



Hemiola

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

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ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

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HOLD YOUR APPLAUSE: INVENTING AND REINVENTING THE CLASSICAL CONCERT BY ALEX ROSS

A couple of years ago, Barack Obama hosted an evening of classical music at the White House. Beforehand, he said, "Now, if any of you in the audience aren't sure when to applaud, don't be nervous. President Kennedy had the same problem. He and Jackie held several classical music events here, and more than once he started applauding when he wasn't supposed to. So the social secretary worked out a system where she'd signal him through a crack in the door. Now, fortunately, I have Michelle to tell me when to applaud. The rest of you are on your own."

Obama was having fun at the expense of the 'No Applause Rule', which holds that one must refrain from clapping until all movements of a work have sounded. No aspect of our modern concert ritual causes more bewilderment. The problem is not that the Rule is so arcane that even a law professor turned commander-in-chief cannot master it. Rather, it's that the etiquette and the music sometimes work at cross-purposes. The noisy codas of the first movement of Beethoven's *Emperor* even beg for it. The word 'applause' comes from the instruction *plaudite*, which appears at the end of Roman comedies. Those cli-

mactic chords are the musical equivalent of *plaudite*: they almost mimic the action of putting one's hands together.

If the President ever clapped in the 'wrong' place, he was intuitively following instructions in the score. This explains why newcomers exhibit anxiety on the subject; it even appears that fear of incorrect applause can inhibit people from attending concerts.

Programme booklets sometimes contain a list of rules, rendered in the style of God on Mount Sinai: "Thou shalt not applaud between movements of symphonies or other multi-sectional works listed on the programme."

The underlying message of the protocol is, in essence: "Curb your enthusiasm. Don't get too excited." Should we be surprised that people aren't as excited about classical music as they used to be?

The chief limitation of the classical ritual is its prescriptive quality; it supposes that all great works of music are essentially the same. What I would like to see is a more flexible

cont on p4/...



Alex Ross is Music Critic of *The New Yorker*. This article is abridged from a lecture given to the Royal Philharmonic Society in London in March 2010.

Full version available from www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk

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Applause should be an emotional response to the music, rather than a regulated social duty—
Emanuel Ax

SPANISH GOLD

Saturday 24 March, 7.30 pm
St George's Church, Stockport

Tickets: £12, £10 conc,
£2 students

Tel: 01663 764012

Email: tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk

Online: www.st-georges-singers.org.uk



Inca musicians



Victorian Manuscript

St George's Singers will be joined at 'Spanish Gold' by two talented young musicians from RNCM: Jamie Parker is the guitar soloist, whilst percussionist Sarah Stuart has an incredibly busy evening playing the marimba, vibraphone, chimes, bongos, temple blocks, wind chimes, crotales, tom-toms, ratchet—and a very big drum!

SPANISH GOLD—400-YEAR OLD TREASURE TROVE

St George's Singers' next concert, 'Spanish Gold', offers an enticing programme drawing on the fabulous treasury of 400 years of Spanish music.

The 16th century school of Spanish renaissance composers—called the 'Golden Age'—was one of the most splendid in Europe, and Tomás Luis de Victoria was the dominating figure. He was born in

Avila, and studied with leading Spanish composers until he went to Rome, where he certainly knew, and may even have been taught by, the great Palestrina. Entering the priesthood after his wife's death, he returned to Spain in 1585 where he served the Empress Maria as teacher, organist and choirmaster until his death. Some of Victoria's finest works were composed after his return to Spain, and despite his Roman training, Victoria retained strong Spanish roots. The *Missa pro victoria*, performed at the concert, is a 'parody mass', and is a fine example of the deeply mystical approach of so much Spanish Renaissance music.

Francisco Guerrero was 'maestro de capilla' at Seville Cathedral, where Alonso Lobo was a choir boy and probably the maestro's pupil. Lobo's music is of a later generation than that of Victoria, and combines the smooth contrapuntal technical of Palestrina with the sombre intensity of Victoria. We are singing Lobo's best known motet, *Versa est in luctum*, written on the death of Philip II.

The discovery of the Americas

has been described as the greatest event in the history of the world, and the exploits of Cortés in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru are well documented.

Less well known is the spread of Christianity which accompanied the invasion, the establishment of education and building by the Catholic church. The Aztecs and Incas were highly sophisticated civilisations, and

were responsive to the new ideas, especially the music, which was an important social and spiritual element in their lives. Priests began by teaching the liturgy through plainchant, then polyphony. The very first polyphony published in the Americas in 1631 was the processional *Hanaq pachap kusikuynin*, written in Quechua, the language of the Incas.

All the leading composers of the day, including Victoria and Lobo, sent music to 'New Spain'. Some even emigrated permanently. Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla was born in Malaga in 1590, but moved to Puebla, Mexico in 1622. He was appointed 'maestro de capilla' of Puebla Cathedral in 1628, staying there until his death in 1664. One of his most famous works is the 'parody mass' *Missa ego flos campi*, performed at the concert.

From 16th century Mexico to 20th century North America. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968) was an Italian, descended from a prominent

Spanish banking family that had lived in Florence since being forced by the Inquisition to leave their home in Castilla Nueva (whence his name) in 1492. Inspired by the great Spanish guitarist, Andrés Segovia, he ultimately became one of the foremost guitar composers of the 20th century. In 1938 his works were banned by Mussolini, and in 1939 he fled the rising tide of anti-semitism to the USA where he became a film composer on over 200 Hollywood movies. His *Romancero Gitano* (Gypsy Ballads) is a fabulous setting for guitar and four-part chorus of a cycle of poems by Garcia Lorca, drawing on the flamenco traditions of his ancestors' native home.

Costa Rica, in Central America, is one of the world's great singing nations. One of their leading choirs, El Café Chorale (read about them on pp14-15), are good friends of St

George's Singers, and we are delighted to be singing two of their favourite pieces: *Piel Canela* by Latin vocalist Bobby Capo (a Latin American pop idol in the 1940s), and *Caña dulce* by José Daniel Zúñiga, a piece that is so well known in Costa Rica that it is treated as part of their folk heritage.

Finally, to the 21st century American composer Stephen Paulus. A prolific composer of more than 450 works, his music has been described as 'rhythmically aggressive, often gorgeous, moving and uniquely American.' We are singing his *Poemas de Amor*, a song cycle based on an anonymous 16th century Spanish text.

