



St George's Singers

Hemiola

St George's Singers

WALTER AND LENNY

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ST GEORGE'S SINGERS

PRESIDENT:

Marcus Farnsworth MA ARAM

VICE PRESIDENTS:

Susan Roper
Stephen Threlfall
Stephen Williams
Sasha Johnson Manning

MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

Neil Taylor

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ACCOMPANIST:

Peter Durrant

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Leonard Bernstein and Walter Hussey

In November, St George's Singers will be performing three works, including *Chichester Psalms*. Leonard Bernstein wrote the piece in 1964, following a commission from the then Dean of Chichester, the Very Reverend Walter Hussey. The Dean wanted this work to be the centrepiece for the 1965 Southern Cathedrals Festival held at the cathedral in Chichester.



Madonna and Child, Henry Moore, St Mathews, Northampton

John Walter Anderton Hussey, born in Northampton, second son of a canon, was educated at Marlborough College where he was a talented schoolboy trombonist and a contemporary of John Betjeman. During his time at Keble College, Oxford, after watching a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, he began his foray into the world of arts, buying a sketch of Romeo's costume for ten shillings. (50p)

Sir Kenneth Clark, art historian and broadcaster, described him as the 'last great patron of art in the Church of England ... an aesthete, impresario and indomitable persuader'. Over a period of 40 years, he helped to reinvigorate the great tradition of the church as patron of the arts.

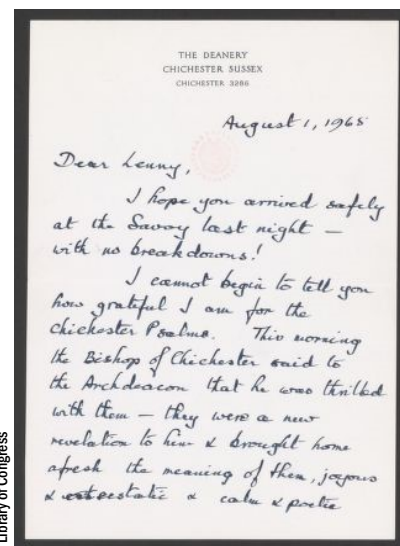
Before his tenure in Chichester, Hussey was vicar at St Matthew's in Northampton, having taken over from his father. This magnificent church, that John Betjeman described as 'the sort of church which brings you to your knees', became a centre of both visual and musical creative arts. Hussey oversaw the restoration of medieval features and the com-

mission and installation of modern art including a statue by Henry Moore, *Madonna and Child*. Hussey, whilst ambitious for his church, was



Tapestry by John Piper at Chichester Cathedral

mindful of his parishioners. In discussion with Moore, Hussey was concerned to ensure the completed work respected the 'sensibilities of both the artist and the congregation of St Matthew's'. >> **Page 6**



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Photo by Keith Edkins (Wikipedia)

West Sussex Record Office

Saturday 24 November 2018
Royal Northern College of Music,
Oxford Road, MANCHESTER

Leonard Bernstein
Chichester Psalms

Howard Goodall
Eternal Light
Sasha Johnson Manning
War's Embers

St George's Singers
Conductor Neil Taylor
Organ Graham Eccles
Piano Pete Durrant

NB Coach from Poynton to RNCM

Tickets: £16, £14 concessions
£7 students/children/group
discounts
Tel: 01663 764012

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

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

A HUNDRED YEARS ON - BERNSTEIN

LEONARD BERNSTEIN *CHICHESTER PSALMS*



It is almost a hundred years since the signing of the armistice between the allies of World War One and Germany, to stop fighting as a prelude to peace negotiations. On 24 November 2018, our concert will include three works that bear testament to this momentous centenary.

2018 also marks the centenary of the birth of Leonard Bernstein, who occupies an important place in music history as conductor, pianist and composer, a triple career he pursued with flamboyance and vigour throughout his professional life. As a composer he is probably best known for his stage musical *West Side Story* (1957) as well as several other shows for stage and screen including the film *On the Town* (1949) with Gene Kelly.

But he was more than a populist composer. He produced three powerful symphonies and a sparkling opera on the subject of Voltaire's *Candide* amongst other works. His overall style was very eclectic, with influences of Stravinsky as well as traditional and popular sources. Most of his large scale non-theatrical works deal with religious themes and include setting of biblical or liturgical texts.

The 1960s was one of the most divisive and tumultuous decades for America and the world. It was marked by the

civil rights movement and the Vietnam war. In 1963 President Kennedy was assassinated and a close friend of Bernstein had been murdered. He took a sabbatical from his post as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic to focus on composition.

It was in early December 1963 that Bernstein had first received a letter from The Reverend Dean Walter Hussey, commissioning a work for the Chichester Festival in 1965, so *Chichester Psalms* was composed amid a busy schedule. It was his first completed work since finishing the third symphony, *Kaddish*, written in memory of President Kennedy. Both pieces combine choruses singing Hebrew text, with orchestral forces, but where *Kaddish* is a statement of profound anguish and despair, *Chichester Psalms* is filled with more hope. By combining the

ducting. Hussey suggested to Bernstein that he might like to conduct the performance in Chichester but this ultimately fell to the musical director, John Birch.

Bernstein originally described the piece as *Psalms of Youth*, but he dropped this later as he considered the piece might be too difficult for young performers. The work is for boy treble or countertenor, solo quartet, choir and orchestra. However, we will be performing the reduction written by Bernstein, that pares down the orchestral performance to organ, harp and percussion. Bernstein stated explicitly that the boy treble part (Psalm 23) should never be sung by a woman, to reinforce the liturgical meaning of the passage sung, as if David himself was giving voice.

