

The Newsletter

Singing together really does you good!



Did you feel good after the Elijah performance? Read on ...

Eighty-four members of a Choir (in the US) were asked whether there were ways in which singing together benefited their health. The majority of respondents agreed they had benefited socially (87%) and emotionally (75%), with 58% agreeing they had benefited in some physical way, and 49% spiritually. Common themes expressed were:

meeting new people, feeling more positive, increased control over breathing, feeling more alert and feeling spiritually uplifted.

With respect to health benefits, most reported improved lung function and breathing, improved mood and stress reduction.

In a second study on 91 members of the choir most respondents strongly agreed that 'singing helps to make my mood more positive', 'singing is a moving experience for me sometimes',

'singing makes me feel a lot happier' and 'singing is good for my soul'.

Women were significantly more likely to experience benefits for well-being and relaxation, younger people were more likely to report social benefits, and those professing religious beliefs were more likely to experience spiritual benefits.

Bath Bach Choir: Elijah, Bath Abbey

Magnificent Mendelssohn in one of his most memorable and popular compositions, tells the story of an extraordinary unconventional Old Testament prophet in a unique musical portrait. And this performance reached down into the heart of the work, wrestling with the emotional intensity of its sometimes barbarous themes.

The clever use of lighting heightened the tension and the choir found an extra dimension – especially in the sections sung without copies. The singers had both bite and breadth, controlled and full bodied, then down to whispered piano singing, which worked especially well with a beautifully discreet organ accompaniment from Marcus Sealy, were in exceptional voice and the choral sound gave the whole piece an immensely satisfy-

ing foundation, balanced and well-integrated.

There was some fine solo singing from Justin Lavender, his ringing final declaration, *Then Shall the Righteous* coming over with real intensity. Mezzo Wendy Dawn Thompson's *O Rest in the Lord* was serene and soothing with a lovely flute conclusion.

Mary Plazas' big operatic soprano, with its distinctive vibrato, gave us a soaring *Hear Ye Israel*. And we had a delightful vignette from the Abbey Choir's Holly Brunskill, standing in for Sophie Edwards.

Roderick Williams as Elijah was a majestic presence, singing from the pulpit – always a big advantage – the voice stern and tender by turns, evoking the bitter irony of his bloody and dramatic encounter with

the prophets of Baal: and finding the deep sorrow of *It is Enough* in all its heart rending sadness.

The diction was crisp and clear and his awareness of the other performers acutely perceptive. It was a performance to be savoured and the whole work, directed by Nigel Perrin, with the Wessex Sinfonia offering weighty orchestral support, had a unity and gravitas which was indeed magnificent and moving. A well-filled abbey was totally absorbed and it showed in their appreciative response after the final chorus echoed up into the Abbey roof. (There was a retiring collection for Japan).

Peter Lloyd Williams
21 March 2011

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Stars of the show!



Nice to welcome Tony & Gay back from Florida. Here are some more of Tony's Musical Terms from across the Pond!

Allegro con brillo *the fastest way to wash pots and pans*

Andante *a musical composition that is infernally slow*

Appogiatura *an ornament you regret after singing it*

Barbidolce *sweet but plastic*

Bar line *what the tenors form after a concert*

Carmina banana *a medieval musical plantation*

Coral symphony *(see Beethoven—Caribbean period)*

Fruitti tutti *a chorus singing together in an exaggerated, overripe manner*

Katya Katerpilova *Janacek's predecessor to Madam Butterfly*

Legolegato *stop singing legator!*

Molto bolto *head straight for the ending, but don't make it seem rushed*

Rubato *cross between rhubarb and a tomato*

The Junior choir took part in a special concert in Wootton Bassett in March organised by Alan Petifer in aid of the Afghan Heroes Charity. It was a full and varied programme which included jazz

bands, country singers, comedy acts and Julie Felix of 60s fame.

The choir had their own spot in the first half and they were brilliant, then joined the band on stage at the end for a rendition of the charity song Forever Young. The choir

were particularly excited about the very large buffet that had been laid on for the performers!