Enjoy—or as they say in Spain: ¡Que cantéis bien y disfrutéis del concierto!



The Inca city of Machu Picchu



Puebla Cathedral

CANTE JONDO—THE DEEP SONG OF SPAIN

Composed in 1951, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Romancero Gitano* is a superb suite of seven songs for guitar and four-part choir, setting to music the poems of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca. The words are not from Lorca's most famous work, *Romancero Gitano*, but from a related collection, *Poema del Cante Jondo*.

'Cante jondo' is a flamenco vocal style from Andalusian folk music, the name meaning 'deep song'. Flamenco itself is a genuine Southern Spanish art form. It exists in three forms: el cante (the song), el baile (the dance), and la guitarra (guitar playing). Gypsies are often credited with the 'invention' of flamenco, and



her own suffering within its complex rhythms. It is regarded as one of the oldest, most primitive song forms of Europe, the

they certainly played an important part in its creation. But the popular songs and dances of Andalusia also had a major influence on early flamenco.

'Cante jondo' is a highly stylized form of singing, in which the singer must convey his or only song that has been conserved in its pure form.

In 1922 the Andalusian composer Manuel de Falla organized the 'Concurso de Cante Jondo' in the Alhambra in Granada, with the aim of encouraging the performance of flamenco, which had fallen into a period of decadence. Falla believed flamenco to be a musical art form of great value, having spent years studying and hearing it directly from gypsy friends. Enlisting the cooperation of Spanish intellectuals was considered crucial to the success of the festival, and he gathered together an impressive group of musicians and artists,

amongst them the young poet Federico García Lorca.

To promote the Concurso, Falla wrote an essay about 'cante jondo', identifying the primary influences on Andalusia's flamenco music and dance: Byzantine church music from the eastern Mediterranean; Moorish music from North Africa; and the music and rhythms of India, brought to Spain by the gypsies five hundred years earlier.

Lorca's *Poema del Cante Jondo* was written in 1922, but was not published until 1931. He loved 'cante jondo' and was fascinated with flamenco and its gypsy associations, believing that only gypsy music, the music of the persecuted and oppressed, truly embraced the diverse and ancient Andalusian culture. In 1936 Lorca returned to Granada for a family celebration. Four days after his return, the Spanish Civil War began, and a month later, Lorca was arrested and murdered. He was thirty-eight. Only after Franco's death in 1975 were his writings or his murder discussed in Spain. Ever since, all great 'cante' singers of Spain have been turning his poems into song.



'Cante jondo...is the trilling of birds, the song of the rooster, and the music of forest and fountain...a stammer, a wavering emission of the voice that makes the tightly closed flowers of the semitones blossom into a thousand petals' - Federico García Lorca



Lorca in 1934

PARODY? I SUPPOSE YOU THINK THAT'S FUNNY

Both Victoria's *Missa pro Victoria* and Padilla's *Missa ego flos campi* are 'parody masses'. The term has absolutely nothing to do with humour, but would perhaps be described in today's terms as 'plagiarism'. The phrase describes the practice in 15th and 16th century mass compositions of incorporating pre-existing musical material derived from other vocal works such as motets, chansons or

madrigals. The parody mass was very popular during the Renaissance (Palestrina wrote no fewer than 50), and involved freely reorganizing and expanding the original material, inserting new sections, or creatively reworking several voice parts to form a new composition.

The finished work is known by the name of its model. Hence, *Missa ego flos campi*, the text of

which is of course the standard Latin mass, is named after the motet on which it is based and whose words come from the Song of Solomon (*I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys*); whilst Victoria's *Missa pro victoria* parodies a secular chanson called 'La Guerre', celebrating a French victory in 1515, and is Victoria's only mass modeled on a secular work.



Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)

2011 was his 400th anniversary

HOLD YOUR APPLAUSE (CONT/...)

Photo: Dan Chung



'Standing ovations have become far too commonplace. What we need are ovations where the audience members all punch and kick one another.' - George Carlin

approach, so that the nature of the work dictates the nature of the presentation – and, by extension, the nature of the response.

The classical concert of the 18th century was radically different from the rather staid and timid affair of today. Mozart wrote to his father after the premiere of his *'Paris' Symphony*: "Right in the middle of the First Allegro came a Passage that I knew would please, and the entire audience was sent into raptures ...I brought it once more at the end of the movement — and sure enough there they were: the shouts of 'da capo'." This kind of behaviour seems in line with what you find in jazz clubs, where people applaud after each solo, as well as at the end of each number.

In the Romantic era, composers began to reject the idea of music as boisterous entertainment. Wagner played a pivotal, if inadvertent, role in the transformation of audience behaviour. At the premiere of *Parsifal* in 1882, he requested that there be no curtain calls after Act Two, so as not to "impinge on the impression". But the audience misunderstood

these remarks to mean that they shouldn't applaud at all, and total silence greeted the final curtain. "Did the audience like it or not?" Wagner asked. Two weeks later, he slipped into his box to watch the flower maidens scene. When it was over, he called out "Bravo!" – and was hissed. Alarming, Wagnerians were taking Wagner more seriously than he took himself.

In the first decades of the 20th century, mid-symphonic applause was still routine. When Elgar's *First Symphony* had its first London performance, the composer was called out after the first movement. Around 1900, though, a group of German musicians and critics began promoting a code of silence, à la Bayreuth. By the 1920s, several leading conductors were discouraging excess applause.

In many instances, the Rule seems in keeping with the music. I wouldn't want applause between movements of, say, Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. Elsewhere, though, it has a perverse effect. Emanuel Ax complains on his website: "I am always a little taken aback when I hear the first movement of a concerto which is supposed to be full of excitement, and virtuoso display and then hear a rustling of clothing, punctuated by a few coughs; the sheer force of the music calls for a wild audience reaction." It is the sound of people suppressing their instincts.

Worse is the hushing of attempted applause. People who applaud in the 'wrong' place may well be attending for the first time. Having been hissed at, they may never attend again. We may be imposing habits of home listening on the concert hall. Seated before our stereos, we've grown accustomed to brief bands of silence between movements. Where listeners

were once swept away by music, they now spoke of music sweeping over them, like an impressive weather system over which they had little control. There ought to be more give-and-take between performers and audience. Passivity is too easily mistaken for boredom. Performers, for their part, overdo the detachment. Music is an art of mind and body; dance rhythms animate many classics of the repertory. But in modern classical music, the body seems repressed.

