



Hemiola

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

German Masterworks—concert review	2
La Cenerentola—review	2
The return of Glee	3
Albion—concert preview	4
Parry's church	5
Glasto vs Glyndebourne	6
View from the organ loft	7
St George's Singers news	8
The Singing Potter	8
Jazz Psalm Sunday	9

Charity and other news	10
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ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

PRESIDENT:

Brigit Forsyth

VICE PRESIDENTS:

Sue Roper
Mark Rowlinson
Stephen Threlfall
Stephen Williams

MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

Neil Taylor

ASSISTANT MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

Calum Fraser

ACCOMPANIST:

Jeffrey Makinson

Registered Charity no 508686

Member of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies

www.st-georges-singers.org.uk

BRIGIT TO JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS



We're delighted to announce that our new President, Brigit Forsyth, is giving the Christmas readings at this year's *Carols and Brass by Candlelight* concert.

Brigit first took part in our carol concert a few years ago, when she entertained the audience with an alternative (and very funny!) version of the 'Twelve Days of Christmas'. We're not sure what her choices for this

year will be, but we can be sure they'll be both entertaining and seasonal.

Our friends from the Vernon Building Society Poynton Brass Band will be with us as usual, to join with the Choir (and the audience) in carols old, modern and brand new. We'll also be welcoming another old friend back for this concert. Andrew Dean, who used to be Accompanist to St George's Singers some years ago, is returning for a 'one-off' appearance, standing in for Jeff Makinson.

And finally, not to be forgotten are the seasonal mince pies and mulled wine, just the thing to keep the winter chill away.

Anyone who hasn't yet been to this great Christmas concert is advised to book early to avoid disappointment!

Saturday 4 December, 7.30 pm
St George's Church, Stockport
Tickets: £12, £10 concessions, £2 students/children (including refreshments)
Tel: 01663 764012
Email: tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk



POYNTON AWASH WITH MUSIC

A glorious tide of music flowed over Poynton last month when a huge community project involving over 400 people culminated in a series of performances of Benjamin Britten's cantata, *Noye's Fludde* in St George's Church. St George's Singers led the audience participation

sections, along with members of other Poynton choirs and bands. Our Vice President, Mark Rowlinson, took the role of Mr Noye, and Joyce Tindsley was Mrs Noye. The Musical Director was Paul Hindmarsh, and the Voice of God was intoned by Gordon

Lees. Local school children played all the other parts, including the animals, the gossips, and Noye's sons and their wives. The event was organised and produced by Catherine Silman and Anne Mitchell of Cantata Music Education.

GERMAN MASTERWORKS— A MASTERFUL PERFORMANCE



Thanks to Margaret Dennis for this shot of the Choir during the concert

Our final concert of last season in June really lived up to its name, as the Choir delivered a truly thrilling performance of some of the greatest choral works to come out of Germany.

Neil had chosen a very difficult programme to round off the year. Three gorgeous but terrifyingly intricate motets by Bach, three works by Mendelssohn (all requiring totally different moods and subtleties of expression) and no fewer than

five Brahms' anthems. This was a tough sing for any choir, even professional ones, but Neil was absolutely delighted with the commitment, drama, expressiveness and articulation (all those German consonants took some getting out!)

A special mention must go to Jacqui Smith, who performed the soprano solo in *Hear my Prayer* so beautifully.

And the audience loved it, one of them writing after the concert: *"I felt I must write and tell you how much I enjoyed the German Masterworks concert yesterday evening! What was special about last night? Even the thought of sitting in a cold church on a warm summer evening was enticing but the music itself was*

so vital, alive and engaging. I particularly liked the solo, as an 'old favourite' it is easy to be comfortable with it, but the clarity, brilliance and serenity of the piece was outstanding. I also enjoyed the Mendelssohn organ solo - I am not aware that I had heard it before but it sent my imagination soaring. And to me the choir became a harmonious orchestra full of passion and joy."

All in all, a great success of which we can be very proud—and which puts us in great shape for this season's *St John Passion*.



Jacqui Smith rehearsing her solo

LA CENERENTOLA BY GEOFF TAYLOR



Marcus as Dandini with the Ugly Sisters

Photo: Courtesy of Pauline Nield

La Cenerentola, Rossini's take on Cinderella, is a frothy entertaining comic opera, considered,

with *The Barber of Seville*, to be the high point of Rossinian comedy. Unlike the Barber, it has dark satirical undertones. When we heard that Marcus Farnsworth, our previous Assistant Director, was appearing as Dandini, the Prince's valet, at Clonter Opera we had to go.

In 1974 Jeffrey Lockett invited an opera group to perform operatic excerpts in a barn at his farm near Congleton with the audience seated on straw bales. These performances became an annual event until 1981 when a Health and Safety "jobsworth" at the Local Authority banned the straw bales and a building programme began to provide

fixed seating. Clonter Farm Music Trust is now a unique residential touring and educational enterprise committed to providing the highest quality training and performance opportunities for singers at the beginning of their careers.

