



Hemiola

St George's Singers

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ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

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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

BACK TO THE BRIDGEWATER

The home of St George's Singers is the parish church of that name in Poynton, a lovely, welcoming space in which to sing, but which has room for only about 200 audience members. So for many years, we have been 'peripatetic', performing in different venues around the Manchester area. In many ways this is an advantage: we can choose the venue to suit the music we are performing. Thus, Gorton Monastery was absolutely the right place to present Rachmaninov's *Vespers*; the Cathedral lent itself superbly to the sacred music of Gabrieli and Schütz; and St George's Church in Stockport provides the family ambience for our traditional carol concert.

This year we return to the Bridgewater Hall, perhaps the most exciting of all our venues, for Bach's *St John Passion*. No-where else in Manchester enables us to present this seminal

work to such a large audience, and with such an amazing line up of soloists. However, hiring world-class venues, soloists and orchestras does not come cheap, and we do not take on events like this without careful consideration, budgeting and planning, or without many sleepless nights!

Our 19th April *St John Passion* is different. For the first time, we

marketing team, a seriously passionate and dedicated chorus, and a commitment to choral and performance excellence. According to Manus Carey, Head of Artistic Planning at the Camerata, "We have a relationship with St George's Singers going back many years, and it's very exciting that we have the opportunity to collaborate once again at the Bridgewater Hall

for this great, central work in the repertoire."

Perhaps in the current economic climate, with budget cuts dominating the headlines,

working in partnership with others will become an important strategy in allowing music groups of all kinds to continue to put on rewarding and stimulating programmes in venues worthy of staging them.

I hope you enjoy the result of this very special partnership on 19th April.

- Anne Francis



Tuesday 19th April, 7.30 pm

**Bridgewater Hall
with**

St George's Singers

Manchester Camerata

conductor Nicholas Kraemer

Soloists:

Julia Doyle, Clare Wilkinson,

Andrew Staples, Mark Stone,

Matthew Hargreaves

**Tickets: £9 to £34, discounts
for concessions and groups**

Tel: 0161 907 9000

www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk

ST JOHN PASSION— THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHANN SEBASTIAN

Martin Luther believed that profound contemplation of the sufferings of Christ in his trial and death was the only way to experience God, and the only route to faith. The passion (suffering) of Christ thus became a central theme in the devotional art of the German Baroque, in passion plays such as that from Oberammergau, and the rich musical tradition of passion settings for the Good Friday liturgy. This tradition reached its zenith in the music of Bach.

In 1723 Bach moved to Leipzig, to take up the post of Cantor of the Thomasschule, the school attached to St Thomas' church. As well as teaching music and Latin to the 50 or 60 boys at the school, Bach was responsible for the music at four Leipzig churches: St Thomas, St Nicholas, St Peter and St Matthew. His musical forces included the schoolboys (divided into his principal choir and three less talented), a few professional musicians, and some university students.

Bach spent most of Lent in 1724 preparing for the biggest musical occasion of the year, the passion service at Good Friday Vespers. Sung passion settings are an ancient tradition in Christian liturgy. There are accounts of visitors attending them in Jerusalem in the 4th century AD, but they were only introduced to Leipzig by Kuhnau, Bach's immediate predecessor in 1721. The central element of the passion was a musical setting of one of the gospel accounts, plus chorales (Lutheran hymns). Arias and choruses employing non-biblical texts would also be incorporated. The congrega-

tion would therefore have been used to hearing music in modern styles alongside traditional hymns and recitations. What they would not have been accustomed to would have been the supremely inventive, expressive harmonisations of the hymn tunes, the virtuosity demanded of singers and orchestras, and the highly dramatic musical setting of the gospel text, as interpreted by Bach.

Although the gospel accounts of the crucifixion are unchanging, interpretations of their meanings are far more diverse. Bach does not change the text of John's gospel, but does add two dramatic episodes from Matthew—Peter weeping after he hears the cock crow thrice, and the veil of the temple being torn in two after Jesus' death. He also inserts extra texts in the form of chorales and arias, providing points of reflection and challenging the congregation to respond personally.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the work is the ingenious, palindromic structure. The work is flanked by two massive choruses, the first a complex and compelling invocation, the last a sweet graveside parting. Within this framework Bach arranges musically similar choruses symmetrically around a central chorale, 'Durch dein Gefängnis'—'through thy prison'. Nine choral movements, the last four mirroring the first four, revolve around the pivotal point of the drama, the height of the psychological conflict, when Pilate search-

es for a way to release Christ while the high priests (the chorus) scream for his death.

Throughout the work Bach pairs off choral movements that share similar texts or sentiments. The soldiers mockingly hail the King of the Jews to the same music as the priests demanding that Pilate does not write 'King of the Jews'. More ironically, the same chorale tune contemplates Peter's denial of his master ('Petrus der nicht denkt'), and then Jesus providing for his mother ('er nahm alles').

There is no record of the reaction of the first audience in 1724, but they must have realized how extraordinary the composition is. Whether heard as a dramatic story of human emotion, a theological exposition, a challenge to improve one's life, or a masterpiece of musical invention, it still grips the audience 300 years later.

Bach's manuscript of the *St John Passion*



St Nicholas Church, Leipzig—venue of the first performance

When eminent biologist and author Lewis Thomas was asked what music he would send from Earth into outer space on the Voyager spacecraft, he replied, "I would send the complete works of Johann Sebastian Bach." After a pause he added, "But that would be boasting".

INTERVIEW WITH NICHOLAS KRAEMER

What does the St John Passion mean to you as a musician?

It's a piece that has grown on me over the years. It used to be a tougher prospect than the *St Matthew Passion* because that is a much richer work, full of famous and beautiful obligato arias which you come away singing. In the *St John* the arias are few and far between, and it has a much more austere feel. You don't have as many moments of repose and contemplation. But what you do have is a much more tangible dramatic momentum, with a real sense that the crowd (ie the chorus) are ever present. You cannot escape being drawn into the drama, and you do really feel you are going through it with them. In the *St Matthew* the action is being interrupted much more often. It is more leisurely. There is always a moment in the second half where people just go to sleep! There is nothing you can do about it – everything just slows down. Nothing slows down in the *St John*. There is an absolute sense of urgency about what can be done to change the situation, that maybe this time something different happens.

Have you performed or conducted the St John often?