Perhaps concerts should be more old-fashioned – more local, communal. Institutions might work on strengthening the bond between performer and public: remarks beforehand, gatherings afterward, and, certainly, a relaxation of the Rule. I'm with Ax when he says, "I think that if there were no 'rules' about when to applaud, we in the audience would have the right response almost always."

People often ask whether classical music has become too serious. Certainly, it has acquired a veneer of solemnity, but too often that veneer is a cover for business as usual.

I dream of the concert hall becoming a more vital, unpredictable environment, in thrall to the wildly diverse personalities of composers and performers alike. The great paradox of modern musical life is that we both worship our idols and, in a way, straitjacket them. We consign them to cruelly specific roles: a certain rock band is expected to loosen us up, a certain composer is expected to ennoble us. Ah, Mozart; *yeah*, rock and roll. But what if a rock band wants to make us think and a composer wants to make us dance?

Music should be a place where our expectations are shattered.

'Music is an art of mind and body; dance rhythms animate many classics of the repertory. But in modern classical music, the body seems repressed.'

'Always make the audience suffer as much as possible.' - Alfred Hitchcock



Photo: © Graham North

BEST SINGING DAY EVER!

The 2012 Singing Day, held on 21st January, has officially been voted one of the best ever—by our visitors!

The refurbishment of St George's in Poynton meant that we had to move venue, so for the first time we held the event at Cheadle Hulme Methodist church, where Alison Gunn managed to secure the church for us for the entire day. Organising refreshments, lunch, tea, rehearsals AND a concert in a brand new venue called for even more effort than usual. But with a battalion of volunteers from the Choir (and a few friends and

George's event with enthusiasm, and (with Anne by his side to make sure he got it right) welcomed our visitors with wit and charm.

Then onto the music. Neil took us through his usual warm-up repertoire of physical jerks,

hissy fits and rude noises, self-inflicted beatings and mental arithmetic problems before we got down to the main busi-

ness—Mozart's *Requiem*. The assembled choir was 250-strong, including 190 visitors. So popular had the Singing Day been that there was a waiting list of over 40 disappointed people. Those who made it however found themselves part of a wonderfully balanced choir. Perhaps because so many

people knew the *Requiem* already, Neil was able to concentrate on pronunciation and expression, and the final result, performed in the concert at the end of the day, was one of the finest we've delivered on our Singing Day.

We were joined at the concert by four lovely young soloists: Rebecca Lea, Rebecca Anderson, William Petter and Jonathan Ainscough. Not forgetting the wonderful Jeff Makinson, who accompanied us throughout the day, and then still found

'The musical direction was superb. Although this was the first time I have taken part in one of your singing days, it will certainly not be my last.'

'A fabulous day. The singing was definitely a challenge, only having sung a couple of pieces from it before, but I had a great sense of achievement at the end.'



Now, please tell us in your own words why you want to join this workshop?

relatives roped in to help) everything went off with military precision. Registration was handled efficiently by Gillian Banks and her team, passing visitors straight onto the 'catering unit', who delivered what was the first of many gallons of tea and coffee during the day.

The event was opened by our new Chair, Peter Marcus, who handled his first major St

'The whole day was so totally wonderful. The organisation was HUGE and everyone benefited from all the expertise that made it such a success, with music and cakes and soup to die for!'

'I have attended many singing days including yours. This Saturday was, without doubt, the best I have ever attended. The conductor was superb, and the performance was one I was proud to be part of.'

the energy to give a virtuoso performance at the concert. (The less said about the organ, the better!) As usual, however, the star of the show was the food—this year even better than ever. A special edition of *Hemiola* was handed out with some



of the best cake and soup recipes from previous years, but we're sure Debra will have some new ones from amongst this year's batch.

The event was an outstanding success and raised almost £3,500 for choir funds. So well done Singers, visitors, Neil, Jeff, soloists, and the dozens of volunteers who made this such a fantastic day.

Our kitchen maids Debra, Alison, Lesley, Bridget and Irene displaying their sumptuous baked goods ... and Peter wondering if he should dash to John Lewis for more cups



'The organising of the event and the 'crowd control' were fantastic, as was the singing. We really enjoyed ourselves and are already looking forward to next year's event. PS The soup and cakes were delicious.'

Great things indeed! Thanks for a wonderful day, Neil.



All photos © Graham North



A sell-out audience of 600 enthralled by a performance in its entirety of *Messiah*



MESSIAH—ANOTHER MONASTERY TRIUMPH

St George's Singers have presented two previous concerts in the Monastery, performing the Monteverdi and Rachmaninov *Vespers*, but this was their first full-scale choral concert there. I have previously recounted something of the background and history of this outstanding amateur choir and with reference also to previous performances at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall.

The Monastery with its high vaulted roof and solid, unadorned, walls, made for a somewhat unusual acoustic which was more on the dry side. This made hearing the superb articulation and diction of the choir, prepared as always by Neil Taylor, a particular pleasure. Every one of Charles Jennings' words in the many choruses could be heard, savoured and enjoyed, along with the unison singing and that of the choral parts. A special mention should be made of the men who, although outnumbered two to

one by the sopranos and altos, were in particularly fine form. Their incisive attack, shared with their female counterparts, had a sonority that contrasted quite superbly. The tangy gut strings of the Northern Baroque were heard to good effect throughout; they seemed to relish the acoustic whilst the solo trumpet thrilled in 'The trumpet shall sound'.

Unlike the Bridgewater Hall concerts present-

ed by St George's, the soloists on this occasion had not yet embarked on the international circuit. Ruth Jenkins' warm but flexible light soprano was a delight, even if she could not quite match that ethereal lightness that long ago Mancunian, Isobel Bailie, brought to 'I know that my redeemer liveth.' Ruth has presence with a voice size and projection to match. Her alto colleague lacked something of both qualities, being somewhat underpowered and lacking in the lower voice. But then I have to admit that the days of the formidable contraltos of yesteryear, so common in the oratorio repertoire of the North West of England, seem long gone. I was grateful for her tuneful and sincere singing of the words.

