



Music @ St Bartholomew's

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June 2010



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- Music on Mondays
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Viva Voce in Venice

Full of pancakes, we met in Dublin Airport on a lazy Tuesday afternoon. Lazy for some. We took a colourful plane journey to Treviso. Shortly after landing we took a bus and a short quick march to our hotel for the night. We ventured out into the silent town in search of food. We found some soon enough and enjoyed an Italian menu with some boisterous mind games, which frustrated even the Director of Music himself. We stayed in an elaborate building, which was delightful to the eye and contained the most exciting exploding radiators on the planet. So much to look at with so little time. We had arrived on the last day of the Carnevale, and were welcomed by many rather eccentrically costumed folk.

After a night of war paint, plastic swords, crazy

French women and a glorious recreation of Sinbad, we had some breakfast and set off for Venezia.

We took a bendy bus all the way to a bridge and crossed over into the land of gondolas, enormous churches and many, many canals. Our hotel was well equipped with a state-of-the-art singing room so, naturally, we wanted to try it out straight away. With an hour or two of practicing under our belts, we headed out to a park and had some luncheon and a small gymnastic display from Saorla. Then we had a walking tour (obviously). We were told how many bridges and churches were in Venice, and we learnt that even Venetians who have lived there all of their lives, don't know the street names. Some of us paid an impressive amount of attention to our tour guide,

because we knew that quizzes needed questions. Our tour ended in Saint Mark's Basilica. We just about managed to get in before they closed the doors, and we had a hurried tour of a fantastic Basilica. We left and had a snack before returning to none other than Saint Mark's for Mass that evening. It was an amazing experience to sit in the church and listen to the service. The sermon was a particular highlight. It was very interesting and the priest made a few rather good jokes to lighten the mood.

When we had exited the Basilica, we all suddenly remembered a promise that Mr Wilson had made to us of beatboxing in the square. Knowing that we can be extremely persistent, Mr Piplica finally broke into song *Glee*-style, so that Mr Wilson didn't have to be embarrassed



Viva Voce in Venice (continued)

all by himself. Video evidence of that unforgettable occasion is sadly not in (official) circulation, but I'm sure if you ask, Mr Wilson would be delighted to do it all again, complete with erratic umbrella dancing.

Dinner that night was particularly delicious as we each roamed the city for a place to eat. We had waiters such as Adrienne and Antoine waiting on us hand and foot. After clearing the restaurant of Parmesan cheese, we departed with a skip in our step back to Hotel Universo. After a hyperactive day, most of the choir girls were asleep before their heads had hit their pillows. Others spent some time enjoying the view from their balconies and practicing their terrible Italian accents.

We woke to a downpour of rain. This didn't put a

dampener on our spirits, as we had all been informed that we could wear our super-cool farmer-esque wellies, which we had packed for just such an occasion. Also we were allowed out to go shopping for a few hours. Every girl's ears pricked up at this news.

The first concert of our World Tour was to be in the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli. It was a compact church which some might think is more cosy, but that didn't stop the cold from seeping into our bones and making us shiver. Our concert attire was newly ironed and lemony fresh. We sang our hearts out in an attempt to keep warm, and it really helped. It was a success. So much so that one kind old man who came to our first appearance, ended up at all three.

The afternoon had put

our nerves at ease, so when we traipsed into Saint Mark's for the third time in two days, we were eager and raring to go. We sang in the side chapel, which was an eerie experience because the rest of the cathedral was in complete darkness, but every time we sang a note, it resonated incredibly behind us. The service was short and sweet. Some people believed that they hadn't quite warmed up enough from earlier, so a few sly diaphragm tests were heard in my ear from a certain Megan beside me. Thankfully they were very sly.