Despite it being 'accessible', *Chichester Psalms* has a reputation amongst singers as being notoriously tricky, especially the opening movement. Spare a thought for our valiant tenors who will be singing what is considered one of the most difficult parts for choirs.

The range of the piece is one thing, but maintaining major sevenths with the basses is a significant challenge! The first movement's dissonant sevenths, present in every chord, sound like clanging bells ordering their listeners to wake from deep sleep. >> Page 3

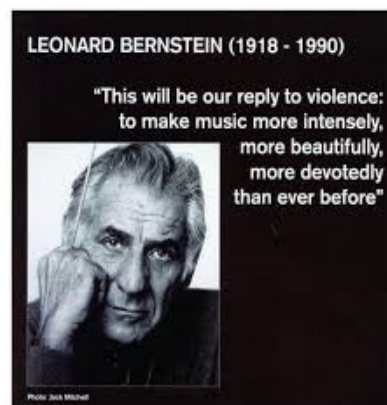
Awake, psaltery and harp! I will rouse the dawn!
Urah, hanevel, v'chinar! A-irab shahar!

עוה נבל וקנור; אָפּערֶה שָׁחַר.

Hebrew with Christian choral tradition, Bernstein was implicitly issuing a plea for peace in Israel during a turbulent time in that young country's history.

An openly Jewish work, *Chichester Psalms* is affirmative, a rousing call to arms but also, at times, almost serene. He deliberately wrote what might be seen as an accessible piece, and he is recorded as joking that John Cage might find it 'square'.

Although *Chichester Psalms* was commissioned by The Reverend Dean Walter Hussey, for the Southern Cathedrals Festival, the premiere took place in the Philharmonic Hall, New York, on July 15, 1965, with Bernstein himself con-



A HUNDRED YEARS ON - BERNSTEIN



Chichester Cathedral ©Telegraph

◀◀ **Page 2** The second movement, Psalm 23, *The Lord is my shepherd*, opens with the song of David in a gentle, traditional sounding melody, sung by the boy treble and echoed in the sopranos.

The boy treble's theme was adapted from a musical that Bernstein never completed, *The Skin of our Teeth*, based on a play by Thornton Wilder. The men's theme was adapted from material that was eventually cut from *West Side Story*.

This tranquil melody is abruptly interrupted by the low, rumbling sounds of the men's voices singing Psalm 2, *Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?*

Then there is a gradual overpowering of this more sinister interruption, which is sung by sopranos, responding to the slightly unusual score direction, 'blissfully unaware of threat', that may hold meaning in Bernstein's experiences of 1964.

In his letter to Hussey, Bernstein himself confirmed the link

between the Chichester commission and his most popular stage-work: 'It is quite popular in feeling (even a hint, as you suggested, of *West Side Story*), and it has an old-fashioned sweetness along with its

more violent moments.' In his programme notes for the New York premiere Bernstein said 'I have a deep suspicion that every work I write, for whatever medium, is really theatre music in some way'.

In a letter to a friend after the English première, Bernstein wrote:

'The *Psalms* went off well, in spite of a shockingly small amount of rehearsal. The choirs (Winchester, Salisbury and Chichester) were a delight!

They had everything down pat, but the orchestra was swimming in the open sea. They simply didn't know it. But somehow the glorious acoustics of Chichester Cathedral cushion everything so that even mistakes sound pretty'

Chichester Psalms is an eclectic mix of Hebrew text, Christian choral

tradition and Broadway jazz. At least two choreographed ballets have been set to *Chichester Psalms*. In 2004 the New York City Ballet shared the stage of the New York Stage Theatre with the Julliard Ensemble, for a visual interpretation of the score by Peter Martins. In March this year, in a tribute to Bernstein at the Royal Opera House, the work was also interpreted on stage, this time by the Royal Ballet's *Yugen*, choreographed by Wayne McGregor.

Bernstein commented during a 1977 press conference, 'I spent almost the whole year writing 12-tone music and even more experimental stuff. I was happy that all these new sounds were coming out: but after about six months of work I threw it all away. It just wasn't my music; it wasn't honest. The end result was *Chichester Psalms*, which is the most accessible, B-flat major-ish tonal piece I've ever written.'



Chichester Psalms, / *Yugen* Royal Ballet © Guardian

In June 1973, Bernstein conducted *Chichester Psalms* at a concert for Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, which was televised all over Europe.

After the concert by the Orchestra Sinfonica de Roma, the Harvard Glee Club and the Newark Boys Chorus, the Pope blessed the musicians, and thanked Bernstein.

The pontiff said to the audience, "Ecco un Americano che vien a dare lezione musicale a noi della vecchia Europa."

("Behold an American who has come to give music lessons to us of the old Europe.)"

BERNSTEIN IN VERSE

In a humorous poem, quoted by *The New York Times* in 1965, Bernstein described the process of composing *Chichester Psalms*.

For hours on end, I brooded and mused
On *materiae musicae*, used and abused;
On aspects on unconventionality,
Over the death in our time of tonality.

Pieces for nattering, clucking sopranos
With squadrons of vibraphones, fleets of pianos
Played with forearms, the fists and the palms
And then I came up with the *Chichester Psalms*.

These psalms are a simple and modest affair,
Tonal and tuneful and somewhat square,
Certain to sicken a stout John Cager
With its tonics and triads in E-flat major.

But there it stands - the result of my pondering,
Two long months of avant-garde wandering,
My youngest child, old-fashioned and sweet.
And he stands on his own two tonal feet.

