



Ashford Choral Society

Celebrating 160 years

Conductor: Mark Deller – Accompanist: Matthew Raisbeck

Chairman: Alan Paterson – Secretary: Virginia Brown

Newsletter 3 – November 2018



Christmas Carol Concert Charities 2018

For the annual Carol concert in Ashford Parish Church, the Society usually choose a local and a national charity to support with funds collected in the retiring collection. These funds are augmented by "round the houses" carol singing in the week after the carol concert. Generally a significant sum is raised - last year we raised £1300 to split between two good causes.

This year's concert, on December 22nd, will support **Ashford Borough Citizens Advice** who support many local people with worries and financial problems and the national charity will be **Médecins Sans Frontières** (Doctors without Borders) - the only charity to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize - whose teams of doctors, nurses and surgeons work in some of the most dangerous parts of the world helping civilian casualties of war, disease and disaster.

CHRISTMAS will begin a little earlier this year for The Society as we will be performing **Bach's Christmas Oratorio - parts 1,2,3** - on Saturday November 17 at the Colyer Fergusson Hall, Canterbury.

Dating from 1734 the first three parts of the Oratorio narrate the Nativity of Jesus.

The complete Oratorio was written for performance over the six great feast days of Christmas during the winter of 1734 and 1735 when it was incorporated within services of the two most important churches in Leipzig, St. Thomas and St. Nicholas.

For those interested in the image chosen for the ACS poster for this concert (and illustrating this article), this is a detail of Gerard David's triptych of Saints Jerome and Leonard with Donors and the Holy Family dating from 1510 - 1515. This lovely painting is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (and was reproduced, under their Open Access Licence, without charge to the Society.)

The sheaf of wheat on the floor beneath the manger and Joseph refers to John 6: 41: "*I am the bread which came down from Heaven.*" Clearly visible in the background of David's painting are the shepherds on the hill hearing the news of Christ's birth from the Angels, as more shepherds approach the stable.

Gerard David was an important Netherlandish artist working in the mercantile cities of Bruges and Ghent where there was a good market for fine painting and manuscript illumination. David's luxuriously finished, richly coloured, devotional works had a strong following in the Italian merchant community of Northern Europe - with some of his major altarpieces commissioned for Italian locations (for example, the vast Cervara altarpiece, now in Genoa).

For more information about David, or to see the whole of the painting used for the concert poster, visit the Met website at

https://metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gera/hd_gera.htm

Learning resources for the voice parts of Bach's **Christmas Oratorio** Parts 1,2,3 are available online as follows:

- *John Fletcher* has all parts – subscription service
- Both *Choralia* and *Cyberbass* websites have all parts of the Oratorio for free

(N.B. the cantatas/chorales have their German titles on all sites)

Ashford School 1918 - 2018 concert

The head of music at Ashford School, **Malcolm Riley**, held a concert at 7.30pm on Thursday 11 October 2018 in The Brake Hall to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, and the centenary of the death of Hubert Parry.

During August, Malcolm asked Ashford Choral Society to provide some singers, for all voice parts, to boost the efforts of his young Ashford School chamber choir and over 20 Choral Society singers responded to the call.

It was a tremendous evening of music, giving the school orchestra and choir the opportunity to perform at a high level in front of an audience. The programme included Parry's "*I was glad*", "*Blest Pair of Sirens*" and an excerpt from his oratorio "*Judith*" as well as a rare performance of "*Heroic Elegy*" by Ernest Farrar (1885-1918).

There was also a world premiere of a song, setting a poem by Tim Willets. The poem (reproduced below), a reflection on the First World War, was set to piano music written and played by Malcolm and sung by professional mezzo soprano, **Louise Winter**:

Someone from the Past

I know who you are, but you not I

A person from the future remembering someone from the past

This cross marks your body, but your soul is elsewhere.

So sad your young life with others suffered, and died out there.

Many crosses surrounding you, mark friends, comrades both,

All reaching out to be remembered for their death under oath.

Your family and friends long gone, leave history to be their mourner;

So it's wise to remember - The War to end all Wars.



After the concert, Malcolm thanked the choral society members for creating a "wonderful wall of sound" especially in "*Blest Pair of Sirens*".

Wedding Belles

The Choral Society have been delighted to provide singers for two weddings this year.

The wedding of Howard Fox and Jessica Fermor of Perry Court Farm took place at Boughton Aluph on 25 August. The church was packed and the bride looked absolutely lovely. Reverend Ravi Holy led the service and ACS sang Mozart's "*Laudate Dominum*" (with Caroline Collingwood as soloist) and Elizabeth Poston's "*The Apple Tree*" carol (with Harriet Clements as soloist) and supported the congregation in three hymns, including "*Jerusalem*".

The Fermors of Perry Court have been supporters of ACS over many decades – playing host to our annual carolling for Charity - and the "Apple Tree" carol, with its special meaning for fruit farmers like the Fermors, has been sung at their family weddings and funerals for several generations.

ACS' singing was obviously much appreciated, as even though the Society had agreed to waive its usual fee for singing at a wedding, in recognition of the Fermor family's many years of support, Mrs. Heidi Fermor presented Alan Paterson with a thank you card, enclosing £200 in cash.

Choir member, Penny Miller (*pictured to the left*), got married to Steve Town at 1pm on Saturday 6 October at Wittersham Church and had asked Mark Deller if he would conduct a choir from the Society. Many members were delighted to support Penny in her walk up the aisle with her mother Jane Miller.

Wittersham church was at capacity as the choir made the rafters ring with Vivaldi's "*Gloria*" as Penny arrived looking radiant.

The choir sang The Blessing, in the form of Rutter's "*The Lord bless you and keep you*" and as the register was signed revisited May's concert of the Brahms's Requiem with "*How lovely are thy dwellings*". Penny and her husband left the church to the stirring Handel anthem from "Sansom", "*Let their celestial concerts all unite*".

It was a joy and a privilege to sing at such a happy event and Jane was delighted to make a payment of £200 to Society funds in recognition of the contribution made by the singers at Penny's wedding.



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