



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

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BUSINESS AND THE ARTS BY ELEANOR WOTHERSPOON

I found out something surprising the other week. Despite working in the arts for over five years, it wasn't until recently that I discovered that more people in the UK visit museums and galleries than attend live sporting events. What's more, audience figures for arts venues have risen 12% in the past year. Here at Arts & Business, we concentrate on emphasising the importance of private investment in the arts—ie money from both businesses and from individuals. Culture and the creative industries are worth over £7.7 billion to the British economy. It brings visitors from overseas, exports high-quality products, and helps put the UK on the map.

In the UK, culture is supported by our government. This helps the arts become available to everyone, while remaining at the cutting-edge of new developments such as Manchester's International Festival. However, when the figures are actually analysed, only half of funding for culture in the UK is from the government. Overall, arts organisations still have to raise around 35% from earned income such as tickets and cafe sales. More importantly, the arts have to raise around 15%

of their income from support from businesses and individuals – in 2008/2009 this equated to nearly £655 million. For example, for every hour that Manchester Art Gallery is open, it has to raise £393 (in addition to its support from Manchester City Council) to support its exhibitions and educational work with schools and families.

I don't think that anyone could confidently say that they expect government funding for the arts to increase over the coming years. In times of economic difficulty, it is all too easy for governments to cut cultural support. Yet everyone knows that culture can inspire and motivate; provide a period of calm in a busy life; or open people's minds to new horizons.

As we expect the private sector to recover more quickly than the public sector, Arts & Business would like to encourage both businesses and individuals to support the UK's cultural heritage. Business support of an arts organisation provides real benefits such as advertising and entertainment, as well as the knowledge that you are supporting an intrinsic part of a



Eleanor Wotherspoon, Regional Director,
Arts & Business North West

community. Through supporting an arts organisation as an individual, you are becoming closely involved with something you are passionate about, while actively helping it to grow and develop.

There are a myriad arts organisations out there that need support; whether through something as simple as purely buying a ticket, or by becoming more involved by being an active supporter. In the North West alone, we look after a network of over 200 arts organisations, helping them raise the support that they need to survive and thrive. By supporting a form of culture that you are passionate about, you can help an organisation gain the freedom that they need for the future.

www.artsandbusiness.org.uk, email
eleanor.wotherspoon@artsandbusiness.org.uk or tel 0161 236 2058.

MONTEVERDI AND FRIENDS—A GREAT NIGHT OUT FOR ALL



Marcus and Johnny Herford taking a breather during rehearsals

The Monteverdi *Vespers* concert was a truly special occasion. Not just because of the glorious music making, but also because we welcomed back so many old friends—and sadly had to say farewell to others.

This was the last official SGS concert for Dame Joan Bakewell, who has now stood down as our President after six years. A pre-concert reception was held in the Monastery's Chapel for SGS Friends and guests, to say goodbye to Joan, and thank her for her loyal and valuable support.

The Choir presented Joan with her very own choir folder containing a score for the Rachmaninov *Vespers*, a memento of the concert at the Monastery in which Joan played a major part as Reader. We included a selection of photos of the Choir taken at concerts during Joan's tenure as President, to remind her of some of the many wonderful moments we have all enjoyed over the last few years.

We also had to say goodbye to our wonderful Assistant MD, Matthew Hamilton, who heads off to conduct the Reading Bach Choir, and to direct RSCM Voices (Royal School of Church Music) - the RSCM training choir.

It wasn't all farewells however. A big round of ap-

plause from the Choir welcomed back our favourite baritone, Marcus Farnsworth, along with Richard Dowling and Amy Wood who have sung with us before.

The pre-concert reception was a good opportunity to entertain and say thank you to the Friends of St George's Singers, who do so much to support the Choir financially, and by coming along to concerts with enthusiasm and a great spirit of adventure.



Anne Francis making a presentation to Matthew Hamilton at his final concert

SGS stage management team tried a number of different layouts, manoeuvring the choir (and the staging!) around the nave, side aisles and massive pillars of the Monastery, before finding the right balance of sound, and ensuring that the audience could see.

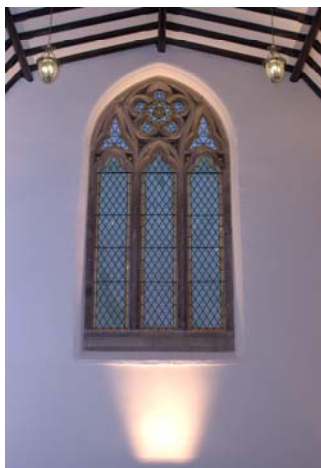
As Donald Judge says in his critique of the performance,

this was the culmination of weeks of rehearsal which was summed up for the Singers and the audience by Dame Joan: "a truly intense and emotional experience."



