



Music @ Saint Bartholomew's

<http://www.stbartholomews.ie>

January 2012



- The Girls' Choir
- Producing "Smoke"
- My time in the choir

The Girls Choir –The First Decade (1)

The Girls' Choir will be ten years old in 2012. To mark this occasion, Music @ Saint Bartholomew's has asked a number of people involved over the years to send in their memories and photographs.

Cliona Rogan is the last of the original twelve girl choristers to graduate from the choir; here is her memory of the first decade.

There were twelve of us in September of 2002. Now, nine years and four directors later, the girls' choir has grown to eighteen choristers strong, with two CDs recorded, and all smiles.

When the choristers were being recruited, I'm sure Mr Wisener got tired of hearing Happy Birthday sung repeatedly to him, in frequencies that the human ear shouldn't have to endure for long. Nonetheless, singers were chosen, and our first service took place on 9 February 2003. It was

Evensong (they were starting us out easy). We straightened our brand new cassocks, reveling in the excitement of singing an actual service. We lined up and went over the important things in our heads: don't drop anything; walk along the black lines; don't fall; sing. Even though we had practised the music for months previously, there was still a hint of terror in our voices as we emitted our first notes of the Smith responses.

The choir has changed a lot since 2002. Over the nine years, we've traversed far and wide to sing to the masses. Back in the days when we hadn't experienced the heartache of a change in director of music, we visited Cashel. Here we experienced the disaster that was mushy peas. After a full recovery from this traumatic meal, we summoned

up the strength to stay up half the night tormenting the parents around us. But not me of course; I was asleep after ten minutes, like a respectable eleven year old. We sang our lungs out that weekend, and visited graveyards strewn with sheep, and of course, the Rock of Cashel.

Climbing ruins seemed to be our favourite pastime. In Kilkenny, the year after Cashel, we climbed a rather small tower so as to enjoy a reward of muffins; and we even visited Kilkenny castle as an extra bonus.

When the girls' choir visited Cork in 2007, we immediately got lost. Recovering quickly, the five of us sang with the girls' choir in Saint Fin Barre's, which was an experience not to be missed. We broadened our musical knowledge by singing Anglican Chant



The Girls Choir –The First Decade (2)

psalms for the very first time. An exciting moment for me, I assure you! While in Cork, we took the opportunity to visit Fóta, not to mention the small funfair across from the restaurant, where an alto was to be heard squealing with delight on the rides, and holding handbags along the way (see photographic proof below!).

Unfortunately we lost a member of the wolfpack after we came back from Cork. After we said goodbye to Mr Wisener, we waited, curious to see who would fill his shoes. During the transition when Mr Parshall valiantly stepped forward, an entire choir practice was taken up by auditioning some of the candidates. Much to our amusement, we watched, unhelpfully, as they attempted to control us. Funnilly enough, Mr Wilson wasn't one of them.

Fraser would bring us from Christ Church Cathedral to Saint Mark's Basilica. When in February 2008 we sang in Christ Church, it was the first time a Saint Bartholomew's group had appeared there in living memory. In October of the same year, the girls and men travelled to the far off land of Kilbride, Co. Wicklow, for a harvest evensong, bringing with us a flexible repertoire, and an organist capable of amazing things with somewhat limited machinery.

Our first semi-abroad trip was to Armagh in February 2009. We made the most of it: we played Frisbee on the hillside; we sang Mamma Mia loudly in close proximity to Mr Wilson... Unfortunately some of us had some time-keeping difficulties, but made up for it by buying Fraser the most amazing present of bright pink,

striped, heart-shaped sunglasses (which he definitely has not 'lost').

In 2010 we went international to Venice, the city built on water. We sang in the depths of Saint Mark's Basilica and listened to beatboxing in Saint Mark's Square. Luckily, we arrived in peak flood season and witnessed the most extraordinary sights: we watched the water seep up through the tiles of our hotel floor as we stood in our pyjamas, laughing. The shock over, we continued with the usual activities of running around with swords, and accidentally breaking the radiators.