Both men had strong well-projected voices. Marcus Farnsworth was more a bass-baritone

than a true bass and although he had to reach for the odd low

note his even vocal extension and clear diction were a delight. The tenor, Richard Dowling, who boasts a degree in Chemical Engineering and a PhD in a chemistry related subject, is only now studying

music and voice full-time at the Royal Academy of Music. With power, projection and good diction allied to a pleasant tone, he will surely soon have to take important career decisions. Opera companies are always on the look out for tenors with strong well-projected voices. Here his heartfelt singing of the recitative 'Thy rebuke,' was particularly notable and heavy with expressive meaning.

St George's Singers will return to the Monastery on June 17th alongside the Fine Arts Brass Ensemble in a concert entitled *Vivat! Music for a Royal Occasion*.

Robert J Farr

www.musicweb-international.com



DESERT ISLAND DISCS

The BBC commemorated the 70th anniversary of 'Desert Island Discs' by casting away Sir David Attenborough. We decided to cast away our own national treasure, who has a very special connection with Desert Island Discs—Alan Swain. Here are some of Alan's BBC memories.

The cover page of *Radio Times* in the late 40s was always a picture of BBC Headquarters, Broadcasting House (BH), in Upper Regent Street, London. This beautiful boat-shaped art deco building with its bronze and glass front doors always inspired me. You can imagine my feelings in October 1954 when I walked through those doors to start my 35 years in broadcasting. Television was relatively new, so radio was still of major importance. There were just three domestic programmes from BH: the Home service, the Light programme and the Third programme. Recording in those days was on

15in per second tape and for radio newsreel, hot inserts, 78rpm acetate disc. Tape editing occupied much of my time, lots of Third programme dramas, sessions with Julian Bream, Harry Mortimer (brass band legend) and (would you believe!) 'Desert Island Discs'. Working with producer Monica Chapman, and occasional visits by Roy Plomley, the originator and presenter, was always a delight.

Here are my eight records:

Symphony No 2—Sibelius

'Bella figlia dell'amore' quartet from *Rigoletto*—Mozart

Dream of Gerontius—Elgar.

What is it that makes me and lots of others very emotional at the first chord of 'Praise to the Holiest'?

Symphony No 8—Mahler

La Calinda—Delius. A very happy piece of music. I used to love the second theme with lots

of tambourine. Alas, even with my new hearing aid, the tambourine isn't there any more.

'Siegfried's Funeral March' from *Götterdämmerung*—Wagner

Overture to *Tannhäuser*—Wagner

Beim Schlafengehen (Upon Going to Sleep) - Richard Strauss. The best piece of music in the world.

My luxury item: years ago I made a mahogany and maple cabinet with three drawers which contain all my wood-carving chisels. Would this be allowed with its contents? If so, I hope there are timbers other than just coconut palm! (*Sorry Alan—you can have the box, but absolutely no tools.*)

For my book, with plenty of time on my hands I would like to take Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. After several readings I might get to understand it.



Hampered by the lack of his favourite woodworking tools, Alan took a few weeks to build a crude raft from coconut trunks, palm leaves, conch shells and dried seaweed.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!



B minor Mass rehearsal

'German Masterworks' rehearsal



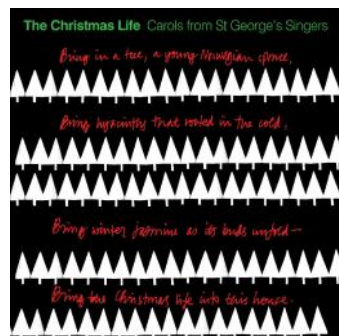
Monteverdi *Vespers* rehearsal



Carol CD rehearsal

Just a small selection of near identical shots from the publicity archive. Either Neil's wardrobe could do with a make-over, or someone has a superstitious side!

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS' NEWS



SGS ON CLASSIC FM

Did everyone hear St George's Singers on Classic FM just before Christmas? Our new CD *The Christmas Life: Carols from St George's Singers* was featured on John Brunning's 'Drive' programme on 6th December. He chose to play *I saw three ships*, and his verdict was, "Didn't they sound good!" That's just one of the goodies on the CD—which is still available if you want to stock up in good time for next Christmas, price £10!

NEW LIFE FRIEND

Kath Wood, who retired from the Choir at Christmas, was

made a Life Friend of St George's in recognition of the many years' service she has given to the Singers, and presented with a lovely bouquet at rehearsal for the carol concert. Kath was actually back at rehearsal in January though—to deliver more jars of marmalade for sale in aid of Choir funds. Thanks Kath—and we look forward to seeing you for many years to come.

SPANISH FOR BEGINNERS

Many thanks to tenor Mark Warrington for all his help to the Choir with our pronunciation for 'Spanish Gold'. With Mark's expert tuition (and

Neil's hectoring!) we'll sound like regular gauchos. Audience members please note: we are using South American pronunciation throughout the concert, rather than Castilian Spanish—and we're even doing the Latin bits with a Spanish accent as well. So—listen up and be transported to the pampas!

ALTOS SET THE BAR

Congratulations to Section Rep Anthea Slater and the alto section, who managed to raise an astonishing £980 (so far!) for the Choir from various fundraising activities over the autumn term. Now, let's see what the basses and tenors can do!

UPDATE ON WAKEFIELD LIBRARY

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY:

- The current building must be closed for health and safety, so YLI need to find new premises
- The 12 Councils operating the service spend a mere £120,000 between them
- By relocating the drama service to another library, the music service will cost even less
- Significant latent demand means that pricing could be increased with little effect upon demand—and offering potential for a self-funding service
- The Chair of YLI has written to all 12 Councils, urging a 6-month extension of funding, and preferably 3 years, and a further trawl for suitable premises

We reported in the last issue of *Hemiola* on the cultural vandalism being threatened by the closure of Wakefield Music and Drama service. Over the last three months, the debate between Yorkshire Library and Information (YLI) Service and its users has been intense, and many members of the Choir have joined in the lobbying.

Mel Rimmer wrote in November to David Rutley, MP for Macclesfield, and was delighted to hear that he had taken up the matter with Lisa Dodd, Service Director for Sport and Culture at Wakefield Council. He received a response that '...the points raised by members of the WCS will be considered...I fully appreciate the value of the service offered and I am fully supportive of Wakefield doing everything it can in partnership with other YLI member authorities to support the continuing availability of the service'.

Another of our altos, Jean Egerton, also took up the campaign, writing directly to one of the York councillors. He replied with a question: would any other non-Yorkshire councils be willing to contribute to the upkeep of the service? Jean contacted a number of Cheshire councillors about this, who indicated they would be willing to receive petitions on this.