Choir President Joan Bakewell, Vice President Stephen Threlfall, our concert host Anne Marie Bailey and— trying not to get caught on camera—our bass section rep

Once again the Monastery was packed to capacity. The layout of this concert was very different to previous performances, as Monteverdi called for two very distinct choirs, to be positioned opposite each other. Conductor Neil Taylor and the



Photos: courtesy Graham North



Joan doesn't look too sure about what exactly we've given her



..... but as ever, her thank you speech is gracious, entertaining and sincere.

A TRIUMPH AT THE MONASTERY

BY DONALD JUDGE

Claudio Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* is surely on the wish list of every choral singer and conductor, and as the large audience for St George's Singers' performance in Gorton Monastery on March 20th showed, there are many concert goers eager to hear this wondrous work.

Maybe only Bach's *B minor Mass* or *St Matthew Passion*, *Messiah*, *Elijah*, the Verdi *Requiem* and *The Dream of Gerontius* have the same 'pulling power' for both choirs and their audiences. With its demanding multi-part choral writing, six vocal soloists, and dazzling instrumental accompaniment, it's a brave Choir that attempts the Monteverdi *Vespers* for both musical and logistical reasons. Let me say straight away that St George's performance was not an attempt – it was a triumph!

Almost any performance of the *Vespers* is a compromise. Monteverdi's instructions, for example as to pitch and instrumentation, aren't always clear. It isn't that long ago that many professional musicians would have struggled to play in an appropriate style, let alone with an appropriate sound. While we've come a long way since Nadia Boulanger reintroduced Monteverdi to the world in 1937 with a piano featuring in the accompaniments, finding good enough players with the right instruments is not easy.

The young players of Chetham's Baroque Orchestra, led by Yusuke Kinoshita, did wonders, making a lovely baroque sound along with the sensitive continuo of Arngeir Hauksson and Jeffrey Makison on theorbo and chamber organ.

There were authentic sackbuts, while it is of course better to have well tuned oboes than unavailable (or wayward!) cornetts. When heard alone in the *ritornelli*, the orchestra really shone, and one could easily forget that all the players are still at school.

The soloists, Clare Lloyd, Amy Wood, Peter Davoren, Richard Dowling, Marcus Farnsworth and Jonny Herford were all fine singers, well balanced but with distinctive voices – very important when there are pairs of sopranos, tenors and baritones. The four men blended beautifully when singing the plainchant. While any one of them could have made sufficient sound on his own, it gave a real



feeling of monks at their devotions. It was a very nice touch for solo singers sometimes to stand next to the theorbo, when the building, beautiful though it is, and in many ways an ideal venue for such a piece, has no transepts and alcoves for different groups of performers, such as Monteverdi probably envisaged. It's a pity the building didn't allow the 'echo' soloists, even when behind the choir, to sound more distant. Personally, I would have liked the lights to have been dimmed or even extinguished!

While soloists and orchestra only arrive at the last moment, for the choir, the performance is the culmination of many weeks of intensive rehearsal. St George's is a large choir, far larger than would have been used in contemporary or modern performances of the *Vespers*. The acoustic in Gorton Monastery seems to magnify voices while muting instruments, and baroque instruments are quieter anyway. While the details of orchestration were rendered almost inaudible in all but the quieter and more sparsely scored numbers, we could revel in a gloriously full and beautifully tuned choral sound. No one would wish to deny the Poynton choir its sonorous *fortes*, the balance between vocal

parts was good even if the men sometimes predominated, and the tuning was impeccable. Contrapuntal entries were reassuringly clear from such a large group in a reverberant acoustic, while the unison lines of sopranos and tenors were beautifully blended.

Neil Taylor had prepared the Choir to a very high standard, and he held the performance together with sensible tempi and a clear beat. This is a work that keeps our interest with frequent changes of tempo and rhythm even within a single movement that can create real difficulties for less well rehearsed and disciplined forces. This was a concert that was inspiring to both performers and audience: one to be savoured and remembered for a very long time.



Yet another packed audience at the Monastery

"I thought the choir sounded fantastic, tuning was impeccable and they sounded really strong" - soprano Amy Wood

"It was great to take part in the lovely concert with you and great to hear you navigating through all the difficult syncopating passages!" - theorbo player Arngeir Hauksson

"It was an absolute pleasure working with you again.. The choir sounded super" - Marcus Farnsworth

"The choir sounded excellent in the performance" - orchestra leader Yusuke Kinoshita

"I really enjoyed Saturday, and thought the choir were fantastic, a real credit to all your work". - soprano Clare Lloyd



Arngeir Hauksson with his theorbo

I CAN SING! BY CLAIRE HAWKER



"Thanks for the very warm welcome given to the group—I appreciated the help given by the St George's members which contributed significantly to the enjoyment of all participants."

"I learnt so much and had immense fun in the process."

"It's now Tuesday evening and I'm wondering how I spent these times before I joined the LTS course!"