Lest we forget, our trips have not all been music related. We have gone to Funderland nearly every Christmas since the beginning, courtesy of our friend, Richard Bannister. I say 'nearly' as, the very first Christmas that we dared to venture



The Girls Choir – The First Decade (3)

outside our hallowed gates, we went ice-skating. Funderland has proven a great way of seeing how old the choristers have gotten, now that going on 'Extreme' merely three times in a row can make them queasy.

After getting introduced to the Voice for Life awards in 2008, the choir burst into colour. With our newfound medals, a CD was in order. In

2009, along with the boys and men, we recorded a CD for the 20th anniversary of the Alan Stanford concerts. It was the girls' first time recording, and we hardly believed how fast the time flew. A few months ago we recorded our own CD with the men, and again the time went too fast.

We lost Mr Wilson to the organ bench, and Mr Par-

shall took over once again, producing sterling work in brightly coloured socks. Thanks to him, we brought another few medals home, when some of us undertook more exams with the RSCM. We said goodbye to him again, when he left for England in February. Our current victim, Mr Russcher, has been with us ever since.

Cliona Rogan

From the Pulpit

Michael Thompson was Vicar of Saint Bartholomew's and Christ Church Leeson Park from 2004 to 2007. He now resides in France.

Although those who remember my time at Saint Bartholomew's may find this surprising, I was very rarely insistent when it came to the musical aspect of the Liturgy. This was not simply the fruit of self-discipline. It was because the music was under the direction of one of the finest liturgical musicians I have had the honour of working with, Malcolm Wisener. Nonetheless I was adamant that the Girls Choir should sing at my institution in Christ Church Leeson Park.

In all those places where the wonderful tradition of a Boys and Men choir has been maintained, it is too easy to view the Girls Choir as an add on, or as a sop to current thinking, or both. Implicit in such an attitude is that it is 'not the real thing'. There should be no place for such attitudes in the Church.

The life of Saint Bartholomew's is centred on the Eucharistic Offering. In that Offering, Christ includes all of us, and all that we do, all that we strive for. The music of the Liturgy is expressive of our deepest perceptions, or highest aspirations, and of our use of God-given gifts as expressions of the nobility

for which we were created. How could that be complete without the unique beauty, timbre and quality which, in their different ways, the Girls and Boys choirs offer?

I wanted the Girls to know that they were not singing as a concession or as a favour, but because without them there would be something lacking, which only they could supply, in the honour due to Almighty God. The Girls Choir of Saint Bartholomew's Church has greatly enriched that offering of Worship. I pray God's continued blessing on their musical journey into the Mystery of the Divine.

Michael Thompson

In the beginning...

Alan Fletcher writes about the events that led to the formation of the Girls' choir under then Director of Music, Malcolm Wisener.

In 2002, Malcolm Wisener announced to the Easter Vestry of Saint Bartholomew's that he intended to introduce a Girls' Choir within the parish. Most English cathedrals had separate girls' choirs, and recently, Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin had formed one. In order to bring Saint Bartholomew's into line with this wider Anglican tradition, and also to help develop a new aspect of parish life, he had decided to explore establishing such a choir within Saint Bartholomew's also.

The Easter Vestry was delighted to hear of his initiative, and so he began recruiting in June of that year. A promotional brochure was prepared with the help of Ian Ellis and Richard Bannister, which Malcolm would give to prospective choristers after their auditions. It outlined the commitment that the girls would be taking on, and explained how they would be contributing to the musical life of the church – and not least how they might find themselves having fun socializing with a new group of

friends. By November, twelve girls had been signed up, and an official launch of Saint Bartholomew's Girls' Choir was held in February 2003. The choir's debut was at Evensong on 9 February in that year, an occasion well attended by parents and supporters, when the girls sang the service setting by *Sumsion* in A, along with the anthem *The Lord bless you and keep you* by the ever-popular composer, John Rutter.

Malcolm left Dublin in September 2007 to take up the post of Organist and Choirmaster at Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork, where he is currently busy presiding over a wholesale organ rebuild and refurbishment, as well as heading up the RSCM in Ireland. He still keeps an eye on the fortunes of his former choir, however, and is delighted to hear how his initiative back in 2002 has flourished and borne such splendid fruit some ten years later, with the production of a fine CD, "And the house was filled with smoke". He wishes the musical establishment at Saint Bartholomew's all the best as it goes from strength to strength in the capable hands of Tristan Russcher.