You don't get to do Passions that often. Half a dozen to ten times I suppose. I came to it late in life and I'm quite glad, as it really needs learning. Conducting the *St John* is a very rich experience because I'm discovering things all the time. I'm forever looking at the chorales and seeing how much relevance they have to what is going on around them. The challenge for the conductor is to keep the drama moving. The chorales are considered moments of reflection and people tend to think 'well, here's a chorale - we can relax.' But in fact they are an integral part of what's going on, reflecting

either on what has happened or what is to come. Even though they seem to stop the drama, in fact they actually thrust the drama forward, albeit in a very straightforward musical way. In Bach's day, of course, everyone would have known the chorales and joined in with them. Even if modern audiences don't join in, there is still a feeling of audience participation. Many of the tunes are hymns that anyone who has ever been to church will know.

Have you worked with St George's Singers before?

No, never and I'm looking forward immensely to our rehearsal in a couple of weeks' time. The choir shapes the performance hugely. Almost immediately they are out for Jesus' blood. You think there are all these nice people singing in the chorus, but they can't be nice people at all for most of the time. They have to put on a persona which is pretty vile.

How would you pitch this concert to the potential audience?

I would tell them it's an absolute must. For one thing, you have a wonderful line-up of soloists—really seasoned singers full of integrity. Then, we are not going to be singing this like an oratorio, with the soloists just standing and singing to the front. There will be a certain amount of moving about. I can't say it's semi-staged, but the soloists will be as much 'off the book' as possible, and there will be an element of relationship between the characters. The whole trial scene of Pilate and Jesus has to be done facing each other, a court room scene with one in the dock and the other in judgement. Peter Sellars, the great American director, has fully staged the *St John* in a concert hall with the Berlin Philharmonic. We won't be doing that, but the singers will want it to be as dramatic and vivid as possible.



I've read that Bach kept tinkering with the St John?

Yes, he made big changes. He borrowed the original opening chorus of the *St John* to close Part One of the *St Matthew*. But then he probably thought the *St John* deserved a new start - and what a start! The opening chorus is just stunning, with so much depth that in fact I think it rivals the opening of the *St Matthew*. It's stirring as well as disturbing with the oboes clashing harmonically against each other, and some extraordinary turbulent string writing underneath.

How would it have been regarded at the time?

Well, Bach was no pop star. The pop star was Telemann, the famous, well-travelled composer, who turned down the Leipzig job. Then someone else turned it down, so the Town Council offered the job to old Bach at Cöthen as 'second best'. Sitting in on the first performance, there would probably have been a bit of a buzz amongst the congregation (and I do call it that) but I don't think people would have made the journey from Cöthen to Leipzig to see old Bach present his new work at Easter. After all, it was a devotional work, and so people would not have "enjoyed" it as such. They would have been going through it with Christ - this is after all the purpose of the work. The fact that there is some unforgettable music in it was a bonus!

Nicholas Kraemer - equally at home in front of modern and period orchestras. He began his career as a harpsichordist, and now enjoys a busy schedule conducting throughout Europe, North America and Japan. As well as being Permanent Guest Conductor of Manchester Camerata he is also Principal Guest Conductor of Music of the Baroque, Chicago.

“You cannot escape being drawn into the drama ... you do really feel you are going through it with them.”

You can hear Nicholas Kraemer talk about this performance of the *St John Passion* on a special podcast on St George's Singers' website. Go to www.st-georges-singers.org.uk and follow the link on the home page



Our new President, Brigit Forsyth, gave some marvelously entertaining Christmas readings, including one she had written herself

“People ask why we travel to Poynton for a choral day; yesterday was the answer. It was well organised, the food was excellent, and the singing unforgettable. On behalf of the Hathersage people I would like to thank you and your Music Director for a wonderful day and long may they continue.”
- a *Singing Day* participant



Singing Day Coordinator, Gillian Banks, registering attendees at the 2011 Singing Day

TRIPLE CONCERT REVIEW

It was a busy couple of months for the Choir, with our autumn, Christmas and Singing Day concerts falling within a matter of weeks.

First up was ‘Visions of Albion’—English choral works from the first half of the 20th century. With last minute changes of seating plan to resolve sight line issues, major problems getting all the staging into the small space available in St George’s in Poynton (a big thank-you to

Alan Swain for his usual miracle working), the horror of the stage management team on the arrival of a behemoth of an organ that somehow had to be accommodated in the chancel, and colds and coughs striking most of the soloists in the run-up to concert day, this was never going to be an easy ride!

On the night, though, everything fell into place, and we gave a great recital of our English choral heritage, from Parry to Finzi via Vaughan Williams and Holst. We had all worked hard to master a very difficult programme, and Neil was particularly pleased with our performance of Parry’s *Songs of Farewell*. Congratulations especially to our soloists: Jo Bluck, Sylvia Glover, Jennie Smallwood, David Crossfield, Jonathan Gort, Jacqui Smith, Mike Mason, John Pears, and Paul Mummery. It says something about the strength of the choir that so many soloists for such

challenging works can be found from within its members. And we musn’t forget Darius Battiwalla who gave a virtuoso display with two enjoyable organ solos.

was our first concert with our new President, Brigit Forsyth, giving the readings, we were delighted to show her the strength of the loyal support we command—even in the face of blizzards.



OK people—just keep singing until the audience turns up

Then onto Christmas, and our traditional *Carols and Brass by Candlelight* at St George’s in Stockport. The organisation of this concert normally runs like a well-oiled machine. This time though we were nearly undone by the one thing we can’t control—the weather. With snow and ice making roads and pavements treacherous, we weren’t sure if we would actually have an audience big enough to consume all the mulled wine and mince pies. But St George’s Singers’ audiences are an intrepid bunch and turned out in force. As this

Finally, the Singing Day in January was another great success, with a choir of around 180 giving a tremendous account of Haydn’s *Nelson Mass*. With the sale of home-made soup, sandwiches and cakes, the event raised over £600 for the Choir—a big help towards the costs of the *St John Passion* in April.

Neil taking the soloists through their paces in rehearsal before the evening performance of Haydn’s *Nelson Mass* at the Singing Day



CONDUCTORS: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What's the definition of a conductor? A musician who is adept at following many people at the same time.

What's black and brown and looks good on a conductor? A Doberman.

What do all great conductors have in common? They're all dead.

What's the difference between God and a conductor? God knows He's not a conductor.

What's the definition of an assistant conductor? A mouse trying to become a rat.

