CHOIR NEWS – SEPTEMBER 2018



Long before I ever joined a choir, I had grown to love the service of evensong. The name itself suggests a closing of the day before the perils of the night. To me, evensong belongs to twilight; to be sung as the light fades and the day turns into night. In the Catholic Church there is vespers, literally eventide.

So years ago, whenever I could, I listened to Radio 3 on Wednesday afternoon for the broadcast of evensong, live from somewhere. And when I learnt that the service was open to all, I started to attend those locally. The Oxford college chapels, Eton, and St George's Windsor

became familiar to me. On one occasion I literally stood next to my hero Harry Christophers in the stalls at Magdalen Chapel when Genesis Sixteen was the choir (see photo). Afterwards he asked me if I had enjoyed it. Wonderful, was my reply. I have always wanted to sing with the Sixteen. Can I join? His reply began with the words Sorry Old Chap, and I don't remember the rest.....

Nowadays more and more broadcasts are from the archives, so recordings going back decades. Broadcast Choral Evensong is, I believe, the world's longest running outside broadcast programme. Although often interesting in themselves, the use of archive broadcasts is something of a shame. A similar thing has happened to Songs of Praise which has become a show rather than a service in the old format where the BBC would televise singing in a local church by local people. I long cherished a black and white recording on video tape of my Mother in one such Songs of Praise. Sadly one day, in my rush to record Spurs v Arsenal live from the old White Hart Lane, I recorded over it. A double blow as it was an away win, unfortunately.

Evensong is rather like an old, familiar and favourite overcoat which can be dressed up from time to time, but at its core remains the same timeless item. The format changes little, but styles come and go. New chants are written but the psalms remain unchanged. Sometimes a hymn, sometimes not. Sometimes an introit, usually not. Always the chance at the end for the organist to shine with the 'voluntary'. At St George's Windsor, as I recall, the clergy and choir stayed in their places until the voluntary had finished, before leaving in a silent and dignified procession. Much the best way in my opinion.

Your choir is working hard preparing various evensong settings for autumn and winter months; a pity that they are intended for our visits to cathedrals and will not be sung locally.

And finally, I would mention that this is likely my last Choir News as I'm hoping that someone will take over from me....sighs of relief all round I shouldn't wonder

The Bledlow 100 Club

The last draw of the year will take place in December. That one will also be my swan-song as promoter and Rob Hill will be in charge thereon in. Good luck to him, and thanks again to all those who have supported the choir through the 100 Club for the last five years.

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