"It has been a wonderful and unforgettable experience."

"I actually feel it is one of the best things I have ever taken part in."

"You turned a motley crew of wide abilities into a very credible sounding choir!"



Evan Dawson (Making Music), Anne Francis, Neil Taylor and Timm Barkworth

I have to admit I wasn't a complete beginner – I can read music and hold a tune reasonably well - but the thought of singing in front of other people or having to audition for anything had been enough to put me off indulging my enjoyment of singing since my days in the school choir.

Then I was sent the details of a 'Learn to Sing' course for an article in Inside Magazines. It would be hosted by Poynton's St George's Singers and there were 200 places on offer (safety in numbers I thought – there was no way we would have to sing on our own with so many people!). It was a couple of hours on a Tuesday evening for six weeks so I thought I could get a pass out for that long notwithstanding the juggling it would require with the rest of the family's evening activities.

So I registered my interest before the magazines had even been printed. Subsequently so did lots of other people – so many that there was a waiting

list of 100 in addition to the 200 who were accepted!

I was indeed spared the horror of having to sing on my own but there was no room for inhibitions on this course – some of the warm ups were hilarious and woe betide anyone who didn't join in. Musical Director Timm Barkworth had a lovely manner – he only had to threaten very slightly that he would come round and single out anyone who was 'not playing' or not doing something quite right, to guarantee 100% participation next time.

A few scales and exercises during the first session helped us all to establish which vocal part we should be singing. Each week started with a warm up and singing craft session to improve our technique and along the way we were also given a whistle stop guide to reading music. We learnt four pieces over the six week period, which we performed on the final Tuesday evening. Four different



styles of music, in three different languages and each one in four-part harmony – impressive huh?

Some of us were also able to attend (as spectators!) the regional heats of the BBC Choir of the Year 2010 at the Royal

Northern College of Music. This was a great opportunity to be entertained by all sorts of different choirs. The variety of people participating was fascinating, proving that there's no such thing as a 'bog standard' choir!



Timm leading the warm up



All in all I enjoyed the course immensely. It's a shame it went on for no longer than six weeks and I can't really say I made lots of new friends. I saw a couple of familiar faces but there was very little time for chit chat with the 199 other people on the course who I'd never met before! But it has definitely opened the door to a new leisure pursuit. At the end of the course we were given details of scores (get it?!) of singing groups and choirs in the region. Now it's down to me to pluck up the courage to go along to one and see if I pass muster!

I'm sure I speak on behalf of the majority (if not all) the attendees in thanking St George's Singers for offering us this great opportunity.

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GERMAN MASTERWORKS—PREVIEW

The final concert of our 2009-2010 season brings together three choral giants: Bach, Brahms and Mendelssohn, a trio linked together over a span of 150 years by influences that had lasting effects on musical composition. All three produced works of great profundity and pathos from very simple musical ideas, demonstrating above all a total command of the technique of counterpoint.

What is counterpoint? The word comes from the Latin *punctus contra punctum* ('note against note'), and involves the writing of two or more melodic lines that sound very different



Brahms (1833-1897) as a young man—a long way from the heavily bearded and venerable old man usually depicted

and move independently, but which sound harmonious when played simultaneously. So, counterpoint focuses on melodic interaction, and only secondarily on harmony.

It is of course impossible to write simultaneous lines without producing harmony, and impossible to write harmony without linear movement. Bach's counterpoint, considered the most profound synthe-

sis of the two ever achieved, is extremely rich harmonically and clearly directed tonally, whilst the melodic lines are fascinating. The listener is encouraged to listen 'horizontally' in order to hear two or more strands individually, rather than their combined effect vertically.

There is a belief that contrapuntal music is cerebral or intellectual, and that harmony rather than counterpoint must be the medium for the expression of emotion. But to all three of these composers, the use of counterpoint is not some arid, didactic and arcane practice, but a tool, vital to producing music of the freshest vitality—and all of which will be heard in this concert.

Bach systematically explored the full range of contrapuntal possibilities in *The Art of Fugue*, a work that inspired Brahms to write a number of works, of which the *Geistliches Lied* and his three acapalla motets are fine examples, the contrapuntal lines flowing seamlessly in dialogue with one another.

However, the musical climax of the concert will be Bach's motet, *Jesu meine Freude*, one (along with *Lobet den Herrn*) of his visionary *Six Motets* that had immense influence on both Brahms and Mendelssohn. The dramatic contrasts in vocal texture, dynamics and metre provided a stimulus that can be heard in both their works.

The role played by Mendelssohn in re-establishing Bach's pre-eminence through the staging of his *St Matthew Passion* in 1829 is well known, and resulted in the invigoration of composition, especially for Brahms and for Mendelssohn



The Cantor of Leipzig, 1685-1750

himself. His setting of *Richte mich, Gott* has wonderfully clear harmonic writing, and triumphant, choral-inspired conclusions that show the Cantor's influence is never far from the surface. And in the perennial favourite, *Hear my Prayer*, the beautiful dialogue between solo voice and accompaniment is a delight.

