

Notes from the Song School

Andrew Lucas and Tom Winpenny give a summary of the wide-ranging musical activity by the Cathedral Choirs over the last 12 months:

In May 2015 the **Cathedral Choir** went on a tour to Germany to Hildesheim, Hannover, Brunswick and earlier in the year sang a concert at St Mary's, Welwyn; in June they sang a live broadcast of Choral Evensong for BBC radio 3. The choir also performed at the International Organ Festival in a concert with Westminster Abbey and Christ Church, Oxford; sang together with the Abbey Girls Choir some newly commissioned and very beautiful music by Alec Roth for the dedication of the new nave screen statues, and also the boys found time to beat the Linköping Cathedral boys' choir from Sweden at football when they visited us.

Both choirs, plus St Albans Bach Choir, sang with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in three pre-Christmas concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London and in Fairfield Halls, Croydon. These concerts were all packed out – making a total audience of 14,500. With the Cathedral's *Carols on The Hour* services, the Cathedral Lessons and Carol Services, and services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we think that another 20,000 people will have heard them sing over the 2015 Christmas period.



The Cathedral Choir, with the Bishop of St Albans, in Hildesheim on the occasion of the 900th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Cathedral.

Around Easter 2016, both choirs sang at the live Sung Eucharist for Easter Day, followed by a BBC TV recording of *Songs of Praise* from St Albans and also recorded some anthems for the programme's archive. In July 2016 both choirs, plus the Abbey Singers, joined forces with St Albans Bach Choir in a performance of Bach's *Mass in B minor*, which is a tour de force for anyone but especially for young children.

In the autumn of 2015 the organ scholar Michael Papadopoulos left us to be an assistant organist for a year at Clare College, Cambridge and St Paul's, Knightsbridge (he did a lot of commuting), and was replaced by Nicholas Freestone. Nick is an excellent organ scholar, but it seems that his fame will now for ever rest on his organ rendition of 'Life on Mars' in tribute to David Bowie on the day of his death which was published on YouTube and watched by people around the world. According to the Daily Telegraph, 'his playing reduced millions to tears' – in a good way – and it is probably the biggest and least expensive piece of publicity the Cathedral will ever get. Naturally, he is staying on for a second year.

Andrew Lucas, *Master of the Music*



The Cathedral Choir sang at a special service, attended by the Bishop of St Albans, to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the founding of Hildesheim Cathedral.

The **Abbey Girls Choir** has had a particularly busy summer term. Every two years the choir undertakes a tour, and at May half term we set off on Eurostar for a short tour to Paris. During our visit the choir gave three performances, but there was also plenty of time for sight-seeing (Notre Dame, Pompidou Centre, Eiffel Tower, Seine boat trip) and shopping. Our first day we sang the Saturday evening Mass at Saint-Eustache which was completed in 1633 and is situated in Les Halles, the historic market area of Paris. Its inspiring architecture and excellent acoustic made it a rewarding place to sing, and we were welcomed warmly by the church staff and the English parish priest.

The following day we headed to St George's Anglican Church, not far from the Arc de Triomphe, to sing the Eucharist. St George's was rebuilt around 30 years ago, and has an elegant modern design despite

its anonymous appearance from the street. The girls sang *Missa in simplicitate* by Jean Langlais and *Caro cibus* by Mendelssohn, and their singing was enthusiastically received. Our final day in Paris saw the choir sing a lunchtime concert at the famous church of Saint-Sulpice in the Latin Quarter. Of Parisian churches it is second only in size to Notre Dame. It has an envious musical tradition, boasting Widor as one of its most eminent former organists. The recital included music by Fauré, Leighton, Mendelssohn and Grandi, and was well received by visitors, choir parents and by the church staff. Nicholas Freestone, the current Organ Scholar, accompanied on the beautiful Choir Organ (an instrument once presided over by Fauré).

A few weeks after our return from Paris, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Abbey Girls Choir with a special

continues on next page...

continued from front page...