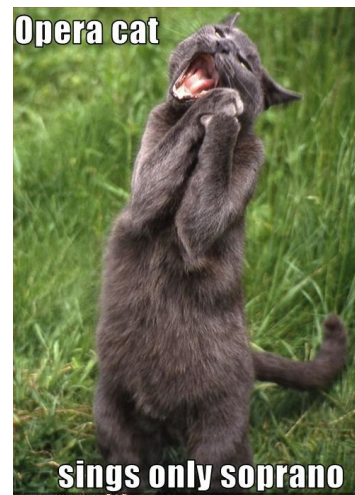
What do you have when a group of conductors are up to their necks in concrete? Not enough concrete.

What's the difference between a choral director and a chimpanzee? It's scientifically proven that chimps can communicate with humans.

A musician calls the symphony

office to talk to the conductor. "I'm sorry, he's dead", comes the reply. The musician calls back every day for a week, always getting the same reply. At last the receptionist asks him why he keeps calling. "I just like to hear you say it".

The Editor would like to make it clear that no reference to any real persons, living or dead, is intended, and apologises unreservedly for any offence caused. Really.



After some pretty dodgy top As from the sopranos, Neil decided to bring in an augmenter for the *St John*

MUSIC FOR THAT VERY SPECIAL DAY BY SUE TAYLOR

Give up even more time for St Georges!!? No, sorry Oh it's for a wedding is it? Well, OK.

Even recalcitrant tenors and world-weary basses give in if it's for such a happy event. The Cheshire Consort—St George's ad hoc group of mixed voices—has now sung at over a dozen weddings. The ceremonies have been extremely varied. We have sung at full-scale Nuptial Masses, elegant and trendy city centre do's, emotional services in country churches and a civil partnership at an airport hotel where we entertained the guests to Christmas carols!

It all began when I was asked to fix a choir for a church wedding where there was no resident choir or organist at the church. The response of the bride's family and friends was so positive—including a donation to SGS—that I agreed to give it a try.

Liaising with the bride (or her mother) can be very interesting, especially when I'm asked for "anything from *Les Misérables*....", "something from Katherine Jenkins' CD" or

memorably "the Sanctus from Bach's B Minor" because the father of the bride was bowled over when he heard us sing it in the Bridgewater Hall!

Our MD—previously Matthew Hamilton, now Calum Fraser—and our organists Tim Kennedy and Graham Eccles cope with whatever gets thrown at them with great good humour. On one occasion the bride asked for Lloyd Webber's *Pie Jesu* and was so moved she couldn't start up the aisle and we had to sing it again!!

Until the final arrangements are agreed nothing is fixed, and it's surprising how many weddings are cancelled or changed. One bride told me her fiancé had lost his job and she had to chose between the choir and the cake. Guess which one she picked!!

At the start of this venture I didn't realise how complicated it could be but thanks to the good will of the Singers it's always great to share in such a very special day in peoples' lives. And it's made money for St George's too!

The Cheshire Consort's 'Guide to Choosing your Wedding Music' is now available to download from our website: www.st-georges-singers.org.uk/wedding-choir

The Cheshire Consort is available to sing at civil and church ceremonies throughout Cheshire, Greater Manchester and North Wales. Contact Sue Taylor on 01663 766991, email setaylor9@btinternet.com. You can find out more about The Cheshire Consort on our website at www.st-georges-singers.org.uk/weddingchoir



MONTEVERDI IN PISA BY JO GARBUTT



Last September we were ‘off the beaten track’ in the north west of Tuscany, away from the hubbub of Italy’s tourist attractions. Stopping in a small walled town, we wandered into a church where a poster caught my eye:

AnimaMundi
- musica sacra
Cattedrale Di Pisa

I looked at the details and my eyes widened:

Monteverdi - Vespri della Beata Vergine 1610
Direzione Artistica—
Sir John Eliot Gardiner

Monteverdi Choir
English Baroque Soloists
His Majesty’s Sagbutts and Cornets

I grabbed my husband’s sleeve “They’re doing the Monteverdi – in Pisa – look who’s conducting – what’s the date today?”

A quick check of his watch showed us that we hadn’t missed the concert – it was the next day – there was still time for a change of plan....

Sometimes in life you just have to make quick decisions – knowing that the tickets would most probably have all gone, that we were still a long way north of Pisa and that we had no idea where we would stay, we decided to pack up, pay up and see what

we could do.



Sir John Eliot Gardiner, choir, ensemble—and pulpit

We arrived in Pisa the following afternoon and made for the Piazza dei Miracoli – the large square which is the location of the Campanile [the leaning tower], the Baptistery and the Cathedral, and a major tourist attraction.

Hurrying past the rows of souvenir stalls we arrived at the entrance to the Cathedral just as the last group of tourists was leaving. Our first breathless enquiry confirmed our worst fear - there were no tickets left. .. but having got this far we were not giving up easily!

There was a festival office, we were informed, a few hundred yards away, but it was closing in five minutes. We kept running, burst in through the door, and became extremely Italian in our impassioned requests that the girl at the desk find us a ticket [or two...]

Somehow our elementary attempts at the language must

have had the right effect... after a moment’s consultation with her colleague she drew out a small box from under the desk, and smilingly presented us with what seemed to be the last two tickets. We thanked her profusely, took out some money and enquired about the price.

“Quanto costa?”
“No, no Signora - gratuito”.
Two tickets – nothing to pay.

The concert was scheduled for 9 pm but evidently this was a significant social occasion, as the enthusiastic mingling of the well dressed cultural elite of the area was still in full flow when players and choir began to walk on at 9.40 pm.

The warm September night, and the beauty of the immense Cathedral created a unique ambience; as the introductory Versicle ended and the Response ‘*Domine ad adiuvandum*’ rang through the vast space, we



Gallery above the West Door—a very long walk from the stage

knew we were present at a memorable event. Personally, I felt happy to be revisiting an old friend – having performed this only months before at Gorton Monastery with St George’s.

How to describe a virtuoso performance of such a remarkable composition?

The Monteverdi choir may be few in number but their vocal skills are inspiring – immaculate diction, a tremendous range of dynamics and an energy that added fire to the more dramatic parts of the Psalms. The ‘*Nisi Dominus*’ with the repeated ‘*surgite, surgite postquam sederitis*’ stayed with me throughout the rest of the holiday!

Pisa Cathedral is vast – even the pulpit [which took the sculptor Nicolo Pisano 10 years to create] has room for several singers and instrumentalists and the performers made full use of the dramatic possibilities.