Choirs love to sing Bach—and St George's is no exception. The chance to sing Bach all evening—whether in the original or through other composers' interpretations—will surely be a real treat for both choir and audience.



Mendelssohn, 1809-1847

A great wine connoisseur invited Brahms to dinner and in his honour brought out some of his choicest bottles. "This is the Brahms of my cellar," he proudly announced as the wine was poured into the composer's glass. Brahms scrutinized the wine, inhaled its bouquet, took a sip and murmured, "Better bring out your Beethoven."

Like many in 18th century Leipzig, Bach was a caffeine addict, drinking 3 or 4 cups of coffee a day, mostly at Herr Zimmerman's coffee house. His 'Coffee Cantata' is a short comic opera about a father trying to get his daughter to kick the habit, and includes the memorable line, 'If I can't drink my bowl of coffee three times a day, I'll shrivel up like a roast goat.'

Bach and Brahms form two-thirds of what are sometimes called the 'Three B's' referring to the primacy of three composers (the third of course being Beethoven). Rather sacrilegiously, they are also referred to as the 'Trinity' - Bach the Father, Beethoven the Son, and Brahms the Holy Ghost.

NEXT SEASON—JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER!



So—what could possibly beat Monteverdi's *Vespers* at Gorton Monastery? Well, what about Bach's *St John Passion* at the Bridgewater Hall?

That's the main treat in store for us next season—but it's by no means the only one.

The 2010/11 season starts off in familiar territory. *Visions of Albion* (shades of Blake, visionaries, ancient feet et al) is our first concert, and presents some of the landmark works which defined the English choral sound world of the 20th century. Works by Parry, Holst, Vaughan Williams and Finzi trace the renaissance of English choral music through the century, as the musical baton is passed from one hand to the next.

At the opposite end of the season, in June 2011, we find ourselves at the other side of Europe, with a programme of sacred choral music from Eastern Europe. Janáček and Kodály were both dedicated to the cause of folk and nationalist music in their respective countries (Czechoslovakia and Hungary), and developed their own unique styles. We'll be performing some of their most beautiful, dramatic and haunting works, fittingly in Gorton Monastery, in *Eastern Voices*.

Other events on next season's agenda include our usual Singing Day (this year it's Haydn's *Nelson Mass*), our annual carol concert with VBS Poynton Brass Band, and what has now become a regular feature of a

St George's season, an appearance on the *BBC Daily Service*.

But the highlight of the year for many of us will be Bach's *St John Passion*, which we will perform at the Bridgewater during Holy Week next year. This very special concert represents the first time St George's Singers has embarked on a true joint venture with Manchester Camerata. A wonderful line-up of soloists will be joining us under the baton of the Camerata's Principal Guest Conductor, Nicholas Kraemer, and (to keep a close eye on us!) Neil Taylor will be on stage as well, playing continuo.

Our 2010-11 season promises to be fantastic!

Some members of the Choir have already had experience singing with Nicholas Kraemer—here's one story

MAKING THE MOST OF OPPORTUNITIES

BY URSULA BIRKETT

Sometimes opportunities offer themselves, you think "Why?", and do nothing. And sometimes you think "Yes!", and go for it.

Choir members may perhaps recall a notice last year about extra singers wanted at the RNCM for a production of *Belshazzar* – Handel, that is, not Walton. My 'other' choir is working its way gradually through Handel's oratorios, and this is one we'd sung, and enjoyed, so, having checked that I wouldn't be either in costume or deprived of my copy, I went for it. Sylvia Glover went for it too, but sadly fell victim to illness in the final days. This was a particular shame after we'd braved the snow and black ice of late January to get there for rehearsals.

A production for the RNCM Vocal & Opera Studies course,

it was put on to showcase the College's current brightest talents, semi-staged, with some costume, some props, quite a lot of movement, some video back projections, and some imported soloists. These latter included Robin Blaze, whose illness in 2008 prevented his singing in our *B Minor Mass* at the Bridgewater Hall, when he was replaced by Tim Mead to stunning effect (which those who were there will recall.) I now conclude that Robin would have been very good and compelling.

The local talent was also fine, and I look forward to claiming acquaintance when some of them come to fame in the future. The brightness and fluency of the coloratura of chorus as well as soloists was remarkable, and a pleasure to hear rather than, as sometimes, a

source of anxiety. I *think* I kept up fully.

Rehearsals for the Chorus were taken in total by five different conductors, providing a lively education in adapting to different styles and emphases.

