

Musical Developments

Martin Penny

I am delighted to announce some additions to the musical team, and to explain what they will be doing and why.

Assistant Director of Music

Since January Sam Hudson FRCO, College Organist at Haileybury has played for us on an occasional basis, typically twice a month.

As of September Sam will assume the position of Assistant Director of Music. His background includes periods as Organ Scholar and Acting Director of Chapel Music at Girton College Cambridge and as Organ Scholar at Wells Cathedral.

Sam and I will share the playing/directing – so that we both keep all our skills up to date. In addition Sam will provide some 1-1 tuition in piano, organ and singing.

Sam has recently married (July) and his wife, Rebecca, is a qualified singing teacher. She may also be available for some 1-1 tuition.

Instrumental Group Co-ordinator

Samantha Hall, a former UH Choral Scholar here, and now a full-time music teacher at Chauncy School in Ware also joins us from September, taking responsibility for developing an instrumental group to contribute to the monthly "All The Family" Service.

Initially, this will be targeted at 10-15 year olds within the church family. Over time we hope that the group will act as a means of attracting youngsters and families to All Saints alongside the other initiatives that are being pursued.

Our Vision for Music at All Saints

All Saints put together a Parish Profile in 2006 which called for growth, with an acceptance that this meant change and active outreach.

This has been put into practice and means a revised task for the musicians:

- Providing suitable, high quality, relevant music to support both current and evolving liturgy.
- Providing a channel to engage people in music making and thus bring them to God
- Taking all-comers and working out how to use their skills ('The choir is neither elitist nor selective' – recruiting brochure, circa 2001).
- Encouraging everyone to give of their best – no less and no more.
- Making every chorister matter.
- Helping to make occasional users (Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms) feel welcome in our church.

Some things to celebrate

The following were promoted in the last year:

Full Chorister (Red): Ciera McClean, Ella Mitham, Hugo Turner, Michael Stephens-Jones, Oliver Tycker, Thomas Oates

Senior Singing Boy: Joby Dixon, William Crowther

and all the others are well on the way. This is the result of a lot of work, not least by Mark Gilby and Natasha Page in tutoring them on Mondays and Tuesdays respectively.

You may have heard Natasha sing a live solo on Radio 3 on Weds 21st July during her Eton Choral Course.

We continue to support all our young singers through the MDF – and we are extremely grateful to Chris Benham for

continuing to run Soundbites which is such an effective means of keeping it well 'topped-up'.

The choir should be congratulated amongst other things for:

- A series of concerts by our own team and Bob Chilcott's *Jazz Mass*
- An all Purcell evensong to celebrate his 350th anniversary
- Two new Advent Carols (Skempton, Todd)
- Two new Christmas Carols (Carter, Gardner)
- a new Magnificat & Nunc Dimmittis (Gabriel Jackson)
- a new Mass (Walton *Missa Brevis*),
- The special service on Palm Sunday
- The music for Holy Week
- new anthems by Hildegarde, Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons, Blow, Purcell, Stanford, Willan, W Davies, Walton, Durufle, F. Jackson, Chilcott, G Jackson amongst others
- the refurbishing and full indexing of the library, masterminded by Simon Barton
- several fund raising initiatives that led to the addition of approx £2000 worth of music at no cost to the church,
- the provision of free vocal tuition (30 mins each/week) to two deserving choristers (based on commitment not capability)
- A huge amount of work 'behind the scenes' by Lynford Neville, Julia Gough, the Music Committee – and the parents who run the 'taxi' service!

Things to work on

Sadly, during the year we have had some departures, some expected and some not and sometimes things have not been as good as I would like. We are launching a recruiting initiative in Sept featuring the new team and intend to generate as much publicity as we can. We make very high demand of our choristers (and their families) and we need to show the great value that membership provides.

A year ago I was told '*this has become a choir of Adults with some children*' and '*we can't hear the children*'. Following a lot of hard work they now have the confidence and we can hear them, and so some rightly say '*they aren't always in tune / well-balanced / rhythmically accurate*'. Improving this is the next task. Indeed the whole team will be working to grow the competence, capability and confidence of **all** our musicians as fast as possible; accepting that there will be slips from time to time as we push hard to attain the extraordinary levels of the early 2000's.

To put this in context, most of the music we sing is regularly used by the RSCM in their Silver and Gold exams – levels that are between one and three steps higher than the Red Ribbon standard that several of our choristers have just attained.

I believe we have a very robust plan and highly skilled team for 2010/11 that will deliver concrete results. I will continue to strive to manage the balance between the clear need to create space for new initiatives (Prayers & Bears, Messy Church, Youth Group, All the Family Service, Family Eucharist) and support them with appropriate music and the need to preserve and build on the great legacy we have.

If you have any thoughts, ideas (or friends, nephews, nieces, grandchildren who might sing/play with us) please do speak to me – I'll be glad to hear what you have to say.

Love,
Martin