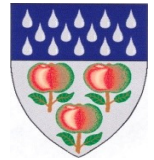




Hyfrydol



No. 96

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter

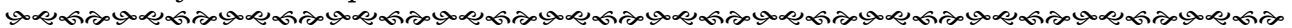
February 2022

“Instead of declaring a holiday for all of January, Phillip has given us just two Thursday rehearsals off. We are encouraged to sing in mufti from the choir pews each Sunday until 9 January when we shall sing our first anthem of 2022. At least, in the choir pews, we may sing without masks!”

That is a quote from our last issue. Wrong again! We certainly sang our first anthem on Sunday 9 January, but all muffled in face masks. Omicron is not only the fifteenth letter of the Greek alphabet, but also the new reason for turning life into a masquerade. And we didn't get to have the expected January rehearsals either. As the tide appears to be turning, yet again, perhaps the rehearsals might recommence and perhaps we might reappear from behind our disguises.

We shall not make any new predictions. There are many more letters in the Greek alphabet and we know not how many will be used before this pestilence is consigned to history. Nonetheless, we publish what might be called an aspirational calendar; the first date is an Evensong to be sung on Saturday 12 March but it can only take place if we can rehearse through February.

This issue is something of a salute to Hubert Parry who died of the Spanish Flu in the last great pandemic. May he rest in peace.



Katie Choi, our newest choir member

Katie has just joined us, not as a chorister, but as our new organ scholar. She was recommended to us by Philip Swanton, Coordinator of Organ Studies at the Sydney Conservatorium.

We asked her to tell us a little bit about herself and how she became an organist.



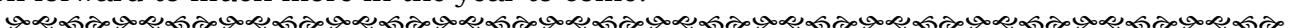
I haven't played the organ for too long. I only started playing organ in semester 2 of year 10, (so about 4½ years now), and I started it because I used to play the piano and violin at the Conservatorium High School, however I decided that they both weren't really for me. Therefore I decided to completely change paths and go to organ! I was lucky to have access to an organ at our school.

The Swiz organ is very nice, I haven't played on many organs, but I like the sounds of the pipes, and the touch of the manuals a lot. It's very comfortable to play.

I graduated high school in 2019, and this year will be starting my 3rd year as a Diagnostic Radiography student at the University of Sydney. I will (hopefully) have next year as my final year. I am currently just tutoring a little bit as work.

This is a photo of me and Philip Swanton in 2019, when I played organ at the Shore School.

Welcome Katie. We have already enjoyed your playing hymn accompaniments for us and we look forward to much more in the year to come.



Dear Lord and Father of mankind

The choir sang this hymn/anthem at our first service in January. We featured the convoluted story of this piece in an early issue of the newsletter (August 2013) but more digging has now been completed and it is time for a more complete history.

George Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) was the American Quaker poet who wrote the long poem *The Brewing of Soma* in 1872. Traditionally, Quakers have not sung in worship, but value silence, waiting for the “still, small voice” of God.

According to written accounts of the time, Whittier had been reading in Max Müller’s *The Sacred Books of the East* about the use of soma, a plant found in northwest India. Soma was used to prepare a mildly intoxicating drug that was ingested in religious rituals, resulting in a state of frenzy. His rather long narrative poem begins by describing Vedic priests going into the forest, brewing a drink from honey and milk, and drinking themselves into a frenzy. Whittier was critical of those who believed they might find God through unbridled ecstasy, such as the hysterical camp meetings and revivals common in America in his day.

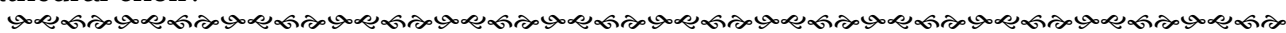
W G Horder, an English Congregational Minister, recognised the stand-alone value of the last six stanzas of Whittier’s poem and published them in his *Congregational Hymns: a hymnal for the Free Churches* in 1884. It was probably sung first to a tune like *Newcastle* (H K Morley, 1875), but the tune *Rest*, composed in 1887 by English composer Frederick Maker and familiar to some of our longer-serving choristers, made the text popular.

