



Music @ St Bartholomew's

<http://www.stbartholomews.ie>

January 2010



- Creating a CD
- Scaling the Heights
- Celebrating Christmas

Voice for Life Awards Service

On Saturday 19 September, all the Bronze and Silver Award winners (including myself)



went to Christ Church Cathedral for a special RSCM Voice for Life service. Successful singers from lots of different choirs around Ireland took part this year, including the Palestrina Choir from the Pro-Cathedral, boys from Saint Patrick's Cathedral Choir, choristers of Saint Anne's Cathedral in Belfast and girls from Christ Church itself.

When we arrived, we were escorted to the Chapter

House, where Mr Parshall said hello, and showed us where to stand and what we were singing. They were all pieces we were fairly familiar with. In total the treble line consisted of about 40 boys and girls. The Saint Bartholomew's choristers who came were as follows: Elias, William, Oisín, Jake, Isobel, Megan, Hugh, Daisy, me, Cliona and Kate.

First of all we practised in the Chapter House for about an hour and then we moved into the church, where we did another practice with all the other parts (the altos, tenors and basses of the Cathedral Choir) and also learnt how to process. Then we went through the whole rigmarole of receiving our certifi-

cates a few times.

The service began at 5.00pm, and since it was an Evensong, it only lasted about 40 minutes. In my opinion, it went very well. All the combined award-winners made a wonderful echo, which we could hear for several seconds afterwards!

After that we went down to the Crypt for the very familiar tea and biscuits! All in all,



it was a great experience and great fun.

Liam Newman

The Christmas Concert

The Christmas Concert, held on Sunday 13 December, was sung by the girls, boys and men's choirs.

It was a huge success! Alan Stanford was brilliant, as were all three choirs. We sang all of the songs on the CD. We had practised these

pieces for ages and ages to get them perfect, both for the CD and concert, and they were excellent on the night.

My two favourite pieces at the concert were *The Angel Gabriel*, which was sung by us girls and accompanied by Mr Wilson on the grand piano;

and *We Three Kings*, which was sung mainly by the men with bits sung by the boys and girls.

It was a brilliant night with great refreshments afterwards. I hope it's just as good next year!

Catherine Neenan

In search of new music?

If you are ever in the market for a new CD, having exhausted your own collection and maxed out your credit card on iTunes downloads, I can offer no better advice than that you contact Tim Thurston and ask to have a root through his 'Concern box'. This is where many of his CDs find themselves when he reorganises his collection

and it provides a veritable feast for any music lover. At any one time it's almost certain to contain a Bach Passion or two, Beethoven and Haydn symphonies galore, the latest hits of Debussy and Brahms, and other music of every kind, including many things that you're unlikely ever to have encountered (I certainly never have!). When you take a

morsel or two, slipping your contribution into the box in return, you are not only letting yourself in for a new aural treat but also helping a very worthy cause. So do ring Tim and arrange a visit, or browse the racks next time he brings them to Sunday morning coffee. I am sure you won't be disappointed!

Fraser Wilson

Making the Magazine

This magazine, now in the third edition of its current all-music format, has proved to be a super way of spreading the word about the music that happens in Saint Bartholomew's. We have been very pleasantly surprised by the positive feedback we've received from so far and wide. Obviously the magazine has reached places we hadn't even dreamed of! Producing two editions each year, in January and June, allows us to document the church's busy musical life in what we hope is an interesting and entertaining way, and we're really pleased to see so many contributions from people involved in the music-making at first hand. (Thanks to all those who have contributed their journalism on this

occasion!) The magazine is becoming a collective record of what we do, and in that way it reflects the church's music: something to which everyone can contribute and of which we can all feel proud.

To that end, we all have an interest in seeing its continued success and I urge you all to consider how you might get involved in making the next one – whether by writing an article, taking a photograph, sending in a comment or idea or helping out with the production. Richard and I will always be pleased to hear from anyone about this.

I'm particularly grateful to the generous individual who is sponsoring this edition by paying the production costs.

