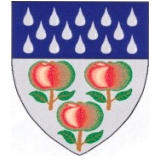




Hyfrydol



No. 98

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter

April 2022

The program for the rest of 2022

Phil and Peter have worked assiduously on our calendar of events for the rest of the year. It has now been distributed to the choir and, while still subject to modification, it gives us lots for which to look forward.

For the most part, it reads:

While our key priority is to enhance worship at our Sunday services with well-presented, quality music, we have a tradition of preparing and presenting music in other services and events, including services at other churches and concerts. These efforts give us and our congregations great pleasure and improve our choral abilities, and can be a wonderful outreach to our community.

MESSIAH

A Lenten selection from Handel's Messiah, presented in our church on 9th April (which we call "Palm Saturday" but is also known as "Lazarus Saturday"). Invite your friends to sing with us and/or to attend on the Saturday at 6:30 pm.

CELEBRATION OF PSALMS

This concert will be presented at Swiz on Saturday 20th August at 5pm. Nineteen of the 150 psalms appear in five congregational hymns, four choral anthems, four spoken responsories, three readings, and four chanted settings. Only two are "Anglican chant". The list of composers is a "Who's who?" of church music, including Luther, How, Quilter, Gelineau, Haydn, Walmisley, Stanford, Carr-Boyd, Howells and Rowley.

We are familiar with many of the pieces already, and this presentation brings together many different styles, helping us and those listening to appreciate the marvellous teaching and encouragement in the psalms.

GOULBURN VISIT

The Cathedral Church of St Saviour in Goulburn is looking forward to welcoming us on the weekend of 24th and 25th September. The Dean is keen that the Cathedral resumes presenting Evensong monthly, and we would like to support that worthy objective. And if we give the Cathedral choir (led by Director of Music Barbara Griffin) encouragement too, great!

The organ and choir pews in St Saviour's Cathedral



On Sunday we will sing Choral Eucharist at 10 am and Evensong at 5 pm. We will rehearse in the Cathedral on Saturday afternoon and then enjoy dinner together at a venue to be recommended by our hosts.

An optional extra is to present a concert on the Saturday afternoon. Obviously this would require us to arrive in Goulburn earlier for rehearsal. We might present excerpts from the Celebration of Psalms, and excerpts from other concerts we have presented for the Swiz Cultural Foundation.

Before committing to the Cathedral, we need to get a good indication of who would like to participate, so we will be asking you on Thursday March 31st about your intentions, and also your opinion on presenting the optional Saturday concert.

FOUNDATION CONCERT

We plan to present a concert on Saturday 26th November to benefit the Swiz Cultural Foundation. It is likely the first half of the program will feature Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony*

of Carols. The second half will feature other advent-appropriate music – one possibility is Ralph Vaughan William’s *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*.

For all of us, the program we plan for 2022 represents a re-awakening of outreach possibilities after the constraints of the past two years. And for those disappointed about the second postponement of our trip to Salisbury Cathedral, we hope these special events will provide appropriate challenges and satisfactions to ameliorate that disappointment.

So we need to confirm the Goulburn visit, but everything else makes for a busy and interesting year.



Last month

Evensong

The Evensong service was a great occasion. We had 28 voices in the choir, plus Phillip, Peter and Kate who did lots of accompanying, most significantly during the presentation of Peter’s new composition *O God, early in the morning*. This was our first ‘in person’ Evensong since Saturday 29 February 2020. It was especially rewarding to see the service so well attended.

Peter’s anthem was very well received and we might hope it finds a wider audience than just our own in the future. It certainly deserves one. It was great having him conduct his own work at its first outing.

Thanks to the choir members who supplied the comestibles for the high tea which followed the service. Almost everyone in the congregation moved into the hall afterwards and ate everything in sight. The clean-up was easy; there was nothing left!

The commissioning service

On Tuesday evening, 15 March, we welcomed Rev. Stuart Holman and his wife Cate to Swiz. The service and the commissioning were led by Bishop Chris Edwards. Once again, the church was full.

We sang Stanford’s setting of the Jubilate – *O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands* – and Rutter’s setting of the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24–26). It was good to see Phillip co-leading the singing of the song *O praise the name of the Lord our God*, from Hillsong. It was not a difficult piece and many in the congregation seemed to know it well, but if we had seen the dots before the service, we might have done a better job of contributing.

It was a most joyous evening and, again, everyone moved into the hall for the high tea and lots of chat.

Messiah rehearsals

Messiah rehearsals began a few days later. It was pleasing to have so many visitors attend, some from within the parish and some from other local church choirs and some who are friends of choristers. All are welcome.