A HUNDRED YEARS ON - GOODALL

The music for *Eternal Light: A Requiem* flooded into my head in a great rush, confirming the suspicion that I had been nudging towards something addressing grief for some time. It had probably been triggered by a commission I completed in 2005 for the choir of King's School, Canterbury, in memory of a student, Lucy Holland, who died with members of her family in the Indian Ocean tsunami. Nothing can alleviate the suffering of losing a child, but perhaps some things – kindness, the refusal to forget, and even, in this instance, a piece of choral music sung by young people – could mark the passing of a precious life and honour it with dignity, compassion and beauty.

Howard Goodall,
Guardian 26 Sept 2008



Rowan Atkinson, Howard Goodall and Richard Curtis

More popularly known for writing TV theme tunes (*Blackadder*, *Vicar of Dibley*, *Red Dwarf*) Howard Goodall is equally well known in the world of choral singing. *Eternal Light* was written specifically for singers, dancers and orchestra, and received its New York premiere performance in November 2016, in Carnegie Hall, 51 years after Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*. Commissioned by London Musici, the work's world premiere took place in the Lowry Theatre, Salford, with the Manchester University Chamber Choir as well as choreography for Ballet Rambert.

Goodall, in an interview in 2008, mooted that any composer writing a requiem in these modern days would feel the weight of tradition bearing down. He considered one of his most fundamental challenges for the piece was to address '...what - in the 21st century - is a requiem for; who is it for; and what does it mean.'

For his *Eternal Light*, Goodall went in search of poetry, both secular and sacred, that reflect on the various concepts of 'requiem'; peace, grief, comfort and faith in an afterlife. In her review of the official recording of the work, Dr Liz Garnett notes '...(Goodall) aligns himself with Brahms in his choice of vernacular texts and his philosophical approach to the form. To my ears, though, the more immediate comparison was with Britten, since he retains the Latin texts to interweave with the English poems'. Goodall's piece 'sits firmly in the post-Rutter choral tradition of new music that is accessible to amateur choirs'.

In rehearsal, many of the Choir have come to love Goodall's re-working of John Henry Newman's hymn *Lead kindly, light, amid th'encircling gloom*. This iconic hymn was sung by British troops to the accompaniment of nearby artillery fire on the Western Front, at services held before going into the trenches the following day. It was also sung by Betsie ten Boom, sister of Corrie ten Boom, and other women as they were led by the S.S. Guards to the concentration camp Ravensbruck during the Holocaust.



A young Howard Goodall as boy chorister in Oxford.

Garnett notes 'Goodall's vocal lines are good at bringing out the natural prosody (patterns of rhythm and sound) of the text in their rise and fall, even when written in crotchets'. *Lead kindly light* is a prime example; this simple lilting melody will no doubt become a church classic in the spirit of his arrangement of *The Lord is my Shepherd*.

For the *Dies Irae*, Goodall chose a Canadian poem from the First World War, *In Flanders Fields*, by John McCrae, reasoning that "since hell – in my mind – is something we here on earth are quite capable of creating without the expertise of Satan or the Almighty, and the Flanders trenches must come close to anyone's idea of hell."

Our soloists, Leonie Maxwell, Joe Judge and Terence Ayebare, will be performing a number of the pieces, some accompanied by choir in contrast and others where we repeat, intertwine and, hopefully, enhance their melodies. *Lacrymosa* for baritone, is set to the poem *Do not Stand at my Grave and Weep*. Mary Frye's words offer



Eternal Light - Ballet Rambert © Guardian

comfort and seem to welcome death not as an ending of a life, but the beginning. It is a beguiling melody set above the choir's repeated words, 'lacrymosa dies illa'.

The last movement, *In Paradisum*, draws together music from several of the preceding sections. The whole ensemble will sing together, finishing *Eternal Light* in a peaceful and reflective close.



Eternal Light - Ballet Rambert
© Guardian

With thanks to Dr Liz Garnett,
HelpingyouHarmonise.com

A HUNDRED YEARS ON - WAR'S EMBERS

WHITTINGHAM 1918

Dr Eric Northey, bass, was instrumental in introducing the choir to the two year Arts & Heritage Project, *Whittingham Lives*. He also led the decision to commission *War's Embers* from Sasha Johnson Manning.



Dr Eric Northey

Whittingham 1918, Eric's new play, is to be premiered at St Peter's Arts Centre, Preston on **Thursday 25, Friday 26 and Saturday 27 October**. The play uses a bold mix of professional actors and final year students on UCLan's BA Acting Course. It will then tour other parts of the North West, funded by Unison.

Based on research into the asylum papers, *Whittingham 1918* depicts the drama of Whittingham Asylum, near Preston, as the First World War comes to a dramatic end. With over 900,000 British military killed, 2 million wounded, 200,000 missing, all UK hospitals and institutions are admitting war-related casualties. Delivered in secret by closed ambulance trains,

Whittingham Asylum has to take in 1,000 shell-shocked 'service patients', to add to the 3,000 civilian mental cases. The experienced medical staff who had gone to war either never came back, or returned

so devastated that they struggled to fit into a changed world.

And there is resistance. There is now a union trying to end a culture of 96 hours a week pittance pay. In the absence of men, it is the women who lead the fight against war and against the politicians who started it. Like all wars, it leaves 'the world turned upside down' and it seems it's a woman's job to change it.

The play is a moving counterblast to the glorification of war. It questions who is 'mad' - the war-monger or the peace makers? It presents a tale of hope not hatred, and that in a shattered world, it is women who pick up the pieces, and rebuild.

Whittingham Lives Project

SASHA JOHNSON MANNING

In our June concert, we gave a performance of three pieces from the commissioned work *War's Embers*, written by Sasha Johnson Manning.