Evensong on 25th June. To mark the occasion, we had commissioned (through the generosity of St Albans Ex-Choristers' Association) an introit from Judith Weir, the current Master of the Queen's Music. She composed a beautiful setting of Christina Rossetti's poem *Holy Innocents* for upper voices and organ. It was a privilege for the choir to work on this piece in rehearsal with the composer, and it is a work which we will return to frequently in the future. Around 20 former choristers joined forces with the present choristers for the anthem – Holst's magnificent setting of *Ave Maria*. It was a pleasure to welcome back to the Cathedral my predecessors Simon Johnson and Andrew Parnell (the choir's founder director). The Cathedral Music Trust generously met the cost of the reception which followed the service.

The Abbey Girls Choir took part at the end of term – alongside the Cathedral Choir and under the direction of Andrew Lucas – in the performance of JS Bach's *Mass in B minor*. This was jointly promoted by the Music Trust and St Albans Bach Choir. It is one of the most

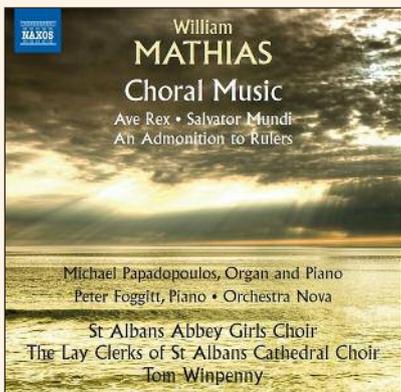
demanding works in the entire choral repertoire, and the choristers had worked hard throughout the year to learn it. It was a hugely enriching experience for the choristers to take part in, and something which will remain with them throughout their musical lives. It was an excellent conclusion to a busy year.

As a postscript to the year's events, this summer sees the release of the Abbey Girls Choir's latest recording – *Choral Works* by William Mathias. This recording, made in July 2015, was generously supported by the Music Trust, and it includes the *Jesus College Service*, the extended anthem *An Admonition to Rulers* and the carol sequences *Ave Rex* and *Salvator Mundi*.

Tom Winpenny, *Assistant Master of the Music and Director of the Abbey Girls Choir*



The Abbey Girls Choir on tour in Paris, where they sang Saturday Evening Mass at St Eustache Church (right) and enjoyed seeing the sights at the Eiffel Tower (left).



A recording session (right) for the Abbey Girls Choir's latest CD of Choral Works by William Mathias.

CD available now (£6.99) from the Cathedral Shop or Cathedral Office via:

lizzie.smyth@stalbanscathedral.org



Andrew Parnell (founding Director), Tom Winpenny (current Director), Simon Johnson (previous Director) and Andrew Lucas (Master of the Music) attending the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Abbey Girls Choir.



Past and current choristers and musicians at the Abbey Girls Choir 20th Anniversary Celebration, with composer Judith Weir (front row, left).

Bach's Mass in B minor

A view from the choir

This concert in July was given by St Albans Bach Choir, the boys, girls and lay clerks of the Cathedral Choirs, and the Abbey Singers, with the English Concert and a quartet of excellent soloists, conducted by Andrew Lucas. It was made possible by the joint sponsorship of the Bach Choir and the Music Trust. Judging by the sustained applause, our performance was clearly enjoyed by the large audience; but what was it like to be singing this wonderful music?

It is hard to beat the thrill of being part of a team of 180 and helping to perform some of the most glorious music ever written. There were many moments of sheer joy, starting with the first few bars - surely the ultimate musical expression of happiness, thanks and praise. By contrast, it was impossible not to be moved by such sections as 'Et incarnatus est' and 'Crucifixus' and the challenge was to convey that emotion while remaining musical. There was also exhilaration at tackling very difficult music and, thanks to our meticulous preparation by Andrew Lucas, singing it really well. Unlike the audience,



photo: Eike Davis

we could see the conductor's face - and I think he was rather enjoying himself!