The sensuous rendition of ‘*Nigra Sum*’ came from a gallery above the aisles; the vocal duet ‘*Pulchra Es*’ beautifully sung by soprano and mezzo came from the pulpit.

The two tenor soloists in the ‘*Audi Coelum*’ were stationed far apart: one in a gallery above the West door, the other on a dais below the

High Altar, their calls and responses carrying through the huge space. And one of them, Peter Davoren, had been a soloist with us in Gorton.

After the poignant ‘*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis*,’ one of the sopranos made her way into the pulpit, a tenor moved into the nave below the front of the stage and a mezzo soprano stood towards the back. Meanwhile the two choirs left the staging and walked silently back into the transept.

Thus the hymn ‘*Ave Maris Stella*’ seemed to emerge ethereally from around the building. The effect was enhanced by the serenity of the instrumental ritornelli – the audience remaining completely still as the notes died away.



Pisa Cathedral and a famous landmark to the right

ences - the baritone’s proclamation of the ‘*Gloria*’ from the final *Magnificat* was almost physical – a joyous outpouring of praise that brought the work to a triumphant end.



Interior of Pisa Cathedral

There was one final surprise in this richest of musical experi-

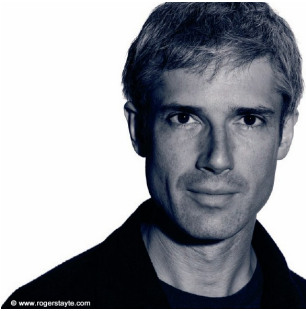
Discussing it later, we agreed that this event was more than just a memorable concert. It was in another league.

Not simply because the strange circumstances that had made it possible to attend had sharpened our anticipation, or even because our dogged determination to be there had paid off.

No, it was because we were witnesses to a performance of artists who were not just highly skilled and thoroughly professional, but were willing to take risks in order to achieve the nearest thing to perfection that we may ever hear.



AnimaMundi is a festival of sacred music, held every year in September-October in Pisa. Sir John Eliot Gardiner has been Artistic Director for the last five years. It is organized by the Opera della Primaziale Pisana. Website: www.opapisa.it



Richard Strivens is an experienced singer, workshop leader and singing teacher. A bass baritone, he studied singing at the National Opera Studio, the Royal Northern College of Music, and EurOperaStudio, Milan. He is currently appearing at the Royal Opera House in *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

One of Iyengar yoga's most famous students was Yehudi Menuhin, who met Mr Iyengar in 1952. Menuhin became an enthusiastic follower of Mr Iyengar's technique and arranged for him to meet and teach people all over the world, thereby becoming one of the first to introduce yoga to the West.

RELAXATION, BREATHING AND SINGING: HOW YOGA MAKES SINGING EASIER

RICHARD STRIVENS IN CONVERSATION WITH CAROLYN FERGUSON AND SUSAN HODGSON

The last time St George's Singers performed Bach's *St John Passion*, in 2002, I was delighted to be one of the soloists. The Holy Name church shimmered in the dim lighting, the solemnity of the orchestral introduction led the choir to stand soundlessly – and as one, they breathed in. It was mesmerising.

Breathing effectively is of course the very foundation of singing, and one of the many links between yoga and singing. I've been dabbling in yoga on and off since university, including classes at the Buddhist Centre in Manchester. Unfortunately, a freelance life makes building a weekly routine of yoga classes difficult.

About ten years ago, I discovered fitness didn't just happen: I would have to start working at it. I remembered the movement teacher at the National Opera Studio had said we need strength, balance, stamina, agility, co-ordination and flexibility as performers. I run, which gives stamina, some strength and agility, but does little for the other qualities. I was aware that yoga could offer more and it was through Carolyn Ferguson that I discovered Iyengar yoga. I had known Carolyn for some years as the mother of one of my singing pupils. A qualified Iyengar teacher, she persuaded me to go along to the taster summer sessions at MMU last year, which turned out to be a revelation.

The Iyengar approach clearly suited me from the start. Named after its originator, Mr B K S Iyengar, it is a holistic approach to well-

being; underpinned by scientific precision, it incorporates physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional qualities. Every pose ('asana') is explained clearly with progressive degrees of detail and meticulousness as you learn. Iyengar teachers are trained in anatomy, so they have the confidence and the knowledge to adjust postures safely and effectively. It's quite disconcerting how Carolyn can articulate precisely what specific muscles are feeling, and by encouraging me to stretch or realign in some particular way, a pose is made easier and more effective.

Increasingly I was coming to realise great parallels even on a philosophical level between yoga and singing. So, practically, how does yoga support my singing?

The first theme for me in yoga is posture. The aim is towards symmetry, alignment and balance, with no one side or muscle group dominant. You might say that a set of dominant muscles is 'aggressive'. Yoga attends to this aggression

and recreates a balance: a firm outer structure with inner softness. This is also a good description of the physical and mental act of singing. Moreover, singing is a whole-body activity, every part of the body engaged in the efficient production of sound. Yoga makes you aware of every muscle and their interconnection. For example,

The Iyengar Yoga Institute in Pune, India, was opened in 1975. It is now run by Mr Iyengar's son and daughter, who continue his teaching and research. Today it has over 2,000 fully trained teachers operating out of 180 institutes in more than 40 countries.

moving the shoulders back and down encourages the sternum (breast bone) to lift, opening the solar plexus, also giving width to the ribs – all first principles of efficient singing. Practising yoga regularly will result in 'muscle' or 'cellular' memory of the improved posture.

The second particular aspect it helps is breathing, which in yoga is called 'pranayama': 'prana' meaning life force, and 'yama' controlled or regulating. It's the similarity of focus on breath and the flow of air, rather than the specific actions that is so crucial in this link between singing and yoga.

An example from my own experience: some months ago I developed a sore back after some rather foolish furniture moving. Trying to avoid the resultant pain, I unknowingly changed my posture. That sent a unwelcome bolt of tension through my body, tightened my throat and larynx restricting my vocal range. I had lost the ease of production of my lower range. Car-





oyn suggested some lower back exercises, which I tried and the usual timbre and range returned quite uncannily and very noticeably to Carolyn within minutes.