A list of singers appearing in past years, many of whom have gone on to huge success, includes Simon Keenlyside (1984), Amanda Roorcroft (1988), Jane Eaglen (1989), Mary Plazas (1990) and Toby Spence (1994). In 2003 alone the list included Amy Freston, Sarah Tynan, Jacqui Dankworth and Tina May!

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THE RETURN OF GLEE

Those of us with teenage families—or even those of us who still secretly indulge in teenage fantasies—might have come across the latest American TV import. Called ‘Glee’, the series tells the story of a high school teacher as he attempts to restore the school’s Glee Club to its former glory, and in the process transforming a group of underdogs into a world-class vocal ensemble.

The ‘glee’ has a long and honourable tradition. The name comes from the Old English ‘gleo’ and has nothing to do with happiness. It means play, music or entertainment, and occurs in *Beowulf* in the sense of ‘melody’. Originally the glee was an English part-song for three or more voices, usually sung a cappella, and was popular in the 18th and early 19th centuries. It may be light-hearted or serious, and usually consists of a number of short,

musically contrasted movements. However, unlike the bawdy ‘catches’ of the late 15th century, the respectable and artistic character of the glee made them appropriate for female company, and whilst they began as exclusively male voice, over time ladies were included in their performance.

The earliest known ‘glee’ so described was *Turn, Amaryllis, to thy Swain* by the 17th century composer Thomas Brewer, which featured in John Playford’s *Musical Companion*. However, the heyday of the glee was between 1750 and 1850, when it was a favourite for amateur music-making and clubs, with prizes and medals on offer for the best compositions. Indeed, it is estimated that around 10,000 glees were composed during this period.

The first Glee Club was founded in Harrow School in 1787, and soon clubs sprang up all

over the country. Musical tastes changed however, and by the mid 1800s, the glee had been overtaken by the romantic part-song, and glee clubs superseded by choral societies. In the USA however the activity and the name were taken up by universities, with Harvard Glee Club founded in 1858, and many collegiate ensembles still retaining their original name.

So, does anyone fancy composing a glee for St George’s? Something we can memorize and sing on tour perhaps? We might even rustle up a prize for the best composition!



The cast of Glee modeling St George’s Singers’ new concert outfit

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Marcus was among dozens, many from the Conservatoires, who auditioned. Like Glyndebourne, the cast rehearse in residence for several weeks. This fosters a close ensemble approach infinitely more artistically valuable than the international opera houses where the divas fly in on the morning of the first night and tell the Director how they do it.

Dandini, a part invented by Rossini, shifts the work from magical fantasy towards psychological drama. It is a gift of a part for a performer with Marcus’ comic talents. The Prince instructs his valet to swap roles with him so that he can find his true love without her knowing he is a Prince.

Marcus grasped the opportunities provided with enthusiasm as he enjoyed the wooing of the sisters (certainly not ugly in this version) and put one over on his boss. Robert Beale in the Manchester Evening News, having described Marcus as “a proven success as a baritone singer”, felt that “he revealed a considerable gift as a stage performer (who) had the audience in the palm of his hand.”

Clonter provided a delightful evening, even if the picnic setting was not quite Glyndebourne. Let us hope that in future years Clonter goers will remark that the famous opera star, Marcus Farnsworth, appeared there in 2010.

Marcus having a quiet word with Cinderella’s dad

Photo: Courtesy of Pauline Nield



VISIONS OF ALBION—CONCERT PREVIEW



Sir Hubert Parry

Visions of Albion
Saturday 13 November, 7.30 pm
St George's Church, Poynton

Parry: *Songs of Farewell*

Holst: *Two Psalms*

Vaughan Williams: *Mass in G minor*

Finzi: *Magnificat, Lo, the full, final sacrifice*



Vaughan Williams in 1917

St George's Singers first concert of the new season, 'Visions of Albion', takes place on Saturday 13 November, with a programme of music that reflects the revival in English music that occurred in the first half of the 20th century, often referred to as the 'English Renaissance'. A new generation of composers turned away from the legacy of the classical German tradition, and embraced a greater freedom of expression, seeking inspiration in the re-discovered treasury of English Tudor music whose rhythms allowed each voice to follow independently the natural inflections of the words, lending meaning and nuance to the glorious poetry and prose of England.

Undoubtedly the First World War lent momentum to this search for the 'voice of England'. So, it is fitting that the concert takes place on the day before Remembrance Sunday, and not surprising that much of the music we will be singing reverberates with the echoes of war.

Sir Hubert Parry, 66 when the First World War broke out, was devastated by it. Many of his former students marched away to the trenches, some never to return. The agony was made worse for Parry, who felt deeply betrayed by the German nation whose great legacy of music had formed the wellspring of his inspiration. It was against this background that the *Songs of Farewell* were composed.