Mr Wilson, obviously overjoyed with our amazing skills, said that dinner was on him that night; and we set off in search of said dinner. Naturally we went out sporting some quite bizarre masks which had been purchased earlier, but unfortunately our after-dinner



Viva Voce in Venice (continued)

walk to digest everything was turned into a sprint, as we felt raindrops hit our faces while we skipped over bridges on the Grand Canal. A certain someone would like to advise you against doing this, as the step pattern on this particular bridge was irregular; she built up such a momentum that she nearly tripped face-first onto the stony ground. That night was a mixture of laughter and more laughter, as the girls had been allowed FIZZY DRINKS for the first time. It seemed quite a challenge for some girls to resist.

Our last and final performance was in San Giovanni Elemosinario at noon on Friday. Soaked to the bone from fast walking in torrential rain after hearing of a boat strike (typical), we got there with moments to spare and we began right away. It

was an impressive concert as we all knew in our hearts that this was our last time to shine in Venice. Little did we know, some people had an ingenious plan for later. We cantered back to the hotel and changed into dry clothes only to go out again on our final shopping opportunity. We had lunch in ankle-deep canal water. *The city built on water was flooding.* The flooding was hilarious. We were all prepared for it, and it was nice to see others' attempts at getting into shops without wetting their feet (mostly unsuccessfully).

The whole party had dinner in a quaint restaurant which we took over. Treasure maps were drawn, and choristers were introduced to a game where you would whisper someone's second name louder and louder – until they noticed – which later Mr

Wilson presumably regretted.

We had a talent show that evening. People are surprisingly unwilling to display their talents. With many contributions from the men, it went down a treat and was topped off by a "Pi-off" by two idiotic members of the choir, who were ridiculous enough to learn off more than 60 digits of Pi (3.14... etc). After the winner had been declared, a table quiz commenced promptly. Some questions were slightly questionable (pardon the pun) – like 'What is the correct spelling of Fraser Wilson's middle name?'. Other questions were unreal and some were undoubtedly too hard – like 'What is Anatidaephobia the fictional fear of?'

The flooding grew worse that night. The water seeped up through the floor of



Viva Voce in Venice (continued)

our hotel, and we were amazed as we watched it spread, all the while holding our noses at the stench. In onesies, pyjamas and clothes alike, we watched it cover the ground floor entrance – until we were sent to bed while the adults in the choir went exploring the city at night.

The trip was the first of hopefully many trips abroad

for the girls' choir. I for one had tremendous fun and it all ended on a high note. The next morning we awoke early and took a bus to the airport. Amidst whispers of "Wilson", playing card games and groans from the sick few among us, we arrived on a rainy plane and set off back to Dublin.

Tears in the airport before we all parted ways –

and realisations that we were now unable to talk to each other every minute of every day – ended our fantastic trip. Thanks a waterproofillion to everyone who was involved in organising this trip, especially the parents who supervised, Miss Beecher Bryant, and of course, Mr Wilson for all of their heroic efforts.

Cliona Rogan

The Director's Cut

What a great article, Cliona – so now you all know what a wonderful time we had in Venice, and how educational her piece is too (I now know what 'onesies' are, for a start). In adding a few words of my own, the first and most important thing is to congratulate the girls on the quality of their singing and in particular the standard they reached in the third concert

(one always hopes with such affairs that things start well and get better!). Also, they were a pleasure to go on holiday with; impressively, not one person ended up falling into a canal all week, which, considering how the water came overboard and streets turned into tributaries, was remarkable! There was one moment when I feared that a trademark triple-somersault-backflip-twist-hop

manoeuvre was going to carry Saorla right on into the Canal Grande, but I underestimated her dexterity. However, none of us could avoid the Biblical quantities of water that flooded the city; far from dampening spirits, the water appeared to make everyone more excited and happy! A good preparation for our return to Ireland, of course.

