

# Music in 2019

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

Romarlla Blanche-Drammeh moved to the 'back rows' after a period of service as Head Chorister and was succeeded by Soraia Jorge.

For the first year since I became DoM there were no completely 'new' faces in 2019. Do please encourage people to 'come and join us' – I'm very happy to talk with, present to, send material to anyone who might be interested for themselves, a child, nephew/niece, grandchild or just a friend!

## The Support Team

John Norris puts in many hours learning/relearning our repertoire to great effect – occasionally delegating to Michael Stephens-Jones when he's on vacation from Selwyn College, Cambridge.

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 and Julian 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!

To my disappointment we have been unable to attract a new 'Soundbites' Organ Scholar – the search continues!

## Special Events during the year

The year began with choral services on 6<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.

We were delighted to sing at a Confirmation Service with 17 candidates (9 from All Saints including one, Rachel Brett, from the Choir)

Palm Sunday was a busy day with Chilcott's *A Little Jazz Mass* in the morning and a 'Bring & Sing' *Requiem Faure* with a soloist from St Martin's Voices, the first in a series of collaboration with St Martins-in-the Fields of which more later. We welcomed some 40 guests to sing with us – just about squeezing everyone into the Chancel.

After the usual sequence of services in Holy Week and on Easter Day, we went straight into the Summer Term and, unusually found ourselves singing about Doubting Thomas (Easter 2 is usually a said service but schools went back on Easter Tuesday as Easter was so late).

In June we premiered our 'learning project' for the term, Cecilia McDowall's *Celestial Fire* on Pentecost Sunday. In the following week we hosted seven concerts in All Saints as part of the Hertfordshire Festival of Music with Stephen Isserlis as Principal Artist. Musically it was a great success, but some concerts had disappointingly small audiences.

August saw the launch of *Heavenly Harmonies* with a concert by St Martin's Voices directed by Andrew Earis (DoM, St Martin's-in-the-Fields and a Producer for BBC Radios 3&4). This was the fruition of discussions with the SMitF team, brokered by HeartEdge, over the previous 18 months.

The aim is simple – for the Choir (plus some special friends) to generate more income for All Saints with a monthly sequence of concerts on Saturday mornings 'Coffee, Cake & Choral Classics) – many of the Choir also proved to be

excellent bakers! Thanks go to them and also to the team of helpers who made the Coffee, served the Cake and, importantly, took the Cash! The series (4 concerts in 2019) raised over £1300 for Church Funds.

September included a service theme around Weddings (in part to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dorothy & Richard Toyn's Marriage in 1979). We had fun dusting off some Wedding favourites and we all learnt a very appropriate hymn written by David Mowbray whilst Vicar here.

Because we were holding 'Starry Xmas' over the last weekend in November we moved Commemoration of Faithful Departed to the last Sunday in October and so began the familiar pre-advent sequence including All Saints Sunday and Remembrance Sunday - yet again it didn't rain (just)! We contributed a sponsored 'Carolathon' to the 'Starry Xmas' Festival. We were quite 'carolled-out' by the end!

December began with a 'Bring and Sing Messiah Part 1, with about 30 guests and soloists from SMitF, our choir and singing students from Richard Hale, and was followed by the usual flurry of Carol Services. We were joined by the Choir of St-Joseph's-in-the-Park for the Heavenly Harmonies concert, which led to plans for a Festival of Primary School Choirs in 2020 – alas, like so much else, a 'victim' of the Covid19 pandemic.

Following the sad, sudden and premature death of Sir Stephen Cleobury we made a number of changes to the 9L&C including performing a gentle and effective arrangement of an old German carol by Sir Stephen, which we will repeat in 2020. We also included a beautiful, newly written/published carol from a new collection 'Multitude of Voyces' that came to us via the 'Selwyn Connection'.

### **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 2020 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 2019. As ever we planned and delivered a balanced budget in 2019. The Fund has increased substantially as we were the beneficiaries of an unexpected bequest during the year, eventually amounting to a little over £23,000. It is very thoroughly tied to supporting the work of the Choir. Initial discussions as to the best use have been held and more detailed planning is in progress, though now 'on-hold' due to Covid19.

### **Thank You's**

Firstly, to the choir for:

- Delivering week in, week out
- The special services over Passiontide and Easter, the 'Autumn Marathon' and 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 Julia for their support and encouragement of all we do
- Julia in keeping our finances and robes in order
- Mary, and Julian for their 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