Alan Fletcher

Letter from Peter Macintosh (1)

Fraser Wilson (and his alter ego) shared the position of Director of Music at Saint Bartholomew's from 2008 to 2010. He (they?) are now living and studying in Sheffield, becoming reacquainted with the delights of university life, and, as ever, writing music under a variety of pseudonyms.

Any account of my time with the girls is likely to begin with the word "Venice". It was for me the point at which the girls' undoubted potential sparked into real achievement. Knowing that you can travel a thousand miles to sing for Mass at Gabrieli's church, representing your country, sharing your art – and not falling into any canals in the process – gives you a gentle but firm confidence. This confidence, I believe, has helped carry the girls to where they are today.

Things were different after we got back: the girls were more focussed, more aware, and made a

Letter from Peter Macintosh (2)

stronger sound. Today, as you can hear on their new CD, they have reached a remarkable standard, driven by the marvellous efforts of Tristan, Lucy, and David – but also, I feel, by the belief they discovered in the crisp darkness of Venice: that they could do this.

When I first met the girls, they were (of course) all a lot younger than they are now; and as they grew, we watched them also growing into their role within the church. In time, they became “the talk of the town”, and rightly so – they began to reach for the stars. Although it was my name “on the tin”, a collection of remarkable people shared more than I could ever have asked and have my unending gratitude: Paula, Niamh, Andrew, Rosemary, Peter, Rosie, Cally, Richard, the Venice back-row crew, par-

ents, supporters, friends, many others – but most importantly and triumphantly, the girls themselves.

Other good memories of our time together involve trips to Armagh and Kilbride; a wonderful afternoon's entertainment at Bobby and Pat Barden's peaceful house in the Dublin Mountains; the girls' Monday evening concert in which we saw a very different side of their talents; and some wonderful singing in services.

In celebrating their tenth anniversary, we are also marking the end of the first phase of the Saint Bartholomew's girls' choir: the last remaining founding members have flown off into the world, and the second decade begins. The girls take with them something essential. To quote the late, and dearly missed, Fr John McKay (who

was instrumental in facilitating our Venetian adventure), they have “learnt from the stones”. This is something that all who pass by Saint Bartholomew's can share: a warmth, and a sense of belonging which can be hard to discover elsewhere. There is also a sense that, while individuals come and go, the church remains. “In our day of thanksgiving”, we not only think of the past but look to the future, with the knowledge that as long as wonderful music is at the heart of Saint Bartholomew's, there will also be found the beating heart of a spiritual purpose. Just as it has nurtured the girls, this purpose will continue to nurture those of us scattered far and wide, who these days must sing our praises from afar.

Fraser Wilson

Training the Choir (1)

Lucy Champion has been training the girls' choir this year.

As a member of the congregation with my family at Saint Bartholomew's since August of 2010, I have had the pleasure of attending the Sunday morning services and listening to the girls'

choir. As a singer with Anúna, a vocal coach and a person who is passionate about choral music, it is a pleasure to experience the music and atmosphere at this beautiful church. Imagine my delight, therefore, when Tristan Russcher, the choir's talented and

accomplished Music Director, approached me in October to do some training with the girls as they prepared to record a CD – what a wonderful opportunity.

Over a number of weeks, I have been working with the girls on basic tech-

Training the Choir (2)

niques in singing, addressing the issues of posture, alignment of the head and the body (you would be amazed at the difference it can make), breathing and projection of sound. I can honestly say that it is an absolute de-

light to work with these girls – what I find inspirational is the dedication that they have to working on their voices and to being part of the choir at Saint Bartholomew's. This team spirit and focus is, after all, the fundamental basis of

great choral singing. I think the years ahead for the girls choir at Saint Bartholomew's are going to be filled with wonderful music-making, and I wish them every continued success.

Lucy Champion

“Growth and Development”

Peter Parshall wore many different hats at Saint Bartholomew's from 2007-2011. He is now based in Cornwall, England.