This is a wonderful development especially since we don't charge for the magazine. We'd like to have similar sponsors for future editions, whether anonymous or named, so that the magazine can continue to go from strength to strength. The cost is not huge but the support is hugely valuable! Please contact either me or Richard if you can help in this way.

Without the man sitting across the room from me as I write this, there would be no magazine. Richard masterminded his first music magazine more than fifteen years ago, and is still going strong! He's a powerhouse of organisation and wizardry to whom this publication owes a huge deal.

Fraser Wilson

Friends of the Choir

The Choir Fund does a huge amount to support music within Saint Bartholomew's, and it goes without saying that it can never have enough supporters. Fundraising has always been important for what we do, and this year will be even more so as we look to support two international choir trips.

Some years ago Bobby Barden set up a scheme for

those wishing to make regular contributions, and in-



deed fourteen good friends are still involved, contributing an average of €10 per

month apiece. This provides the Fund with around €1700 each year. We say a very sincere thank-you to them and hope that there might be others who might like to join them. If you would like to know more about taking part in this scheme then please contact Bobby on 01 494 5671, or by e-mail to bobbybarden@gmail.com.

Richard Bannister

My Favourite Piece

When I had to sit down to choose which one piece of music I love the most, it proved to be an impossible task; there are just too many! But, I definitely have a few favourites.

So, where to begin? Well, I love Mozart's *Mass in D* which the girls and men sang at Midnight Mass. I really enjoy this piece because of the contrasts between Kyrie, Gloria, Benedictus, Sanctus and Agnus Dei. And if I had to pick one part of the Mass, I'd say my favourite is the Gloria. This is because of the up-beat music that goes with it. I love the harmonies that the choir sings during

this piece. It is truly joyous and perfectly suits the Christmas season.

And then there's *Panis Angelicus* ... I find *Panis Angelicus* very sweet and melodic. I think that with the right soloist (and yes, we have a few of those!) this piece sounds amazing. *Panis Angelicus* has a certain quality about it. It is so wonderfully moving. As you probably know, *Panis Angelicus* means 'Bread of the Angels', and the music and the tone of this piece effortlessly reflect the title. Dare I say it, the singing is of Angels too!

The next one of my

growing list of favourite pieces is a Christmas one: *We Three Kings* (this year we learnt the arrangement by Philip Stopford). I find this piece quite, well, I think the right word would be ... dramatic! Especially leading up to the end when the hairs literally stand up on the back of my neck. Stopford definitely did his job by making the verses sound like a 'lumpy camel ride'. The soprano and alto ornaments, when put together with the basses and tenors, sounds amazing. This piece is just beautiful.

I have so many favourites but to keep this essay within the

Rehearsal Weekend

On Saturday 26 September, the girls' choir went for a working weekend at Bobby Barden's lovely home in the beautiful surroundings of the mountains: you wouldn't think you were still in Dublin! Mr Barden and his dog Sara were very friendly and welcoming towards us. We picked blackberries, fed carrots to the donkey and pony, petted horses, climbed trees (Cliona, Kate and Lucy did that), and slid down a little hill (where Kate decided to try out skiing). We also did a lot of sing-



ing with Mr Wilson and Miss Beecher Bryant, and we played a good game of football, while

the other girls played croquet. Mrs Barden provided us with drinks, snacks, dinner and a place to relax which we were very grateful for. The next day,

after a luxurious lie-in, we had a rehearsal with Miss Beecher Bryant and Mr Wilson. After the rehearsal the parents came and joined the choir for a splendid lunch. Everybody generously brought something to share with everyone else. This picnic was coordinated by Nina's mom Nadine. This was also a very sociable and enjoyable day, and a really nice way to start off the term, as we got to know each other a bit more.

Megan Jones

My Favourite Piece (continued)

required word limit, I'll just mention one more. *Even such is time*, by Bob Chilcott. We started singing this piece with Miss Beecher Bryant who told us it was just a warm-up... Well, that's what we thought! You can really hear the variation in the two sections of the piece – 'Who in the dark and silent grave ...' to 'And from which Earth and Grave and Dust: the Lord will raise me up, I trust!' This piece has such a beautiful melody. It really brings out the best in each of

our voices, but we still sound like a choir with the whole so much more amazing than the rather good sum of the parts.