One of Parry's pupils, Ralph Vaughan Williams, volunteered

for the Field Ambulance Service in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) in 1914. He was posted to Flanders and then Greece, and in 1917 he was commissioned in the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was deeply affected by the carnage and the loss of close friends such as the composer George Butterworth. After hostilities ceased in November 1918, he became



Gerald Finzi

Director of Music of the 1st Army British Expeditionary Force in France, and on his return to England he was appointed Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music. It is a tribute to his spirit that by the early 1920's he was writing uplifting and unquestionably English music such as the *Mass in G minor*.

His good friend Gustav Holst had a very different war-time experience. Holst had just completed *Mars* from his *Planets* suite when war broke out, and although he volunteered for military service at once, he was turned down on health grounds.

With anti-German feeling running high, he came under suspicion from his neighbours (the family name was originally 'Von Holst' which he subsequently changed by deed poll), but following a police investigation he was cleared of being a German agent.



Gustav Holst

Gerald Finzi had been only 13 when the first war began, but he was still affected by its tragedies. His family settled in Harrogate and Gerald began to study music at Christ Church, High Harrogate under Ernest Farrar — whose death at the Western Front

affected the young Finzi deeply. He also lost three of his brothers, and these adversities contributed to Finzi's bleak outlook on life. His burgeoning career was thwarted by the outbreak of the Second World War, causing the cancellation of his song-cycle *Dies Natalis* at the Three Choirs Festival. It was a performance that could have brought him to prominence sooner. Instead, he spent the war in the Ministry of War Transport, and opened his house in Hampshire to German and Czech refugees. His masterpiece, *Lo, the full final sacrifice*, was written in 1952. The text



was taken from a meditation on Christ's ultimate sacrifice for mankind. The agnostic Finzi surely also had in mind the personal sacrifices that his fellow men had endured through the century's two tragic wars.

THE CHURCH THAT PARRY BUILT

Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry will for ever have an honoured place in the history of English music, and choral music in particular. But few people know of the role his father played in building one of the great churches of the Victoria era.

Hubert's father, Thomas Gambier Parry, was an accomplished musician, artist and art collector. He decorated St Andrew's Chapel in Gloucester Cathedral, the nave ceiling in Tewkesbury Abbey and the nave and lantern ceiling in Ely Cathedral. He was also an influential figure in the Three Choirs Festival.

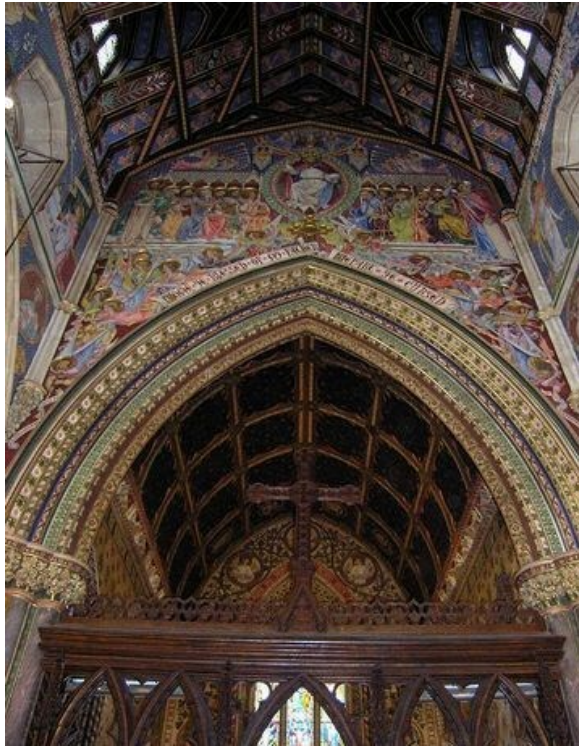
Highnam Court in Gloucestershire was the family home, and had been bought by Thomas in 1838. Originally built in 1658 to replace one severely damaged in the Civil War, it is one of the few houses built during the Common-



Floor tiles in the church

wealth period. The building of a church at Highnam was a long-held ambition for Parry and his beloved wife Isabella. Three of their children had died in infancy, then in 1848 Isabella herself died just twelve days after giving birth to their sixth

child, Hubert. Thomas, diverting himself from his grief, resolved to set about realising the dream they had shared, and



The Doom (Last Judgement) painting in Highnam Church

work on the church, called Holy Innocents in memory of his dead children, began in 1849.

Thomas Parry was one of the founders of the Anglo-Catholic movement which eventually became the 'Oxford Movement'. He sought to recreate in Highnam a 'golden age' of the English church when the buildings were themselves things of beauty. And beautiful it is. Every inch of the interior is painted, the windows furnished with intensely coloured stained glass, the floor tiles decorated with exquisite patterns. Thomas himself painted all the frescos, harking back to mediaeval concepts in terms of subject matter, but seen through the eyes of a 'modern' Victorian.