The next we heard was a letter in January from Robin Osterley, Chief Executive of Making Music, who have launched a campaign to save the music library service. In his letter he confirmed that over 2,000 letters and emails of protest against the closure had already been received by YLI, who were now considering a number of options, including taking up offers from third parties to take over the running of the service.

A meeting of YLI was scheduled for 26 January, but so far

we have no further information on what was decided (if anything).

In the meantime, the campaign continues, and everyone is urged to write to Yorkshire councillors and their MPs to save this valuable service. The key points to mention in any communication are: the Service is of national importance, not just to users in Yorkshire; it is used by thousands of choirs and orchestras, making it possible for hundreds of thousands of people to enjoy music in their community; it offers a valuable resource to young musicians; the closure of the Service would save paltry sums of money only.

You can keep up to date with the campaign on the Making Music website, www.making-music.org. In the meantime, Gwyneth Pailin is monitoring events on behalf of St George's Singers.

MEMORIES OF RAY BY ANN YOUNG

St George's Singers' membership has changed so much over the last few years that few members now will know or remember Raymond Lomax. I was already a member when Raymond joined us in 1987. Little did we realise what an exciting, adventurous, energetic musical journey we were embarking on!

At 'a stroke' of his baton he opened up St George's repertoire. He swept us along with his enthusiasm and energy, stretching our talents and instilling us with confidence. We would all leave his concerts exhausted but exhilarated!

He exposed us to a wide variety of musical styles, meticulously prepared our concerts and challenged our abilities in *African Sanctus* by David Fanshawe, *A riveder le stelle* by Ingvar Lidholm, *Te Deum* by Otto Olsson, Britten's *War Requiem* and grand opera choruses. The Lidholm and Olsson

pieces were British premieres. *African Sanctus* was accompanied by all the sound effects that the BBC Sounds Department could muster! The vaulting of St George's Church in Stockport was full of the sound of powerful jungle rain as we sang!

Another memorable concert was a Classic Opera Spectacular at the G-Mex under the auspices of Raymond Gubbay. Lights flashed across the audience in spectacular fashion. Raymond, as a timpanist with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, played proudly as we sang. We were elated, the muskets and canons of the *1812 Overture* brought the concert to a thrilling climax. It was an unforgettable evening.

Raymond seemed to have an inner engine that gave him tremendous energy for his music, whether it was a short Bruckner motet or a chorus from Verdi's *Requiem*. He introduced us to tours abroad to Germany and Belgium and opera amongst the tractors and ploughs at Civit Hills. He loved Christmas and would plan our next Christmas concert on Boxing Day. The concerts were held at Stockport Town Hall. The audience loved them and attended in droves.

I used to give Ray a lift to choir each week and learned much from him. He talked of the lives of composers as though they were his own personal friends. He would dissect each concert on the way home.

On one such journey home I asked him, when I left this earth would he arrange for the choir to sing at my funeral? He said without any hesitation that it would be impossible because he wouldn't be alive. He felt he would not reach the age of fifty. His life would only be short.

He certainly packed a musical extravaganza into a very short life. One of his favourite expressions in rehearsal was 'let's have it just one more time'. On our final notes he dragged out the most energy we could muster and left us amazed at our achievements.

He left St George's to concentrate on a smaller group of singers, Amici. It is very fitting that his memorial concert should include both choirs who played such an important role in his musical journey.

When he passed away, a glowing musical light went out in the North's musical tapestry.

Ann Young (alto) has been a member of St George's Singers for 37 years, was a former Chair of the Choir, and is also a member of Amici. The proceeds from the concert for Ray will go to Cancer Research UK.



Raymond Lomax, 1955-2002

Sunday 4 March, 7.30 pm
Royal Northern College of Music
'Remembering Ray'
Conductor: Stephen Threlfall;
Soloists: Jayne Carpenter, Mark Rowlinson; Piano: Wendy Dolby
St George's Singers
Amici Chamber Choir
Northern Symphony Orchestra

Lomax Arrangements for percussion
Dvořák Te Deum
Vaughan Williams Serenade to Music
Rachmaninov Piano Concerto no 2
Bruckner Locusts

£18, and concessions
Tel 0161 907 5200, www.rmcm.ac.uk



Ray with St George's Singers at Stockport Town Hall, 1993



ST GEORGE'S COAT OF MANY COLOURS



St George's Church in Stockport (often called the 'Cathedral on the A6') and one of the Choir's main concert venues, is used to big events. And they don't come much bigger than this giant coat.

The coat was made for a production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, performed by parishioners at the St George's Festival this summer, and is constructed from 8,832 squares. Work on the coat began last autumn as part of a community knitting project.

The 'Coat of Many Colours' was made by children and parishioners at St George's Church and primary school, and including some members of St George's Singers.

It measures 42ft 6in by 18ft 2in and weighs more than 364lbs—

that's 26 stones! It took 10 people using ropes to raise it into position for a display above the church choir.

The coat has been officially recognised by the Guinness Book of Records as the world's largest jacket, easily beating the previous record holder from the Ukraine, which measured a measly 32ft 6in by 17ft 9in, and which was made in 2002 to celebrate the Ukrainian fashion holiday.

Church members were delighted to receive their official Guinness certificate in a special ceremony at St George's.

After its display in the church, the coat was scheduled to be unpicked and sent to Africa to be used as blankets.

OUR CHRISTMAS TREE COMES TO LIFE



Every year during Advent St George's Church in Stockport holds a Christmas Tree Festival, and invites local groups and charities associated with the church to make and display trees that reflect their activities.

This year, to celebrate the recording of our new CD, entitled *The Christmas Life*, the Choir decided to make new decorations to match the theme of the CD.

Designed and masterminded by Mel Rimmer, the tree was gar-

landed with sheets of music and miniature trees, beautifully decorated with the words of the carol, 'bring the Christmas life into this house'.

Congratulations to all our creative tree designers—and well done for publicising our new CD at the same time!



EFFIE'S BURNING BY DAVE FRANCIS

Just before Christmas Brigit Forsyth rang to thank us for her copy of *The Christmas Life* and *Hemiola* and to apologise for not being able to come to either of our concerts in November and December.

She told us about a gig she was doing with her band The Fir Cones in London the week before Christmas. (Did you know Brigit has her own band and plays regularly in London?) She also invited us to a private showing of *Effie's Burning*, a play she was putting on at the Soho Theatre in London in January. Well we couldn't go to the gig but decided the play was a good excuse for a trip to London.