Okay, I was asked to pick my favourite piece of music as sung by our choir, but I still don't have an absolute favourite – and maybe never will – because there are so many fantastic ones. But these are just a few of my favourites that I'm delighted to share with you – and I can assure you it's an ever-growing list!

Kiah Ronaldson

The Great Choir

On the Sunday evening before Christmas, the people who had done the Bronze Award and the men sung the Service of Lessons and Carols together. It was the first time Saint Bartholomew's had ever had a 'Great Choir' service. It was an absolute success! We sang many popular tunes, including *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree*. I enjoyed it and I'm sure everybody else did too!

Daisy Magahy Buckley

Diary of a CD (part one)

**AUG
9**

The decision is taken to produce a recording to commemorate the twentieth annual concert with Alan Stanford. Over the course of an evening Richard and Fraser work out a suitable programme. Of the ten musical items on the final CD, seven appear on this initial draft.

**SEP
3**

Fraser writes to the Select Vestry formally announcing the project. "We will produce a CD recording of readings and choral pieces, based on the format of the concert itself but with a slightly different focus."

**SEP
16**

After considerable discussions RTE finally commits to broadcasting the concert on national

radio at Christmas time. The broadcast eventually goes out on Christmas Day as part of a larger programme.

**SEP
21**

Richard makes the decision to hire a professional recording engineer for the musical portions of the disc, while retaining responsibility for the spoken word sections. The work is given to Brian McIvor, who was responsible for the Choir's first CD "Sing Praises" in 1998. Though this adds considerably to the cost of the project, the end result speaks for itself.

**OCT
14**

Alan e-mails us his final list of readings. Bobby Bardentelephones Richard to suggest that the CD should open with a recording

of the Church Bells chiming 7.00pm, the time that the concert begins.

**OCT
16**

After the Friday practice a number of the gentlemen help Richard and Fraser to mock up possible photographs for the front cover of the CD. Later on that evening, Richard produces a first mockup of the front cover, which bears at least a passing resemblance to the final version.

**OCT
18**

Richard sets up some borrowed sound mixing equipment in the church after evensong, and experiments with a few different microphone locations while Fraser does a not-entirely-convincing impression of Alan Stanford.



Diary of a CD (part two)



The spoken portions of the disc are recorded in Saint Bartholomew's, engineered by Richard and produced by Fraser. Alan manages to record almost the entire content in a single take, with just some very minor corrections.



A member of the Select Vestry enquires whether "O holy night" is planned for the recording. Richard reluctantly admits as much, at which point a well-known University President expresses his absolute horror at the thought. He describes it as a work "which should ideally be decomposed", though he subsequently purchases a copy anyway!



The photo-shoot for the disc takes place with Alan and the four head choristers. A total of three angles are selected, each taking roughly ten minutes to perfect. Two of these end up being used in the final project; one on the cover, the other on the CD itself. "We will take hundreds of photos, nearly all of which will be discarded. Of the few that are good enough to consider using, the best ones will be those in which you are all looking relaxed but focused - you don't want to look like soldiers (or slob)!"



After considerable discussion, the sale price of the CD is set at €10. That same evening, Fraser finishes work on his arrangement of *The Angel Gabriel*, written specially



for the girls, and including several solo parts.

Richard begins the process of arranging permission to use the four spoken tracks that are within copyright. Following discussion with John King, a standard copyright form is produced which allows us the option of a future rerelease on sites such as the iTunes Music Store. (There are no plans for this at the moment, though who knows what the future might bring?).



Fraser and Richard spend most of an evening (and quite a bit of a morning) thrashing out the booklet and cover design. The draft at this stage looks almost exactly like the final version, albeit with







Diary of a CD (part three)

a completely different set of photos inside the booklet. A giant "Coming Soon" poster is produced, appearing in the church a few days later.



Richard abruptly realises that the on-disc artwork for the CD itself has been completely forgotten about in the mad rush to get everything else done! In desperation he throws together a quick version in about fifteen minutes... which ends up being exactly what appears on the final disc.