The girls were matched



The Director's Cut (continued)

in their enthusiasm and their singing by a back row formed of four 'Saint Bartholomew's people' (Messrs King and Bannister, Rosemary and Katie) and four friends of mine from the UK. (Sadly the rest of our men were unable to travel for one reason or another; they were in our thoughts as we paddled and performed; and we do hope that they will be able to come next time.) This octet brought out the very best from the girls and vice versa. It was great to see everyone getting on so well; I regret that public performance was not limited to official concerts; Adam has a lot to answer for! One afternoon the adult singing contingent made its way to Harry's Bar for refreshment; its return to the hotel was hampered by floodwater, but eased by much lighter wallets and the natural

euphoria resulting from a visit to the home of the Bellini.

One evening the 'choir mothers' went out 'on the town', returning soaked through but invigorated! Not surprising, as Rosemary (by the way, a powerhouse of organisation, advice and musicality, though an awkward surname for those trying to catch her out with their new game) and I had taken the girls on, and had presided over a raucous dinner... The mothers took over again, and order was soon restored. They were a super team and I am grateful to them all for coming and being such a great part of the trip – I do hope they enjoyed it. Niamh as usual co-ordinated us all with tremendous efficiency and endless patience, mainly towards me. Singing at San Marco was of course a highlight for us all. So was Cliona and

Kate's quiz, which of course my team did dreadfully in (though I am proud to know Pi to 2 decimal places - do I get a prize?). We were lucky to sing in other beautiful churches too; apparently the cold was epic; I was too busy dancing around to notice. If you haven't been to Venice, I can't insist enough that you go as soon as you possibly can, preferably arriving in Saint Mark's Square at 1am just as high tide is sending the water 4ft high against the Basilica... That was a magical moment, one of many, in what was a wonderful trip (and we're all grateful to Tim Thurston, John McKay, and others for invaluable assistance). The girls' first foreign trip set a pretty good benchmark for the next excursion, wherever it may take us...

Fraser Wilson



Tim Thurston Retires from the Choir

Tim, best known for his wonderful RTE Lyric FM programme, 'Gloria', is stepping down from the choir. Not many people would realise that he has given sixteen wonderful years to Saint Bartholomew's Choir, while at the same time broadcasting the most wonderful sacred music into people's homes across all of Ireland. Fortunately he will

continue to be very much a part of Saint Bartholomew's, in attendance with his wife Anne in the congregation. Recently the gentlemen of the choir presented Tim with a book appropriately inscribed and signed by all. Tim, at the presentation, revealed that it was the plainsong psalms from our Walter Vale Psalter that he especially enjoyed singing

and will now enjoy listening to. The whole parish will join in thanking Tim, and wishing him the best of good health, with many more years of his wonderful program 'Gloria'.

The photo below shows Tim with former Director of Music, Malcolm Wisener, during the choir's trip to Paris in 2004.

Bobby Barden

Table Quiz and Auction

Look at the merry gathering in the picture below! That was the scene at this year's Table Quiz and Auction - the seventh annual event and, despite all the gloom and doom, one of the best yet, raising well over €2000 for the choir fund!

As always the event was run with military precision by Richard and Robin, with help from many others behind

the scenes. Thanks are due to the various people who contributed items for the auction and raffle, especially our corporate sponsors: The Fone Factory and the Wicklow Wine Company. A particular thanks must go to Frank Bannister for writing the questions, some of which were just fiendish. Nevertheless it was quite amusing to note that

hardly anyone knew the patron saint of butchers, tanners, and bee-keepers (take a wild guess...).

It was just brilliant to see so many choristers and families there, as well as so many friends of Saint Bartholomew's. It was a great night all round; roll on next year!

Fraser Wilson







Cashel Weekend

The boys and gentlemen of the choir travelled to Cashel, Co. Tipperary, on Saturday May 15. The trip was facilitated by the Dean of Cashel, the Very Revd Dr. Philip Knowles.

The journey to Cashel is shorter than it used to be, thanks to several new stretches of motorway, but this didn't stop at least two of our drivers deliberately selecting a somewhat more scenic route for their passengers. Happily, all arrived in Cashel in ample time for lunch in the Deanery, a wonderful spread laid on for us by the parishioners of the Cathedral. The Dean welcomed us back to Cashel, saying how he looked forward to hearing us sing.