When it came to the final rehearsals and performance, we were in the eloquent hands of Nicholas Kraemer, with the Camerata, which was a further education as well as a delight. As the story of *Belshazzar* involves uninhibited partying in praise of heathen gods (which proves not to be a good idea) we also had stage 'business' for not just principals but also chorus, calling for a degree of drunken jollity only occasionally seen amongst St George's Singers (though I can't vouch for the students of the RNCM, of course).

© Robert Carpenter Turner



Nicholas Kraemer, Principal Guest Conductor of Manchester Camerata

PRAGUE TOUR REPORT

It's Spring Bank Holiday weekend—and it's another fantastic tour for St George's Singers, this year in the beautiful city of Prague.

This year we used the services of a professional music tour company, who liaised with our own tour organiser Pam Craig, to set up some great events: a concert in the baroque extravaganza of St Peter's Church in the heart of Prague, Mass in St Vitus Cathedral followed by a recital, then a concert at the Nymburk Music Festival. A lot to pack into two days, but then we don't go on tour to relax!

After a late flight on the Friday, and a Saturday morning for sightseeing, rehearsals began in earnest on Saturday afternoon. Neil had chosen a lovely, but very challenging programme to entertain our Czech audiences: Britten's *Five Flower Songs*, two



Choirboys resting

Onto Sunday and Mass at the awesome St Vitus Cathedral, which sits in the heart of the Prague Castle complex overlooking the city. We were all shepherded up a very tall, very narrow spiral staircase before emerging into the organ loft with a spectacular view over the nave.



Jeff was tucked round the corner on the organ, closely



watched by the cathedral organist himself, who clearly felt very proprietary about his instrument, and kept leaning over to pull out stops—with rather alarming consequences for Jeff, the choir—and probably the congregation below! However, our performance of anthems and motets by Bach, Brahms and Mendelssohn met with a delighted response from



The Cathedral loft

of Lauridsen's *Les Chansons des Roses*, extracts from Dvořák's *Mass in D minor*, and Kodály's *Pange Lingua*. All works we had done before, though not for some time, so some fine-tuning was required before the audience arrived—which they did in droves!



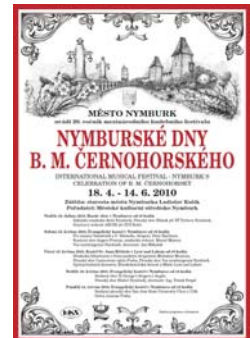
The Chair of the Festival Committee (with young son!), and Nymburk's Minister of Culture with Anne and Neil at the reception



Concert in St Peter's Church, Prague

the large crowd that had gathered below us to listen to our post-service recital.

Then onto our third venue in the old royal city of Nymburk, about 40 miles outside Prague. Each year the city holds a music festival in honour of the baroque composer Bohuslav Matej Cernohorský, a contemporary of Bach, but who leaves behind only one



Evening dinner cruise on the River Vlatava

published motet (*Laudetur Jesus Christus*), the bulk of his work having been destroyed by fire. The festival began in 1991, and invites groups from all over the world to perform. St George's Singers received a warm welcome from our Nymburk hosts at a special reception before the concert, and then treated to a special Czech dinner afterwards—with the inevitable dumplings! With lots of sightseeing, and wonderful music, the tour to Prague was really pretty fabulous!



St Vitus Cathedral



YOUNG MEN DON'T SING? BY DAVE FRANCIS

Sorry—but there's just no escaping football at the moment! The World Cup has arrived, and England are (as usual) driving us to drink, drugs, divorce (or any combination thereof). So let's forget about the football and focus on something much more important—the singing.



[Health Warning: Do not read this article if easily offended by bad language]

Like many an enthusiastic choral singer, I participate in several choirs. Some meet on a regular basis, others more occasionally but all of them are broadly similar: SATB, written music, learnt in order to be performed to an audience, led by a conductor.

But one is different – very different. Unlike the others, it has no audience. The music it sings is not written down and has no named composers. While its repertoire is made up of many different songs, it holds no rehearsals but meets only to perform. It performs a capella and has no conductor, yet manages to sing with impressive precision. And this despite the fact that the choir is large – extremely large. Most striking of all is its composition. It is made up almost entirely of men, with young men under 40 in the majority.

We are frequently told that men, especially young men, are resistant to choral singing. Indeed, Gareth Malone has made his reputation as a television 'choral personality' on the premise that it takes something (and someone) extraordinary to persuade men to sing. There is a male prejudice against choirs, we are assured, which is strongest among young working class men, who perceive organised singing is alien and effete. But if this is true, how are we to explain the fact that the choir I am referring to, and with no Gareth Malone in sight, consists of many thousands of young men – standing together (no-one sits down) singing song after song for two hours with spontaneity and gusto?

In case you have not guessed already, the choir I am describ-

ing goes by the name of the Stretford End. It performs at every Manchester United home match. Its extensive repertoire of songs all involve contrafactum, the setting of new words to an existing melody.