Judy Martin, the Director of Music of Christ Church Cathedral, agrees to act as music producer on the recording, saying "Saint Bartholomew's is a great place to record in, especially at the



weekend." She sends a list of suggestions as to how to make the most of our planned recording sessions. The bells of Saint Bartholomew's are recorded from three locations simultaneously; a house across the road; the church porch, and near the front gate. The latter proves the most successful recording, despite a number of cars driving past in the background!



Our planned recording sessions take place in the church over three successive days. The choristers discover that it takes rather a lot of effort to stand absolutely still for huge lengths of time. Fatigue and stress is eased considerably by the behaviour



of some of the younger boy choristers, naming no names... After reviewing the "take" from the weekend, the decision is taken to have one extra "last-minute" recording session to tie up a few loose ends.



The additional recording session takes place, during which *Once in royal David's City* is added to the final programme.



A number of editing sessions take place in Brian McIvor's facilities in Slane, Co. Meath. Some of the sessions run long into the early hours, powered by Red Bull, tea-cakes, blueberry



November 20



November 21

Diary of a CD (part four)

muffins, and a huge amount of patience.



The finalised disc is delivered to the manufacturers. Some of those involved reveal their *beardy* side by celebrating the evening with something completely different: the “Video Games Live” concert in the National Concert Hall! The concert proves to be great fun despite the slightly (okay, very) frightening demographic of those present!



After another all-night session, the preordering system on the web site goes live. A total of twenty-two copies are sold via the web site in the week prior to launch.



Richard discovers at first hand exactly how much car space is needed to carry two thousand CDs. Despite driving a large car, his entire boot, back seat, and passenger seat are stacked high with discs. In a slight panic he telephones the Vicar, who offers to help him unload that evening at Saint Bartholomew's.



Three pieces for organ, by Daquin, Messiaen, and Pachelbel, are performed by David Adams and released on the web site as bonus downloads for those purchasing the CD. At the time of writing they have been downloaded over one hundred times.



The disc is launched at the concert by the Vicar. Sales on the night are brisk, with many people buying not only a copy to keep themselves but also others for family and friends. And why not – they made the perfect Christmas present! Positive comments started flooding in almost immediately, and the generosity of people's praise has been most pleasing for us all. Copies have made their way as far as Africa and America, and amongst others we've been delighted to hear from a number of musical friends of the church and several former members of the choir. Copies remain on sale, for anyone who wants to get ahead with their shopping for Christmas 2010!

Richard Bannister



Midnight Mass

It was a cold dark night; you could almost taste the festive merriment in the air. Midnight Mass has always been a very special event in the choral calendar, so it was with huge confident smiles that we processed into the church (and out of the cold night air) and began to sing to the packed church. The service itself couldn't have

gone better. The Mozart mass setting was incredible (as always!), scattered with breathtaking solos and stunning choral parts, and of course it wouldn't be Midnight Mass without a seemingly endless collection of festive hymns to belt out at our top volume. As we left the church that night at the end of the service, we were

too tired to think about what we were doing. All we could do was make our way home and crawl into bed, safe in the knowledge that we had done a good job of keeping open that special place in everyone's heart that belongs to deserving services like Midnight Mass.

Sally Anne McCarthy

Funderland, an aptly named place

Getting there was half the battle. Cars slipped their way to the snowy RDS where this story is set. After everyone had arrived, we journeyed inside, because it was absolutely freezing standing stationary in a windy area. We ventured off in our respective groups in search of our favourite rides. After going on some quite tedious ones to 'warm up our stomachs', we went on my personal favourite,



Extreme. It was delightful to say the least. So delightful in

fact that one of us went twice. This preferably un-named individual later expressed her remorse for this decision, because it had left her feeling rather terrible (see across - RB). She stupidly also couldn't resist going on G-Force, the most sickening of all rides. Smart child. There were ups and

downs, and downs and ups which everyone enjoyed (apart from some nervously onlooking parents). When our heads stopped spinning and we could see again, we noticed that half the choir were on the dodgems enjoying smashing into each other. Some crashes were more spectacular than others, but I think all our

rage was let out eventually. Naturally, being the (super mega awesome) daredev-



ils that we are, when we did eventually enter the world of 'outside', as some like to call it, we decided to try almost everything. At least twice. We learnt a lot that day. Fizzy drinks don't calm stomachs; it is very cold at the top of some of those rides; loose shoes are dangerous; and we are all incredibly stupid.

