activities towards the composition of cycles of works that demonstrated his musical erudition and consummate skills, such as the *Art of the Fugue* and the *Musical Offering*. So it is entirely logical to suggest that Bach compiled the *Mass in B minor* as the supreme example of his art, his final thoughts on this sacred vocal genre, a summation of his life's work.

The fact that Bach knew that the Mass would never be performed in a liturgical setting underlines its 'universality'. The work transcends the theology of Christianity, uniting Catholic and Lutheran, and applying itself to the broader category of 'spirituality'.

But the universality of the *Mass* goes even beyond this. Bach

was the supreme culmination of the Baroque style. And yet he also stood at the crossroads of Western classical music. The Age of Enlightenment beckoned. The 'stile antico' associated with church music from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the esoteric theories and quasi-divine art of learned counterpoint were giving way to the easy pleasures of the 'galant' style whose aim above all was to be agreeable and entertaining.

Bach succeeds in the *Mass in B minor* in pulling together an unprecedented range of musical styles: stile antico, Gregorian plainchant, profoundly expressive music, highly ornamented solo arias, and the secular and ebulliently joyful dance music found throughout the work.

Bach's output stands as the central, musical monument in Western civilisation, precisely because of its universality. Intellectually, spiritually and musically, the *Mass in B minor* unites his creed as a Christian with his creed as a musician, and is the supreme expression of that universality.

The Bach scholar, Christoph Wolff, commented that there was 'no discernible practical purpose' for Bach to have written the *Mass in B minor*. Bach himself would have disagreed. In his view, "*The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul*".



The Thomasschule and Thomaskirche in Bach's time

## THE KING AND BACH: BOOK REVIEW

Bach lived at the end of one and the beginning of a new era, as the age of deep religious belief and mysticism was giving way to the Age of Enlightenment. 'Evening in the Palace of Reason' by James Gaines presents a surprisingly thrilling and intimate portrait of how the two ages collided through the

persons of Johann Sebastian Bach, the unacknowledged genius driven by God and counterpoint, and Frederick the Great, the tortured, cruel and blood-thirsty monarch who became the champion of the cause of Reason, and whose court was home to the new generation of musicians and

philosophers. The book relates the story of the one and only meeting between these two giants and then goes on to give a detailed account of their lives, set against the turbulence of Frederick's never-ending wars. If you want to know more about Bach and his world, try this book. Fascinating reading.

## ALL SET FOR THE BRIDGEWATER—DON'T MISS IT!

St George's Singers' biggest concert of the year takes place in a few weeks time at the Bridgewater Hall, when we take on perhaps the greatest of all choral works, Bach's immense *Mass in B minor*. And what a line-up of soloists we will have in front of us!

Canadian-born soprano Nancy Argenta is one of the foremost singers of her generation, and the supreme Handel soprano of our age. She has numerous Bach recordings to her credit, under conductors including Gardiner, McCreesh, Davis, Blomstedt, Pinnock, Hogwood and Norrington. Soprano Rebecca Outram is a renowned baroque singer, with a voice described by one critic as '*truly phenomenal – it was as if we were in heaven on an unrepeatable journey to the transcendental*'.

Countertenor Robin Blaze is established in the front rank of interpreters of Purcell, Bach and Handel. He has worked

with most of the distinguished conductors in the early music field. He and Rebecca have both most recently been seen in BBC Four's 'Early Music'.

Tenor Mark Wilde makes regular appearances on the concert platform and the operatic stage both in the UK and abroad, and has many CD recordings to his credit. And finally, Michael George, firmly established as one of Britain's most versatile bass-baritones, has appeared with all the leading UK orchestras and ensembles, and has sung throughout Britain and extensively abroad.

We are also delighted to be joined once again by the Manchester Camerata orchestra, who played with us so brilliantly on our two previous Bridgewater Hall outings, in the *St Matthew Passion* and *Elijah*. This is an especially significant concert for our Musical Director, Neil Taylor, as this is his

first appearance 'in charge' at the Bridgewater Hall. But—no signs of nerves yet from Neil, who seems far more relaxed than his choral troops, who are anxiously trying to memorise whole chunks of the score, get to grips with never-ending pages of quavers, and frantically pencil in last minute score marks.