Thomas' son, Hubert, knew the church intimately. The church organist Edward Brind gave Hubert his first lessons on the piano, and taught him to play the Nicholson organ—which still stands in the church following restoration.

It is tempting to think that Parry in composing the fifth of his *Songs of Farewell*—a setting of one of John Donne's *Divine Meditations* on the Last Judgement—had in mind his father's great 'Doom' painting, which dominates the nave of the church.

Highnam is just a few miles outside Gloucester. So if anyone has spare time during our tour of Elgar country next May, a visit to Parry's church may be worth considering.



The Church of the Holy Innocents at Highnam and its beautiful spire, seen from the gardens of Highnam Court



One of the paintings covering the church interior

Highnam Church was described by Sir John Betjeman as "the most complete Victorian church in this country".

Highnam Court



GLASTONBURY OR GLYNDEBOURNE?



It was George Bernard Shaw who first described the English and the Americans as two countries divided by a common language. The same could be said of musicians. In theory the language of rock musicians and classical musicians is the same: in practice they speak a totally different tongue.

Here's a quick guide to help you bridge the language barrier.



Classical-speak	Rock-speak
Aeolion mode	Natural minor scale
Cadences	Changes
Cadenza	Solo
Concert	Gig
Crotchets	4s
Down beat	The 'one'
Ensemble	Band
Forte	Loud
Fortissimo	Very loud
Glissando	Slide
Minims	2s
Modulation	Key change
Ostinato	Riff
Pianissimo	What?
Piano	Fairly loud
Polyrhythm	Groove
Programme	Set list
Quavers	8s
Score	Chart
Semiquavers	16s
Tutti	Full band

THE ORIGINS OF ALBION

Where does the title of our concert 'Visions of Albion' come from? Most people will probably know that 'Albion' is a poetical name for England or Britain, but what are its origins?

Albion is the oldest known name of the island of Great Britain, and in the canon of English poetry refers to a land of mythical beauty, peace and plenty. It is thought to derive from the Gallo-Latin word

Albion, which shares the same stem as the Welsh *elfydd* (earth, world), as well as the *Alps*. The Latin word *alba* means white, and is surmised to refer to the white cliffs of Dover, which would have been the island's most distinctive geological feature for any passing invader, trader or traveller on the prehistoric grand tour.

The name *Albion* was used for these islands long before it was known as *Britannia*. An anonymous 6th century BC writer speaks of the 'islands of the *Ierni* (Irish) and the *Albionnes* (English)', and by the 1st century AD *Ierne* and *Albion* together are regarded as forming the *Britannia* Isles.

The myths of Albion also stretch back into time. The 12th century 'historian' Geoffrey of Monmouth described how Brutus of Troy and his companions set sail for the promised island of Albion, a land inhabited by giants, but which was such a pleasant and fruitful country that Brutus was impelled to settle, defeating the giants, and renaming it after himself.

The idea of Albion however is most often associated with the mystic poet William Blake who created an entire mythology about Albion, whom he portrayed as the embodiment of man, of Britain, or even the western world as a whole.

So, for a concert that celebrates the revival of English music, the title is just right.



VIEW FROM THE ORGAN LOFT— INTERVIEW WITH JEFF MAKINSON

Why the organ?

I learnt the piano from age 6, and soon after I became a chorister at St Ann's Church in Manchester. Ronald Frost (the organist at St Ann's) offered to teach me the organ. I subsequently became organ scholar at St Ann's and went on to study at the RNCM. But it wasn't until I became organ scholar at York Minster that I really got the church music bug. The organ is a highly versatile instrument with great range of tonal colour. It's ideal as an accompanimental instrument, particularly of the Anglican repertoire. The psalms are full of descriptive imagery and the organist can colour the text. Every organ is different, and so is the experience of playing them. It's not just the instrument - it's also the building. Kings College Cambridge has a great organ, and the chapel acoustic is wonderful. Of course, it's a privilege to play in a place of such awesome musical heritage.

Your favourite composer?

Johann Sebastian Bach—the greatest musical genius. One of my ambitions is to play in Leipzig.

Have there been any awful things happen in performance?

Nothing really disastrous, but there are all sorts of things that can go wrong – you have to try to be at least one step ahead. The instrument can cipher (the pipe just keeps sounding) – there's often nothing you can do about it as a player. And many organs are housed in cold, damp buildings – not ideal for sensitive mechanisms.

You seemed to have problems with the organist in Prague!

Some organists can be very protective and territorial – particularly on the continent. The guy in Prague wasn't too bad – I think he was just trying to be helpful. But in Budapest a few

years ago, the cathedral organist wouldn't let me near the instrument. Geoff Taylor, Stephen Williams and I spent ages persuading him to let me play!

