

Notes

The newsletter of the Formby Choral Society
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President-Stephen Threlfall

Conductor-David Holroyd

Chairman's message January 2009

Shirley Potter writes

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope that you enjoyed the carol concert last month as much as I did. Formby Band was in tremendous form and is a real asset to us at this popular event. Woodlands Primary school choir was a delight; the following day, I had a telephone call from a member of the audience (unknown to me) who said he enjoyed coming every year but thought that the children's choir made it even more special than usual and epitomised the spirit of Christmas. And a big thank you to you all for making the clear up operation afterwards so quick and efficient.

I hope you have all had an enjoyable Christmas break and are raring to go into the rehearsals for the March concert. I am given to understand that Mozart's C Minor Mass is a tremendous piece to sing. It is a very demanding work for the two soprano soloists, with smaller parts for the tenor and bass; the agency which is providing the four describes them as a dream team so I think we have something special to look forward to.

Sea Symphony in a day?

Not really for the faint hearted. However, just over 700 singers gathered at the Bridgewater Hall on Sunday Oct 12th, which was the anniversary of both Vaughan Williams' birth and of the premiere of the work. Eight FCS members joined the see so crowd. We started at 10.30 with a warm-up or maybe 'loosen up' would be better, as we relaxed arms, neck and face before singing. We began rehearsing towards the end of the first movement which conductor James Burton wanted to make as beautiful as possible. Those who know the work will be familiar with some of the rousing elements and this part is in complete contrast. The variations in time signatures and speed make the work quite difficult; one has to concentrate on counting as well as trying to sing the right notes and watch the conductor. But the sound was amazingly good for a scratch choir, though members of the Halle Choir were interspersed around the hall to give some 'backing' and the Halle Youth Choir was also taking part. Good to see youngsters enjoying singing and they made a beautiful sound.

A caffeine break at midday was very welcome and a lunch break followed at 1.30 when we were fortunate to be able to find a picnic table outside where we enjoyed the sunshine –and a good chat.

In mid afternoon we were joined by the orchestra. Wow! What a difference and what we lacked in skill was made up for by the orchestra in sound. We were surprised to see so many younger people in the orchestra (OK, so we know policemen get younger as well!) but also women seemed to outnumber men. The soloists were great and we began to feel we would give a good, if not pristine, rendition of this work. James helped by 'painting a picture' for us as we worked through the music. The work is so expressive; one could almost feel the waves on the sea and the wind in the sails.

Another break was welcome, allowing us to lubricate our vocal chords prior to the concert performance. It all worked better than we had anticipated and the audience was very receptive. Ther was a wonderful sound and considering the short time we had rehearsed, plenty of musical colour. The silence at the end was deafening and incredibly effective.

It had been a great experience for singers as James said to us afterwards in a nearby restaurant; so few choral societies can put on a concert that needs such a large orchestra (two harps!).

We look forward to our next 'away day'.

Ann Deacon

"Haven't I seen your face before?" a judge demanded, looking down at the defendant.

"You have, Your Honour," the man answered hopefully. "I gave your son violin lessons last winter."

"Ah, yes," recalled the judge. "Twenty years!"

Reflections of a new member

Several years ago my daughter made us all write down 'things we wanted to do before we died' and all 5 of us in the family were made to do this (a strong minded girl our Katie).

Each of us had to come up with 10 things, and then joining lines were added if any of us wanted to do the same 'pre-death' things. I learnt that my son Robert wanted to make a lot of money as a stock broker (now looks a bit of a long shot) and also to 'grow and eat a pig!!' Wife Jen and little Edward found they both wanted a cat (so I suppose that is that then). Getting to the point- Jen found I wanted to sing in a choir. As I'm a lot older than her and knowing 'we are all but frail vessels' she felt she should get me in a choir without delay! At the time she worked with Ros, so within days I was facing conductor David- scared witless as I had never actually sung in any choir since my schooldays. And that is how you have me in your choir.

My wife is a psychologist and says we should all take time out to reflect- and in doing so I noticed that no matter how grumpy or exhausted I feel before a practice I usually feel better after. As a GP I'm always on the lookout for medical phenomena so I thought I would research to see if there are any links between singing and health. **Apparently singing for health may be an idea whose time has come.** The interest in music in relation to health is evident in much medical and health-care research.