Cliona Rogan

More reflections from the Bridge

More than anything else, our music is sustained by the great efforts of many people who choose to invest huge amounts of their time, talent and energy. I have been reminded of that fact time and again over the past six months, in recording sessions, at rehearsals and services, at concerts, at meetings, and in many other instances. Sometimes people may not know exactly why they are doing it: at the end of a long week, I'm sure that many of us would rather have a glass of port and watch an episode of *The West Wing* than go out for a rehearsal. But they do it, week after week, because there is something innately rewarding and satisfying about doing what we do and doing it so well. Parents see it in their children as they grow more confident and start to sing around the house; the choristers find themselves suddenly able to sing that tricky passage or understand an augmented fourth; we all enjoy the exhilaration that comes from a job well done together.

What better example of this than the CD that was made at breakneck speed in the run-up to Christmas? It wasn't going to be easy to produce a recording of that scale in such a

short space of time, but it came about thanks to the extraordinary dedication and energy of so many people, who spent hours working on a project that became so important to us all. Now, after the event, we can look back and see that the thing made us grow, together and individually, and that we are the better for it. I'm sure that all of you who heard the CD, or who gave a copy to a friend, will have enjoyed the fruits of our labours, and hope that you can all feel satisfied that the investment has been returned! You bought the CDs in such numbers, and sent them so far and wide: we have had wonderful comments from all over these islands and from much further afield; and you can hear the improvement in our singing this term. I repeat my sincere thanks to Richard, Brian, Judy, Peter, Rosemary, the boys, girls and men, choir parents and families, the Vicar and congregation, and everyone else who was involved. Well done to you all!

When the autumn term began I was full of hope for the coming months. A number of senior boys had just graduated, and we were waiting for the new team to take over. I think

it's fair to say that they didn't look back for a second! We have a balanced and able group of boys now, who are confident with what they do and always willing to go the extra mile! The girls deserve a huge amount of credit for matching the boys at every turn, and for the superb way in which they have made themselves invaluable to the church's music. All the Choristers should join me in thanking Rosemary, their teacher, without whom their development would not have been so rapid nor so impressive. She's a marvel, who, I hope will be with us for a long time to come, to be part of the journey and raise us to ever greater heights. I continue to be astounded by the tenacity and energy of the choir men, and it has been great to welcome Frank, Tim and Isaac into their ranks since September. I was recently told by a very senior clergyman that "Saint Bartholomew's has the best men in Ireland!" and I wouldn't disagree with that for a second! Peter has been a rock, as usual, and the Vicar as much of a friend to the music as we could ever have hoped. The Select Vestry never fails to support the church's music, and that is simply invaluable at

More reflections from the Bridge (continued)

a time when so much church music is in severe peril.

We continue to look for ways of making a more efficient and happy choir, and the Choir Support Committee is so important in terms of decision-making and logistical support. Through the CSC, all choir parents can be closely involved in the work that their children undertake. This is an opportunity that many of them take with both hands, and I find this very inspiring! Paula and Evelyn have become the lynchpins of the two Committees

this term, pillars of support and energy the both of them, and Niamh continues to manage everything (including me!) with enviable skill and amazing passion!

Before closing, I'll share with you a few of my personal highlights of the last few months. The boys' and girls' rehearsal weekends were great fun and were marvellously supported not only by the parents, but also by Bobby and Pat Barden and our friends at St Werburgh's church, particularly David McDonnell. The boys-

and-men Eucharist with The Dublin Viols was very special. It was a privilege to take part in the services over Christmas, which went off exceptionally well. This term, standing in front of the boys and men singing Byrd 5, took me to heaven and back; at the end of last term, the girls moved me to tears with my own setting of *The Angel Gabriel*. What will be the highlights of the next six months? I can only look forward to finding out!