This kind of song has a long history in popular culture. As musicologist Trevor Hold notes, "The art of contrafactum is an ancient one. Folksongs have regularly been dressed up with new verses. The writers of topical ballads, hawked in the streets of London in the 16th to 19th centuries, all did this: new words to existing tunes, so well known that they were printed without music, with simply the instruction *To be sung to the tune of Jenny Adair, Lillibulero, The Grey Goose, etc.*"

But while contrafactum is not unique to football grounds,



contemporary football choirs have taken this ancient popular art form to its most elaborate level. Every major football ground has its own songs, many using the same tunes. At Old Trafford the songs fall into three types. First, there are the 'club songs' that glorify the club and the fans' commitment to it. There are many of these, one of the most often performed being 'United Road':

*"United Road, take me home
To the place I belong*

*To Old Trafford to see United
Take me home United Road".*

But perhaps the most powerful and poignant of these songs, given the club's history, is 'We'll Never Die', to the tune The Red Flag (O Tan-nenbaum):

*"United's flag is deepest red,
It shrouded all our Munich dead,
Before their limbs grew stiff and cold,
Their heart's blood dyed it's ev'ry fold.
Then raise United's banner high
Beneath it's shade we'll live and die.
So keep the faith and never fear,
We'll keep the Red Flag flying here.
We'll never die, we'll never die
We'll never die, we'll never die
We'll keep the Red flag flying high
'Cos Man United will never die."*

The second kind is 'anti-opposition' songs, that express

the fans' disdain for opposing clubs. Unsurprisingly, these are the ones with the most obscene lyrics. A classic of this type is 'Build a bonfire' (My Darling Clementine):

*"Build a bonfire,
Build a bonfire,
Put the Scousers on the top,
Put City in the middle,
And we'll burn the f***ing lot."*

As this song indicates, the most common targets of anti-opposition songs are arch-rivals



Manchester City and Liverpool.

Another anti-City song is 'Nothing at all':

*"This is how it feels to be city
This is how it feels to be small
This is how it feels, when your
team wins nothing at all, nothing
at all."*

The third kind is 'player songs', in which particular players – current and past – are celebrated. Almost all members of the current first team have songs dedicated to them, as do many Manchester United players of the recent past.

The one sung most frequently at Old Trafford this season, for obvious reasons, is the Wayne Rooney song. This uses a South African kwela tune 'Tom Hark'. This tune, with new English words, was a top ten hit back in the 1980's for a group called The Piranhas and has been used as the basis for numerous football songs ever since. In the current Old Trafford version the words are *"I saw my mate the other day,
He said to me he'd seen the white Pele,
So I asked, who is he?
He goes by the name of Wayne Rooney,
Wayne Rooney, Wayne Rooney,
He goes by the name of Wayne Rooney."*

The Stretford End choir regularly performs songs about former Manchester United stars, such as this one (to the tune You are my Sunshine) about Ole Gunnar Solskjaer:

*"You are my Solskjaer,
My Ole Solskjaer,
You make me happy,
When skies are grey,
Though Alan Shearer, Was
f***ing dearer,
Please don't take my Solskjaer
away."*

When David Beckham returned to Old Trafford in March as part of the A.C. Milan team, the prodigal son was welcomed with probably the most common football song of all (to the tune Guantanamera): *"One David Beckham,*

*There's only one David Beckham,
One David Beckham,
There's only one David Beckham."*

My own favourite player song is the Stretford End's version of the *Twelve Days of Christmas*, dedicated to their great star of the 1990's, Eric Cantona:

*"On the first day of Christmas
My true love gave to me,
Eric Cantona.
On the second day of Christmas
My true love gave to me,
Two Cantona's and an Eric Cantona"and so on.*

What is particularly impressive about this song is not just that the choir sings all twelve verses almost regardless of what's happening on the pitch, but the way it respects the tradition of *accelerando* and *rallentando*. In line with that convention the twelfth verse begins slowly but reaches 'six Cantona's' very fast, then finishes very slowly (and together). Not bad for a choir of many thousands with no conductor.

Some songs combine elements of two or more types, such as the one dedicated to United's Korean midfielder, Ji Sung Park, but also denigrating the hated Liverpool (to the tune Lord of the Dance): *"Park, Park wherever you may be,
They eat dogs in your own country,
It could be worse,
You could be scouse,
Eating rats in a council house."*

Another which combines player and anti-opposition themes is the Carlos Tevez song. After two seasons at United, Tevez left last summer in acrimonious circumstances and joined newly wealthy Manchester City. Since then the Stretford End has sung this song at every home match. The tune is another widely used one, originally the Irish nationalist song God Save Ireland: *"Who's that tw*t from Argentina?
Who's that money grabbing whore?
Carlos Tevez is his name,
And he hasn't got a brain,*