Another great boon of yoga is the way it can improve relaxation in the area around the throat. This is vital to vocal production, everything being interconnected. Singers can have a tendency to squeeze and tighten the throat to reach the high notes. Yoga is practised with a soft throat; the jaw is loose, as if water fills where the tongue rests in the mouth - simple and effective imagery.

Every yoga session starts with a quietening and focusing exercise. It gives the group a chance to arrive fully and sometimes involves chanting the word 'Om'. The idea is the four sounds in the word (a, o, mmm, er) can resonate in different nerve centres ('chakras') in the body, generating and circulating energy. Amongst other things, the vibration cleanses the sinuses, relaxes the larynx, and energises the lips and facial muscles. Choral singers will immediately be able to relate this to pre-rehearsal warm-ups!

Posture, breathing and muscle relaxation are just some of the

physical benefits yoga brings. But let's not forget the mental and emotional side. Yoga grounds you, physically and mentally, increases awareness, and enhances concentration. Keeping in the moment, aware of what your body is doing, is vital to regular successful performances. For me this is perhaps even more important than the physical side: having a way to get yourself, as a matter of routine, into 'the zone' or 'flow state' - important for mental health as a performer.

Many performers both amateur and professional crave the adrenalin of the stage; to rely solely on this is a dangerous course both for your performance and for the low you feel afterwards. Balancing the adrenalin rush with yogic concentration is a much more sustainable and reliable way of going on.

The Iyengar Institute was formed by Mr Iyengar in 1975 and is now a worldwide organisation. However, it operates like one big, global family. Poses are constantly under review, research is being done into enhancing the effectiveness of the postures, or how postures can help with specific ailments. Senior teachers travel to India

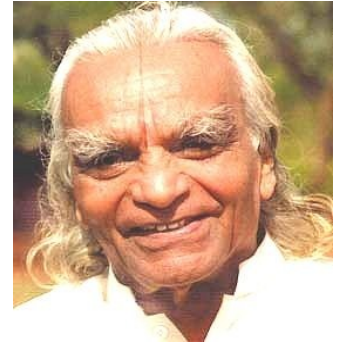
"Yoga is like music. The rhythm of the body, the melody of the mind, and the harmony of the soul, create the symphony of life"
- B K S Iyengar

regularly to study, bringing back the latest ideas to pass on to the students. Anyone taking up Iyengar yoga with a qualified teacher immediately becomes part of this global family.

Yoga is a rigorous and demanding activity, but it can be practised safely by men and women, old and young, regardless of levels of fitness - it is distinctly not competitive. For many it is simply a way of keeping physically healthy; others are keen to delve further into the intellectual, philosophical and spiritual aspects.

Whatever you as a singer want to get out of Iyengar yoga, I can vouch for its efficacy as a wonderful tool to support and enhance your vocal technique.

Richard Strivens and Carolyn Ferguson will be running a Yoga-Singing Workshop for St George's Singers in September. More Information available later in the year.



B K S Iyengar is one of the world's leading practitioners and teachers of yoga. Born in 1918, his childhood was marked by serious illnesses, including malaria, TB, typhoid and malnutrition. Through diligent practice of yoga, he overcame his disabilities, then went on to research and develop a system of yoga, based on the 1,700 year old philosophy and postures of the sage Pantanjali, focusing on precision and alignment, and which can be practiced by everyone safely.



Carolyn Ferguson has been a qualified Iyengar yoga teacher since 2003, and runs classes in Didsbury in Manchester. www.yogaindidsbury.co.uk

**Manchester & District Institute of Iyengar Yoga—
www.mdiiy.org.uk
Iyengar Yoga Association of the UK—www.iyengaryoga.org.uk**

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS

Big thank-you to Eric Northey for bringing our attention to an artistically and musically satisfying version of the Hallelujah chorus. See it on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCFceJTEzNU>

Another Hemiola—another batch of 'get well' messages! This time it's Mike Mason who's now recovering nicely at home after his hip-op. Hope you enjoyed the TWO cards we sent Mike—only one of which was deemed suitable for mixed voices!

And we were delighted to see Elfed Hughes back at rehearsal. Unfortunately he won't be able

to sing in the *St John* (the rehearsal police are monitoring attendance particularly carefully!) but we hope he'll enjoy joining in the odd chorale on Tuesday evening.

A hearty welcome to a couple of new members: Jennifer Limond (alto) and Barbara Gajda (soprano).

Twitter

A reminder that St George's Twitter feed is now operating. Log on to <http://twitter.com/stgeorgessinger> (note the spelling!) to find out what we're tweeting about. If you have a twitter feed yourself, why not become one of our followers. That way you won't miss out on the news!

NOW THAT'S SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT!



A very proud Neil Taylor with Ella at St Paul's Cathedral

Neil Taylor, St George's Singers' Musical Director, has lots to sing about at the moment. His 16 year old daughter, Ella, recently was named BBC Radio 2 Young Girl Chorister of The Year.

The Grand Final of the competition took place on Friday 29 October at St Paul's Cathedral in London. The show was hosted by Aled Jones, presenter of Radio 2's Good Morning Sunday, and was broadcast on Sunday 7 November at 8.30-10pm on Radio 2.

Neil was in the audience at St Paul's to hear Ella and seven other young choristers in the special Silver Jubilee anniversary

year of the competition. Ella sang two items: 'I cannot tell why he whom angels worship', and 'How beautiful are the feet of them' from Handel's *Messiah*. At the end of the competition, she and the Young Boy Chorister winner, Liam Jones from Durham, sang Geoffrey Burgon's lovely *Nunc Dimittis*.

Ella began singing with the Sheffield Cathedral Choir (where her father was of course Director of Music!) at the age of ten. She has toured with the Cathedral Choir to Germany, France and Hungary and has also broadcast regularly with them on BBC Radio 3. She has previously won the Intermediate Recital prize and the Sacred Song Prize from the David Clover Competition for young singers.

Ella left the Cathedral choir in July 2010 to take up a music scholarship at Lancing College in Sussex, where she is currently studying for her A levels whilst pursuing her choral studies. Following a recent Eton Choral Course she has been invited to join the prestigious Rodolfus Choir. Ella's interests extend beyond classical music and she has sung in the backing group for a Sheffield band

Screaming Maldini during the last year.

Neil, who coached Ella herself in the Cathedral Choir, said, "We are delighted about this fantastic news. All of us at the Cathedral and at St George's are over the moon about the result."