What's the most difficult organ piece you've had to play?

O Magnum Mysterium by Peter Maxwell Davies. It's an unaccompanied choral work which finishes with an extended organ fantasia. The rhythms are enormously complex with no patterns or sequences, so the player has to learn it note by note. It took me most of the whole of one summer to learn it for a concert at the RNCM – the piece only lasts a few minutes!

You're currently Sub Organist at Manchester Cathedral.

What's next?

My ambition in terms of cathedral music is to become a Director of Music. But there are only so many of those jobs around! I was born in Manchester, grew up in Sale, spent four years at RNCM before going to York Minster in 1992, then onto Lincoln Cathedral. In 1999 I moved back to Manchester and I'm very happy here. Musically it's a rich and vibrant city, with a great diversity of musical groups. We're currently planning for a wonderful new cathedral organ. I enjoy teaching, particularly at the RNCM and I'm keen to do more piano accompaniment – which I love.

What about your solo career?

I'd like to play more solo recitals but it can be difficult finding the time away from the cathedral. I'm very keen to go to Denmark, where there are some fine organ builders at work. Also Norway, Sweden and Iceland are on the list! And France is full of great instruments. I'm also keen to become an examiner for the Associated Board. It's a really tough process to get accredited, and you have to be very versatile. They won't just take me on to

do organ exams – I'll have to master every instrument and voice.

Do you enjoy conducting?

Even though you're appointed as Cathedral Organist you actually spend more time in front of the choir. I wasn't trained in conducting but I grew into it and now really enjoy it. I would like to form my own madrigal group, probably using very good students. This could be inside or outside the cathedral. I already direct the Cathedral Voluntary Choir, a mixed choir of around 30 people, and which is doing really well.

Are cathedrals being affected by the cuts?

Cathedrals are all feeling the pinch, not just financially but because of the increasing secularisation of society. It's a massive commitment for a youngster to become a chorister, particularly if the cathedral insists on the child becoming a boarder. Children really have to want to do it and need the full support of their parents. At Manchester we currently have 12 choristers, and we aim for 18 or so. Intake levels seem to vary year to year. We are also competing with other fine children's choirs in the area such as the Hallé Youth Choir. Children may find it more alluring to join something like that, and sing with a big orchestra in a lavish concert hall, than to join a Cathedral choir.

Is it to do with the repertoire?

The repertoire is rich and varied, and choristers have the opportunity of singing some of the finest pieces – *Messiah*, the



Jeff playing for St George's Singers in Nymburk on tour to Prague, May 2010

Bach *Passions* and Duruflé *Requiem*, for example. I do believe that it's the greatest musical education a child can have. They learn great works and perform them to the highest standards week after week – of course, within a theological context. Most cathedral choirs have a large repertoire – many pieces very often don't repeat within a yearly cycle.

Isn't it sometimes tedious for you, playing the odd few notes at rehearsal?

I like being the Accompanist for St George's very much. It's great playing these wonderful works. And it's fantastic working with such a friendly group. It's also one of the best organised groups I've ever worked with – it all ticks along like a BMW engine! And I enjoy working with Neil very much. I especially love choir tours – it's a great way to get to know people.

What about hobbies?

The usual – reading, walking, cinema, travel. I listen to a wide range of music and I love comedy. I'm also very interested in politics and architecture. My favourite TV programmes include 'Have I Got News For You', 'The Thick of It' and 'Question Time'.

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS



Welcome to some new members of St George's Singers : Joy Metcalfe joins the altos, and Hilary Nicholls the tenors. We hope you enjoy many years singing with us.

Commiserations to some of our sick friends. Following Geoff

Taylor's enforced tour of duty with the crutches, Mark Warrington is now in exactly the same position. (Choir taxi rota being drawn up as we print!)

And get well soon messages to Marie Wharmby—hope you'll be back with us soon.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Bill Golightly. Bill sang with us for a number of years and was a steady presence in the basses. Our thoughts are with his family.



Sylvia at her potter's wheel

THE SINGING POTTER BY SYLVIA GLOVER

That sounded like a really neat name for my website... until on our way south from a visit to Ted's mum in Scotland we called at Moffat for lunch and saw... yes, a shop called "The Singing Potter". Fairly dodgy singing (I didn't realise it was actually possible to *croon* Gospel music) and equally dodgy pots. Ah well - just my name it had to be, then.