The wicked witch returns

And then the pestilence managed to infiltrate the choir. We assume it was the Omicron BA2 thing which reduced numbers by nearly half on the following Sunday morning. Peter Gilkes directed (Phillip was out of town, not Covid affected) and Kate Choi accompanied (Peter Hamilton was afflicted, we believe). The healthy fifteen did a good job on Tallis’s *If ye Love Me*, and Kate filled the master’s shoes admirably on her first solo outing. Choir practice on the following Thursday, including the Messiah rehearsal, was abandoned, but we sang Sam Wesley’s *Lead me Lord* on the next Sunday.



This month

Easter services

With the return to Eastern Standard Time on Sunday 2 April, ‘blue shirts’ will mean, for men, Swiz ties and dark jackets.

Messiah

Rehearsals have begun, and we have lots of extra help from within the Swiz congregation and from the wider community. We have only a few rehearsals left before the service which Stuart Holman has agreed to lead.

Palm Sunday

We sing the anthem *God so loved the world*, text from John 3:16 and music by John Stainer. It is a chorale from his cantata *The Crucifixion*.

Good Friday

If you missed the world premiere presentation of the new Peter Hamilton anthem, *O God, early in the morning*, then you must come to the Good Friday choral service when we shall sing it again.

Easter Day

We have a new anthem to present on Easter Day – *Good Christians all rejoice and sing*, words by Cyril Alington and music by Malcom Archer. We are familiar with the words in the hymn that we sing to the 16th century tune *Vulpus* (HTC No. 154), but this is, for us, a new and different tune by a living British composer.

Malcolm Archer



Anzac Day

Another anthem composed by Malcolm Archer is on the program for our Anzac Day service on 24th April. For the fallen has text by Laurence Binyon, written just after the start of the Great War.



Lord of the Dance

On Good Friday, we shall present John Rutter's setting of Sydney Carter's text *The Lord of the Dance*. The lyrics date from 1963. Carter wrote:

I see Christ as the incarnation of the piper who is calling us. He dances that shape and pattern which is at the heart of our reality. By Christ I mean not only Jesus; in other times and places, other planets, there may be other Lords of the Dance. But Jesus is the one I know of first and best. I sing of the dancing pattern in the life and words of Jesus.

Whether Jesus ever leaped in Galilee to the rhythm of a pipe or drum I do not know. We are told that David danced (and as an act of worship too), so it is not impossible. The fact that many Christians have regarded dancing as a bit ungodly (in a church, at any rate) does not mean that Jesus did.

The Shakers didn't. This sect flourished in the United States in the nineteenth century, but the first Shakers came from Manchester in England, where they were sometimes called the "Shaking Quakers". They hived off to America in 1774, under the leadership of Mother Anne. They established celibate communities - men at one end, women at the other; though they met for work and worship. Dancing, for them, was a spiritual activity. They also made furniture of a functional, lyrical simplicity. Even the cloaks and bonnets that the women wore were distinctly stylish, in a sober and forbidding way.

Their hymns were odd, but sometimes of great beauty: from one of these (*Simple Gifts*) I adapted this melody. I could have written another for the words of *Lord of the Dance* (some people have), but this was so appropriate that it seemed a waste of time to do so. Also, I wanted to salute the Shakers.

He added later:

I did not think the churches would like it at all. I thought many people would find it pretty far flown, probably heretical and anyway dubiously Christian. But in fact people did sing it and, unknown to me, it touched a chord ... Anyway, it's the sort of Christianity I believe in."



That Passion Chorale – a letter to the Editor

In *Hyfrydol* last month, the editor made reference to the *Passion Chorale* (we sang the hymn *O sacred head surrounded* at Evensong – Ed.), a melody often sung in churches on Good Friday but did you realise that lovely wistful melody began life in a secular context as a love song, composed or 'moulded' by Hans Leo Hassler in or around 1601?

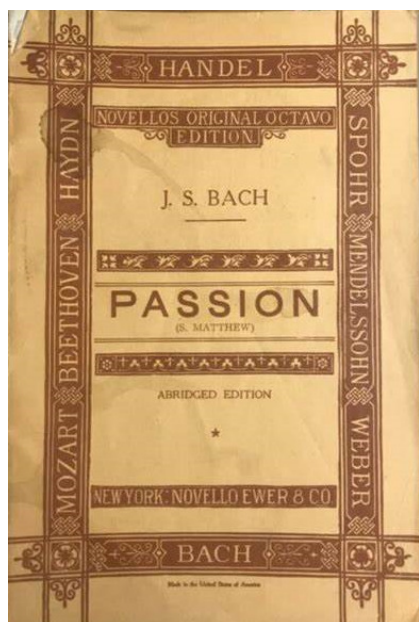
The love song's original title was *Mein G'mut ist mir verwirret*¹, it then became a Catholic hymn *Herzlich thut mich Erlangen*² in 1613 before being adapted by Paul Gerhardt and attached to a

¹ Which in English translates as "My mind's confused within me".