Singing is very physical and something as huge and complex as the *B minor Mass* gives us a thorough work-out. Pulses race during the energetic sections and diaphragms work hard to achieve long, sustained, quiet phrases. Our concentration must never falter. As singers, we are involved in the music in a way that no listener can be, and that is a huge privilege. It is why we do it!

Stephen Boffey, *St Albans Bach Choir*, bass

Young and gifted musicians compete

St Albans Young Musicians Competition Final - Sunday, 28 February 2016

The afternoon of Sunday 28th February 2016 saw the Final of the Fifth Young Musicians Competition in the Cathedral Nave, adjudicated by Trustee, Professor Tim Blinks of the University of Hertfordshire.

Over 200 performers drawn from primary and secondary schools in the St Albans area performed a very wide range of music with great commitment and enthusiasm.

Ensembles and soloists displayed the depth of music-making from these youngsters and the huge support that is given them by their parents and teachers. Next year's Competition will take place on Sunday 26th February.

Music Trust Endowments

The Music Trust has received a number of endowments under its Endow A Day's Music scheme and Endow a Chorister or Lay Clerk scheme, which enable donors to mark a special event or relationship in a truly lasting way.

One such story from Ailsa and Alan Herbert:

"It may seem strange that we have endowed the music on 29 February which only occurs once every 4 years! There is a good reason - it is the birthday of our younger son Tim (a landmark which he shares with Rossini) and we felt that it would be appropriate to mark this unusual date. Tim joined the Cathedral Choir in 1988

(shortly after his second birthday!) as one of Barry Rose's first probationers and went on to become Head Chorister in 1993-4."

Endowed Days

7 January	(John and Lois Scott)
29 February	(Ailsa and Alan Hertbert)
13 May	(Dorothy Percival)
17 September	(Pat and Paul Leggatt)

Chorister Endowments

2015	Anonymous
------	-----------

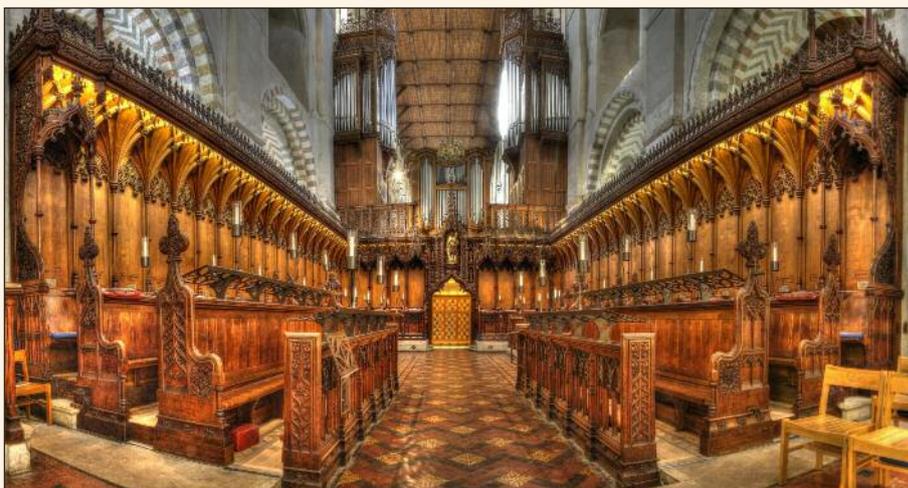


photo: Luke Watson

The recently refurbished Quire, with extended stalls, music rests and lighting - made possible by a legacy from Dr John Birch, former Trustee and distinguished musician (Chichester Cathedral, the Temple Church, curator-organist Royal Albert Hall).

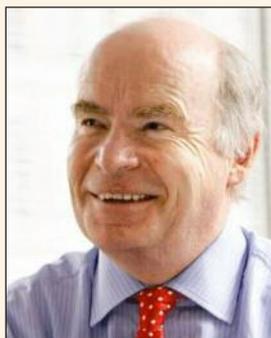
Our Trustees

The Dean pays tribute to Gerald Corbett and David Foxton as they step down and we hear from two recently-appointed Trustees, Ralph Abel Smith and Peter Trevelyan.