Clay is something that has worked its way gradually into my life. (And my skin, clothes, washing machine, carpets...) In Cardiff in the '90s, when I was a sharp-suited, high-heeled, scarily efficient IT manager (I kid you not!), pottery evening classes offered a wonderfully relaxing contrast to the artificial world of computers and financial services. In 2002, during six months of art therapy after what

people used to call a nervous breakdown, it became a path back to some semblance of normality. When I started an art and design foundation course at Stockport College in 2003, I had ideas of becoming a graphic artist and learning about web design - but then the ceramics rotation started and the clay penetrated a little deeper. When I went on to do a degree in Three Dimensional

Design the idea was to combine glass blowing with ceramics, but glass lasted all of three weeks... Clay had worked its way right into my heart and there it has stayed. I set up a studio in a log cabin at the bottom of the garden, invested in a kiln, a wheel, clays, feldspars, oxides, scales, sieves, boards, buckets and bowls, and lo and behold - I was "A Potter"!

Now clay is my work and play; a source of stress and the ideal therapy; my daily grind and my ultimate relaxation. The nicest thing anyone can say to me is "I love using your pots". I am hooked.

I'm told I'm the worst kind of addict: a pusher too. Many people who have lived their lives blissfully unaware of its power have been sucked in... by me and my clay. (Gwyneth, I apologise now. But maybe your life won't be changed by just one pot - perhaps it works like the vampire's third bite?)

I love to teach - especially throwing, because of the look

of wonder on people's faces as the clay comes to life in their hands. Something I am privileged to do occasionally these days is to teach on the same art therapy course that rebuilt my life. What a way to give something back! And to see the blank, dull mask of depression soften into first mild interest, then focus, enjoyment and finally pride is very special. (Oh, and selling pots is a bit of a buzz too!)

They say every cloud has a silver lining. Mine turned out to have a muddy lining, and I love it!



See more of Sylvia's work at www.sylviaglover.co.uk

Watching Sylvia at her potter's wheel at the Cheshire Open Studios event in September brought back memories of the 1950's BBC Interlude, mesmerising to watch as the clay took and changed shape. And now I could have a try! It had all looked so easy but the clay had a mind of its own. I almost gave up but with Sylvia's gentle tuition something which looked like a pot eventually took shape. I hoped I hadn't wasted her clay - that when I had gone she would reuse it. But two weeks later there was the pot for me at choir all glazed and fired! - you can even see the thumb-print on it and should it ever find its way onto the Antiques Road Show there's a name and a date at the bottom! - Gwyneth Pailin



JAZZ PSALM SUNDAY BY DAVE FRANCIS

On a Sunday in August three members of St George's Singers, Susan Hodgson and Anne and Dave Francis, took part in a choral concert at Gloucester Cathedral.

The concert was part of 'Three Choirs Plus', the fringe programme of the Three Choirs Festival. We sang in a choir of nearly 200 singers, assembled from all over the country by Three Choirs Plus organisers Brian and Alison Ley to perform a new work by composer Scott Stroman.

The 'Jazz Psalm Sunday' choir was a mix of singers from different choral backgrounds. As well as traditional choristers like ourselves, used to reading music and singing from a score, many of the choir came from community choirs and were 'aural learners', used to singing entirely from memory.

This proved to be an advantage, since at the very first rehearsal Scott announced that the whole concert was to be performed without music. Not only that, but we were going to move to the rhythm. This all came as a bit of a shock, as you can imagine. But in for a penny, etc.

The rehearsals took place in Gloucester on three Saturdays in May, June and July. Then on the final weekend of the festival the choir met for two days prior to the concert on Sunday evening.

The big attraction for us was the opportunity to sing choral jazz. Following our SGS experience of singing works by Duke Ellington and Will Todd, the chance to perform a brand new jazz choral piece was too good to pass up.

Scott Stroman is a professional jazz musician and Professor of

Jazz Studies at the Guildhall School of Music. He is also an experienced choral conductor and conducts his own choir, Eclectic Voices.



The amazing line up of jazz greats in rehearsal, including the legendary Henry Lowther on trumpet

The new work, 'Jazz Psalms', consisted of settings of six texts drawn from various psalms, scored for choir and nine piece jazz band. The piece lasted about 45 minutes and formed the second half of the concert. In the first half we performed Scott's arrangements of six spirituals and gospel songs.

How did the concert go? Well, the joint was rockin', as they say! The joint, in this instance, being the hallowed precincts of one of England's oldest and finest Cathedrals.

It also helped that the band included some of the best jazz musicians in the country, including the legendary Henry Lowther on trumpet.

It was tremendously exciting music to sing. The challenge of performing an entire concert from memory was very scary, but we managed it, just!

It made me realise that this kind of music really has to be performed this way to capture its essential dynamism and spontaneity. As Scott emphasised repeatedly, it cannot be performed standing still. So we moved, stamped and clapped our hands. Hard to do that while holding a score!

The Jazz Psalms is a terrific piece, as I hope St George's Singers will get a chance to find out before too long. Get on your dancing shoes!



Composer and conductor Scott Stroman

Henry Lowther is a trumpet player of formidable talent with no superiors amongst European jazzmen, and precious few anywhere. Unusually for a jazz musician, he is also engaged frequently as a classical trumpeter by major symphony orchestras and has recorded with Simon Rattle and the London Sinfonietta.