Effie's Burning, by Valerie Windsor, was first performed at the Library Theatre in Manchester as a lunch time show in 1987. It was then scheduled to be performed at the Bush Theatre but, before its opening, the theatre burned down. The National Theatre picked it up for five shows, followed by a four week run at the Offstage Theatre in Chalk Farm. After that the play

disappeared from the repertoire.

The play is a powerful drama about an elderly hospital patient and the young doctor who befriends her. Effie, the patient, has spent most of her life (from age 14) in a mental institution. Recently, due to the 'community care' policy, the institution was closed and she was moved into a 'halfway house'.

Deeply unhappy at being separated from the world she has come to know and depend upon, Effie has reacted to this change by setting fire to her room in the halfway house, resulting in a major fire. The play begins as she is in hospital recovering from burns and being investigated by the police. As Dr. Kovacs gets to know Effie and learn about her life, she begins to understand what has led her to this desperate action.

In its theme, the play reminded us of Eric Northey's play about Prestwich Mental Hospital that many of us saw in the summer.

In the original production 25 years ago Brigit played the part of the young Dr Kovacs, but in this production Brigit's daughter, the actor Zoe Mills, took the part of the doctor and Brigit played Effie. The play was well worth seeing, a moving and compelling piece that is very instructive about the plight of people who in the past were institutionalized as 'moral defectives'. Though the play was simply staged, both actors were completely convincing. The opening music, *Heart Time*, was composed by Brigit and played by her and Lucy Railton.

There was a chance to chat to Brigit afterwards. She was very pleased we had come. We visited a part of Soho we didn't know well. The Soho Theatre is small intimate theatre half way between Ronnie Scott's and Pizza Express – a jazz lover's paradise.

A final point. We should consider the possibility of inviting Brigit to play at one of our concerts, as she is a very accomplished cellist as well as a successful actor.



PETER MARCUS—ANGEL OR DEMON?

Anyone seen that new TV series, *Eternal Law*? From the sound of the title, you might be forgiven for thinking this is just another American legal drama. Well, forget the slick and sleazy lawyers from LA, Boston and Chicago. This is the real stuff.

Two angels (that's the heavenly kind, not the ones with the money) are sent down to earth to help people in trouble. (Stay with me here guys.) But the really bizarre twist is that they are disguised as lawyers—that's

barristers, not solicitors—and (even more bizarrely) they live and practise law in that hotbed of vice, criminality and evil-doing, York. No, not New York; that's York, ee-by-gum, Yorkshire.

Like all angels, they have wings that (naturally) only appear *in extremis*. (There is a third angel who keeps her wings in a cupboard—but that's another story.) And as angels, they (naturally) only represent the innocent, the deserving and the

truly penitent. The rest of mankind is handed over to a 'fallen angel' (boo, hiss!) who invariably loses his cases.

You may be wondering why this balderdash is getting a mention in *Hemiola*. Well, does anyone not think it a coincidence that our new Chair, a barrister, has just moved his chambers—to York?

Spooky, or what! (Cue X-files music...)



Exhausted after Tuesday evening's rehearsal, Peter overslept and dashed into court the next morning minus wig and gown

OLD FRIENDS RE-VISITED



During their trip 'down under' in September, Dave and Anne Francis went to visit ex-SGS member Michael Kertesz, whom many members will probably remember.

"Michael was a stalwart member of the bass section for several years.

"A native Australian, Michael is a biologist by profession and left the choir 2½ years ago, when he moved from Manchester University to the University of Sydney.

"He now sings with the Sydney Philharmonic Chorus – as a tenor (please come back Michael!).

"He and his partner, Liz, live in beautiful suburb of Sydney called Killara. Apart from singing, Michael's other leisure pursuit, we discovered, is spinning wool, which Liz then weaves on her loom. We had a lovely afternoon with them."

If any other Choir members have heard from old SGS friends and members, let us know what they're up to!

A SINGER'S GUIDE TO CONTROLLING YOUR CONDUCTOR

Choral music: a definition
A complex organisation
of sounds that is set
down by the composer,
incorrectly interpreted by
the conductor, ignored by
the singers, and
misunderstood by the
audience.

- 1 Never be satisfied with the tuning note. If the conductor gives you the note himself, insist on your preference for the piano.
- 2 Complain about the temperature of the rehearsal room, the lighting, the lack of space, or the draught. It is best to do this when the conductor is under pressure.
- 3 Bury your head in the music just before an important cue.
- 4 Ask for a re-audition or seating change. Ask often. Give the impression you're about to quit. Let the conductor know you're there as a personal favour.
- 5 Loudly clear your throat during pauses (tenors are trained to do this from birth). Quiet instrumental interludes are a good opportunity for blowing your nose.
- 6 Long after the passage has gone by, ask the conductor if your bottom C was in tune.
- 7 Wait until well into the rehearsal before letting the conductor know you don't have any music.
- 8 At dramatic moments in the music (preferably whilst the conductor is emoting wildly) be busy marking your music.
- 9 Look at your watch frequently. Shake it in disbelief occasionally.
- 10 Whenever possible, sing your part either an octave above or below what is written. This is excellent ear training for the conductor. If he hears the pitch, deny it vehemently and claim he must be hearing the harmonics.
- 11 Tell the conductor you're not sure of the beat. Conductors are always sensitive about their stick technique, so challenge it frequently.
- 12 If you are singing in a foreign language, ask the conductor as many questions as possible about the meaning of individual words. Occasionally, say the word twice and ask for his preference for pronunciation, making certain to say it exactly the same both times. If he remarks on their similarity, give a look of utter disdain and mutter about 'subtleties of inflection'.
- 13 Ask the conductor if he has listened to the Eric Ericson recording of the piece. Imply that he could learn a thing or two from it. Also ask if this is the first time he's conducted this piece.
- 14 If your phrasing is different to other singers, stick to your guns. Do not ask the conductor which is correct until backstage just before the concert.

If you want to see a master at work practising these techniques, go to:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3HZ4UM5uts&feature=youtu_gdata_player

PUGIN DOWN-UNDER BY ANNE FRANCIS

Last October, when we were in Australia, Dave and I spent a week in Tasmania, somewhere we had always wanted to visit. It's a fascinating and very beautiful place and there's hardly anyone there so driving and travelling is a pleasure.