Sasha Johnson Manning © BBC

Sasha's choral suite was commissioned by the Whittingham Lives Project and is based on the poetry of Ivor Gurney, a tragic victim of war who spent many years in an asylum. The suite of ten songs is accessible and powerful. Sasha hoped that, 'in a gentle way, I have done respectful justice to the shining legacy of this tender yet brave individual, whose creativity, despite taking place in the midst of unimaginable horror, lives on.'

During rehearsals, the Choir have found this work to be both accessible and powerful; whilst both poems and music reflect on the horrors that Gurney witnessed, they are also hopeful, compassionate and reflect the longing that Ivor Gurney had for his beloved Gloucestershire countryside.



Ivor Bertie Gurney, 1890 - 1937

©Gloucestershire County Council

Song

Only the wanderer
Knows England's graces,
Or can anew see clear
Familiar faces.

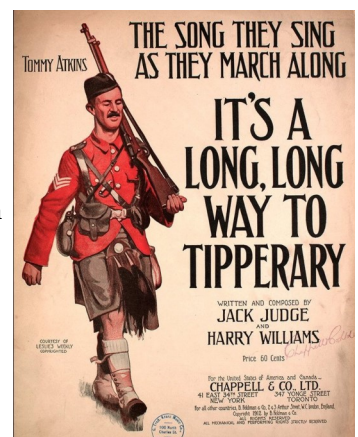
And who loves joy as he
That dwells in shadows?
Do not forget me quite,
O Severn meadows.

Ivor Gurney

SINGING TOGETHER

On Saturday 29 September, a number of singers (both St George's Singers and other friends) gathered at St John's Minster in Preston to enjoy a day of singing together a range of music, that reflected the moods, life and times of the Whittingham Asylum. From the sublime *Locus iste* (*This place was made by God*) to a robust performance of *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* and *Pack up your Troubles in your old kit bag*, sung together.

Neil Taylor and Pete Durrant were our engaging and entertaining musical team, guiding us through the four part harmony pieces. A number of us had an interesting wake up call when asked to sing from memory, duetting *Early one Morning* and *The Girl I left behind me!* On a very light note, we all enjoyed words set to familiar hymn tunes; *We've had no beer* to the tune of *Abide with Me* would have been sung with great gusto in the trenches.



WALTER AND LENNY

Letter from Walter to Lenny,

11 June 1965

Dear Dr Bernstein,

I have just returned after being away for five weeks as a result of a tiny cerebral thrombosis. In due course the doctors assure me that I shall be quite fit again and need take no notice of it, but just at present I feel slightly old and tired!

The Chichester Psalms arrived yesterday and I do indeed thank you for them. They are splendid and exactly the sort of thing that I was hoping for. So far as I can judge they seem to be admirable and I thank you most warmly for them.

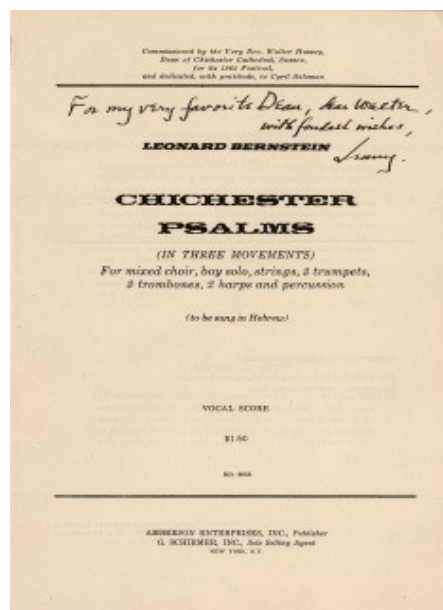
If it is at all possible for you to come over and hear them in late July we shall be delighted for you to do so. In this case please come and stay at the Deanery.

Would you like to conduct them?

As to the orchestra, Mr Birch has got this in hand and will I am sure follow your wishes.

Yours sincerely

Walter Hussey,



The vocal score of Chichester Psalms, with a dedication from Bernstein to Hussey.

◀◀ **Page 1** Whilst he is associated with some of the most iconic visual works of art of the 20th century, these are outnumbered by the range and diversity of the many musical commissions Hussey inspired.

Whilst at St Matthew's, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the church, he commissioned works from Benjamin Britten (*Rejoice in the Lamb*) and Michael Tippett (*Fanfare No 1*) for the celebrations. Other commissions included Gerald Finzi (*Lo, The Full Final Sacrifice*), and Malcolm Arnold (*Laudate Dominum*).

In his autobiography, Hussey gave a fascinating account of how he came to approach Bernstein. During his first visit to the USA, his host happened to be a friend of Bernstein's doctor, 'Chuck' Solomon (the Cyril Solomon, to whom the work is jointly dedicated). A brief meeting

between Hussey and Bernstein took place after a New York Philharmonic rehearsal. In subsequent letters to the composer, Hussey suggested a setting of Psalm

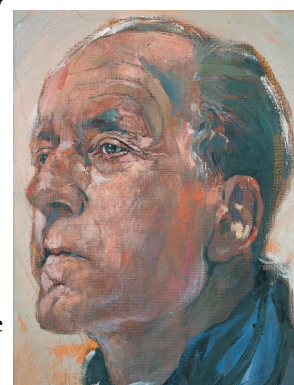
Two as well as a 'touch of the idiom of *West Side Story*'. Hussey accepted the texts being set in Hebrew ('the choir will do their best to cope!').

Hussey's letters to 'Call me Lenny' Bernstein remain on record and detail the transatlantic relationship developed decades before the advent of email. They also give an insight into the nature of the man.