In 1888, C H H Parry composed the oratorio *Judith, or The Regeneration of Manasseh*. Parry himself wrote the libretto, linking the totally unrelated stories of Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33) and Judith (Apocrypha), a Jewish widow who used her beauty and charm to destroy an Assyrian general and save Israel from oppression. It was composed for a festival in Birmingham and was at first very successful. But its popularity faded quickly.

A tuneful aria, *Long Since in Egypt’s Plenteous Land*, is sung by Manasseh’s wife Judith as a kind of Sunday School lesson to a group of young boys during the first Act.

In 1924, G G Stocks, Director of Music at Repton School in Derbyshire, realised that the aria’s 86 88 66 rhythm was well suited to Whittier’s poem if you repeated the last line of each verse. He included the tune in a supplement to the school’s hymn book for use in the chapel. The tune *Repton* has now become the ‘go-to’ tune for the hymn and *Rest* has been quietly laid to rest.

In the version we sing as an anthem, the third verse has sopranos sing one of the two variations of the melody which Parry included in his aria. We don’t get to sing the descant version of the penultimate verse, but you can hear it if you click on the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUndPHAYKc8> which is sung by the boys of the St Paul’s Cathedral choir.



Jerusalem

On the second Sunday in January we sang another hymn set to a tune by Hubert Parry. The tune, *Jerusalem*, has been with us for over 100 years; the words for only about 40 years – another case of a Parry tune being taken over without his knowledge or permission, like *Dear Lord and father of mankind!*

Around 1808 William Blake published his epic poem *Milton: A Poem in Two Books*. The words “And did those feet in ancient time” come from the preface to the epic. Britain’s poet laureate from 1913 to 1930, Robert Bridges, rescued the words from eternal obscurity.

1. Dear Lord and Fa-ther of man-kind, For-
2. Drop Thy still dews of qui-et-ness Till
3. Breathe through the heats of our de-sire Thy
4. In sim-ple trust like theirs who heard, Be-
give our fool-ish ways; Re-clothe us in our
all our striv-ings cease; Take from our souls the
cool-ness and Thy balm; Let sense be dumb, let
side the Syr-ian sea, The gra-cious call-ing
right-ful mind; In pur-er lives Thy
strain and stress, And let our or-dered
flesh re-tire; Speak through the earth-quake,
of the Lord, Let us, like them, with-
ser-vice find, In deep-er rev-erence, praise,
lives con-fess The beau-ty of Thy peace,
wind, and fire, O still small voice of calm!
out a word, Rise up and fol-low Thee.

Hymn tune Rest



During World War I, he approached Parry, an old Etonian school friend, asking him to compose music to Blake’s verses for the “Fight for Right” movement which had been formed to sustain the resolve of Britain during the World War. “It should be suitable, simple music to Blake’s stanzas,” Bridges insisted; “music that an audience could take up and join in.”

William Blake – a self-portrait

Once the “suitable, simple music” was written, the piece was played to Henry Walford Davies, at the Royal College of Music, and he volunteered to print the music. Davies, an organist at the Temple Church, tried it out on the boys of the City of London School who provided choristers for his choir. And these, with other choirs and choral societies in London, gathered to sing it publicly for the first time at a “Fight for Right” meeting at Queen’s Hall, Langham Place in London, on 28 March 1916.

Jerusalem instantly became popular and, because of its wide appeal, Parry added an orchestral accompaniment to the one already available in print for organ or piano.

In 1917, Parry conducted it for the ladies of the Albert Hall choir as part of a call in favour of National Service for Women. This signalled a closer relationship with the women’s suffrage movement which Parry and his wife, Maude, supported. A year later, *Jerusalem* was sung at a suffrage demonstration concert and it was decided it would become the hymn of the Women Voters – the song was adopted by the Women’s Institute as their anthem in 1924.