On our last day before we got the flight back to Sydney we visited the small settlers' town of Richmond, one of Australia's oldest and best preserved towns which was once a strate-

is regarded as a great Tasmanian cultural treasure, were designed by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1842), 'an amazingly creative genius and the supreme designer of the early Victorian era.' Not our Gorton Monastery Pugin then, but his father.

Pugin was a prime mover in the Neo-Gothic style of architecture and design - Gothic was Christian and Christian was Gothic. It became the way people built churches and perceived churches

work together toward their shared vision.

Churches in Tasmania were built from three perfect little scale models brought out by Willson in 1844. They had been designed by Pugin and constructed in England by craftsmen in the employ of George Myers, his favoured builder. The additions to St John's church and the two churches at Oatlands and Colebrook were derived from these models. The Pugin baptismal font (above) was brought out by Bishop Willson in the 'Bella Marina' and the chancel window (below) was copied from Pugin's scale model.

Pugin's impact was felt not only in Tasmania. Right across Australia, from outback towns with tiny churches made out of corrugated iron with a little pointed door and pointed windows, to the greatest cathedrals, there are buildings which are directly related to Pugin's ideas.

Pugin's sons Edward and Peter Paul carried on his business after he died. Edward, as his father had, designed hundreds of churches - including of course a building loved by St George's Singers - Gorton Monastery.



OTHER KEY TASMANIAN EVENTS

1842—first official census,

population 57,471

1842—Hobart proclaimed a city

1842—peak year for convict arrivals

1842—Darlington penitentiary

reopened

1843—bushranger Martin Cash

captured, but later pardoned

1844—formation of Royal Society of

Tasmania, first branch outside

Britain

1845—Hobart Synagogue,

Australia's oldest, consecrated

1846—convict transportation to

Tasmania suspended until 1848

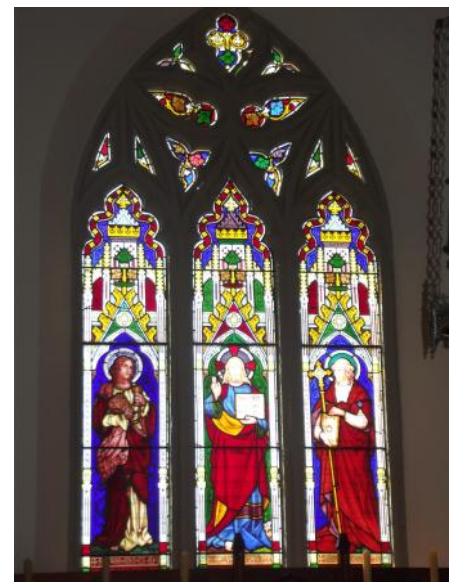


gic military post and convict settlement. As we parked the car we saw an interesting looking old church on the hillside by the river. This was St John the Evangelist Church, Australia's oldest used Catholic Church. With its historic cemetery it is the most visited church in Tasmania and along with the nearby convict bridge, a major icon of the state.

Inside the church we discovered that the nave had been built in 1837 from plans by an English architect, Henry Edmund Goodridge. Then in 1859 the church was enlarged with a chancel, a steeple and a sacristy. What caught our eye was the name of **Pugin**. The additions to the church, which

should be. Pugin designed the interior of the Palace of Westminster after the fire of 1834, and hundreds of churches, including St Giles Catholic Church in Cheadle (the one in Staffordshire, not Cheshire).

Pugin was great friends with Robert William Willson, priest in charge of the Nottingham Catholic Mission, whose work on behalf of the sick and needy regardless of creed had earned him the respect of all the townspeople. In 1842 Willson was the ideal choice as first Bishop of Hobart Town, heading a poor Catholic flock - over half of them convicts - scattered across Tasmania. When Pugin heard of the appointment he was delighted, seeing an opportunity to



MAINHAUSEN—A GOLD STANDARD COMPETITION BY GEOFF TAYLOR



The opening concert

**"It is the way of
music to produce joy"**
- Aristotle

Post-competition party—with judge
Stephen Williams



Mainhausen is a village eighteen miles outside Frankfurt, with a population of around six thou-

sand, about the same as Disney. The resemblance ends there. Mainhausen supports six choirs, three of them founded in the nineteenth century, and every five years since 1988 they have organised an International Choral competition. In the previous nine festivals they have welcomed over 7,000 people from more than twenty countries. All three hundred or so participants are lodged in local homes. Mainhausen is also the home of Christian Fröhlich, who sang with St George's Singers for three years a few years ago. He has an important role in the organising committee. When he told Anne, Dave, Sue and Geoff about the competition, adding that their

friends from El Café Chorale were participating and that Stephen Williams was an adjudicator,

they decided to have a June holiday in Germany.

The Festival began on Friday evening in a beautiful and packed abbey church. After a welcome to all the choirs and audience from Christian, in German, English and Spanish, homage was paid to the father of German music, Bach, with a thrilling performance of the *Prelude and Fugue in G Major* on the powerful abbey organ. A new choral work was then premiered by the combined choirs of Mainhausen. *Manic Herzeleid* was a setting of nine medieval poems by Thomas Gabriel, a local church musician and one of the adjudicators. He is also a Jazz pianist with a "Play Bach" trio and the music was modern with a rather insistent rhythm section.

A reception in the beautiful abbey gardens followed, with dancers in Regency costumes, and some of the competing choirs giving us a taste of the joys to come, with El Café Chorale performing Costa Rican folk songs. Stephen introduced us to Vytautas Miskinis, a fellow adjudicator. This composer of more than 300 motets, 15 masses and over 350 songs was delightful company. He was dismissive of our stories of singing in a choir of 26,000 at the Estonian Singing Festival. "That's nothing. At our Singing Festival in Lithuania we have a choir of 46,000!" He is becoming better known in this country following the release of a CD of his music by Polyphony.

The competition began at 9.30 prompt the following day with Male Voice Choirs. The men of El Café Chorale were particularly moving with a Costa Rican *El Padre Nuestro*, and, cannily, a Miskinis *Ave Regina Coelorum*. However, they were up against stiff competition. The first of two winning performances was by the staggeringly musical and disciplined students from the University of Louisville, the Cardinal Singers. The Americans showed off the most perfect unison singing I have ever heard in the *Znamenny Chant* by Igor Sakhno.