The Dean of Cashel is – by title – Dean of the Ancient Cathedral, which dominates the heritage site commonly known as the Rock of Cashel;

and since we were visiting as his guests we could all enjoy the magnificent views and architecture without charge. (Three of us were also lucky enough to stay with him in the Deanery, which apparently is haunted...)

Some of the boys, clearly fascinated by the Romanesque and Gothic structures, took advantage of the steep grassy banks to let off steam before rehearsal. Meanwhile, a group of gentlemen, together with the Director of Music, tested out the acoustic of Cormac's Chapel with an impromptu performance of Bruckner's *Locus iste* for a small audience of choir mothers and surprised American tourists!

The first of our two services was Choral Evensong. At the turn of the last century, Cashel Cathedral boasted a full choir, and the Vicars Choral

would have been heard daily, singing the offices of Matins and Evensong. Our visit was a chance for the current congregation to experience some of the music performed in Georgian times, and it was very fitting to sing Evensong in the acoustic of the current classical Georgian Cathedral. The setting used, Noble in B minor, is a staple of the choir repertoire. The service was rounded off with Simon Lindley's arrangement of *Now the green blade riseth*.

The Cathedral Organ by Samuel Green has some historical significance, as it was used by George Frederic Handel prior to the premiere of *Messiah* in Dublin. Sadly, the original organ case was sold to Wicklow Parish Church at the end of the last century, since the Cathedral Chapter needed funds to maintain the upkeep



Cashel Weekend (continued)

of the old Georgian structure.

Our visit helped to raise funds for the Bolton Library, a unique collection of antique books, and the finest collection in the country outside of Dublin. We had a chance to view some of the manuscripts after the service, including a particular highlight, the World's Smallest Book, a copy of the Lord's Prayer. Though not pictured, it appears slightly smaller than the average adult fingernail.

The adults subsequently relocated to a local hostelry to exercise the time-honoured tradition of lubricating the vocal chords after Choral Evensong. The choir parents and boys took up residence in another hostelry across the street for dinner.

On Sunday morning, following breakfast, the Choir gathered for rehearsal in the

Cathedral. The Dean invited Fr. Andrew to preach at the service and the setting was Byrd's *Mass for Five Voices*. After the service, we were treated to another wonderful lunch at the Deanery. The Dean thanked us all for coming, and mentioned that more than €600 had been raised for the Bolton Library fund. The Director of Music responded, thanking the Dean for the warmth of his welcome, and the ladies for providing two wonderful meals.

With the hard work out of the way, the majority of the group decided to visit the Mitchelstown Cave, considered by the editor to be an excellent opportunity for accidentally disposing of excess choristers. We did, however, return to the surface with a full complement.

The writer would like to take this opportunity to thank

all who made the choir's third trip to Cashel an outstanding success, in particular Evelyn Foley. We are all very grateful to the Dean for making this possible, and for all the work he did to advertise our services both on local radio and in the local papers. Heartfelt thanks also to the ladies of Cashel Parish, who provided such excellent food, including a selection of splendid desserts. The weekend was enjoyed by all, and we look forward to visiting again in the not too distant future.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of former chorister Nicholas McMurphy, who agreed to sing alto for the weekend. Nicholas sang in Saint Bartholomew's for over a decade before moving (should that be emigrating? - RB) to Cork in 1998.

Robin Heather



Girls' Choir Concert (10 May)

We should take great pride in our girl choristers, who gave us a heart-warming performance in their concert on Monday 10 May as part of the Music on Mondays series. The gentlemen of the choir were also present, but only to provide backing vocals for the main acts – a wide variety of pieces where the girls played various instruments and sang on their own.