The concert raised over £4,000 for the charity and a very good time was had by all.

Rome — Palazzo Doria Pamphilj



One of the places you might consider visiting when we go to Rome is the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj.

Larger than many royal palaces, the palazzo contains one of the finest collections of paintings in private hands. On walls crammed with famous artists – Claud Lorraines, Caravaggios, Titians, a Filippo Lippi, a Bronzino family portrait – don't miss one of the world's most famous

paintings: Velazquez's Pope Innocent X, which inspired Francis Bacon's "screaming pope" series.

Innocent was famously dominated by his mistress – his widowed sister-in-law, Donna Olimpia. The "Papessa" reputedly made a fortune selling church offices, and was accused of poisoning cardinals to create new vacancies. When Innocent died, it is said that she hid the corpse in a corner while she cleared the papal palaces of treasure. Al-

gardi's bust of her, at the far end of the gallery, portrays a thoroughly nasty piece of work.

In adjoining private rooms, viewed from behind velvet ropes, modern life has infiltrated the Louis XIV formality; comfy sofas, bookshelves, family snaps on the mantelpiece and a forgotten mobile phone on a sideboard.

It's well worth a look!

Totus Tuus Henryk Górecki

Henryk Górecki was born in 1933 in the small town of Czernica in the Silesia region of Poland. He was trained as a primary-school teacher, and did not formally become a composer until the age of 22 when he enrolled at the State Higher School of Music in Katowice. He studied in Paris for a time and became acquainted with the leading edge of the Western avant-garde. Górecki's music was always deeply rooted in Polish ideals however, and it carries a sense of the emotional impact of the atrocities of the Second World War.

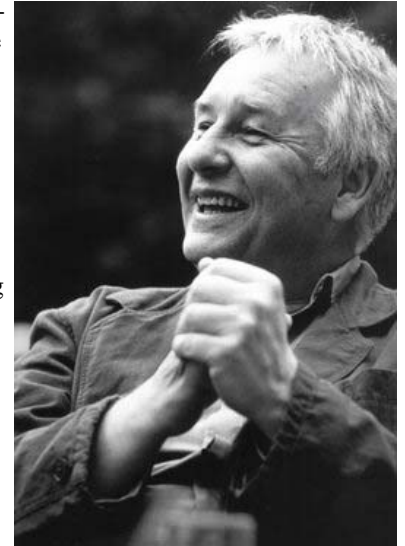
Pope John Paul II made his third visit to Poland, his homeland, in the summer of 1987. The outdoor masses were attended by hundreds of thousands of people. At one of these events, on 19 July, a new

choir piece by Henryk Górecki was performed. *Totus Tuus* sets a brief prayer to Mary, the patron saint of Poland and a strong priority in the prayers of the Pope (and all faithful Poles, including the composer).

The music is chorale-like, and quite traditional. But, while the harmonies tend toward the triadic, the progressions are much simpler and more static than would be found in the chorales of J. S. Bach, for example. At one point, where the text is an imploring "Maria," over and over, the music slips away from the tonic, creating a section of contrast for the overall design. But, soon enough, Górecki returns to the key and phrase structure of the opening. This composer is a master, even (and perhaps especially) with very simple material, of shaping the flow

of repetition and variation. The final passage of *Totus Tuus*, for example, gradually closes in from the phrase "Totus tuus sum, Maria!" It leaps up and falls back to the tonic chord alone, with the choir intoning the word "Maria!" by itself.

At the premiere of *Totus Tuus*, the choir would have been large, the audience large, the occasion large. Górecki, who had written a great quantity of sacred choral music over the past decade and a half, responded with a score that is humble and prayerful, finely judged to project both the sonorities of the music and the message of the text.



Svyati by John Tavener

In a late addition to our Autumn concert programme we will also be singing *Svyati* by Sir John Tavener. This will require some preparation as it is divided SSSAATTTBBBB and is sung with a solo cello. (Looks like we'll need to recruit some more basses chaps, or it'll be one to a line!)