Scott Stroman, the band and the Three Choirs Plus chorus in rehearsal in Gloucester Cathedral



ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS



TWITTER FACTS

The definition of 'twitter':
to utter a succession of light chirping
or tremulous sounds

41% of all 'tweets' are categorized as
pointless babble, 38% conversational,
9% have 'pass along value', 6% are pure
self promotion, 4% are spam,
and 4% proper news.

As of June 2010, about 65 million
tweets are posted each day, or about
750 tweets each second

The second most common word found in
tweets (after 'the') is 'I'

St George's Singers now has a Facebook page, and a Twitter feed. (Er, what?)

Twitter is a 'social networking' website which enables its users to send and read other users' messages, called *tweets*. Anyone who sets up an account can publish short tweets (no more than 140 characters) on their profile page. Anyone who wants to 'follow' them then receive these tweets either via their own Twitter page, or (if they choose to do so) on their mobile phones.

Social networking sites like this are great for disseminating news and information about events, so we thought St George's should take advantage of any opportunity to spread the word about our fantastic concerts and other events.

Existing Twitterers (or is that Tweeters?) can find us at <https://twitter.com/stgeorgesingers>.

If you're not already registered with Twitter, log on to <http://twitter.com> and create an account. There is no charge and it's fast and easy to set up.

Once you're registered with Twitter, go to the St George's Singers' page and click on the button to become a 'follower'. Any messages put out by St George's will then go directly to your own twitter page.

So, have a look at our Twitter page and let's create some buzz around this season's concerts—especially the *St John Passion*. If you are a Facebook user, you can join the group 'St George's Singers Past and Present' by going to <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5956959470>.

A big thank you to Mel Rimmer (beansproutblog!) for setting this up for us.

Just spotted on YouTube (www.youtube.com), some handy tips for Neil and Calum:

Mr Bean conducts the Salvation Army Band (wonderful display of a genuine rapport between conductor and orchestra). Elsewhere **Rowan Atkinson** directs the orchestra in Beethoven's 5th Symphony.

We thought Jeff would appreciate the video of a lethally dangerous **organ in Augsburg** with a 128' register, as well as the **world's largest playable organ**, found on the 2nd floor of Macy's store in Philadelphia. It has more than 28,400 pipes, scattered throughout the store over seven floors. And he surely won't want to miss the version of **Ozzy Osbourne's Mr Crowley**, transcribed for church organ. (Perhaps something to consider for our next concert Jeff?)

HANGING AROUND FOR CHARITY



Unexpected item in the bagging area

On 26 September, our very own dare devil, Jenny Thomas, threw herself off the Devil's Gorge in Denbighshire—all in the cause of CLIC Sargent.

Jenny did two abseils down the Gorge: the 90ft slide and the 120ft overhang. Although style marks for her first attempt were low (the upside down technique is not recommended for beginners!) she clambered back up, and had another go. The second attempt was flawless, and Jenny made it to the bottom slowly but safely. By the time she got to the terrifying 120ft overhang, Jenny was clearly getting 'the hang' of it, and she

got down in one piece, with nothing more than a few aching muscles. More importantly, she raised over £400 in vital funds for children and young people with cancer.

Many thanks from Jenny to everyone who sponsored her—and many congratulations to her for being brave enough to tackle an event she didn't really enjoy, but was determined to complete for her charity.

It's not too late to contribute to Jen-

ny's valiant effort—just visit her fundraising page at <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JennyThomas>, where you can see a video of her ordeal.

OK—now what?



THE MORE YOU SPEND

New members to the Choir (as well as many of our Friends and supporters) may not know that St George's Singers has its very own charity shop—and that we can raise money for the Choir simply by buying online.

The shop can be entered from the Choir website (go to 'Online Shopping' on the left hand menu of the home page) which takes you through to the SGS Buy At website. There are over 150 shops to choose from, including high street favourites (Marks & Spencer, Thorntons, Tesco, John Lewis, HMV, Waterstones), plus online shops such as Amazon, Play.com, Boden, Love Film and dozens more.

New arrivals include fair trade and ethical merchants Natural Collection and Ethical Superstore, as well as other charity outlets such as Oxfam. In fact, you can find almost anything here—from adventure holidays to lemon zesters.

The really important thing though is that by buying through our shop you can earn money for the Choir in commission. Every purchase made attracts a commission which is paid directly to the Choir. (We don't of course know who has bought what—we just get a cheque every few months!)

The size of the commission varies with the merchant; it's usually around 5-6% but can be as much as 15% of the sale price. And there are always special offers available, which are updated regularly on the website. You pay no more than you would normally—but St George's gets an enormous benefit.

How much have we raised so far? Over the last couple of years we've raised nearly £170. This has come from 140 individual sales, representing £6,121 in purchases.