With a fantastic line-up of singers and players, Bach's sublime music, and tickets priced as low as £11—this concert is a must for anyone who loves music!

### ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEXT CONCERT

Sunday 22 June 2008

Bridgewater Hall, 7.30pm

Bach *Mass in B Minor*

with Manchester Camerata

Nancy Argenta, Robin Blaze,

Michael George, Rebecca Outram

and Mark Wilde

Tickets: £11, £16, £21, £26

Tel: 0161 907 9000

[www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)



Soprano Nancy Argenta



Countertenor Robin Blaze

## THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Where did the beautiful stained glass image on our poster for Bach's *B Minor Mass* come from? Well, it's quite a story.

After weeks of scouring the internet, pouring over dozens of books and pictures, and despairing talks with our printers, we finally stumbled across the website of the St John Evangelical Lutheran Church in Amherst, New York – and saw twelve glorious stained glass windows that seemed to express visually what Bach had voiced musically – a deeply held Lutheran faith.

An email to Pastor Peter Breitsch was despatched, and a follow-up phone call to New York confirmed that he would be delighted for us to use the images—and a member of the

congregation, Conrad Sorenson, went off on the first sunny day to take new high-resolution photos of all the windows – just for St George's Singers!

There are twelve windows in all located in the the Church, each one portraying one of 'I Am' sayings of God and Christ. The window that we chose for our poster is the fifth in the series, 'I Am the Light of the World', and portrays a radiant Christ (left panel) as the source of true Light. That Light reaches for a man (right panel) bringing him out of the darkness into the brightness (John 8:12).

The windows were designed and manufactured in 1965 by Willet Hauser, one of the most famous architectural and

stained glass designers in the United States. Willet Hauser have designed the windows for countless churches, cathedrals and public buildings throughout the USA, including the United Nations and Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and are currently restoring many of the churches damaged in the recent hurricanes in the southern states.

We are immensely grateful to Pastor Breitsch, to Conrad Sorenson and to the entire congregation of St John Evangelical Lutheran church for allowing us to use their windows to publicise our concert. You can see all the windows at St John's website at [http://www.start-church.org/Stained\\_Glass](http://www.start-church.org/Stained_Glass)

### THE WINDOWS

LORD, how can man preach thy eternall word?  
He is a brittle crazie glasse:  
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford  
This glorious and transcendent place,  
To be a window, through thy grace.

But when thou dost anneal in glasse thy storie,  
Making thy life to shine within  
The holy Preachers, then the light and glorie  
More rev'rend grows, and more doth win;  
Which else shows watrish, bleak, and thin.

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one  
When they combine and mingle, bring  
A strong regard and aw: but speech alone  
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,  
And in the care, not conscience ring.

George Herbert



I am the Light of the World

## ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS

### NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new members who have recently joined the Choir:

Dave Shield, John Slater (tenors); Kate Fuggle, Anthea Slater, Margaret Beetham (altos); Michael Peat, Andrew Charlton, Stephen Barton, Michael Calam, David Langton (basses); Katherine Lawson, Lorna Marsland, Janet Mortimer (sopranos).

Whilst the Choir is delighted to welcome new members, both the alto and bass sections are now full, and anyone wishing to be considered for audition should speak to our Musical Director, Neil Taylor before

coming along to rehearsals.

There are still places for sopranos and tenors however—especially tenors. Why not come along to a couple of rehearsals, or join us for a Singing Day to see if you like us!

### SGS BLOG

St George's Singers now has its own 'blog', called SGS In Touch, accessible by choir members old and new who want to keep in touch with each other, arrange social outings, or just 'chat' with other members. For an access password, contact Andrea Millington.

### FAREWELL TO ANNA

We're sad to say goodbye to our Choir Secretary, Anna Marsden, who after many years with St George's is having to leave us. In addition to being a stalwart member of the soprano section, Anna has been our Secretary for many years, and has made an enormous contribution to the smooth running of our Singing Days, as well as dealing with all the administrative matters that go with running a large choir. Many thanks to Anna for all her hard work, and good luck for the future.