John Tavener writes of the piece: "I began to write *Svyati* in early 1995: while sketching it, learned that John Williams, father of Jane, my dear friend and publisher, was dying. I could not refrain from dedicating it to Jane and to the memory of her father.

The text is in Church Slavonic, and it is used at almost every Russian Orthodox service, perhaps most poignantly after the congregation have kissed the body in an open coffin at an Orthodox fu-

neral. The choir sings as the coffin is closed and borne out of the church, followed by the mourners with lighted candles. The cello represents the Priest or Ikon of Christ, and should play at a distance from the choir, perhaps at the opposite end of the building. As in a Greek drama, choir and priest are in dialogue with each other. Since the cello represents the Ikon of Christ, it must be played without any sentiment of a Western character, but should derive from the chanting of the Eastern Orthodox Church."

I, for one, can't wait!



Editorial

Welcome back. I always seem to start a new term with the words “And now for something completely different!” And my goodness that is so true this term. After the wonderful magnificence and reverence of Mendelssohn we move forward to the 20th and 21st centuries for our lighter Summer Concert.

For those of you who are new to the Choir remember this

concert starts earlier in the evening, and the aim is that we all bring a picnic along to have after the concert in the area of the Wiltshire Music Centre.

We all have to learn the 5 Negro Spirituals by heart this term so that we can sing them without copies, so that’s a nice little challenge with which to start the term.

Nigel’s looking so much better isn’t he? It’s so good to see him out of pain and back

at the helm. We are so lucky to have him as our musical leader.

What else to say? Oh—this is a fun musical term, when we can let our hair down a bit and maybe even swing! There’s a thought. But the point is, of course, that that doesn’t mean it’s easy—it’s not, it’s actually very difficult. It just has to look easy, and that takes bags and bags of effort. What fun it is though!

Happy singing.



We’re on the Web!
www.bathbachchoir.org.uk

Material for publication in The Newsletter should be passed to Bob Hussey as soon as possible. Bob can be contacted on 01225 316 899 or by EMail at bob@resolve-uk.com.

The Choir Diary

Thu 12 May	Choir Committee Meeting	
Fri 27 May	Party in the City - start of the Bath Festival	Bath Abbey
<i>Fri 27 May</i>	<i>Schools Term 5 ends</i>	
<i>Mon 6 Jun</i>	<i>Schools Term 6 starts</i>	
Thu 23 Jun	Choir Committee Meeting	
Fri 15 Jul	Compulsory Rehearsal	Willett Hall, KES
Sat 16 Jul	Summer Concert Duke Ellington <i>Sacred Music</i> David Fanshawe <i>Pacific Song</i> Michael Tippett <i>5 Negro Spirituals</i> (from memory)	Wiltshire Music Centre
<i>Fri 22 Jul</i>	<i>Schools Term 6 ends</i>	
<i>Mon 1 Sep</i>	<i>Schools Term 1 starts</i>	
Mon 5 Sep	First Rehearsal Winter Term	Willett Hall, KES
Mon 19 Sep	AGM after short rehearsal	Willett Hall, KES
<i>Fri 21 Oct</i>	<i>Schools Term 1 ends</i>	
21 - 24 Oct	Choir Tour to Rome	
<i>Mon 31 Oct</i>	<i>Schools Term 2 Starts</i>	
Fri 4 Nov	Compulsory Rehearsal	Willett Hall, KES
Sat 5 Nov	Autumn Concert Goodall <i>Eternal Light</i> Whitaker <i>Lux Arumque</i> Górecki <i>Totus Tuus</i> (abridged) Pärt <i>Beatitudes</i> Taverner <i>Syvati</i>	Bath Abbey
Dates for Carols rehearsals are: 7, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28 November and 2, 5, 9 and 12 December.		
14-16 Dec	Carols by Candlelight	Pump Room
<i>Fri 16 Dec</i>	<i>Schools Term 2 ends</i>	
	2012	
<i>Tue 3 Jan</i>	<i>Schools Term 3 Starts</i>	
Mon 9 Jan	First Rehearsal Spring Term	Willett Hall, KES