Outwardly a shy man, Hussey had a gift for making friends, especially with those artists and musicians with whom he worked. He had, what might be termed in Yiddish, 'moxie' and 'chutzpah'; audacity, courage and the tenacity to follow through ambitions coupled with almost shameless boldness. Walter could be a charming force to whom few could say 'no'. Never obsequious, he could still provide a plethora of praise amidst the request for more.

But those who knew him well - or did say 'no' - understood that he could be tetchy, bad tempered and occasionally bemused when a few of his plans did not fall into

The classic definition of 'chutzpah' is that given by Leo Rosten: 'that quality enshrined in a man who, having killed his mother and father, throws himself on the mercy of the court because he is an orphan.'



Portrait of Rev Walter Hussey by Graham Sutherland

Choral work commissioned by Walter Hussey whilst vicar of St Matthew's Church, Northampton

1943	Benjamin Britten	<i>Rejoice in the Lamb</i>
1943	Michael Tippett	<i>Fanfare No. 1 for 10 Brass Instruments</i>
1944	Edmund Rubbra	<i>The Revival</i>
1945	Lennox Berkeley	<i>Festival Anthem</i>
1946	Gerald Finzi	<i>Lo, the full, final sacrifice</i>
1946	Benjamin Britten	<i>Prelude and Fugue on a Theme of Vittoria</i>
1948	Christopher Headington	<i>Festival Anthem: Supreme Bliss</i>
1949	John Rose	<i>Festival Hymn</i>
1950	Malcolm Arnold	<i>Laudate Dominum</i>

WALTER AND LENNY



Photo by Paul Dykes (Wikimedia)

Marc Chagall, window in Chichester Cathedral

place.

It is safe to say that Hussey was an aesthetic snob and remained 'enthusiastically unmarried' throughout his life. His eye for good art was nevertheless extraordinary and visionary in the world of the church.



West Sussex Record Office

Walter Hussey (late 1940s)

Hussey's maxim was simple: in art, the old and new can sit together happily so long as each has genuine quality.

When he moved from St Matthew's to become Dean of Chichester Cathedral, Hussey remained committed to retaining the

bond between the church and the arts.

In the 1950s, Bishop George Bell initiated the idea of using modern art to invigorate and beautify the cathedral. When he moved to the cathedral in 1955, Hussey put these ideas into effect. During his time as dean, Hussey commissioned works by Graham Sutherland, Marc Chagall, Hans Feibusch and John Piper and displayed them in his 11th-century cathedral

And it was not only the cathedral that held these extraordinary examples of paintings and engravings. He also crammed his deanery with his own art collection and later donated this to the city, on the condition that they be displayed in Pallant House, now an art centre in Chichester with an international reputation for the finest collection

of 20th-century British paintings and drawings outside the Tate.

It is not clear how Hussey managed to accumulate such a large quantity of these fine works of art. Perhaps his working relationship with so many contemporary new artists allowed for certain flexibility in costs. But his legacy of commissioning work to reflect the ideas generated by faith and the Church lives on in places of worship around the country. As an example, a relatively recent project, *commission4mission*, was launched in 2009 to encourage the commissioning and placing of contemporary Christian Art in churches - as a means of fundraising for charities and as a mission opportunity for churches.



©National Portrait Gallery

Michael Tippett and Benjamin Britten, both composers of music commissioned by Rev Walter Hussey, on behalf of St Matthew's Church, Northampton.



Chichester Cathedral.org.uk

Noli me Tangere by Graham Sutherland

Sir Kenneth Clark spoke at the unveiling of Graham Sutherland's *Noli me Tangere* at Chichester Cathedral and reflected on the situation when Hussey first began to commission contemporary artists '...when in 1944, a small body of artists and amateurs made a bomb-stricken

journey to Northampton for the unveiling of Henry Moore's *Virgin and Child*, Canon Hussey had lit a candle, which is still very far from being a blaze...The artists commissioned by Canon Hussey were...little known outside the

company of those directly interested in art. I think that even then collectors - both private and public - were shy of their work, and to put it in a church was a wonderful act of vision, courage and persuasive skill.'

Noli me tangere is the Latin version of a phrase spoken, according to John 20:17, by Jesus to Mary Magdalene when she recognized him after his resurrection

TALES FROM THE CHOIR

SINGING COINCIDENCE

Sue Taylor (Soprano) had arranged an opera trip to Lucca, Italy for Geoff's birthday last August.

As they entered Puccini's house / museum, they heard the strains of *O mio babbino caro* coming from upstairs.

They assumed it was a recording but, as they approached, they saw a young woman singing, standing by Puccini's piano, accompanied by her smart phone and a small but appreciative audience.

They were astonished to find it was the Chetham's sixth form pupil who stood next to Sue at the "Music Makers" concert!

A TRIP TO GIGGLESWICK ANNE & DAVE FRANCIS

Many in the choir know Margaret Hutchcroft. A past member of St. George's Singers (she was choir secretary for several years in the late 'eighties), she has been for many years a loyal

Friend who attends almost all our concerts.

What you may not know is that Margaret's niece, Tricia Rees-Jones, is herself an experienced choral conductor. And an enterprising one; when she and her husband, David, moved to near Wells in Somerset four years ago, Tricia

founded a new chamber choir, the Swan Singers.

In late May this choir came on tour to the north of England, including a concert at Giggleswick School in Yorkshire. Tricia was hopeful that her choral-music loving aunt would be able to attend and hear the Swan Singers for the very first time. One big problem – Margaret doesn't drive and Giggleswick is a long way from Poynton. So Tricia contacted Jacqui Smith to ask if there was any chance that someone in SGS could take Margaret to the concert.