Gerald Corbett

It is time to say a very big and warm thank you to Gerald Corbett, who is handing on the chairmanship of the Music Trust to Chris Muhley, having agreed to chair the new Alban Foundation.

For the last five years Gerald has been a fantastic chairman of the Trust, who has managed to combine a watchful efficiency with a light and entertaining touch. It has been a pleasure to attend his meetings – and of how many committees can that be said? They have also been very productive years, in which sponsorship has grown steadily; we have continued important outreach activities such as the schools' *Sing Up* project and external concerts; and we have established several successful new initiatives, of which the annual Young People's Music Competition is perhaps the most remarkable. The Music Trust Gala dinner in 2012, masterminded and energised by Gerald, was perhaps the single most glittering and successful – and enjoyable – fundraising event.



I apologise to the Music Trust for stealing Gerald away, but as his chairmanship of the 'Alban, Britain's First Saint Appeal' has demonstrated, he is literally God's gift to the Cathedral's fundraising, and in the spirit of the Parable of the Talents I am shamelessly exploiting his extraordinary gifts and generosity as much as possible. We owe him an enormous debt of thanks.

David Foxton

David would be the first to admit he is not a man for attending committee meetings – the life of a top-flight city barrister hardly allows it – but he has nevertheless been a wonderfully generous and supportive Trustee. He and Heather have produced no fewer than four choristers for our choirs – two boys and two girls – and Heather also sang in the Parish Choir for some years. They have also provided two choristerships, one each for both choirs, and have been privately generous in many ways over a long period. Though bowing out formally as a trustee, David and the family continue to be very active supporters of the Trust's activities and of the Cathedral in general. They are wonderful friends, and we are extremely grateful to them and for them.



Ralph Abel Smith writes:

I was born and bred in Hertfordshire, and have lived in the Hertford area all my life, focussing on farming and property management as a profession.

At school I started to learn the piano and then progressed to the organ. Whereas I never became particularly proficient, I derived great pleasure and that initiated me into a particular enjoyment of English Cathedral Music.

Over time I have served on the St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance and the Diocesan Glebe Committee, so joining the Music Trust as a Trustee was a natural progression. Thereafter I was very pleased to be asked to join the Executive Committee for 'Alban, Britain's First Saint Appeal', and it will be very satisfactory to see it through to completion which I see as this generation's contribution to the history and evolution of this remarkable building.

To hear music of such quality being performed is as uplifting to the ear as the Cathedral itself is to the eye, and it is a great privilege to be associated with both.



Peter Trevelyan says: Hello!

I was born in St Albans and, for the last 25+ years, have lived in a house at the bottom of the Abbey Orchard.

Most of my professional life was spent as a town planner. My interest in urban planning led me to St Albans Civic Society, and at various times I have been Chair, Vice-chair, and committee member of the Society. That has allowed me to appreciate and enjoy the buildings of St

Albans, amongst which the Cathedral is pre-eminent.

My other main interest has been music. I am an amateur viola player; I married a musician, Diane Terry; and we have a son, Julian, who is also a budding musician. An important part of his musical training was as a chorister in St Albans Cathedral, and subsequently Abbey Singers.

Listening to the boys' choir, in all its various roles, has given me much pleasure in recent years. The Cathedral is singularly suited to choral and organ music, and the use of the building for music is an essential part of its character and attractiveness. I am delighted to be able to contribute in a small way to the continuation of that glorious choral tradition.



Our new Chairman

Chris Muhley introduces himself:

I am delighted to succeed Gerald Corbett as Chairman of the Music Trust. I have been the executive trustee since 2008, working alongside the Development Office on the Trust's day-to-day running. Having retired in the summer after 19 years as Director of Music at Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School I am pleased to take on this further challenge. My two daughters were in the Abbey Girls Choir and benefitted enormously from the wonderful musical education they received. Securing our

Cathedral's musical tradition so that future generations might continue to enjoy what we have today is our priority and we are hugely appreciative of the great generosity of our numerous patrons. Thank you – I hope to continue to build on Gerald's inspiring 5 years at the helm.