## READERS' RANT: BIRTWHISTLE OR JENKINS BY REYNOLD HIGGINBOTHAM

**Do you agree with Reynold? Or do you want to have a good rant about something else? Then send it in to Hemiola and start a debate. As long as it's relevant, decent and not libelous, we'll print it!**

The music of Karl Jenkins has become relatively popular: *The Armed Man*, *Requiem*, *Stabat Mater*. And it is definitely genuine music: melody, tonality, harmony and clear expression of strong emotion. But Radio 3 will have nothing to do with it. Philip Glass and André Previn are also writing genuine music.

Meanwhile, Harrison Birtwhistle, Maxwell Davies and many others are producing works devoid of melody, beauty, harmony, and therefore arguably not music at all, just noise, and a very horrible noise at that! And Radio 3, including the Proms, is full of it.

And almost none of their stuff lasts any length of time. Already all eight symphonies of Max Davies are forgotten; the works of Boulez, Lutoslawski, Penderecki and the symphonies of Tippett are in the bin.

Is it the duty of composers to provide the musical public with nothing but tuneless ugliness?

There are only twelve notes. Eighty years ago Schoenberg reached the furthest possible limit of complexity and chromaticism. Along that road it is physically impossible to travel further than Schoenberg. Every possible combination of the twelve notes had been achieved. Since about 1930 it has not been possible for any music to be more chromatic or more 'modern' than Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra*; any more than mountaineers could go on for ever climbing higher and higher peaks after the conquest of Everest.

A dead end was reached about eighty years ago. There is much talk of classical music dying. *The Independent* has ceased to report on it, and treats

pop as virtually the only music. Even for the *Radio Times*, music means pop. Nearly all the music items on the BBC's *Culture Show* are pop.

Why? Because the musical people need to feel that classical music cannot only be from the past. Genuine, likeable classical music must include a contemporary input, relevant to our own times and also tuneful, beautiful and comprehensible. As long as the BBC and other significant bodies such as the Hallé, Covent Garden and the LSO promote only modern noise, and ignore genuine modern music, then our heritage could be in serious danger.

If becoming ever more chromatic, dissonant and dischordant is the true destiny, or trajectory, of music, then classical music effectively died eighty years ago. If not, then there cannot be any logical or musical reason for rejecting or ignoring Karl Jenkins, or Einaudi, or McCartney or Nymen, and to stop pretending that horrible noise is great music.



## MORNING AT EMMANUEL BY KATE FUGGLE

On Wednesday 7 May, forty members of the St George's Singers arose bright and early to make their way to Emmanuel Church, Didsbury, to sing live for the Daily Service on BBC Radio 4 at 9.45am. It was a beautiful sunny morning as we drove to the church ready for a rehearsal and sound check at 8.30. A very welcome cup of coffee awaited us on our arrival and then we got down to work.

Neil Taylor directed the choir through the usual warm-up exercises, particularly relevant at that hour of the morning! Jeff Makinson was at the organ as we started to rehearse our first hymn "Jesus shall Reign", and this was quickly followed by the anthem "Let all the world in every corner sing", words by George Herbert and set to music by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The concluding hymn was "Crown him with many crowns".

As the sound check took place during this first rehearsal we had to remain standing in order to maintain the distance between us and the many microphones. At the end of the rehearsal producer Clair Jacquiss praised the quality of our singing and made just one or two suggestions regarding diction.

At 9 o'clock we went into a full run through of the service to enable the producer to make an exact timing of the programme. This included a welcome and prayers from the presenter Tony Rogers who was sitting at a table to our right. We were invited to join in with an "Amen" at the end of the prayers, and also with the "Lord's Prayer". Tony raised his hands at the appropriate moments and we all chanted together.

Anne Francis had asked for a volunteer to make the reading but was quickly encouraged to do so herself and with beautiful clear diction read the message from "Hebrews" 2; 5 – 9.

The programme proved to be one minute over time and following a discussion between Tony and Clair it was decided to cut some of the introduction rather than a verse from one of our hymns. More coffee and biscuits were provided before we took our places for the live broadcast. I was slightly nervous. What if I should suddenly decide to have a coughing fit, drop my music or (even worse) hold a top D for a quaver longer than necessary?

I need not have worried. The choir performed perfectly and

Neil and the producer appeared pleased. Jeffrey's playing was excellent—pulling out all the stops for the exhilarating anthem.