Serendipity No. 1 – We regularly drive to Todmorden where our daughter and family live.

Serendipity No. 2 – Todmorden is more than half way to Giggleswick.

Serendipity No. 3 – On the very day of the concert we would be taking our grandchildren home (half-term week). Plenty of room in the car for Margaret.

All this explains how we came to hear a lovely programme of English choral music sung by the excellent Swan Singers in

the remarkable venue that is Giggleswick School Chapel, known to locals as 'the St. Paul's of the dales' (pay it a visit if you are ever in the area).

We heard many familiar classics by Tallis, Purcell, Finzi, Harris and Stanford, among others. All sung quite beautifully. Their rendition of Finzi's 'Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice' brought back particular memories for Margaret, as she was still singing in St George's Singers when we recorded it on our first CD in 1999.

All in all, a lovely trip with a lovely lady.

END OF YEAR SOCIAL PHOTOS BRIAN MARSDEN



At our end of year social the traditional role of Master of Ceremonies was transferred from Chair to our own master of the double

entendre, Chris Shelley. With his own idiosyncratic sense of humour and timing, Chris masterfully handled the running of the social, entertaining all present with his mid item patter.

As always, we remain amazed at the talent of our fellow choir members, not only in the musical realms, but also in poetry and reading.

We were delighted to have Neil with us for the evening, especially as he volunteered to be accompanist for all those soloists - above and beyond the call of duty.

Some (but not all) of the highlights included;

An own composition performed by Rhianon Becque;

Jacqui Harmer and Miranda Thewlis trilling their way into the high atmosphere with the *Lakmé* duet;

Mother and daughter (Jacqui and Meghan Smith) performing a duet, *Courante*, on the piano;

Dawn Garfitt breaking her own rules and singing *O mio babbino caro* on her own, in front of the choir, for the first time;

The cautionary tale of Jim, who ran away and was eaten by a lion, retold from memory by Kathy Halsall;

A welcome return for the tales from McGonnegal, read by Michael Calam;

A group participation song 'conducted' from her wheelchair by Sarah Lionheart. (We were not that good, but enjoyed the traditional guide and scout songs!)



ST GEORGE'S SINGS SYMPHONY SUPPORT

MAHLER 2ND SYMPHONY DARREN NIMAN

"Still Buzzing!" "Not come back down to earth yet!" ... "On Cloud 9!"

These and many other euphemisms can only begin to describe the satisfaction that this ensemble, this extremely talented orchestra, choir and soloists provided to an enthusiastic audience on an otherwise cold, dark night.

Gorton Monastery, provided a more than fitting backdrop for a performance of Mahler's stunning masterpiece; whereas this building has undergone its own "Aufersteh'n", so does the music lift our human spirits ... the ruins of despair to the heavenly heights.

I have for many years played in 'amateur' orchestras on timpani and to this day, especially when we witness such splendid playing such as we did last night, ...we feel so privileged to have the people, venues and facilities to make things happen...the sheer professionalism, dedication and hard work which was put in to this performance shone through, ... offering us a glimpse of the heavens to which Mahler was referring us and leading us towards.

...The St George's Singers and Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra are two ensembles who know their stuff. They take on works which even some professional orchestras wouldn't touch. On the night ... they tackled the intricacies of this score, not only in terms of the expression and technical difficulties of the playing, but carrying off, very successfully, the ever-changing dynamics and issues of balance and projection in a highly challenging acoustic which the Monastery presents. All credit is due to not only the soloists and orchestra, but first and



Slaithwaite Philharmonic & St George's - Darren Niman

foremost the conductor Benjamin Ellin and Chorus Master Neil Taylor for this remarkable achievement.

Bringing these massed forces all

There once was a composer called Mahler,
Whose works were too large for the parlour.
The end and the start
Were so far apart,
You could have wished they were smaller.

Thomas B Pitfield, 1903–1999
Composer, instrumentalist, illustrator

together with such mastery is no mean feat. But Benjamin has a very impressive cv. Under his direction the SPO has gone from strength to strength over recent seasonsChorus Master Neil Taylor is a renowned Music Director, organist and accompanist and under his leadership, the St George's Singers is recognized as one of the leading choirs in the North West, performing at a wide variety of venues including the Bridgewater Hall...

The arrangement of the offstage brass and timpani were spot on, causing the horn calls to resonate around the back of the nave and beyond; closing one's eyes, you would have thought it

was the Royal Albert Hall...

One cannot ignore a few very sublime moments in the proceedings. Firstly, that gorgeous *Urlicht*, the Primal Light, where mezzo-soprano Olivia Ray yearns from *Das Knaben Wunderhorn*. "I am of God, and to God I shall return", she sang, following a moment of calm, an oasis where perhaps we get a false sense of security before all hell breaks loose a few seconds later.

...Secondly, the first entry of the chorus, *Aufersteh'n*, so quiet yet so powerful, emotional and heart-wrenching. Who can deny the occurrence of a deep spirituality going on here?

Then we have her angelic colleague Bibi Heal, as they headed towards the concluding pages in their wonderful duet *O Schmerz*. And WHAT a conclusion! Literally, in that glorious setting, orchestra, soloists and chorus took us upon a journey to the great beyond... in that great cry of Klopstock's moving poem...

"Die shall I in order to live.
Rise again, yes, rise again,
Will you, my heart, in an instant!
That for which you suffered,
To God shall it carry you!"

Thank you to everybody for a wonderful evening and wishing everybody in the Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra and St Georges Singers many more years of happy music making!