*And he won't be winning trophies
any more."*

Finally, over the past couple of years another set of songs has been sung more and more frequently at Old Trafford. These are the 'Anti-Glazer' songs, expressing the fans desire to rid Manchester United of its hated American owners, the Glazer family. The most often performed uses the 'Tom Hark' tune, to which is sung a simple, repetitive lyric:

*Love United and hate Glazer,
Love United and hate Glazer,
Love United and hate Glazer,
Love United and hate Glazer.*

There are several others, the most graphic being: *Gonna die, Gonna die,
Malcolm Glazer's gonna die,
How we'll do it I don't know,
Truss him up from head to toe,
All I know is Glazer's gonna die.*

This is just a small selection of the songs performed by the Stretford End. Of course, similar collections are performed at

other football grounds. The link between football and singing is emotion. For fans, watching their team play is an extremely emotional experience, one which, if you are not a football fan it is almost impossible to comprehend. The emotions of football are experienced collectively and are expressed through singing together. Fans love to sing. What's more, they are very good at it. If you don't believe me, get a ticket for an Old Trafford match and have a listen for yourself.

"The emotions of football are experienced collectively and are expressed through singing together. Fans love to sing. What's more, they are very good at it."



ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS

NEW CHOIR PRESIDENT



St George's Singers' new President, Brigit Forsyth

A big welcome to our new Choir President, actress Brigit Forsyth.

Brigit, who lives in Broadbottom in the High Peak, was born in Edinburgh and studied at RADA in London. She played with a number of repertory companies, before breaking into the West End in Alan Ayckbourn's *The Norman Conquests*. Since then Brigit has appeared in numerous TV, radio and stage productions, though is still remembered fondly for her as Thelma in the

TV series *Whatever happened to the Likely Lads*, as well as in the BBC drama about the women's soccer team, *Playing the Field*.

Currently, Brigit is appearing in a revival of Michael Frayn's *Noises Off* in Birmingham, and has just finished a run in the West End production of *Calendar Girls*.

Whilst Brigit's career has turned her into one of the country's best-loved actresses, her musical talents are less well known. Coming from a musical family, all of whom sang or played instruments, Brigit took

up the cello when she was young, but stopped playing for many years until she was left a cello by her aunt, and her interest in music was rekindled. She now plays with a local amateur group, the Fir Cones, whenever her busy acting schedule allows.

Brigit's link with St George's Singers goes back to 2004, when she gave the readings at the Choir's annual Christmas carol concert. We look forward to welcoming her to our future concerts as our new President—and may even persuade her to pick up her cello !

AND THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE WAS HEARD

The uncertainty of the General Election result on 6th May kept politicians and pundits in gainful employment for weeks afterwards. If only they'd turned to the choral repertoire, they could have sorted it all out in a matter of hours.....

All Night Vigil (Gretchaninov) - for Dimblebys, Paxmen and all varieties of Snow

Visions of Aeroplanes (Vaughan Williams) - dream turned nightmare for UKIP's Nigel Farage

When David heard (Whitacre) - Cameron reacts badly to hearing the exit polls

Missa in angustiis (Haydn) - Straightened times for Gordon Brown, at every possible level

Blest pair of sirens (Parry) - the cheeky pair finally did for our Estonian friend Lembit

Dixit Dominus (Handel) - Lord Mandelson finally gives an interview

Te Deum (Holst) - what we all felt at about 2.30am

St Nicolas (Britten) - the Pickled Boys (AKA the Lib Dem negotiating team) arrive

Lo, the full final sacrifice

(Finzi) - Charles Clarke, Jacqui Smith et al gave their all

Belshazzars Feast (Walton) - the writing's clearly on the wall for the BNP

Mass in Blue (Todd) - the map of England on 7th May

The long day closes (Sullivan) - and we all head off thankfully to bed which, if not dreamless, is at least free of politicians.

LEARN TO SING—THE FACTS!



The 'Learn to Sing' course was an enormous success—and here are the facts to prove it.

- Over 300 people expressed interest in the course, for which only 200 spaces were available.
- Of the 200 allocated a place on the course, 31% came from Bramhall/Hazel

Grove, 27% from Poynton, and 22% from Macclesfield, the remainder traveling in from outlying districts—as far as Sandbach, Frodsham, Lymm and Sheffield.

- 20 people had to pull out during the course, for reasons of illness or work pressure.

- The remaining 180 stalwarts had an 89% attendance record, and 108 people turned up to every single rehearsal (that's 60%).

Over 100 people remain on the waiting list for the next course, which we hope to be running later this year. More information on this as soon as possible.

NEW ASSISTANT MD FOR SGS

We're delighted to welcome Calum Fraser to St George's as our new Assistant Musical Director.

Calum comes from Scotland (yes, we spotted that one), and is currently in the final year of his music degree at Manchester University. He started his music career as a singer and a flautist, and was bass soloist with the National Youth Choir of Scotland and principal flute with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland

At Manchester he has sung with Ad Solem, the University's Chamber Choir for the last two years. He is now fo-

cus on the next phase of his musical life and is enjoying his first year as their conductor, as well as working with the University Choir.