Singing these hymns took me back to my school days when every morning started with the whole school singing together. It produced a feeling of harmony between the students and staff and started the working day with a spiritual boost. Singing for the morning service created the same atmosphere. I thoroughly enjoyed it and trust it brought cheer to those who listened to it.

### THE DAILY SERVICE

- **First broadcast in 1928 in response to campaign by Miss Kathleen Cordeux for a short religious service on BBC radio.**
- **Moved to churches in Bristol, then Bedford during the war, then settled in All Souls, Langham Place, London until 1993 when the BBC Religion Department moved to Manchester. The Daily Service took up residence at Emmanuel Church in Didsbury.**
- **Has team of 25 presenters drawn from many Christian denominations, and is the longest-running programme of its kind anywhere in the world.**



Rehearsing for the broadcast



SGS Chair Anne Francis with Producer Clair Jacquiss and Presenter Tony Rogers calculating how many seconds to take out



Jeffrey Makinson waiting for Neil's signal to join in

## SINGERS RUN FOR CHARITY

No one could ever accuse St George's Singers of being obsessed with sport. (Though we can be pretty vigorous in our pre-rehearsal warm-up stretches!)

So when two members of the Choir stood up one rehearsal and said they were going to do the Great Manchester Run on Sunday 18th May, shock and awe ran round the room.

Alison Beeson and Charlotte French decided to do the 10 kilometer race in order to raise money for two charities. Alison ran for Tommy's, the charity for sick babies, whilst Charlotte was supporting the Children with Leukemia charity.

Neither had ever run this distance before—in fact Alison had never run before in her life. Intensive training started two months beforehand, but then

Charlotte fell ill, and had to take time off.

Which makes their achievements all the more impressive, Alison completing the course in 58'59, and Charlotte in 60'04. Altogether they managed to raise a staggering £3,000 for their chosen charities, including a hefty sum raised from St George's Singers. Well done both of you. We're impressed!



No pictures of Alison or Charlotte actually running are available - but here's one of Alison hang-gliding (or so she says!)

## HANDEL AND THE UEFA CUP

BY GWYNETH PAILIN

WEDNESDAY 14 MAY 2008

### Hazel Grove

Off to collect an orchestral score of *Israel in Egypt* from the Henry Watson Library. Have heard there's a football match on somewhere but don't feel concerned.

### Piccadilly Station

Someone I know is waiting to board the train.

"You'll never believe what's waiting for you out there!"

Can see hundreds of people in blue and a few (the police) in yellow.

"But I'm going to the Library."

"You'll never make it" chorus other passengers.

Nearly get back on train but

decide to try Metro. Quieter down there. No trams going towards Bury – when my tram reaches Piccadilly Gardens can see why not.

### St Peter's Square

A noisy encampment in the middle and a scuffle on the other platform.

Library foyer quiet until group charges in and down to the loos. Not much going on in Music Library except noise from outside.

Handel much too big for my bag. Mild panic about getting back to Piccadilly – decide to try Oxford Road. Clutch music firmly and try to look inconspicuous.

Outside station another

'singing' group - police in control inside.

### Oxford Road Station

Buxton train still there - rush for it not realising it's picked up fans at Preston! Squeeze in wondering what will happen when we reach Piccadilly. Will Handel and I end up flat on the platform? Mercifully door opens on other side. Fans file out in orderly manner – police help the one who can't manage it.

### Hazel Grove

Twenty uneventful minutes later leave Hazel Grove Station behind man on mobile telling someone how awful it was in Manchester!



UEFA Cup—the only European football trophy without a handle

**Q: Who would Handel have played for—Germany or England?**



12-year old trombonist Peter Moore of Chetham's School of Music, and Young Musician of the Year 2008

## CONGRATULATIONS TO PETER MOORE

12-year old Peter Moore was named BBC Young Musician of the Year at a nail-biting final at Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff – the youngest ever winner of the competition.

Belfast-born Peter now lives in Salybridge and is a pupil at Chetham's School of Music, Manchester. All his family members are brass players and his parents were both French horn players in the Ulster Orchestra. Peter has studied at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester City Centre for the last three years. With 290 students, age 8 – 18, Chetham's is the largest Music School in the UK, and the only Music School

based in the North of England.