Darren Niman, 24 September 2018

(Committee member, Gustav Mahler Society UK in the North and Midlands)

MUSIC MAKERS

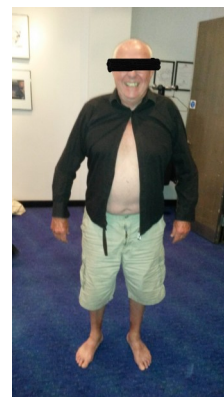
The 2017-18 season came to a fitting climax at the Bridgewater Hall on 6th July when the St George's Singers joined forces with the Chetham's Symphony Orchestra and Chetham's Chorus under Jac van Steen in a nuanced rendering of Elgar's elegiac *The Music Makers*.

The performance came together on merely four rehearsals, only two with the orchestra and the Chethams' Singers but it felt polished and poised. The combination of young and older voices was affecting and gave depth and breadth to the piece.

It was funny to see our own Neil Taylor with the basses in the chorus this time, rather than conducting. It was a wonderful way to close a rich and varied season.

Joe Keaney

There was much amusement backstage as a result of the usual plethora of black uniform at such a concert. A bass, who will remain anonymised, uttered the exasperated cry of, "Oh, #@&?! I've got the wife's blouse" and revealed himself to be in want of extra material.



Meanwhile, in another corner of the room, a more diminutive bass was burrowing in between the rails and muttering cries of, "Where's my shirt?"

TALES FROM THE CHOIR

ON YER BIKE-TALES FROM THE ACCOMPANIST'S SADDLE



The choir have been following Pete Durrant's training regime for an Ironman event, an intense endurance sport. In July this year, it finally took place. Pete tells us the story.

In March 2013, I was out for a 20 mile run in training for that year's London Marathon. This was to be my first marathon. At one point a man caught up with me, he slowed down his pace to run alongside for a chat. I said I was training for the London marathon, thinking I couldn't be outdone, to which he replied that he was training for an Ironman. I asked what that was. He explained the three stages.

2.4 mile swim

112 mile bike ride

26.2 mile marathon.

Whole event has a 17 hour cut off time.

We wished each other good luck and he ran off into the distance! From that point on, I knew that Ironman was the next rung of the ladder I wanted to get to, post London Marathon!

Five and a bit years later, my alarm was going off and it was 2.22am on July 15th, Ironman day!

I got to Bolton at just before 4am, to put the car in the car park and get the shuttle bus half an hour out to Pennington Flash where the swim was taking place. For those of you who haven't been to Pennington, it is notable for its poor quality of water. So poor in fact that they have signs around the side of it advising dog walkers to not let their dogs swim in it!

In we went at 6am. As a relatively poor swimmer, I started near the back of the pack of approximately 2,500 participants for the 2 lap 2.4

mile swim. Towards the end of my first lap, the pros and leading amateurs started to pass me at the end of their second lap and the result of different paced swimmers was one of absolute pandemonium! I got hit in the back of the head at least three times and was very glad to get out of the water at the end of lap one. I jumped back in for lap two, happy to have a bit more space but daunted at the prospect of that much more swimming.

**Chat? Chat?!
Most mortals can
only breathe when
running.**

Eventually and thankfully the second lap finished, about 1h 45m into the race and it was time to get into T1 (the first transition) to get out of my wetsuit and onto my bike. I had a

the marathon. It was baking hot as well so I took on as much water as possible.

As I got into T2 I knew I had 26.2 miles left to run, and I had about seven and a half hours in which to do so. The run started fairly well, my legs felt pretty good so I got into a rhythm and churned away. By mile four my legs had gone. I knew at that point that it was going to potentially be close to 17 hours if I couldn't run. I alternated running and walking for maybe the next 14 miles and concentrated on getting as much food and drink inside me as possible from the feeding stations.



Then I started cramping in my legs and realised I was pretty much reduced to walking only. Based on my maths at the time, I calculated that I'd be ok for the cut off time but not by much. I took on more food and gels and gave running/hobbling another go. The last 6.2 miles (10km) of the run was my strongest, some how, and I managed to position myself as we headed to the finish in a big gap from the competitor in front to the one behind. I had the

whole finisher chute to myself as you can see in the picture!

cup of cola to wash the blue green algae away and off we went on the hilly 112 mile ride!

Throughout the route there were 'feeding stations' where one could pick up water and bananas. At the second station I nearly got taken out by a swerving competitor in front of me so decided from then on that I would actually stop at the remaining stations to stretch my legs out and have a decent banana! The overall time for the event wasn't a concern of mine at all, as long as I finished within the 17 hour cut off time.

So I took it as easy as I possibly could to try to save my legs for



The relief at being able to stop was immense! I was so hungry though and needed food quickly! The only place we could find still open at 10.45pm on a Sunday when we got back

to Manchester was McDonalds, not the greatest option for vegans it must be said, but four large fries did the short term trick!



Final finish time; 15 hours, 26 minutes and 40 seconds.

An amazing achievement, Pete.

Taylor's Tags

Some of you are incredibly prompt on responding, but others appear to be on an elasticated dog lead.

(In Bernstein) Basses, we really don't need any further dissonance, thank you very much.

Brook's Barbs

(For final Kyrie in Eternal Light)
We need this to be a mixture of light jazz coupled with a fairly rambunctious attitude.

(In 1st movement Bernstein)
That bit reminds me of somethingI know! Theme music from the Flintstones!

CAROLS AND SINGING DAY



For our carol concert taking place on Saturday 8 December, we are delighted to welcome back

Chetham's School young brass players, following their debut last year. In addition to these talented senior aged children, we will be joined by the youthful, enthusiastic and well-trained voices of Bradshaw Hall Primary School, under the baton of Vicky Sunderland.

