

## Choir Notes – May 2022



At its beginning, this looked a quiet month, with only Mothering Sunday as a choral service.

We don't rehearse on 3<sup>rd</sup> March - a holiday after Salisbury, who have asked us back next year. Half of me is glad, as we worked hard for Salisbury, and deserve a rest, particularly Jeff, who works like a singing carthorse. But the addict half of me misses it. What do I do instead? I work out how to pay income tax online!

We meet on 10<sup>th</sup> March. We start on *'How Beautiful Upon the Mountains'*, by Sir John Stainer (1840-1901); *'Hide Not Thou Thy Face'*, by Richard Farrant, whose date of birth no-one knows, but he died in 1580, so Tudor music, and the Gloria from *'Missa Je Suis Désbérîtée'*, by Orlando Lassus (c. 1532-1594). Cynthia tells us that this last piece is a 'parody mass', in that Lassus re-worked a contemporary pop tune. Lassus had such a lovely voice, that he was kidnapped as a child three times by choirmasters wanting to up their game. He went at the age of only 12 from Mons in modern Belgium to work for the Gonzaga family in Mantua.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March, Jeff WhatsApps us in the day to cancel *'Hide Not Thou Thy Face'* as it is gloomier than he can bear. He replaces it with *'Call to Remembrance'*, also by Farrant, as a less gloomy piece. Cynthia is unwell in the evening, so Jeff plays the organ. We learn *'Plyve Kacha'*, a Ukrainian song about a man talking to his mother before going to war. His mother says, "you will be buried by strangers". It's easy to find on YouTube and our version may be on YouTube soon. We will invite donations for Ukrainian refugees. Jeff asks his Ukrainian friend if our singing this song in badly pronounced Ukrainian would be acceptable. He says all support is welcome. We will dedicate our performance of Stainer's *'Crucifixion'* on Good Friday to Ukrainian refugees.

Wikipedia says that Ukrainian is an East Slavic language, as is Russian. A tenor solo sings above the choir going "ooooo" a lot, but we have words too between the solos. The "ooooos" are not very deep. Jeff tells us to think of Russian Church music, say Rachmaninov. He says that the song was re-discovered by a South African violinist who found it in the Carpathian Mountains and wrote it down, and it has been much revived since the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea.

Then we rehearse *'God So Loved the World'*, from Stainer's *'Crucifixion'*, which is to be our Mothering Sunday anthem. Jeff has trouble choosing a Mothering Sunday anthem, as it falls in Lent, so sombre music is *de rigueur*, but mothering is not gloomy. Cynthia has trouble with the organ, with the keys sticking down. Jeff suggests sticking chewing gum on her fingers so that they pull the keys up, but I do not think Jeff has thought this through, as it would be difficult to change notes if her fingers are stuck to the keys, but Jeff then giggles, so it is a joke!

Most members of the choir have done Stainer's *'Crucifixion'* before, some several times, so we pick it up easily, but Jeff works on us getting more meaning into it.

Then on 27<sup>th</sup> March we sing it at the Mothering Sunday Service: we may be bottom-heavy as we have two sopranos and four basses, but it sounds OK to me.

On 7<sup>th</sup> April, we go through Stainer's *'Crucifixion'* in detail, emphasising the emotion. Cynthia is absent with Covid, so we sing unaccompanied, with Jeff playing occasional notes for tuning. He tells us of his American coach, who says that singing is like pouring yourself out like red wine, giving something rich and beautiful to those listening. We are to practice warmth and rounded vowels. I must remember those vowels.