Ella admitted to Aled Jones in her interview with him on the radio that she might pursue a career as an opera singer. In this she may well follow in the steps of another of Neil's pupils, Elizabeth Watts, who won the Song Prize at the Cardiff Singer of the World competition in 2007, and who trained with Neil at Norwich Cathedral as a youngster.

Previous winners of the competition have gone on to have highly successful classical, recording or West End musical careers. Ella's first official role as a competition winner was the BBC Daily Service from Emmanuel Church—but a busy year of appearances and performances beckons.

Many congratulations to Ella and Neil—and we've already pencilled in Ella as a future soloist with us!

Ella's first TV appearance as Chorister of the Year was on BBC's *Songs of Praise* on 5th February.

BERYL PEARN: A TRIBUTE

We were saddened to hear of the death of Beryl Pearn, who had been with St George’s Singers for many years.

Although she retired from the Choir a couple of years ago, St George’s remained close to her heart, and we were moved to see that recipients of the donations from her memorial service included St George’s Singers, as well as Heaton Moor United Church and the National Children’s Home.

Doreen Allis, a good friend of Beryl, played the organ at her memorial service, and wrote the following tribute to her.

“Beryl became my close friend after I persuaded her to come with me to SGS for an audition in 1998. Luckily we were accepted and soon enjoyed the friendly atmosphere at the choir. She loved the opportunity to learn and sing the larger unknown works and particularly enjoyed

the tours when we had the chance to sing Evensong in great cathedrals.

“She had many interests and we had some great walking holidays in Austria before she needed two new knees! She was a very caring person, soon made friends, and many people will have happy memories of knowing her.”

In memory of Beryl, her son Richard has donated part of the funds raised at her memorial service to the Choir, for which we thank him and the rest of Beryl’s family and friends.



An informal shot of the Choir outside Blythburgh Church in 2006, during our tour of Suffolk. Beryl is centre front, with Doreen standing to her right. The photo was displayed at Beryl’s memorial service—a happy memento for all

HANG ON—I’VE ALMOST GOT THE NOTE

We’ve all (well, most of us) been there—you see the notes on the page, you know what the interval is, all you have to do is transmit the signals from brain to singing apparatus and off you go. But sometimes, you need a bit of help

Minor second	C—C#	Shark theme from <i>Jaws</i>
Major second	C—D	First two notes of <i>Eastenders</i>
Minor third	C—Eb	First two notes of <i>Greensleeves</i>
Major third	C—E	First two notes of <i>While Shepherds watched</i>
Perfect fourth	C—F	First two notes of <i>Amazing Grace</i>
Augmented fourth/ diminished fifth	C—F#	‘Maria’ from <i>West Side Story</i>
Perfect fifth	C—G	Bugle call from <i>The Last Post</i>
Minor sixth	C—Ab	Reversed theme from <i>Love Story</i>
Major sixth	C—A	(I did it) My Way
Minor seventh	C—Bb	‘There’s a place for us’ from <i>West Side Story</i>
Major 7th	C—B	None (but it’s so strange you’ll always recognize it)
Octave	C—C	Chorus of ‘Somewhere over the Rainbow’

Definition of an interval:
how long it takes to find
the right note. There are
three kinds of interval:
Major interval—a long time
Minor interval—a few bars
Inverted interval—go back
a bar and try again.

“Can’t you listen to chords
without knowing their
names?
- Claude Debussy

TOUR CONCERT SCHEDULE

Saturday 28 May, 7.30 pm—

Pershore Abbey

Sunday 29th May, 4.00 pm—

St Michael's, Ledbury

Monday 30th May, 6.00 pm—

Malvern Priory

Pershore Abbey



TOUR TO ELGAR COUNTRY

This year's choir tour is to the beautiful country that Edward Elgar loved and called his home—the Malverns.

Over the May Bank Holiday weekend (28th to 30th May 2011) St George's Singers will be giving concerts in three of the most famous churches in the Midlands. The tour begins with a concert in the thousand year old Pershore Abbey, whose monastic origins date back to the 7th century. Badly damaged during the dissolution, it still re-

tains a glorious quire, clerestory and tower.

The next day we sing in St Michael's and All Angels Church in Ledbury, which was described by Pevsner as 'the premier parish church in Herefordshire'. Then on Bank Holiday Monday we move on to Malvern where our final concert is in the famous Priory, a cathedral-sized wonder of English mediaeval architecture.

A tour to the Malverns would not be complete without an immersion in Elgar though. So the choir will be visiting the Elgar Museum, attending a talk

on Elgar's choral music, and following part of the Elgar Route—a 40 mile tour of Worcestershire stopping at places associated with Elgar and his music.

A note of caution for anyone thinking of coming to hear us in concert: we won't be singing a lot of Elgar! The music-loving inhabitants of Elgar Country hear more than enough of their most famous export, and were delighted to hear we'd be singing English music—by anyone except Elgar. (Though that won't stop us giving an impromptu performance of some of our favourite bits!)

EDDIE ELGAR—FOOTBALL FAN

BY CONNIE JONES

I grew up in Wolverhampton and, like all my family, I was (and still am) a supporter of Wolverhampton Wanderers. Sir Edward Elgar was also a Wolves fan.

Elgar used to visit Wolverhampton to see his friends at the Rectory of St Peter's Collegiate Church, the Rev Alfred Penny and his daughter Dora, who was immortalized as 'Dorabella' in the tenth of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. Dora also visited the Elgars in Malvern. The Rector's second wife was Minnie Baker of Hasfield Court near Redmarley in Worcestershire. Minnie was a close friend of Elgar's wife Alice. So there were connections between Malvern and Wolverhampton. Elgar, on occasion, would cycle the 40 miles to Wolverhampton on his Sunbeam Bicycle he called Mr Phoebus, although this story may be apocryphal! Interestingly, Sunbeam bicycles were made in Wolverhampton. El-

gar was very keen to see the Wolves play a match as the Rectory was very close to the Wolves ground, Molineux, and in 1869 Elgar and Dora saw their first match together.