And of course there is complimentary mulled wine, minced pies and other Christmas treats. We hope you will all be able to join us to mark the start of the Advent season.

On Saturday 19 January, our annual Singing Day will study and perform Charles Gounod's *St Cecilia Mass* or *Messe Solennelle de Sainte Cécile*. Originally destined for priesthood, Gounod decided to express his faith in a number of works of sacred music. He was also entrepreneur-like in promotion of his work.

At the time of writing the *St Cecilia Mass*, Gounod would have been thirty-six years old and appeared to have been keen to get himself noticed wherever possible. A particular symphony had been well received and when he put quill to paper to produce *St Cecilia Mass* he was brought firmly to the attention of all in Paris. It was a turning point.

Having won the famous Prix de Rome composing prize at the first attempt, Charles' sense of self worth must have been high. It is possible he anticipated both Rossini and Verdi by importing an overtly operatic style into liturgical music.

At its premiere, Saint-Saëns was in the audience and very aptly exclaimed: 'The appearance of the Messe Saint-Cécile caused a kind of shock. This simplicity, this grandeur, this serene light which rose before the musical world like a breaking dawn, troubled people enormously... at first one was dazzled, then charmed, then conquered.'

St George's Singers is not known for shirking a challenge. Come along and see if together we can dazzle, charm and conquer!



Charles Gounod 1819-1893

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC

On 21 May this year, the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex took place. Our own Connie Jones (Alto) had an extra reason for excitement. Her brother, Chris Hazell, had been asked to arrange the music to be played by Sheku Kanneh-Mason. Even Connie did not know about this prestigious job offer until the day, as secrecy and security was so intense.

Chris tells us about it

I got home one day in late March to find a message from one of the executive producers at Decca who said he had a project for me, but couldn't say over the phone. Intrigued, I called back, to find that I had been put forward to make the musical arrangements for Sheku Kanneh-Mason to play at the Royal Wedding in May.

I was told that Sheku would play three pieces during the signing of the register – *Après un rêve* by Faure, *Sicilienne* by Maria-Therese von Paradis and *Ave Maria* by Schubert. Two were originally for voice and piano and the other for solo

keyboard. As an arranger I had to turn these rather "plain" instrumentations into something more colourful, creating separate musical lines for the instruments for which I



Chris and Alison Hazell with Sheku Kanneh-Mason

was writing. In this instance the orchestra was very small as anything larger wouldn't fit into the available space in St George's Chapel in Windsor.

My instructions (apart from keeping it all an absolute secret!) were that I had to fit all three pieces into a very strict nine minutes. The orchestra was one flute, a harp, and a small group of strings plus, of course, the solo 'cello for

Sheku. The most problematic of these was the Schubert. It has a very long verse with a fairly repetitive accompaniment. I found that keeping both of the verses would make me overrun by more than a minute, but one verse was a bit under. So, should it be played more slowly? In the end it was slower anyway so fitted well. With such small forces it was difficult to get much variety of colour into the accompaniment. An arranger has to have the sound mix in his head. I rarely hear things before the last rehearsal when it is rather too late to change things!

Two days before the wedding I went to a rehearsal with Sheku and the orchestra. Just time for a couple of run throughs and that was it. Happily everyone was pleased with the sound. Sadly, no invitation to the wedding, however I did get a credit in the Order of Service, and it is good for my CV!

I will never get an audience like that again.

3.9 BILLION !!

St George's Singers

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Hemiola is sent to all Friends of St George's Singers, and a digital version goes to those on our Mailing List. To receive a regular copy, 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 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, The Stoller Hall, 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, and communicating the sheer enjoyment of singing together. Entry to the Choir is via audition, and new members are welcome to come along to rehearsals at any time.

ST GEORGE'S SINGERS CONCERT DIARY 2018-19

Saturday 8 December 2018
Carols with Brass
St George's STOCKPORT

Sunday 31 March 2019
Bach *B Minor Mass*
With Northern Baroque Orchestra
Gorton Monastery

Saturday 8 June 2019
The Well Conducted Tour
St George's POYNTON

Friday 5 July 2019
Gustav Mahler *Symphony No 8*
Chetham's Chorus, and Symphony
Orchestra and others
Bridgewater Hall.

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

MANCHESTER SINGS!

Cantibus Choral Ensemble
Saturday 10 November 2018

7:30pm

**Methodist Church, The
Avenue, SALE**

A centenary celebration in support of the Royal British Legion. Singing and readings will encompass music across the centuries that will reflect on events that took place 100 years ago.

Music includes

Purcell *Hear my Prayer*
Vaughan Williams *Valiant for Truth*

Palestrina *Sicut Cervus*

Elgar *Lux Aeterna*

Lauridsen *O Magnum
Mysterium*

Northern Chamber Orchestra
Saturday 1 December 2018

7.30pm

**Macclesfield Heritage Centre,
Roe Street, MACCLESFIELD**

A concert of baroque masterpieces and 20th century string music.

Vivaldi *Concert for four violins in B Minor*

Finzi *Dies Natalis* with **tenor
Nicholas Mulroy**

Grainger *Molly on the Shore*,

Elgar *Serenade for Strings*,

Bach *Concerto for two violins*

**Glenn Miller Orchestra &
Singers**

Sunday 6 January 2019

3.00pm

Bridgewater Hall

RAY McVAY directs the UK's greatest big band in a nostalgic concert of fabulous forties music and classic wartime chart toppers, including a special 100th birthday tribute to Dame Vera Lynn.

Guest vocalists **Mark Porter** and **Louise Armstrong**, and special guests *Polka Dot Dolls!* Second half of the concert, the Orchestra will perform in the World War II uniforms of the US Army Air Force.