El Café Chorale at the competition

Their tenors ravished us in *Seigneur, je vous en prie* by Poulenc. They sang Mendelssohn *Nachtgesang* to Germans who responded enthusiastically and proved their versatility with three spiritual arrangements. (When Josh Ramirez, whom many of us remember from the tour by El Café Chorale, was studying for his Doctorate in piano at this University he was forbidden from joining this choir. His supervisor felt that the daily rehearsals of several hours would have interfered with his studies! All the choir members have to have tuning forks – and use them.)

The Mixed Choirs section introduced us to I Musici Capella, a sensational choir, one of two from the Philippines. The Philippino choirs, one of whom won Llangollen this year, will be much more prominent in international choral music in the future. We also heard choirs from Hungary, Denmark and Cuba. I Musici Capella also sang Mendelssohn beautifully to Germans (*Jaglied*) and they introduced us to haunting music by Phillipino composers. The Cardinal Singers gave the most appreciated “coals to Newcastle” piece with *Richte mich. Gott*, (not the easiest piece as we know!), and a wonderfully sustained Victoria *Sanctus*. In the only English piece, Howell’s *Salve Regina* they sounded like an English Cathedral Choir, and there’s no higher praise than that. In surely the most audacious judge influencing coup of all they premiered the very moving *At this time of my parting* which they had commissioned from Miskinis! Space

prevents a description of the whole section, with nearly all the choirs singing off copy. El Café Chorale came fourth, just a couple of points behind a Cuban Choir, but still attained gold standard. I Musici Capella won the section by the narrowest margin from the Americans.

Although this was all hugely enjoyable, nothing had prepared us for the final Jazz Choirs section, which redefined versatility. Entrevoces from Cuba put so much energy into their spirituals that the audience could not keep still. The Philipinos, in outrageous costumes,

exploded onto the stage with a choreographed and immensely exciting performance. To hear a choir that, soberly attired, had, moments before, sung Sweelink, Mendelssohn and Lauridsen beautifully, sweeping us all up in their *Circle of Life* and *We Will Rock You* (Queen not Willcocks!) was as stunning as it was unexpected. But those Americans narrowly, but justifiably, won the section, avenging their defeat in the mixed choirs. Spirituals, of course, with breath-taking solos, but also a wonderfully original wordless *Voice Dance IV* by Greg Jasperce. Small wonder that they scored a historic record – 99.06 points. None of the judges could tell us how they lost nearly a point.



Members of El Café Chorale—recognise anyone?

We had to go for an heroic meal in a local Croatian restaurant to calm down before returning to the evening party. The pleasure all the singers got from each other’s company was self-evident. The rapport and hugging affection between the Americans and the Cubans was particularly touching as evidence of the power of singing to demolish barriers. The Festival President quoted Aristotle “It is the way of music to produce joy” and there was certainly plenty of joy, and splendid Weissbier at the party.



Christian with conductors and El Café Chorale

The following day we all assembled in the afternoon to hear the results. The Chair of the jury, Prof. Hans Jaskulsky, a Frankfurt graduate who directs the Music Centre at the University of the Ruhr, Bochum, read out the marks to whoops of delight from the singers and much hugging. The prizewinners’ concert that followed in the evening was a riotous affair. After a performance by local children, the choir members of the future, and some rather overlong earnest speeches by local dignitaries, the winning choirs encored their best pieces to continuous standing ovations by a gratifyingly demonstrative audience. The most demonstrative members of the audience were the singers, congratulating their fellow competitors. The local Mayor, in the Festival programme wrote, “Music is the only world language and needs no translation”. This was evident in the atmosphere at the final concert, and the inevitable party afterwards. The Mayor also wrote that the organisers had accomplished a logistical miracle. We agreed, and were overawed that this international festival was held in a village about the same size as Disley.



I Musici Capelli



Dave and Geoff’s supper

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 community choir, capable of performing major choral works to a high standard and which would attract singers and audiences from neighbouring towns. Geoffrey died in 1964, but his legacy was nurtured by his successors Duncan Eyre, Ray Lomax and 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 100 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, Gorton Monastery, Manchester Cathedral and Royal Northern College of Music, hold annual Singing Days, and tour regularly in the UK and abroad. St George's Singers continues to explore and expand the boundaries of choral music. Entry to the Choir is via audition, and new members are welcome to come along to rehearsals at any time.

ST GEORGE'S 2011-2012 SEASON

Sunday 4 March 2012, 7.30 pm
Royal Northern College of Music
Remembering Ray

Saturday 24 March 2012, 7.30pm
St George's Church, Stockport
Spanish Gold

Sunday, 17 June 2012, 7.30 pm
Gorton Monastery
VIVAT!

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

BUSY YEAR FOR CHESHIRE CONSORT

The Cheshire Consort, St George's Singers' wedding choir, has a busy year ahead with a series of weddings and a Gorton Monastery appearance.

On 21 June the Consort is singing at a very special event at the Monastery, a 'Saints Supper', to help raise money to continue the restoration of the building's famous saints' statues. The 12 statues were removed from the Monastery to be taken for salvage, but were discovered by a local historian in a Sotheby's catalogue, and were saved by Manchester City Council for the Monastery. However, they are all in need of serious restoration, and the Monastery has launched an appeal to save the 6ft high sandstone statues. The evening also commemorates the 150th anniversary of the arrival

of the Franciscans in Gorton.

The Consort also has a number of summer weddings planned in Manchester and Cheshire. The Consort's reputation is growing, and the group has recently been accorded 'preferred supplier' status at the Monastery, which hosts dozens of weddings every year.

After the last wedding, the Consort coordinator Sue Taylor received the following letter of thanks from the bride:

'I have to say we feel very fortunate and privileged to have had The Cheshire Consort sing at our wedding. The performance was simply amazing! David and I and our friends and family thoroughly enjoyed the performance. I am also grateful to you for suggesting the anthem

as it really worked well and helped to hype the entrance of the bride. It was great! The choir really did add something unique and personal to our wedding. It truly was a special day! You can tell the choir that they have gained more fans.'

Any members of St George's Singers can join the Consort, which is directed by our Assistant MD, Calum Fraser. The repertoire sung is very varied—church and secular weddings are catered for—and everyone always enjoys bringing so much joy to the bride and groom.

To book the Cheshire Consort, contact Sue Taylor, email setaylor9@btinternet.com, or visit St George's Singers' website, www.st-georges-singers.org.uk.