At the same time, other bodies and institutions such as public schools helped to popularise the song, and in 1922 Edward Elgar who greatly admired Parry, made his own orchestration of the accompaniment.

It also entered the hymn book and was taken up in the 1950s as part of the *Last Night of the Proms*. Both verses now are lustily sung at the end of the evening by the enthusiastic promenaders every year. Followers of English cricket teams, soccer teams and rugby teams have also been known to use the hymn to support their teams’ efforts.

But we didn’t sing Blake’s words to the hymn. We sang words written by Michael Perry, a Church of England clergyman and a leading British hymnodist of the 20th century. He was closely associated with Jubilate Hymns, the publisher of our hymn book, *Hymns for Today’s Church* (HTC). He was so closely involved that he has 40 hymn texts in HTC, second only to Timothy Dudley-Smith who has 50 texts.



Michael Perry

Perry paraphrased the words of Psalms 149 and 150 for his hymn text *Bring to the Lord a glad new song* (No. 336 in HTC). He wrote the words with Parry’s tune firmly in mind. The first verse is his version of Psalm 149, the second verse is Psalm 150.

During his relatively short life (he died in 1996 aged just 54) Perry wrote over 300 hymns. After *Bring to the Lord*, his best known hymns are probably *O God beyond all praising* (which we sing to Holst’s melody *Thaxted*) and *Calypso Carol* – “See Him lying on a bed of straw.” He wrote the carol, both words and music, during his student days for a college concert. Apparently, it only became famous when Cliff Richard used it in one of his radio shows.



Sir Hubert Hastings Parry

Having discussed at some length two pieces of Parry’s music, we should perhaps say something about the man himself.

Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry was an English composer and teacher of music. He was born on 27 February 1848 in Bournemouth, the youngest of six children. Three of his older siblings died in infancy, and his mother died twelve days after he was born.

Parry was sent to Eton, where his interest in music was encouraged and developed. At Eton he distinguished himself at sports as well as music. He took music lessons with Sir George Elvey, the organist of St George’s Chapel, Windsor, and composed many apprentice works.

While still at Eton Parry successfully sat the Oxford Bachelor of Music examination, the youngest person who had ever done so. His examination exercise, a cantata, *O Lord, Thou hast cast us out*, “astonished” the Oxford Professor of Music, Sir Frederick Ouseley, and was triumphantly performed and published in 1867.



Going on to Oxford after leaving Eton, Parry did not study music (his father wanted him to follow a commercial career), and instead read law and modern history. From 1870 to 1877 he was an underwriter at Lloyd's of London, but he proved as unsuccessful in insurance as he was successful in music.

Parry continued his musical studies while he worked in insurance. He took lessons from William Sterndale Bennett, but finding them insufficiently demanding he sought lessons from Johannes Brahms. Brahms was not available, and Parry was recommended to the pianist Edward Dannreuther, “wisest and most sympathetic of teachers”. Dannreuther started by giving Parry piano lessons, but soon extended their studies to analysis and composition.

At the same time as his compositions were coming to public notice, Parry was taken up as a musical scholar by George Grove, first as his assistant editor for his new *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and then, in 1883, Grove, as the first director of the new Royal College of Music, appointed him as the college's professor of composition and musical history.

Now well established as a composer and scholar, Parry received many commissions. Among them were choral works such as the *Ode on Saint Cecilia's Day* (1889), the oratorios *Judith* (1888) and *Job* (1892), the psalm-setting *De Profundis* (1891) and a lighter work, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1905), described later as “a bubbling well of humour.” The biblical oratorios were well received by the public, but Parry's lack of sympathy with the form was mocked by George Bernard Shaw, then writing musical criticism in London. He denounced *Job* as “the most utter failure ever achieved by a thoroughly respectable musician. There is not one bar in it that comes within fifty thousand miles of the tamest line in the poem.”