Fraser Wilson

From Miss Beecher Bryant...

It's hard to believe that I've only been at Saint Bartholomew's for just over a term. Things have been so busy – the recording, Christmas, and preparing the choristers for Voice for Life exams – that it feels like much longer! I mainly focus on singing technique and teaching repertoire. My methods are slightly bizarre sometimes; the choristers stroke imaginary kittens for smooth phrasing, pull battle-ships with ropes for better diaphragm support, and leap about like Mr Tumnus (from

The Chronicles of Narnia) for good articulation. The tenors and basses have occasionally been subjected to the same approaches, with a little reluctance – but they do seem to work!

I've been living in Dublin for three years; originally I came to sing in Christ Church Cathedral Choir, with the intention of staying about six months – and I've been here ever since. Last summer, I decided to move on from Christ Church, and now sing in St Ann's Church on Dawson Street. I play the violin

and viola, and the piano (very badly, as the choristers will testify) and recently started the guitar for my job, teaching music in primary schools. I'm also studying part time at Dublin City University.

It's wonderful working with the choirs at Saint Bartholomew's: both the boys and girls have such commitment and enthusiasm, and every one of them is a talented singer. I'm enjoying working with Fraser to bring out the strengths of each chorister.

Rosemary Beecher Bryant

Fundraising

Raising money for the Choir Fund is an important part of the Choir's work, and there will be several exciting events through the Lent and Trinity terms. Keep an eye out for details! In the run-up to Christmas, lots of fun was had and a good deal of money raised. Both the boy and girl Choristers sang their hearts out at special events: the boys at Terroirs in Donnybrook (by kind arrangement with our friends Sean and Françoise) and



the girls at a Christmas party at Quinlan Private on Ragan Road, good friends of the

church. Over €400 was raised by those two events. A very good start indeed!

Fraser Wilson

Music on Mondays

For the second year running, we will be hosting the Music on Mondays series this spring. Running from late April to early July, each Monday at 7.30pm there will be a concert of *some* kind of music – and variety is the spice of life! The emphasis is on making good music accessible to all, and entrance to each concert costs just €5. And it's free to students, under 18s and OAPs. Each concert runs for just over an hour, long enough to feel substantial but short enough not to take up the whole evening. This makes the concerts particularly suitable for the whole family. We very

much hope that many people will want to attend what promises to be a very exciting series! There will be special season-long discounts available and, hopefully, extra spin-off events surrounding the concerts. Further details will be available from late March; do check the website or pick up a leaflet. *The first concert in the series is given by the church's chamber choir, the Clyde Chorale, on Monday 26 April at 7.30pm. Their programme features Vivaldi's Gloria and other works. It should be a suitably excellent first night! The series runs until Monday 5 July.*

Fraser Wilson

Edited and typeset by

Richard Bannister
richard@indigo.ie

Contributors

Richard Bannister, Bobby Barden, Rosemary Beecher Bryant, Daisy Magahy Buckley, Megan Jones, Sally Anne McCarthy, Catherine Neenan, Liam Newman, Kiah Ronaldson, Cliona Rogan, Fraser Wilson

Photography

Richard Bannister, Richard Bloomfield, Evelyn Foley. *Front cover photograph features the interior of the Heckmann chamber organ which is now used extensively in the church.*

Proofreading

Ivy Bannister, Richard Bannister, Fraser Wilson

Administration

Submissions for future issues of this magazine and all enquiries about advertising should be sent to the editor. This magazine is available by post for a nominal charge; for further details, contact the Administrator, Fergus McCullough on 01-6688522 or fergus@stbartholomews.ie.

Future events

A full schedule of services and events is available on the diary page of the parish web site, located at <http://www.stbartholomews.ie/>.

Director of Music

Fraser Wilson
St Bartholomew's Church
Clyde Road, Dublin 4,
085-7628483
music@stbartholomews.ie

Caption Competition

The editor is offering a €10 prize for the best caption suggested for this photograph. Entries by e-mail to competition@stbartholomews.ie.

Closing date Easter Sunday (Apr 4 2010).

The winner will be announced in the next issue.