² I do desire dearly (a blessed end)

Lutheran poem appearing in 1656. His hymn began ‘O Haupt voll Blut Wunden’ which later became (in English) ‘O sacred head sore wounded.’

Hassler lived from 1564-1612 so had already died by the time Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) came to use the Hassler melody – over and over again! Earlier versions of the song had been in triple time which gave the melody a dance-like quality whereas Bach’s versions are described as having a ‘squared up rhythm’ meaning I suppose they are in the style of a chorale (Lutheran hymn) and in 4/4 time. Bach uses the melody five times in one long work, his *St Matthew Passion*, each time with different words and different harmonisations and each time the chorale returns, Bach lowers the pitch and increases the chromaticism, perhaps matching the gloom as Jesus’ death draws closer and closer. And then, the final version (No.73) is sung very softly just after the words (in translation) “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost”.



The first version in the Passion begins brightly in E major at the time of the last Supper as the disciples reassure Jesus of their faithfulness. The next iteration begins in Eb, the next in D major and the next is a mixture of D minor/F major. The final version, sung just after the death of Jesus, begins in A minor, travels through C major, finally resolving unexpectedly on an E major chord. So it is probably due to the frequency of this chorale in this work that gave it the name ‘Passion Chorale’ in English translations. It is not a name used in Germany.

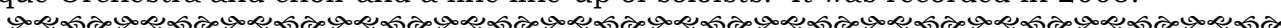
But Bach didn’t only use this melody five times in the *St Matthew Passion*. One can hear it embellished in both the opening and final movements of Cantata BWV 161 *Komm du Süsse Todesstunde*, in the opening movement of Cantata BWV 135 *Ach Herr, Mich Armen Sunder*, in his Christmas Oratorio (movements 5 and 64) in Cantatas BWV 25, 153 and 159, and in the *Choralgesänge* Nos.157 and 158.

And Bach was not the only German composer to be drawn to this melody. Both Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) and Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) chose to base compositions on *O Haupt voll Blut und*

Wunden. Try listening to Mendelssohn’s short cantata or Brahms organ chorale prelude using that name (both can be found on You Tube) and I’m sure you’ll recognise the chorale melody!

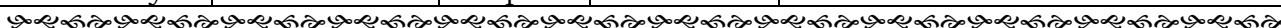
/Meg Matthews, March 2022

Postscript: On Good Friday (15th April) at 1pm on 2MBS FM @102.5, Stephen and I will be presenting an excellent recording of Bach’s *St Matthew Passion* where you will hear all five versions of the Passion Chorale. The performance is under three hours, and is directed by Ton Koopman with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and choir and a fine line-up of soloists. It was recorded in 2005.



The calendar for 2022

Day	Date	Time	Location	Service/activity
Saturday	9 April	6:30 pm	Swiz	Messiah presentation
Friday	15 April	8:30 am	Swiz	Good Friday service
Sunday	17 April	9 am	Swiz	Easter Day service
Sunday	24 April	9 am	Swiz	Anzac Day service
Saturday	11 June	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Sunday	12 June	9 am	Swiz	RSCM Music Sunday
Sunday	19 June	2 pm	Swiz	Huguenot service
Saturday	20 August	5 pm	Swiz	Celebration of Psalms
Sat-Sun	24-25 Sept		Goulburn	Concert and two services
Saturday	29 October	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Saturday	26 November	8 pm	Swiz	Foundation concert



Hyfrydol

The editor very gratefully acknowledges the contributions received from readers for this and past issues. Further contributions are always very thankfully accepted (preferably in Word format, but pdf is also very acceptable):

- Personal stories;
- Musical stories;
- Just about anything, really.

Send them to chideock@optusnet.com.au

Recent past copies of *Hyfrydol* are available through the Choir page on the Swiz website, swiz.org.au. Open the website, click on the *Ministries* heading and then on the *Choir* heading. The choir page shows the music list for a few weeks in advance. Then, scroll to the bottom of the Choir page and, voila! There is the *Hyfrydol* link!