

Sing Joyfully

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter



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July 2018

June

“Mozart fixes everything”

The Cultural Foundation benefit concert for 2018 was held on Saturday evening, 16 June. Headlined “Magnificent Mozart”, it featured items composed for church and theatre. The Swiz choir, augmented by voices from the Willoughby Singers, numbered 47, plus Peter Hamilton on organ, directors Phillip Linqvist and Peter Gilkes. And there were four guest soloists, Amelia Linqvist (soprano), Barbara Jin (contralto), Joshua Oxley (tenor) and Tristan Entwistle (bass). Eleanor Gilkes doubled as both a chorister and another soprano soloist.

The sacred music items included a substantial portion of Mozart’s unfinished *Requiem*, the main choral sections of his *Great C minor Mass*, the *Laudate Dominum* from *Vespers solennes de confessore* and his *Ave verum corpus*.

After the brief interval, the combined choirs and soloists sang excerpts from the operas *Idomenico*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Nozze di Figaro*, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Così fan Tutte*. The concert concluded with a rousing chorus from *The Abduction from the Seraglio*.

Swiz choristers were nervous about being somewhat under-rehearsed, especially because of the Latin, Italian and German texts. The result on the night was quite amazing and the audience was very, very appreciative. The soloists were also all very good. Peter Hamilton did a wonderful job on the organ, accompanying all of the sacred works and all of the opera choruses. He was allowed some slight respite during the second half – a guest pianist, Ben Burton, accompanied the arias sung by soloists.

The Huguenot Society of Australia NSW Chapter

On the Sunday immediately following the Mozart concert, we sang Christopher Tye’s motet *O Come ye servants of the Lord* at 10 am with 30-odd returning choristers. And 20-odd turned up again in the afternoon for the Huguenot service when we sang *La Cévenole* in French and Faure’s *Cantique de Jean Racine* in English. The latter service was very well attended.

It was a big weekend for all choristers, but especially for those who sang the concert and both services on Sunday.

July

St Swithun’s Day, Sunday 15 July

Our patronal festival this year will coincide with the official opening of the Pymble Anglican Christian Education (PACE) Centre. The 10:30 am service will include several choir items, including Parry’s Coronation Anthem for double choir, *I was glad*. We expect to have trumpet and timpani augmentation for the service.

A Swiz Choir social evening, Friday 20 July, 7 to 9 pm in the hall.

It has been quite a long time since our last social function. A number of new choristers have joined us over the past year and it will be good to have an opportunity to mingle without the pressure of pure Italian vowels and perfect pitch.

It is the custom for choir social functions that the ladies provide the cheese and bickies, and the men bring the wine. To minimise the clean-up afterwards, we also bring our own glassware and plates.



Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry

(Adapted from an item in The Independent, a British online newspaper, Friday 20 May 2011)



When Kate Middleton sailed up the aisle at Westminster Abbey to marry Prince William, there was no mistaking the sonic grandeur accompanying her progress. The anthem "I Was Glad" by Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918) was tailor-made for right royal occasions – it was written for the coronation of King Edward VII. Now its sudden popularity – along with the fact that Parry wrote "Jerusalem", one of the best-known melodies in the land – is helping to restore the composer's reputation as a British musical hero.

Parry's ceremonial, dyed-in-the-wool fustiness crystallises all that we love – or loathe – about "English" music. Often it seems to have "conservative establishment privilege" written all over it. That, though, can be seriously misleading. The Royal Wedding may have been an appropriate setting for "I Was Glad", but often Parry's music has been virtually hijacked for purposes that little resembled his original intent, both during his lifetime and since his death.

A biography of Parry by Jeremy Dibble is now on sale on a website devoted to Royal Wedding memorabilia. But here's the quote from the composer on its first page: "The mission of democracy is to convert the false estimate of art as an appanage¹ of luxury." Far from wanting to be an establishment mouthpiece, Parry knew that music was for everyone, regardless of wealth or "class".

How many people singing "Jerusalem" have the first idea of why he composed it? It was actually created for a meeting in 1916 of Fight for the Right, the movement that was trying to win enfranchisement for women and which he and his wife both supported. Later, in the final stages of the suffragettes' campaign, Parry conducted "Jerusalem" himself in their celebratory concert. It's often regarded as the unofficial "national anthem of England" – but if it is anyone's emblematic theme, it is that of feminism. If he knew that BNP² supporters would espouse his hymn as a favourite nationalist tub-thumper, Parry would turn in his grave in St Paul's Cathedral.

Since the royal wedding, Parry's name has been bandied about together with the word "genius". Unfortunately, he wasn't one. His music is an endearing mix of mild inspiration, massive aspiration and decent craftsmanship, topped up with hot air. As a composer, he was the ultimate English amateur, though that wasn't entirely his fault. His father, a director of the East India Company, attempted to steer his studies away from music and his aristocratic in-laws tried to prevent him following a career in it. If he had not given in to these very British upper-crust prejudices, but followed his dreams from the beginning, perhaps he could have fulfilled his potential.

Instead, he sacrificed his artistic ambitions for love. Determined to marry the girl on whom he had set his heart, Lady Maude Herbert, he bowed to her mother – who objected on the grounds of Parry's finances – and meekly took a job with Lloyd's as an underwriter. He stayed there throughout his twenties, pursuing music on the side. The opportunity to work on *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* propelled him back in the right direction, along with the mentorship of the pianist Edward Dannreuther, a passionate admirer of Wagner. For Dannreuther, Parry wrote his first well-received piece: the *Piano Concerto*, full of verve and colour.