The concert began with the full choir singing Harris' *Holy is the true light*, which was performed to great effect during the Venice tour. Next, we had Daisy singing *Panis Angelicus* with the decorum it demands. Then to our great pleasure, we heard Maya on the violin, followed by Megan on the harp, playing two delightful Irish pieces. Megan's harp, made in the Marlay Park Craft Centre, filled the

nave with its gorgeous sound. In a lighter vein, Catherine played the *Jackson Street Blues* on the piano; and the final instrumentalist was Saorla on the cello. I particularly liked her impish glance at Fraser, her accompanist, to ensure they both ended together.

There were many lovely vocal solos but I can only single out a few: Head Chorister, Kate, sang very well with the other soloists in the Mozart *Mass in D*, then gave us a charming *Wee Hughie* later in the programme. Relatively new to solo singing – but most professional – were Killian Rogan (alto) and Emmet Kiberd (tenor). Once again, we heard Fraser Wilson's arrangement of *The Angel Gabriel* sung by Cliona and Megan. Kiah tenderly and beautifully sang Vulpius' *There is a flower*; and Sally Anne sang

with feeling *Once upon a dream* with a flavour of Tchaikovsky.

Early in the programme Megan sang two traditional Irish pieces, illustrating that Irish is a lovely language to sing in. I should also mention that concealed within *Treoraigh me*, a *Thiarna* was the very familiar Wesley *Lead me Lord*, where Nina and Isabelle combined beautifully as the soloists. Isn't it amusing that it has taken Fraser Wilson (with his Sheffield B.Mus) to teach us to sing in Irish – and wasn't it about time!

But, someone please let us know, where do Fraser and Rosemary get the time and the energy to bring this choir to its high level of achievement? We – the parish, the choir, parents and friends – say thanks for a wonderful evening of music.

Bobby Barden



The Clyde Chorale (26 April)

The Clyde Chorale was formed at Saint Bartholomew's eighteen months ago by Fraser Wilson, though many of its members previously sang with the now defunct chamber choir at Saint Patrick's Cathedral.

With five sopranos, and four on each of the other parts, the balance of voices admirably suited the Vivaldi *Gloria*, striking the exciting pace that is essential at the opening. Indeed many larger choral societies can have difficulty attaining this. There were many wonderful moments, particularly that lovely duet *Laudamus te*, where the soloist Philippa Dand combined beautifully with choir member Louise Mc Mahon. We were to hear Philippa again in the *Domine Deus* and the *Agnus Dei*,

where her wonderful range was displayed. What a lovely lower register she has for a soprano.

Bouncing about on the seat of our Chamber Organ, accompanying and controlling everything was, of course, Fraser Wilson. Next Fraser moved to our church organ for an *Adagio* by contemporary composer David Bednall. This is a massive piece with a haunting melody, which calls on the full range of our marvellous organ for its wonderfully dramatic finale. The choir then sang Vernon Hoyle's *God be in my head*, which begins with the full choir in unison (which is not as easy as it sounds) before moving into harmony. Their accuracy was both impressive and profound.

The second half of the programme included a number of motets and folks songs. Mid way through came the organ piece that many of us had been waiting for: the *Throne Room and End Titles* by John Williams, best known from its use in the Star Wars movies. (A recording of this piece on the church organ is now available on the parish web site - RB).

I would single out some lovely singing by Mary Milne in Vaughan Williams' *O taste and see*. The concert concluded with Bob Chilcott's *An Irish Blessing*. We congratulate the Clyde Chorale and its director Fraser Wilson for a lovely evening of music.

Bobby Barden

Chamber Music on Monday (31 May)

Some of these Monday recitals have involved beginners, or artists who are advancing through the early stages of their musical careers. However, on Monday 31 May, we had three musicians of clearly professional standard.

Dorene Grocock is a renowned flautist and she charmed us with some C.P.E.

Bach, which was written for Frederick the Great (who, we are told, was an amateur flautist himself). Many moods were exhibited showing the great flexibility of the instrument. Specially appealing to me was a Beethoven Romance, originally written for the violin, but extremely beautiful on the flute as Dorene played

it. In the second part of her programme she played Rachmaninov's *Vocalise* and then her own *Water Music*, composed by a lake in County Mayo. This recounted all the happenings in the lake through the day: the water lapping; the birds pecking on the shore; and the gulls screaming and wheeling overhead.