Julian Trevelyan at St Paul's Walden Bury

Stephen Boffey, *Music Trust Patron*, reports on the concert:

On 22nd May supporters of the Music Trust were once again treated to a superb recital in the lovely setting of St Paul's Walden Bury (by kind invitation of Sir Simon and Lady Bowes Lyon), performed by one of the UK's leading young pianists, Julian Trevelyan. He had performed here two years previously for the Music Trust in May 2014. Julian, a native of St Albans and former Cathedral chorister, has already, at the age of 17, accumulated an impressive list of competition successes. These include piano finalist in the BBC's Young Musician competition (twice), winner of the Young Pianist of the North, and prizes in several French competitions, most notably, in 2015, becoming the youngest ever finalist and top prize winner of the Long-Thibaud-Crespin International Piano Competition.

Julian had assembled a wonderfully varied programme but it was full of challenges that would test any concert pianist. Undaunted, he immediately dazzled us with his confident display of technical brilliance and continued to do so throughout the evening. However, his first piece quickly established that Julian also has the maturity and musicianship to communicate with his audience. Chopin's *Sonata Op. 35*, composed in 1839, is probably best known for its *Funeral March*, which was written two years before the rest of the sonata; but there is far more to it than that. Immediately after the sombre and brooding first four bars the work suddenly bursts into an agitated torrent of notes and we are on a rollercoaster of a piece, offering astounding contrasts: thrills and serenity, sinister themes and beauty. This masterwork has been described as a 'sonata of love and death' and its range of emotions was handled with conviction by Julian.

Next came a short piece commissioned for the final of the 2015



Long-Thibaud-Crespin competition and it was quickly obvious why Julian had won the top prize. Neuberger's *Les lumières du manège – Tango* builds on the image of lights from a merry-go-round on a Brazilian beach, played on at night by abandoned children. This rhythmically challenging piece is one I should love to hear again.

Two contrasting Schubert *Impromptus*, one lyrical and the other bouncy and lighthearted, were followed by movements from Debussy's *Images*: the gently shimmering *Reflets dans l'eau*; a sonorous *Hommage a Rameau*; and the constant whirling of *Mouvement*.

In a nice piece of programming Julian ended his recital with another substantial and demanding piece composed in 1839 and, like the Chopin sonata, full of dramatic mood swings – Schumann's *Humoreske*. An ideal end to a memorable recital.

Hymnathon – Sunday 9th October 2-5pm

Raise the nave roof and funds for the Music Trust!

The popularity of the BBC television programme *Songs of Praise* gives an indication of the immense enjoyment that many gain from hymn singing. Here is an invitation to come and sponsor and sing your favourite hymns on a Sunday afternoon in the cathedral nave.

Hymns often resonate with the great moments in our lives; in our families and communities and on national occasions. They can transport us as we sing; as Milton puts it, 'O may we soon again renew that song, And keep in tune with Heav'n'. So, here's the challenge on a Sunday afternoon. Choose the hymns that resonate in your lives and sing with one united breath.

But, the small print says there must be a catch. Well, a small one. We know we will have lots of requests to sing many hymns, but we have only 180 minutes available, so we shall sing the hymns that receive the most financial sponsorship. All proceeds to further the work of the Music Trust in sustaining our Cathedral's wonderful musical tradition. This method of sponsorship worked very well in the Choral Extravaganza a few years ago. An interactive chart on a big screen in the Nave will

see the hymns go up and down in real-time as the sponsor money flows in.

We very much hope you will wish to sponsor your chosen favourite hymn through to performance by making a donation and by bringing your friends and family to support your choice.

It would be great to see you there on 9th October - tickets £5 on the door. Andrew Lucas and his dedicated team of organists are furiously practising the whole hymn book and beyond so that each verse of every hymn can be sung with spirit and understanding.

Sponsorship forms and further details available from the Music Trust office. Of course, if you are unable to join us on the Sunday, but would like to contribute to the fundraising, we would be more than grateful to receive your donation.