In Manchester, Calum studies conducting with Mark Heron and choral direction with Martin Bussey. He has attended the renowned Canford conducting course, and most recently participated in a masterclass with the esteemed opera conductor Richard Bonyngue.

Calum heard about St George's Singers from his good friend Matthew Hamilton, who advised him to apply for the position of Assistant MD. "I

jumped at the chance to conduct such a great choir and work with such a highly respected musician as Neil," said Calum. "I enjoy the camaraderie and spirit of working with an ensemble, and also being able to hear the sound you are creating with them—something you can't do as a soloist."



Calum Fraser

Calum we understand is also a keen golfer—so we'll have to make sure he joins the rest of the SGS golfing groupies on next year's Choir tour to Elgar country!

SEA DRAGONS MAKE WAVES

St George's Singers' very own water babies, the Sea Dragons, raised almost £500 in their latest charity swim on 7th March. The team of Jo Bluck, Jean Egerton, Corrie Verduyn and Mark Warrington took part in the annual Macclesfield Rotary

Club sponsored swim, covering an amazing 144 lengths—or about 2.2 miles. Two swimmers were in the pool at any one time, handing over to colleagues in relay fashion, with each swimmer doing 36 lengths of 25m. The swim lasted for 45

minutes which gives them a very respectable average of 1.6 minutes per length. Half the money raised was donated to the Haiti Appeal, the remainder to the Choir's own choice of charity, East Cheshire Hospice.



RECIPES ARE LIKE CHOIRS

BY GEOFF TAYLOR

Recipes are like choirs. The poor ones are simply a mixture of uncoordinated individual parts. (The famous Portuguese soup, Caldo Verde, is mainly shredded cabbage cooked in potato water—and tastes like cabbage cooked in potato water.) But the good ones blend the ingredients to produce a result that is much greater than the sum of its parts. This recipe, based on Elizabeth David's 'Bonne Femme', is the St George's Singers' of soup recipes. The individual ingredients are not very exciting, but when combined, a splendid blend is produced with a sensational overall effect.

POTAGE SAINT GEORGES

- 2 oz butter
- 2 large leeks (with plenty of dark green leaves)
- 1lb potatoes
- Seasoning
- 3 medium carrots
- 2 pints chicken or vegetable stock (cube will do)

Trim the leeks, removing roots and discoloured leaves. Chop roughly, wash as little as possible and dry on kitchen roll. Chop carrots roughly, and peel and slice the potatoes. Melt butter in large saucepan, and sauté leeks, carrots and potatoes for 10 minutes, stirring continuously so they are all covered in butter. Add the stock and a little salt, and simmer for at least 30 minutes (or couple of hours in the Aga). Blend—a handheld blender in the saucepan saves washing up. Season to taste, sprinkle with chopped parsley and a little cream (if you must).

St George's Singers

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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, 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.

MANCHESTER SINGS!

ST GEORGE'S CONCERT DIARY 2010-2011

Tuesday 28 September 2010
—Open Rehearsal

Saturday 13 November 2010
- *Visions of Albion*

Saturday 4 December 2010
Carols & Brass by Candlelight

Saturday 15 January 2011
- Singing Day: Haydn's *Nelson Mass*

Tuesday 19 April 2011
- Bach *St John Passion*

Saturday 25 June 2011
- *Eastern Voices*

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

Sunday 20th June, 4pm

Star of the Sea—music inspired by Mary, Queen of Heaven, Stella Maris. Manchester Chamber Choir conducted by Justin Doyle. Programme includes Victoria's *Missa Ave Maris Stella*, Holst's *Ave Maria*, Will Todd's *Christus est Stella*, Gorecki's *Totus Tuus* and Poulenc's *Mass in G*.

Christ Church, Darley Ave, Didsbury, Manchester, M21. £10 / £8 concessions. Tickets: 07538 138231 or on the door. For information: www.manchesterchamberchoir.co.uk.

Friday 9th/Saturday 10th July and 20th October

An exciting community event takes place in Poynton next autumn—a performance of Britten's *Noye's Fludde* with local children, young people and adults. The performance will be conducted by Paul Hindmarsh, with Mark Rawlinson as Noah and Joyce Tindsley as Mrs Noah, and takes place in St George's Church, Poynton, on four consecutive evenings, with a different local choir leading the community singing at each perform-

ance. St George's Singers leads the singing on Wednesday 20th October. The event has been awarded £10,000 of lottery funding, but more money is needed. Two fund-raising concerts take place on 9-10th July, in which St George's will be performing on Friday 9th. Young people are invited to audition for the parts of Noah's sons, their wives and the 'gossips'. For more information, tel 01625 269721, email cme08@live.co.uk.