When Grove retired as director of the Royal College of Music, Parry succeeded him from January 1895, and held the post until his death. In 1900 he succeeded John Stainer as professor of music at Oxford. A writer of his obituary in 1918 lamented these calls on Parry's time: “A composer who counts is rare enough anywhere, any time. Do not try to use him as a mixture of university don, cabinet minister, city magnate, useful hack, or a dozen things besides. A great blow was delivered against English music when Parry was appointed to succeed Sir George Grove as director of the RCM.” Despite the demands of these posts his personal beliefs, which were Darwinian and humanist, led him to compose a series of six experimental works in which he hoped to supersede the traditional oratorio and cantata forms. They were generally

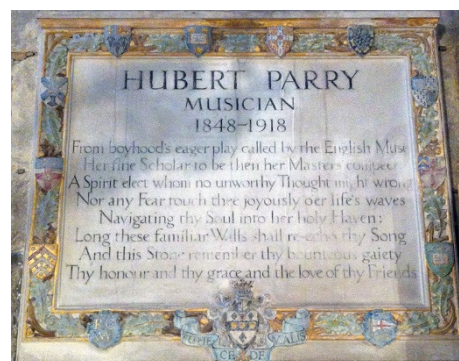
unsuccessful with the public, though Edward Elgar admired *The Vision of Life* (1907), and *The Soul's Ransom* (1906) has had several modern performances.

Influenced as a composer principally by Bach and Brahms, Parry evolved a powerful diatonic style which itself greatly influenced future English composers such as Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams. His own full development as a composer was almost certainly hampered by the immense amount of work he took on; but his energy and charisma, not to mention his abilities as a teacher and administrator, helped establish art music at the centre of English cultural life. As head of the Royal College of Music, he numbered among his leading pupils Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Frank Bridge and John Ireland.

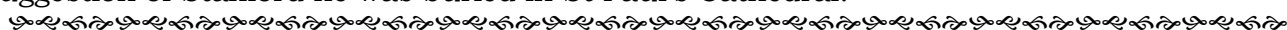
Parry was created a Knight Bachelor in 1898. He was made a baronet in King Edward VII's Coronation Honours List of June 1902.

Parry resigned his Oxford appointment on doctor's advice in 1908 and in the last decade of his life produced some of his best-known works, including the *Symphonic Fantasia 1912*, the *Ode on the Nativity* (1912), *Jerusalem* (1916) and the *Songs of Farewell* (1916–1918). The piece by which he is best known, the setting of William Blake's verses to *Jerusalem*, was immediately taken up by the suffragette movement, with which both Parry and his wife were strongly in sympathy.

Parry greatly admired German music and was a friend of German culture in general. He was, accordingly, certain that Britain and Germany would never go to war against each other, and was in despair when World War I broke out. In the words of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: "During the war he watched a life's work of progress and education being wiped away as the male population—particularly the new fertile generation of composing talent—of the Royal College dwindled."

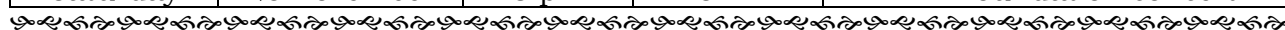


In the autumn of 1918 Parry contracted Spanish flu during the global pandemic and died. At the suggestion of Stanford he was buried in St Paul's Cathedral.



The current aspirational calendar for 2022

Day	Date	Time	Location	Service/activity
Thursday	3 February	8 pm	Swiz	Rehearsals recommence
Saturday	12 March	5 pm	Swiz	Lenten Evensong
Thursday	17 March	7:30 pm	Swiz	Messiah rehearsals begin
Saturday	9 April		Swiz	Messiah presentation
Friday	15 April		Swiz	Good Friday service
Sunday	24 April		Swiz	Anzac Day service
Saturday	11 June	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Sunday	12 June	10 am	Swiz	RSCM Music Sunday
Sunday	19 June	2 pm	Swiz	Huguenot service
Saturday	20 August	5 pm	Swiz	Celebration of Psalms
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