Please email: music-trust@stalbanscathedral.org or phone **01727 890231** if you would like to discuss anything further.

Do support this great occasion as we lift the roof in song.

St Albans Cathedral Music Trust

Cathedral Choir at All Saints', Hertford

Christopher Muhley, Music Trust Chairman, reports on the concert:

On 6th February 2016 the Cathedral Choir gave a splendid concert of largely English music in All Saints' Church, Hertford. This large church in the County town has a versatile 3 manual Father Willis organ with which to accompany its own accomplished choir.

In the first half we were treated to works by Tallis, Byrd and Purcell and EW Naylor's tour-de-force *Vox dicentis: clama!* The second half had representation from Stanford, Elgar, Chilcott and Howells – *Magnificat Collegium Regale*. Tom Winpenny gave us assured performances of works by Mendelssohn and Mathias. The Choir was directed by Andrew Lucas.

These outreach concerts are an important part of the work of the Music Trust: taking the cathedral's high-quality music-making into the Diocese. We hope to have next year's concert even further to the East of the Diocese – more anon.

Patrons' Evensong

Saturday 15th October 2016

Watch the choir rehearse from 3pm, enjoy afternoon tea in the Abbot's Kitchen, and then attend Evensong in seating reserved for Patrons. All followed by a glass of bubbly in the Old Rectory and an update of the Music Trust's work this year. **Enquiries: 01727 890231 or email: music-trust@stalbanscathedral.org**

Save the Date!

**Advent Procession & Supper
Sunday 27th November 2016**

This beautifully sung service starts at 6.30pm. Music Patrons are invited to stay for a drink after the service in the North Transept and then join the Trustees and other Patrons for supper in Lussmans Restaurant. Further details will be sent out to all Patrons.

How you can help

The St Albans Cathedral Music Trust has been established to support and develop the tradition of choral worship and promote music of the highest quality in the Cathedral.

Those who give a minimum sum of £100 are invited to become a patron of the trust. Patrons receive a number of benefits including invitations to the annual Advent Carol Service and Supper, and advance notice of cathedral sponsored concerts.

In addition, the Trust operates three special schemes to acknowledge particular generosity and to keep donors informed of our work:

- Under our **Endow a Day's Music Scheme**, a gift of £7,500 (or £6,000 if given under Gift Aid) donated over a maximum period of five years gives the donor the opportunity to be associated with music in the Cathedral on a particular date each year, in perpetuity
- In return for a gift of £25,000 or £50,000 under our **Endow a Chorister Scheme** the donor has the opportunity to have their name associated, in perpetuity, with a particular chorister's or lay clerk's place in the choirs
- The **Organ Restoration Fund** is still open for those who wish to allocate their donation to this specific aspect of our work, including a **Sponsor a Pipe** scheme, details of which may be found in a special brochure.

We are also always happy to discuss with potential donors how they might best support the Trust. For more information contact **Christopher Muhley** at the Trust's address below.

Looking Ahead

**Sunday 29th January 2017
Epiphany & Candlemas Carol Service**

**Sunday 26th February 2017
Young Musicians Competition Final**

**Saturday 15th July 2017
St Alban International Organ Festival
Opening Concert**

Further information from the Music Trust—see below.



About the Trust

Registered Charity No: 1051072

St Albans Cathedral Music Trust is an independent trust established with full charity status to receive and administer funds.

The Trustees

Christopher Muhley *Chairman*, Ralph Abel Smith, Professor Tim Blinko, Moira Dean, The Very Reverend Dr Jeffrey John *Dean of St Albans*, Andrew Lucas *Master of the Music*, Christopher Melliush, Lady Shelagh Nichols, Peter Trevelyan, Sarah Weldon.

Contributions and enquiries to:

**St Albans Cathedral Music Trust,
The Deanery, Sumpter Yard, St Albans, Herts AL1 1BY**

Tel: 01727 890231 Fax: 01727 890227

email: music-trust@stalbanscathedral.org

website: www.stalbanscathedral.org