Chamber Music on Monday (continued)

The second performer was Rosemary Beecher Bryant, well known to our choirs in Saint Bartholomew's. We are accustomed to hearing Rosemary singing an occasional phrase, as she trains the boys and girls, and sometimes us men. A pity that not more of our choir were there to hear her extremely beautiful soprano voice with its wonderful range and shading. Great dexterity

was called for in the Britten, and I particularly picked out a leap of a seventh sung from forte to pianissimo which I felt said it all. Our bells were so charmed that they joined in with Spanish composer Obradors' *Al Amor*. The rest of her programme included more songs by Obradors, Manuel de Falla and the Czech Bohuslav Martinu.

Dorene and Rosemary

were accompanied by Tristan Russcher, whose playing and artistry were immaculate. Calling it accompaniment is an injustice; rather, he was the third part of this wonderful trio. Often the person playing the piano is little referred to, but I am sure our other two artists would join me in acclaiming the role he played in this lovely recital.

Bobby Barden

Cathedral Scholarship

Emmet Kiberd has been singing part time in Christ Church Cathedral for the last year in addition to his duties in Saint Bartholomew's.

It was with some apprehension that I began this year's singing, unsure whether I could take on two choirs at once, while also making my way through first year at university. At this stage though, with the end of the year fast approaching, I can safely say that the year has been both enjoyable and successful.

My first evening singing in Christ Church Cathedral flew by. After a slightly shaky audition, I joined the choir for

Thursday evensong. For a choir of 20 or so, they certainly made a magnificent sound, not least the two other tenors, who were able to balance their line with eight sopranos, five altos and five basses. Aside



from the singing, though, the choir were most welcoming, especially during breaks spent in the thrall of Burdock's chips. It is tribute to their openness

that a group of different ages and nationalities have formed such a tight-knit community.

With a new choir came a new repertoire too, making it a difficult task to keep up at the beginning, when virtually

everything I was singing was brand new. Soon, however, I was up to speed and I began to appreciate some of the fascinating new music. There were several huge works that were prepared over many weeks; the bizarre and atmospheric

Macmillan Mass was an example, progressing from a fairly traumatic first sight-read to a satisfying performance. Another such work was *My*

Cathedral Scholarship (continued)

Song Is Love Unknown by Francis Pott, a piece which conveys all the contrasting emotions of Palm Sunday in nearly twenty minutes. At the opposite end of the spectrum, I really enjoyed the wide range of early music that we covered, including Weelkes, Byrd, Victoria, Lassus and Gibbons. I was also introduced to the works of some fantastic composers, among them Gesualdo, Rheinberger and Poulenc. At times I also had the experience of learning Irish language pieces with at least half the choir having absolutely no knowledge of the language; these pieces were ironically sung in front of some English flags, left over in the cathedral by The Tudors, who were filming there.

In the course of the year, I also had the chance to sing in two radio broadcasts from Christ Church. The more important of these was a live broadcast of evensong on BBC Radio 3 on Saint Patrick's Day. By some minor miracle, we managed to avoid background noise interruptions, even though the parade had passed

by the cathedral just two hours earlier. The only audible disturbance was the occasional siren (a year-round feature in a city-centre location).

Of course, things continued as before at Saint Bartholomew's and I enjoyed the year here also. Among the highlights, for me, were the recording of our Christmas CD, the Alan Stanford concert



at which this was launched and the recent concert with the girls' choir.

Looking ahead to next year, I expect to continue singing with both choirs. I have many people to thank for a fantastic year: my fellow tenors in Christ Church, for setting an excellent example; Judy Martin and Fraser Wilson for sorting out numerous scheduling conflicts and much more; and members of both choirs for their support.

Emmet Kiberd

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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/>.

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