The most popular shops with Choir members are Amazon

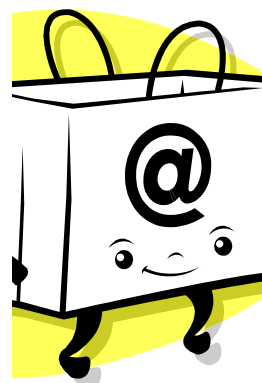
(31% of all sales), followed by Waterstones (23%), HMV (15%) and M&S (14%).

Whilst it doesn't sound like a lot of money, think about this. If only half the members of the choir spent £20 with the shop on items they were going to buy anyway, and earned 5% commission on the sale, we'd earn £50—without trying!

Now is the perfect time to try out the shop, as you start thinking about Christmas shopping. Cards, presents, wrapping paper, decorations, turkeys, puddings—it's all there.

Visit www.st-georges-singers.org.uk and click on 'Online Shopping', or go directly to the website at www.buy.at/sgsonline.

Happy shopping—and help our fund raising at the same time!



On 8th December last Christmas, UK online shoppers spent £1.4 million in just one minute—the busiest ever day for internet sales in the UK.

MUSIC A GO-GO BY GWYNETH PAILIN

Twenty four hours to go to a concert and the conductor is taken ill—an agency supplies a replacement, but he doesn't know the Lauridsen *Lux Aeterna*. A traumatic time for the choir and a steep learning curve for one young man (who apparently excelled himself).

Just one piece of news from one of the twenty choirs who have borrowed music from us this year. From another choir, an apology and two new copies of the Lauridsen—some unforgeable sinning with a highlighter pen there! That work is

still the most wanted, and is the first one we have sent across the sea (Irish, that is!) Now *Les Chansons des Roses* is becoming better known, and we have supplied copies to two choirs.

And then there's the Ellington—down to the Endellion festival in Cornwall (one of the performers was our old friend Andy Williamson, who played in the Ellington *Sacred Concert* with us at Manchester Cathedral), then on to London, and almost across the Atlantic to Florida—until they discovered the cost of the postage. The

largest consignment to go out has been the Bruckner *Motets*, there's been a *Cloudburst* in Edinburgh, and two choirs borrowed Wood's *St Mark Passion* (anyone remember that?)

The local Post Office continues with friendly advice on best ways to send the music—it was great to see one of them at the Learn to Sing course!

Steven Spielberg was discussing his new project - an action docudrama about famous composers starring Sylvester Stallone, Steven Seagal, Bruce Willis and Arnie Schwarzenegger. "Well," started Stallone, "I've always admired Mozart. I would love to play him." "Chopin has always been my favourite, and my image would improve if people saw me playing the piano," said Willis. "I've always been partial to Strauss and his waltzes," said Seagal. "I'd like to play him." Spielberg was delighted. "Sounds splendid." Then, looking at Schwarzenegger, he asked, "Who do you want to be, Arnold?" So Arnold says, "I'll be Bach."

St George's Singers

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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.

SINGING DAY—HAYDN'S *NELSON MASS*

ST GEORGE'S CONCERT DIARY
Saturday 4 December, 7.30 pm
Carols and Brass by Candlelight
St George's Church, Stockport

Saturday 15 January 2011
Singing Day—*Nelson Mass*
St George's Church, Poynton

Tuesday 19 April 2011, 7.30 pm
Bach *St John Passion*
Bridgewater Hall

Saturday 25 June 2011, 7.30 pm
Eastern Voices
Gorton Monastery

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

St George's Singers' 2011 Singing Day this year features the ever popular *Nelson Mass* by Haydn.

Written in a mere 53 days during July and August 1798, the work reflects the political and economic turmoil caused by the Napoleonic wars raging throughout Europe. (Plus ça change) It was originally called *Missa in angustis* (*Mass in straightened times*), but gained its nickname two years later when Admiral Nelson, feted throughout Europe as the scourge of Napoleon, visited Haydn's patron, Prince Esterhazy in Austria.



One of a number of choral masterpieces stemming from Haydn's last years, the *Nelson Mass* combined drama, sophistication, intricate musical

development and thrilling choruses. Just the thing to cheer us up on a cold January day!

The day ends with a concert performance of the work, and this year we're delighted to welcome a wonderful quartet of soloists in Rebecca Lea, Rebecca Anderson, Richard Dowling and David Hansford.

As usual, our Musical Director Neil Taylor will be working us all hard during the day, and giving us invaluable tuition in choral technique.

For more information, download the Singing Day brochure from our website, or contact Gillian Banks on 01925 213949.

The cost for the day is £20, including music hire, tea and coffee. We also provide delicious home-made soup, sandwiches and cakes to buy for lunch and afternoon tea—so you don't even have to bring a packed lunch with you.

Registration on the day begins at 9.30 am, and the evening concert is at 6.00 pm.