In 1887, Parry was hijacked again, this time by his own success: his ode "Blest Pair of Sirens" brought him numerous commissions for a genre of music he didn't much like. His views were humanist and Darwinian rather than churchy. Still, he complied and wrote some oratorios. These had their moments, especially *Judith*, from which the hymn tune "Repton" is drawn. But George Bernard Shaw dismissed his *Job* as "the most utter failure ever achieved by a thoroughly respect-worthy musician".

¹ attribute

² The British National Party is a far-right and fascist political party in the United Kingdom

Besides these, Parry penned countless church anthems, five symphonies, incidental music for the theatre, chamber music, piano music and some excellent songs. Yet his works have never won a real place in concert life beyond the church – and have little hope of recognition abroad, in countries that pride themselves on more sophisticated musical achievements.

Ultimately, he became best known for his teaching. He was director of the Royal College of Music and in 1900 was appointed professor of music at Oxford University. His crucial influence extended over Elgar, Holst, Howells and Vaughan Williams – the latter also espoused Parry's liberal, humanist attitudes. He was kind, perceptive and popular, as the musicologist Donald Francis Tovey remarked while studying with him at Oxford, writing: "Dr Parry embellishes a pupil's piece of platitudinous ponderosity by extracting the juices of the pupil's brain, and concentrating them into an essence while he mysteriously increases the quality!"

There's one more twist in Parry's tale: despite the true-blue Britishness seemingly branded into his music, all the influences upon it were German, notably Brahms, Beethoven and, above all, Wagner. His ceremonial effects and sweeping melodies – the same espoused by Elgar in the Pomp and Circumstance marches – came straight from Wagner, and especially from the overture to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Yet that overture's grandeur is tongue-in-cheek: in this opera, Wagner pokes fun at the way hidebound traditions hinder the progress of new ideas. The opera's hero, Hans Sachs, extols the superiority of German art. Parry seems to have agreed. On the outbreak of the First World War, he was heartbroken by the conflict between his country and that of the culture he loved. He died in 1918 in the epidemic of Spanish flu.

The spirit of old-fashioned German art permeates Parry's music – just as German roots underpin the British monarchy that is celebrating him now. But here are three cheers for the real Parry: the liberal humanist, the supporter of feminism, and the champion of music for all.



Textured terrain recalls romance of the bush

Western Australian artist Carol Rowling describes her method of working thus: "When assembling each work, canvas is stretched over pre-shaped wood, then carved and etched with an angle grinder. Landscapes – abstract in approach and style – are painted into that 'terrain' using acrylics. The completed work is 'framed' in a wrapping of Perspex which has been moulded to fit like a skin: this adds to the materiality and texture.

The effect is surprising. Geological strata are evoked by the process as much as the forms, while fluid painterly shapes rendered in harmonic variations evoke vast areas of terrain: deserts, forests, rivers, lakes, scrub.

Horizontal and vertical 'slats' provide geometric references against which one can read sinuous chromatic undulations.

Other pieces escape from rectilinear tyranny to form puddles or blobs inhabited by compositions either in muted tones or luxuriant greens. There are also grids or 'patchworks' of offcuts and leftovers which recall Rosalie Gascoigne assemblages.

In each case, the smooth Perspex surfaces contrast with the tears, the cuts, the indentations caused by the angle grinder, within which colours flourish like microscopic flora in the cracks and fissures of rocks and wood.

Rowling's art invites close contemplation, its curious combination of rippling movement and arresting stasis recalling the romance and poetry of the Australian bush that places these works firmly in the Australian landscape tradition.



So wrote William Yeoman in an article published in the West Australian newspaper a few months ago.

Carol and husband Bob, once full-time members of Swiz choir, are now on our choir reserve list. They will be in Sydney for the opening of the PACE centre and hope to join the choir for the preceding church service.

Carol is donating a painting for the building and it is called *Golden Valley*. She writes: “My inspiration comes from the book of Isaiah, chapter 40 verse 4. As you know this passage is sung by the Tenor in the opening of Messiah. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.”

More about Carol and her art may be found on her web page: www.carolrowling.com.au.



A Premier’s Award

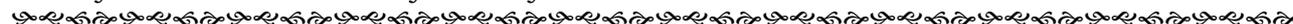
Most of us are aware that Louise Kearns, our Descant Queen, rows competitively in Dragon Boats. Louise has been recognised very recently by the Premier of New South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian, for representing the State in the 2018 Australian Dragon Boat Championships.

Louise begins a new career in a couple of weeks, working at the Sydney Sanitarium Hospital. The hospital has its own dragon boat crew, and we hope they will be happy to welcome a new rower.



RSCM NSW Branch Midwinter Dinner

We have a date but no details about time, venue, guest speaker or cost for this regular event yet. The date is Friday 27 July.



Choir program – 2018

Date	Venue	Time	
Sun 15 Jul	Swiz	10:30 am	PACE Centre opening
Fri 20 Jul	Swiz lounge	7-9 pm	Choir social gathering
Sat 25 Aug	Swiz	5 pm	St Bartholomew’s Day Evensong
Sun 23 Sep	39 Brightmore St, Cremorne	3 pm	Choir soiree @ Chez Gilkes
Sat 3 Nov	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong for the persecuted church
Sat 1 Dec	Swiz	5 pm	Advent hymn festival

Note that nothing is final until the actual day has arrived, so please be mindful of possible changes.