As the person who must hold the record for the “greatest number of titles ever held” at Saint Bartholomew's – Assisting Organist, Acting Director of Music, Assistant Director of Music and Director of Music – I have observed the growth and development of the girls' choir from a number of different angles. And the words “growth and development” are exactly the right ones to use, since that is precisely what I have seen since my first involvement with the music at Saint Bartholomew's, two and half years after the foundation of the girls' choir. Growth, in the sense of numbers and the frequency of their performances, yes, but also growth in confidence, in

repertoire, in technique and in ability to work as a unit.

I have witnessed their development into a group of singers that can be relied upon to ‘produce the goods’ – which, if I'm honest, wasn't always the case at the start! Above all, I believe that the girls have developed into an ensemble that is able to understand both the privilege and the responsibility of leading others in worship – to give people a glimpse of something that is beyond our understanding – which is the *raison d'être* of the music at Saint Bartholomew's. Along the way, the girls, together with their colleagues in the boys' choir, have reaped all the benefits that membership of the choir brings. I've seen individuals grow in confidence and maturity having achieved awards from the RSCM; just as

the choir has grown in confidence and maturity following, for example, an excellent rendition of a difficult anthem.

I believe that all the young people involved in the music at Saint Bartholomew's will, in time, come to appreciate what the church has given them, through education, lasting friendships and an exposure to the incomparable riches of the choral repertoire.

As the founder members of the girls' choir move on to new things, I know they will take with them the memory of experiences that very few others in Ireland have had, or will ever have – happy memories, I hope, culminating in the excellent CD made last month. I wish them, and the choirs at Saint Bartholomew's, every success for the future.

Peter Parshall

Freezing Fingers (1)

Rosemary Beecher Bryant was the choristers' vocal coach from 2009-2010. She has recently emigrated to the United States with her fiancé, Alex Montgomery.

She would very much like to keep in touch with people from Saint Bartholomew's. You can write to her at her new address: 33 Lansdale Avenue, San Anselmo, CA 94960, USA.

Boys' choirs, with their pure tone, angelic expressions, and tradition-upholding, are all very well, but there's something special about a girls' choir. Girls' choir members don't tend to want to hit each other, use the choir stalls as a jungle gym, or tempt their director into having an extended break so that they can beat him in a quick football match (Mr Wilson...). The fact that a girl's ability to sing a top A flat is unlikely to change irrevocably during adolescence, means

that girls' choir members have a broader age range than boys' choirs. They can learn in the choir for longer, growing as musicians, and that is a wonderful thing to witness. The girls of Saint Bartholomew's are a fantastic example of this – “matriarchs” like Kate, Cliona, Megan, Saorla and Sallyanne helping the younger members along – and it was a privilege to work with them over a year.

My favourite memories of the choir include, of course, the tour to Venice in February 2010. I remember particularly how freezing cold it was – so much so that we could see the breath rising from Amaru and Mazzy as they were singing! The girls did an amazing job on the tour, as did the altos, tenors and basses invited by Mr Wilson. Thanks to the parents who organised the event brilliantly.

Another highlight of my time with the girls' choir was their showcase concert in Summer 2010, allowing members the opportunity to show off their individual talents in singing and playing instruments. A particular joy was hearing *The Little Road to Bethlehem* performed by the [then] younger members of the choir – Hannah, Mazzy, Amaru, Maya, Rachel and Lucy, and hearing how their voices, and their confidence, had developed over the year. Singing and confidence need to go hand-in-hand, and Saint Bartholomew's provides an ideal platform for the two to progress together.

Each girl in the 2009-2010 choir had a wonderful voice, and it was a pleasure to work with them on a small-group basis in preparing for the Voice For Life awards and solos. One personal happy mem-



Freezing Fingers (2)

ory was discovering that Isabelle McGeough was (secretly) a fantastic sight-reader! I am sure that all the choir members are going to go from strength to strength – every one of them has the talent, diligence and determination to take their singing further.

I need to give very sincere thanks to Fraser Wilson for asking me to work with the choirs at Saint Bartholomew's.