Source: [British Journal of Medical Psychology](#), Volume 74, Number 1, March 2001, pp. 115-120(6)

Publisher: [British Psychological Society](#)

This paper reviews ways in which music and singing relate to health and healing, historically and cross-culturally, and shows that music forms a part of the healing systems of many cultures. The paper reviews research on the links between music and health. They include studies that suggest that music has profound effects on the emotions, for example, inducing states of relaxation which are particularly useful as an antidote to depression, anxiety and fatigue. Music has also been shown to enhance physical health through improvements to breathing capacity, muscle tension and posture and the reduction of respiratory symptoms. It may also contribute to social health through the management of self-identity and interpersonal relationships. The paper explores theories that are beginning to develop about the mechanisms that mediate music for health, including the possible connections between immuno-suppression, stress reduction, and music. The paper goes on to discuss the role of singing with early years children and community groups of adults. A resurgence of traditional music-making and voice work in community settings is taking place across the UK, and the paper reviews several community-based initiatives.

Valentine E.¹, Evans C.¹

Furthermore research published in the Journal of Music Therapy in 2004 suggested that group singing helped people to cope better with chronic pain.

So perhaps it's our duty to gets friends and family singing- for the sake of their health!

David Unwin

Johann Nepomuk Hummel. 1778-1837

Born Bratislava, Austria (now Slovakia).

Son of Director of Imperial School of Military Music, Vienna.

Educated by Mozart from 8-10yrs of age and then later by Salieri and Haydn (Beethoven was a fellow student).

Became virtuoso pianist, touring Europe. Renowned piano teacher, with Mendelssohn as one of his famous students. (Liszt's family could not afford his fees, it is said)

Kappelmeister first in Eisenstadt and later in Stuttgart and Weimar, which latter he helped become a major European musical centre. There he became close to both Goethe and Schiller.

His main compositional output was for the piano and some see a very significant influence on Chopin's work. However, he also produced work for trumpet, for mandolin, for wind and for voice (masses, songs and operas). He didn't do symphonies for reasons that are unclear. Perhaps he felt that he could not compete with his old school pal, Ludwig. Oh, and he played timps for Ludwig at the premiere of his 7th symphony....

The Great Mozart Mass in C minor. More questions than answers.

Why was it written? It was said to have been an inducement to Constanze to marry him. It would be a piece from his heart and she would sing in it. Or was it a thanksgiving for the birth of their first child? (Sadly, as it happened, the baby, left with a wet nurse, died before the performance). Or was it thanksgiving for the recovery of Constanze from illness?

Or was it to show off Constanze to Dad, hoping it would overcome his extreme disapproval; he had not even attended the wedding? (It didn't work!)

Or was it a demonstration to Dad of his independence from his manipulation and control?

Perhaps all of the above.

Why isn't it finished? It seems agreed that a complete mass was performed-unthinkable otherwise. However, **what** was performed remains moot. Some think it was filled in with plainsong. Some think Dad filled in the gaps. Some say Wolfgang filled in with earlier bits he had written.

Probably it was finished in his head but not put properly onto paper.

Mozart has form for not finishing stuff, anyway, once the original motivation had waned. And the death of his son must have been deeply wounding.

Some say he had paid work to do which took priority. Some say one motivation for the work was his current study of Bach, Handel, Scarlatti and Pergolesi and that technique, not completion was the main thing. Perhaps more was performed and has been lost, perhaps in one of Constanze's emotional burnings of things connected with Mozart's Dad and that bad time. Perhaps Wolfgang destroyed stuff he felt was not up to snuff; it was, after all, his and uncommissioned.

Some say Wolfgang always saw the C Minor Mass as a one-off Salzburg event for a particular purpose and was his to keep or throw away as the mood took him. The Prince Archbishop decreed it was unsuitable as sacred music and must not be performed again, anyway.

Clearly, some of these opinions are mutually incompatible.

What is missing? The Agnus Dei, a second chorus of the Benedictus, a chorus from the Sanctus and a lot of the Credo, according to the musicologists.

But the rest is, by common consent, sublime.

MW(Ed)

Hummel's Mass in B flat major and Mozart's Mass in C minor are to be performed at Our Lady's Church, Formby on Saturday 28th March.