In 1898 Elgar composed what is thought to be the first football chant. 'He banged the leather for goal' was inspired by a headline in the local newspaper, the Express and Star, when a great goal was scored by Wolves hero Billy Malpass during a match against Stoke. Malpass played in the 1893 Cup Final when Wolves beat Everton at Fallowfield, and was Captain three years later when they lost to Sheffield Wednesday in the Cup Final at the Crystal Palace. Christopher Morley, writing in the Elgar Society News, November 2010, suggests that Elgar, who loved puns, was taken by the 'inappropriate pun' in his hero's name! On 25th September 2010, at St Peter's Collegiate Church in Wolverhampton,

'An Evening with Elgar' was held to celebrate the composer's connections with Wolverhampton. The concert was in aid of the Church's Organ Restoration Appeal, and the highlight was the performance of Elgar's football chant by the church choir and Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra. The seven-note



chant had been orchestrated by Peter Morris, the Director of Music at the church. There is a plaque in reception at Molineux, commemorating Elgar's support for Wolves. It is inscribed: *England's greatest composer Sir Edward Elgar 1857-1934 "A devoted Wolverhampton Wanderers Supporter"*.



Carice—tell your mother we've drawn United in the Cup, so if there's extra time I'll be late home

A recent film about Elgar, *The Man behind the Mask*, was reviewed on the Classical Source website: http://www.classicalsource.com/db_control/db_feature.s.php?id=8671

SWIMMING FOR YOUR LIFE BY KATE FUGGLE

A few weeks Bridget Ovey approached me during a rehearsal and asked if I was still interested in swimming in the annual Macclesfield Swimathon.

Full of enthusiasm brought on by singing the *St John Passion*, I happily agreed to swim. Although I had seen the adverts for the big swim I had never actually participated in the event and was slightly apprehensive and dived into training.

The event took place on Sunday 6th March and there were five members of our team, our captain John Ovey representing the bass section, Jean Egerton and myself, the alto section and Jo Bluck and Corrie Verduyn, representing the sopranos (jointly known as the Sea Dragons). John says we need a fast tenor next year!

We each had sponsor forms, and members of the choir freely signed up. The money raised was to go towards research into Parkinson's Disease, shelter boxes for Haiti and eradication of polio from the world.

I awoke early on Sunday morning to prepare for the event. Ate a hearty breakfast whilst listening to 'The Archers', made sure I could still remember the words from chorus 2b of the *St John*, did the weekly food shop, and tidied the garden. We all

met up in the foyer at Macclesfield Leisure centre to have a strategy meeting and tips from our captain before getting ready to take the plunge. John had a quick word with the compère and we bravely entered the water.

We were to swim as a relay team with the aim of completing as many lengths as possible in 45 minutes. There were six teams in the pool at the same time as us, two from Prestbury Football Club. (I wonder if they included Wayne Rooney?) The number of lengths swum was displayed at the end of each lane and the competition was fierce.

Every fifteen minutes the figures were announced and large cheers went up for the leaders. Prestbury edged forward but we were never far behind. When the last five minutes were announced we made a final push to make it over the 100 mark and swam all out, all five of us at once creating large waves. Our final score reached 120 lengths putting us in second place, an amazing achievement!

We lined up to have our photo taken feeling tired but exhilarated. It was a great event, fun as well as tiring, and I think it must be at least 40 years since I have swum with such enthusiasm. I did hear a comment that



Sea Dragons John Ovey, Jo Bluck, Jean Egerton, Corrie Verduyn and Kate Fuggle preparing for a performance of Whitacre's *Cloudburst*

as we were all singers we must have good breath control, which is deemed an asset in swimming. I felt fitter for doing this swim, enjoyed raising the money for worthy causes and would recommend the event to anyone who can swim.

When the final monies have been received, it looks as though we will have raised in the region of £550. Thanks to all our sponsors, whose support has made the event so much more worthwhile.

PEARLS FROM THE PODIUM

"Altos—you have so many uses!"

"Basses—morendo means dying away not expiring through lack of breath."

"Have some fun on those semi-quavers—shake them!"

"People, the word is 'kreuzige'

with a kr, kr, kr. It means 'crucify'. You're not announcing the next train to Croyden."

"Altos. Hold that minim on the word 'ster-ben'. Some of your 'buns' are coming out too soon."

Meet Ben—the latest resident of the organ loft at Sheffield (aah...!). So far training in walking to heel, fetching, and responding to name is going well, but his Master (of the Music) reports rhythm problems and offbeat barking in the 1, 121, 12...21 pre-rehearsal warm-ups. Tuition continues.



MAKING MUSIC—CHINESE STYLE

BY SUE MASON



The Imperial Garden at the Forbidden City

St George's Singers may be travelling to China in 2012 to sing Verdi's Requiem with the International Festival Chorus in the Forbidden City. More news follows shortly!



The Palace of Heavenly Purity

It never occurred to me that I would be a musical path-finder, when I joined the International Festival Chorus (IFC) Shanghai. Having given up teaching to follow my husband to his work in Shanghai, I

threw myself into my new found freedom and expat life, with abandon. Soon though, the novelty of endless coffee mornings, mah-jong sessions and shopping expeditions began to pale and I set out to find something musical to occupy my time.

At this time, there were no 'western' choirs in Shanghai so I joined an American Hand Bell ringing group, 'the Belles': so named as we were all 'trailing spouses' with day time to spare. Sharon Schmidt, the owner of the sets of bells, was a semi-professional ringer from Chicago, whose American gigs meant she was often out of China, so she let us have the key to her apartment and access to her bells.

What the Chinese management of the apartment block made of us trooping in every Tuesday morning clanging like the clappers then leaving, with the lady of the house nowhere to be seen, I can only guess at, but the Chinese are far too polite to question what even I thought of as bizarre behaviour.

But the Chinese indulged in their own bizarre activities, and on one heart-stopping occasion in that 30th floor apartment, we experienced the window cleaner at work. Abseiling down from the roof he swung gently from side to side with a cloth in

hand and cleaned the outside windows, all the way to ground level. To be fair he was wearing a hard hat which seemed a bit pointless but probably kept his head warm in winter.

The Belles heard about auditions that were to take place for a new choir which would be conducted by an English man, Nick Smith, resident in Beijing, who had already established a choir there. Many of his singers were in the diplomatic corps and when some were transferred to Shanghai he offered to come and conduct if a group could be formed.

And so we started. There were about 20 of us initially, male and female and a few local Chinese as well. I was to learn that for local Chinese

to socialize with foreigners was a very unusual situation. It was not the only thing I learned about music in China. The IFC model was to audition singers, but to ensure that every member could manage to learn their notes independently as mandatory rehearsals would happen only in the week before any performance.

To begin with, we sang in expat locations: schools, bars, hotels. I couldn't understand this and was always pointing out suitable venues for concerts: churches, schools, concert halls, and would often warble away in empty echoing churches testing their good acoustics. But we were operating 'under the

wire' so to speak and to be seen publically performing would bring the wrath of the Government down on us.