It was an absolute privilege to work with the girls, boys, and sometimes men (I apologise for my occasionally radical vocal exercises, gentlemen!) in such a supportive, constructive environment – something that is sadly not always found in choir circles, in my experience. Now, as I am preparing to enter a Music Teaching Credential programme in California (yes, I'm going to be Mr

Schuester!), I will be drawing on all the experience I gained at Saint Bartholomew's. They'll all be warming up to Freezing Fingers before you can say Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart!

Warm congratulations to the Girls' Choir on reaching this milestone, and very best wishes for its continuing development. Girls, I miss you; you are all fantastic, and will go far.

Rosemary Beecher Bryant

"It was phenomenal"

Roisin Horan sang with the Girls' choir from 2004-2007. She is now studying for a degree in Law at University College Dublin.

In a word, my time in the Girls' Choir was phenomenal! It enabled me to travel around Ireland with friends, make regular free trips to Funderland, expand my musical repertoire, and most importantly, to share my love of music and singing with people my own age who felt the exact same way.

The help and guidance of my choirmasters, especially Malcolm Wisener and Peter Parshall, were inspiring, giving me the confidence

to further my vocal training outside Saint Bartholomew's. The friendships I made as a chorister I hope will be lasting. It has given me great pleasure to hear and see my fellow ex-Barts girls come on in leaps and bounds. I never dreamed, when I started, that the choir might one day have a CD (or two!), or travel abroad like the boys.

I still can't believe how much has been accomplished since those early practice sessions with only a few girls. This couldn't have happened without the team who believed in us. Fraser Wilson made the impossible possi-

ble; and Tristan brought the standard to where it is today.

It seems only yesterday that myself and Cliona Rogan were watching the boys sing at eucharist and trying to catch the chocolate coins that Reverend Michael Thompson threw down to the congregation from the pulpit. At this stage, we were still just singing Evensong, with the staple repertoire of *Dyson* in F and *Smith* Responses. The speed with which we became real contenders, points to a very promising future. Look out boys, we really are here to stay!

Roisin Horan



2003



2005



2006



2007



2008



2009



Filling the house with smoke (1)

Recording a CD involves a lot of effort over a period of months. The following diary outlines the production process of "And the house was filled with smoke".

The project was conceived on the evening of April 24th, when Tristan Russcher casually mentioned to Richard Bannister that he was thinking about making a CD of the Girls' Choir, given the "exceptionally high standard of their singing". Richard had project-managed the 2009 CD "Carols and Festive Readings", and immediately offered to do the same again. And thus it began...



Richard sends an email with a brain dump of ideas about putting together the new CD, based on the experience of the previous one.

"Whatever is in the recordings should ideally be sung at services in September/October as extra practice". Also – a cynical ploy aimed firmly at the grandparent market – "I think it'd be good to include lots of works with solos to give the girls a chance to shine."



Tristan produces a draft proposal for approval by the select vestry, covering two CDs: the first, of the girls and men, for 2011; the second, of the boys and men, for 2012. The draft document at this stage includes eight works (Archer, Biebl, Chilcott, Darke, Lindley, Parry, Stainer, Stanford), all of which make it to the final disc. Two organ voluntaries were also in the draft, though these were subsequently dropped in favour of

additional choral music.

That same evening, Richard has a quiet off-the-record word with Brian McIvor to ascertain his availability for recording in late October/early November; Brian was enthusiastic at the prospect of working with Saint Bartholomew's again.



The Select Vestry approves the proposals unanimously, and planning work begins in earnest. During the summer months the scheduling is worked out in full, and various other parties are brought on board. Judy Martin agrees to act as producer – and in mid-August, David Grealy is appointed as Assistant Director of Music, coming to us from Westminster Cathedral.



Filling the house with smoke (2)



Various members of the choir have a chat after the Eucharist about possible titles for the new CD. Some of the suggestions border on the ludicrous: “Girl Power”, “Mass Entertainment”, and “Hymns and Hers”. Nobody seems to have any serious suggestions, and with that in mind, conversation shifts towards the possibility of using a line from one of the anthems on the disc.

