

# Music in 2018

Martin Penny

Much of what follows is, of necessity, a reflection of highlights. We regard every service as special and prepare everything with the same care and attention whether it be a swinging number for the All the Family Service, an anthem we know almost too well or a deeply contemplative motet for Passiontide.

## Membership

We welcomed Isabel Jorge and Krystal Porter as probationers. We also welcomed Hazel Ford back after her successful studies at Robinson College, Cambridge.

We said farewell to Trixie Wraith as she moved up several gears in her running activities both locally and nationally. After a short spell as Organ Scholar, Mark Scaife moved to Oxford to undertake an M Mus at New College. We wish them both well in their new endeavours

## The Support Team

John Norris puts in many hours learning/relearning our repertoire to great effect, not least in successfully mastering the complexities both technical and registrational in the Gloria of Gabriel Jackson's *Mass for All Saints!*

David Ford continues to give sterling support as Associate Director, allowing me to play from time to time to keep my hand in, occasionally visit another church on a Sunday to pick ideas, and, between us all, to expose the choir to a rich variety of ideas and approaches – thereby keeping what we do fresh and never 'routine'.

Sam Chadwick has continued to put much energy and ingenuity into providing instrumental arrangements for the All the Family Service, matching individual parts to the increasing skill level of our younger players.

Mary, Julian and others put many hours of effort in behind the scenes putting out all the

music and collecting it back in – the Vestry is a busy place on a Friday Night! Simple to say but several person hours every week.

Julia continues both to keep our finances in order and to ensure our robes are in good order and fit properly - we had both expansion (height) and shrinkage (weight loss) this year!

## Special Events during the year

The year began with choral services on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan with a Family Service in the morning and an Epiphany Carol Service in the evening (one rehearsal only!). Somehow there is never time to rehearse this in December!

Thereafter we enjoyed a few weeks of 'business as usual' before arriving at Lent.

Palm Sunday evening saw a second run of Finzi's *Lo, the full final sacrifice* as part of a meditation of music and readings and kicked us off well for the week ahead of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day.

In May we revived John Rutter's extensive treatment of the Golden Sequence, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, learnt Cecilia McDowall's *Celestial Fire* for Pentecost and polished up Arthur Will's fascinating, but taxing, *Canticles On Plainsong Tones* – a blend of plainsong and post-Ravellian 'French' harmonies. By chance there were a number of visitors who found it surprisingly effective coupled with Palestrina.

The following weekend saw the second Hertfordshire Festival of Music (of which more later).

July began with *Badgers and Hedgehogs* by Andrew Carter for the Pets Service – does anyone have either as pet – and ended with a service for Mary Magdalene, which allowed us to sing an unusual short motet by Brahms in an English translation produced for the occasion.

The Autumn Term started with a period of consolidation and preparation for events towards the end of the year.

All Saints Sunday was marked a revival of Dove's *Missa Brevis* – a wonderful dance-like *Gloria* and an *Agnus Dei* that still send shivers down the spine.

As Remembrance Sunday was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice, we produced a bespoke service including a piece especially written for the occasion by Philip Wilby to words by Guy Wilson. It was powerful and effective – not least in using the Last Post in building Peace '*as round the world its glory rings*'. Just to keep the congregation on their toes the service also involved them in singing the chorus to 'Pack up your troubles', which they did lustily!

A fortnight later we hosted a Team Eucharist; it was good to meet up again with our friends from St Andrew's and St Mary's and work together in praising God.

December was the usual flurry of Carol Services – and an unexpected 'night off' on 10<sup>th</sup> due to the snow. For the Nine Lessons & Carols we learnt a new setting of 'Sweet was the song' by *Iain Farrington*, which seemed to be much appreciated.

### Repertoire

I continue to try to keep our music making alive by refreshing the familiar with new material. There are a few pieces 'in the works' for 2019 but there's room for more. If you have any particular requests or recommendations, please let me know.

### Concerts/MDF

Chris Benham pulled together three more great series of 'Soundbites' concerts, and, aided and abetted by Ann, an equally skilled catering team. The income from this is a key part of the whole All Saints economy. Thank you to you all.

Most of the income from this goes to our Music Development Fund. This allows us to make grants to support individual studies and to provide support and assistance (and

materials) as needed. Everyone who is eligible benefitted from support in 2018 and the Fund remains within the intended target balance of £10-12,000.

The Hertfordshire Festival of Music continues to expand, with three concerts in 2018 and a whole week planned for 2019 including a jointly sponsored 'Soundbites' featuring some familiar local faces we have supported over the years.

### Thank You's

Firstly to the choir for:

- Delivering week in, week out
- The special services over Passiontide and Easter, for Remembrance Sunday and over the Christmas period
- Willingly working on new anthems/carols from all ages and styles.
- Working together as a large family – encouraging and supporting each other
- Putting up with me!

but also to

- David, John, Michael and Sam for their skill, support and constant good humour
- Jo, Colin, Richard, and more recently Julia, for their support and encouragement of all we do
- Julia in keeping our finances and robes in order
- Mary, Julian and all for the weekly work with the folders
- all the adults, young adults and choristers who make such wonderful music and their parents who do so much fetching & carrying
- all of you for your comments and suggestions
- and, finally, to Mary who keeps me sane (ish) – and firmly grounded in reality!

Love,  
Martin