Any public performance in China requires a phenomenal trawl through bureaucratic permissions by the performer, and a scrutiny of words, themes and content. Anything mentioning God is seen to be particularly difficult, as if the audience would rise up as one converted body and turn against communism, nationalism and the Chinese way of life.

But even if the performance gains permission, the terms of the contract always state that a



Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Forbidden City

goodly percentage of the tickets must be given to the Communist party. Not that they use them of course and they turn up being touted on the street.

Many things in China depend on 'Guanxi' which is like a networking system of doing favours with people you know. My good Shanghainese friend, whose English name is Bright, suggested we look at the Lyceum Theatre, and that's where I met Mr Chu. The Lyceum Theatre has its place in the history of 1920s Shanghai and was built by the British especially for the British Amateur Dramatics Society. Although it had



The International Festival Chorus in Shanghai

been in disrepair for many years, it had recently been restored to its former glory. Margot Fonteyn started her dancing career on that stage.

Mr Chu was prepared to take a risk and allow us to perform in his theatre. Of course, as foreigners we could not use the box office, and could not advertise outside the theatre, but he was a true friend and understood that we were no threat to the stability of the country if we stood on his stage warbling in strange tongues, and although he didn't understand what we were singing and maybe didn't even like what we were singing, he helped us get started.

My kitchen table became the box office, and we advertised in all the ex-pat magazines. Anyone who wanted to come to the concert had to turn up and collect a ticket from me as they wouldn't be allowed to enter the theatre without a ticket.

Any concert organizer knows the headache of ticket sales, and there were always potential paying customers who wanted to collect their tickets at the theatre door. Not wanting to reject them, and yet wanting

to stay out of jail, we had clandestine touts, otherwise known as friends and family, loitering in the shadows handing out pre-ordered tickets.

Our first concert at the Lyceum was Fauré's *Requiem*. This was an amazing performance for me, not just because we had fooled the system. The treble soloist had been found in a series of auditions in the International Schools. In this city of 20 million people, the boy in question turned out to be an ex-pupil from Wilmslow High School: the school where I had been teaching prior to leaving for Shanghai.

My heart was also in my mouth



A gilded lion in front of the Palace of Tranquil Longevity

when Mr Chu walked through the backstage area with a group of men in dinner jackets. His English was minimal, but I understood that these were 'chairmen'. Thinking that the

Communist party had rumbled our performance, I reported their arrival to the conductor. I need not have worried. Mr Chu hadn't grassed us up: these were the 'chair men' who would show the audience to their seats. Phew!

And so we sang and I even danced on the same stage as Margot Fonteyn, when we raised funds for the choir by doing a couple of Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas including a performance of *Pirates of Penzance*. This had been the show that the Brits were to have put on and which had to be halted when the Japanese invaded China in 1939.

Being part of the Shanghai choir enabled us to join with our Beijing friends in their performances in the Forbidden City Concert Hall. Nick had a similar arrangement of Guanxi with the management there.

My most thrilling musical moment was probably the stunning performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* which we gave in 2004 and which was the first ever full performance of this work in China. I was vaguely aware of Chairman Mao slowly spinning in his mausoleum not half a mile away.

I had left China before Dame Emma Kirkby performed with the choir, and also wished I had been able to sing in the performance of *African Sanctus* with David Fanshawe in attendance: one of his last public occasions. But I did have the pleasure of singing *Messiah* in Beijing, when Martin Ennis of Cambridge University, conducted us from the harpsichord. He also mixed us up, so on that occasion I was sandwiched between a Swedish tenor and a Peruvian bass.

During my time in China, I attempted to speak Mandarin. The Chinese, who are very keen to learn English, would



An Imperial watchtower in the Forbidden City

approach us in the street as complete strangers in order to practise their language skills. I thought therefore that any oriental face was fair game, and would do the same when I was in the UK. On one occasion, I tried a friendly 'ni hao' to a couple of women in Macclesfield Sainsbury's. They were astonished, probably at the appalling pronunciation, and when I had exhausted my repertoire, we continued in English. To my amazement, I found out that the woman had lived in Macclesfield with her husband and family for over ten years, and was married to Shao En, the famous Chinese orchestral conductor, who was performing the next day with the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra. I was able to send my Shanghai musical friends to the concert, and there they met Shao En and had the bizarre experience of swapping tales about their friend in Macclesfield with him.

The Chinese love music, and can be heard singing in parks and gardens, individually or in groups. Of course I would sidle up and join in. And why not. Music is a truly international language.

St George's Singers

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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

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

Saturday 25 June 2011, 7.30 pm
Eastern Voices
Works by Kodály, Janáček, Górecki
and Dvořák
Gorton Monastery

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

Two dates for the diary to catch up with **Marcus Farnsworth** in the region. On Thursday 31 March he appears at Manchester University in a lunchtime recital of 'Songs Old and New', performing songs by Purcell, Grange, Barber and Britten folksong arrangements. Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall, 1.10 pm, admission free.

In July Marcus will be appearing at the **Buxton Festival** in Anthony Turnage's opera *Greek* - a modern take on the Oedipus legend. Buxton Opera House, July 14th and 25th. Tickets £10—£47. 0845 12 72 190.

Manchester University Chorus
2nd April 2011, Saturday 2nd April 2011 - Whitworth Hall, Manchester University. An

exciting programme of American music conducted by Gregory Batsleer, including John Adams' *Harmonium*. Also featuring The Cosmo Singers, a newly-formed choir with members drawn from The University of Manchester Chorus performing Aaron Copland's Motets. Tickets: £12/£9/£3.

Clic Sargent

Well done to Penny Anson, organizer of the Clic Sargent rehearsal on 13 February 2011, prior to the main event in September. The performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, conducted by Andrew Dean, and with a specially arranged youth orchestra, will be in aid of the charity which cares for children with cancer. Last year a similar concert raised over £4,000.

That Day we Sang

Victoria Wood has created a new theatre piece for Manchester International Festival. *That Day We Sang* is the story of the children who sang on the famous recording of 'Nymphs and Shepherds' by the Manchester Children's Choir in 1929 in the Free Trade Hall, and the subsequent television documentary 45 years later, triggering memories of the day itself and the years in between. Opera House, Manchester, 6–16th July 2011. www.mif.co.uk/ for further information.