The School has had remarkable success in the competition over recent years. A third of the semi-finalists at the 2006 event were Chets students, and two of the five concerto finalists were from the School. Former student Jennifer Pike was the youngest person ever to win the prize in 2002.

Ex-Chets students include cellist Guy Johnston, pianists Peter Donohoe, Paul Lewis and Stephen Hough, organist Wayne Marshall, conductor Daniel Harding and french horn player and jazz pianist Gwilym Simcock.

St George's Singers has a special relationship with Chetham's. Their Director of Music, Stephen Threlfall, is one of our Vice Presidents, and Chetham's pupils have been involved in many of our concerts over recent years, whether singing or as instrumentalists.

We are especially delighted that we will be joined by Chetham's Brass Ensemble in our *Music for Sacred Spaces* concert at Manchester Cathedral next spring, in a programme of Venetian choral and instrumental works. Everyone at St George's wishes Peter every success in the future.

## ANYONE FOR ICE-CREAM?

"And in the next bar of course we have a great example of Bach's use of the Neopolitan Sixth." One of Neil's more gnomic utterances one Tuesday evening had many of us baffled. Neopolitans? It's an ice-cream,

isn't it? Or perhaps some form of bizarre Mafia act of revenge, unique to Naples? Thanks to Andrea who went away and did her homework (swot!) we now know that the Neopolitan Sixth is the name given to one of the

chromatic chords, the first inversion of the triad built on the flattened supertonic, and named after the 18th century composers (Scarlatti, Pergolesi etc) who popularised it. We'll sing it with even more gusto now!



## NEXT SEASON PREVIEW: A CELEBRATION OF YOUTH

It's that time again—the exciting time of year when we get to find out what we're going to be singing next season.

For our 2008-09 season, Neil Taylor wanted to involve as many young singers and musicians as possible. So he's come up with a programme that is both challenging for St George's Singers, as well as exciting for our young 'partners'.

The season opens with a repeat performance (by popular demand!) of our March concert at Gorton—the Rachmaninov *Vespers*. We're not certain yet whether Joan Bakewell and Terry Waite will be able to join us, but Elaine Griffiths (Director of Gorton Monastery) is on the case, and we're sure she'll come up with some amazing guests to join us.

After that we are firmly committed to youth. In November we open up the stage to some of the young singers from the Royal Northern College of Music, who will be joining us in one of Handel's greatest hits: *Israel in Egypt*.

At Christmas, we put on two concerts: our usual *Carols and Brass by Candlelight* at St

George's in Stockport, followed by a special concert at St George's Church in Poynton, our home base. 2009 marks the 150th anniversary of the building of the present St George's Church, and we want to take the opportunity to get in early with our contribution to the celebrations. Both of our Christmas concerts will involve children from local schools—more information on that will be available later in the year.

The Singing Day in January sees us performing Rossini's *Petite Messe Solenne*, a great favourite with choral singers. We will be offering special rates for young singers—more information will be available on the Singing Day brochure.

On to spring, and Neil has planned a fabulous concert in Manchester Cathedral for 25th April—also known as St Mark's Day in Venice. (On that day, men are supposed to present red roses to their loved ones—we'll see what happens!) In a concert entitled *Music for Sacred Spaces* we will be performing a programme of choral music from 16th century Venice, including works by Gabrieli and Schütz. Thinking laterally, Neil has matched this with 20th

century minimalist music by the Estonian composer, Arvo Pärt, who used Renaissance music as the basis for much of his own work. We are delighted to be joined in this concert by the fabulous young players of Chetham's Brass Ensemble, who will be making the most of the layout and acoustics in the Cathedral to show us what they can do.

For our final concert of the season we return to Gorton Monastery to celebrate the revival of the Monastery gardens in a programme of suitably 'floral' choral works: Britten's *Five Flower Songs*, Grainger's *Brigg Fair*, Rutter's *Sprig of Thyme*, plus English folk songs, madrigals and part songs. Rumours persist that Neil Taylor (who is also Master of the Music at Sheffield Cathedral) and our Accompanist Jeffrey Makinson, might also be persuaded to perform some piano duets, and we'll once again be joined by pupils from local schools.