While choosing the title of a piece may be fashionable, every single one of ours turned out to have been previously used, and not always in a sacred fashion. One of the most entertaining discoveries was “God so loved the world”, released by the Australian punk band of the same name in 2005. Looking at other lyrics, “Sitting upon a throne” is quickly elimi-

nated (!) in favour of “And the house was filled with smoke”. The potential double meaning of this (especially in the Saint Bartholomew's context) is relished by all concerned.

The Vicar is asked for his views on this title, given the potential controversy, and he tells Tristan to “use it before I change my mind!”



An email is received from Judy: “The choir is sounding fabulous! Tristan, I'm assuming that you'll record in front of the screen, and that you'll get the organ tuned... Do tell the girls that they need to go for all the high notes, not just the ones they like, otherwise they'll have to do them again, and again...and they'll hate me!”



The first day of recording begins with a moment of comedy gold; the first take, of the Archer *Sanctus*, turns out to be number sixty-eight (for reasons best known to the recording engineer). Peter Parshall comments that it's entirely possible that takes one through sixty-seven (from a different choir) might find their way into our disc by accident. *This does not happen.*

The piece is put down in four takes over a twenty minute period, making it the single fastest track on the entire disc; the longest, the Stainer, took over two hours not including a meal break. Two more movements of the Archer are completed before we stop for an hour. Organ builder Trevor Crowe sits in on the first session, having spent much of the



Filling the house with smoke (3)

morning tuning the organ, and notes that the choir is sounding fantastic.

Later in the evening, the mood changes with the beautiful Gibbons *O thou the central orb*. This anthem is surprisingly challenging to sing, despite much of it being made up of solo parts, a particular highlight being the beautiful duet between the younger and elder Rogan(s). Our producer won't allow us to cheat save time by reusing one take of the chorus three times over, which is certainly the right decision, albeit one which is harder to understand in the middle of a long session!

During the Gibbons, we are treated to the first instance of what was to become one of the refrains of the recording. Judy comments "That was excellent, but...", then she talks for over a minute before concluding with "...but other than that, it was brilliant!". The writer feels that the sessions would not have been the same without the wit and wisdom of Ms. Martin, and regrets that limitations of taste preclude him from adding more examples of it to this diary.

The day finishes with the remaining two movements

of the Archer. Six hours work has given us twenty minutes of the final CD.



Brian completes the first edit of the tracks recorded on the previous Saturday. Richard collects master CDs which are delivered that evening to Tristan and Judy. A number of minor issues (background noises, etc) are identified for correction in a subsequent edit.



Recording on a Friday night after a week in school/work is a particular challenge for all singers, all the more so when the first item on the agenda is the Stanford *Magnificat* in G. This piece isn't easy at the best of times, and we only manage to struggle through it thanks to trojan work from Cliona on the solo treble and David on the Organ.

Afterwards, the gentlemen spend another hour recording the "Justin Biebl" (not really) *Ave Maria*, a beautiful twentieth century anthem set for eight voices. It is 10:00pm by the time everyone gets to

leave, though a few people still manage to decamp to Belamy's...



The third day of recording begins with Tristan saying to Richard, "I know you told me not to do it, but make me listen to you next time, if I try to schedule a recording session for a Friday night again!". This reminder is being printed here to be used as reference material for the next project!

The organ at Saint Bartholomew's has two stops known collectively as the "Bombarde", which have pipes configured "en chamade", pointing straight out into the nave of the church. This makes them sound particularly dramatic. Quite a few of the gentlemen are rudely awakened from their early morning daydreams, as David comes crashing in on the first few notes of Parry *I was glad*. While the moment is not caught on camera, the effect can be easily duplicated at home by using track nineteen (at top volume) on any CD capable alarm clock.

Ninety minutes later, the Parry has been commit-

Filling the house with smoke (4)

ted to hard disk and it is time for the next challenge: Stainer *I saw the Lord*. Work is briefly interrupted by an errant lawnmower, until it is decided that the section we're working on is loud enough that we don't actually need to worry about background noises. Two thirds of the piece are completed before the lunch break, including the dramatic section, "And the house was filled with smoke", that gives the disc its title.