More information on tickets, season tickets, and other events is available in our 2008-09 Season brochure. Come and join us for another exciting year of music making!



Some of the young percussion players from Chethams who played at our Singing Day in 2007

**Our 2008-09 Season Brochure is now available. For a copy, register on our Mailing List at [www.st-georges-singers.org.uk](http://www.st-georges-singers.org.uk), or contact the Publicity Officer, Tel 0161 338 3013, email [publicity@st-georges-singers.org.uk](mailto:publicity@st-georges-singers.org.uk)**

## FRIENDS NEWS

The Friends of St George's Singers was formed by families, friends and former members of the Choir as an easy way to stay in touch with us, and enable them to support our activities.

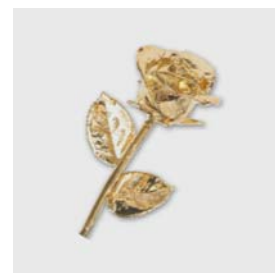
Our Friends play an important part in the social and musical life of the Choir, as well as providing vital financial support. So this year, we have extended the range of benefits available

to Friends to include free coach transport to city centre venues, whenever it is available. Typical venues include the Bridgewater Hall, RNCM and Gorton Monastery.

Annual membership of the Friends costs only £10 for Red Rose, and £25 for Gold Rose Membership, and other benefits include reserved seats at concerts where available, invitations to social events, open

rehearsals and pre-concert receptions, special rates on CDs, acknowledgement in programmes, and early notice of concert information and priority booking.

Please think about becoming a Friend of St George's Singers. For more information, contact Jean Egerton on Tel: 01625 871381, Email [friends@st-georges-singers.co.uk](mailto:friends@st-georges-singers.co.uk).



## St George's Singers

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Find us on the web at:

[www.st-georges-singers.org.uk](http://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, 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 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. St George's Singers continues to explore and expand the boundaries of choral music.

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

20 September 2008, 7.30pm,

The Monastery, Gorton

*The Speech of Angels*

(featuring Rachmaninov's *Vespers*)

22 November 2008, 7.30pm,

St George's, Stockport

Handel: *Israel in Egypt*

6 December 2008, 7.30 pm,

St George's, Stockport

*Carols and Brass by Candlelight*

20 December 2008, 7.30 pm,

St George's, Poynton

*A Christmas Celebration for St George's*

25 April 2009, 7.30 pm,

Manchester Cathedral

*Music for Sacred Spaces*

20 June 2009, 7.30 pm,

The Monastery, Gorton

*In a Monastery Garden*

Ticket Hotline: 01663 764012

[tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk](mailto:tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk)

## MANCHESTER SINGS!

### Ad Solem

Tuesday 3 June, 7.00pm

The University of Manchester Chamber Choir, under the direction of Matthew Hamilton, presents a selection of English choral works from Tallis to Howells, Ramsey to Casken, including some of the most beautiful works this country has produced.

Tickets £8, £5, special rates for students.

### Vocal Concert

Baronial Hall, Chetham's

Tuesday 24 June, 7.30pm

A delightful end of term concert from Chetham's vocal students. Free. No booking required. Retiring collection in aid of St Ann's Hospice.

### Chetham's Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

Friday 4 July, 7.30pm

Bridgewater Hall

Conductor: Mark Elder CBE

An astounding programme of inspiring and passionate works by four major composers of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Ligeti, *Concert Românesc*;  
Stravinsky, *Symphony in 3 movements*;  
MacMillan *Sun Dogs*

(Conductor: Martin Bussey – performed by Chetham's Chamber Choir)

Strauss, *Death and Transfiguration*, opus 24

£16, £11, £8. Under 16s £4 off full price tickets. Tel: 0161 907 9000. [www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)

### Hallé Orchestra, Bryn Terfel

Thursday 17 July, 7.30 pm  
Bridgewater Hall.

*Dream of Gerontius*, with Alice Coote, Paul Groves, Hallé Choir and Youth Choir.

After our *B minor Mass*, the music event of the summer. This special concert with massed Hallé Choirs gives the audience a rare chance to hear a definitive performance of a truly great masterpiece.

Tickets: £10 to £50.

Tel 0161 907 9000

[www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)