After finishing the Stainer, much to the relief of all, the remainder of the day is spent on ~~real~~ music Mozart. Four movements are recorded in a little over two hours - the *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus*, and *Agnus Dei*. Another memorable quotation comes from Judy, who advises the tenors that "that note is higher than you think it is. It's certainly higher than you're singing it!".



The final day of recording is marked by spectacularly bad weather in the morning, providing a dramatic accompaniment to the Mozart *Kyrie*. Lucy Champion, our vocal coach for the girls, kindly offers to come in and 'reset'

the girls; this involves working with them on correct posture and vocal technique and how to work through the fatigue of demanding recording sessions. Thanks to Lucy's expert advice it takes just over thirty minutes to record the movement.

In the afternoon, the group assembles for the last push. Tristan notes that "it's so quiet in here that you could hear an ant sneeze", which might be more comprehensible in its original Australian. Over a three hour period, the final four tracks are laid down; the Stanford *Nunc dimittis*, the Lindley *Ave Maria*, Chilcott *God so loved the world*, and the Saint Clement hymn - *The day thou gavest* - complete with a descant on the final verse. Recording a descant isn't easy at the best of times, but it's a particular challenge at the end of three days of non-stop singing.

Two hundred and fifty six takes, twenty-one hours of recording, and an unquantifiable amount of energy come to a head just after 7:30pm, when the words "it's a wrap" are heard for the last time. The tired cheer at these words is loud enough to be heard by the parents waiting outside the church.

Tristan thanks everyone involved for their efforts, and singles out the various people who have gone above and beyond to make the recording a reality. Then, as an additional thank-you to the girls, he announces a proposed choir trip to a far away country, planned for the next year or two, that had been decided on the previous evening by himself and Judy over a bottle of wine. Later that evening, he receives a text message from a choir parent that says "You might be amused to know that my daughter is looking for her sunglasses, and wondering whether they have sharks in (country name)."

Many of the adults relocate across the road to the Jewel in the Crown for a curry and a few pints. The general feeling of fatigue is accompanied by a sense of pride at a job well done.



Richard produces a first draft of the album art. The back liner of the disc is agreed immediately, and looks almost identical to the final product. The front cover is also recognisable at this stage, though the original photograph

Filling the house with smoke (5)

has to be replaced after it is noticed that the icon of our Lord at the front of the church has been inadvertently decapitated by a high camera angle.



Brian completes the first edits of the Mozart, the Biebl, the Parry, the Stainer, and the Stanford. The reason for the first edit process is made abundantly clear when Richard discovers an extra "amen" at the end of the Biebl. The team briefly consider whether we should claim to have performed a special version of the anthem written just for us, though in the end the decision is taken to stick with the authorised version!

That same evening, an e-mail is received from Tim Thurston, presenter with Lyric FM and former member of Saint Bartholomew's Choir, with completed programme notes for the CD booklet.



Brian completes the first edits of the remaining tracks: the Lindley, Darke, Chilcott, and Saint Clement. The disc is collected from him

in the hallowed halls of Eddie Rockets in Stillorgan Shopping Centre!



Judy sends round her recommendations for the second edit of the disc.

This is a seven page document in single-spaced twelve point text, totalling 4025 words. The final direction, half way through page seven, is "Slit wrists". But whose?

She also notes that take 203 has fifteen bars of Tristan humming along with the music and breathing heavily, the engineer having inadvertently left his feedback microphone channel wide open. A copy of this out-take has been preserved for posterity!

Brian, Richard, and Tristan spend the entire day in Brian's studio in Slane putting the first batch of these edits together. The sheer number of edits mean that fifteen hours is only enough to complete twelve of the final twenty-one tracks.



Richard orders the bar code required for the CD to be sold

on the iTunes Music Store (and on other online stores). Peter Parshall makes some comments on the draft cover of the disc, some of which are subsequently adopted.



The recording process used several sets of microphones in different locations in the church, and these were mixed in real time in order to speed the edit process. As a backup to this, the original sound from all microphone sets is recorded separately so that any problems with the mix can be corrected without having to set up a new recording session. These backups came into their own in the edit of the Parry, as the original mix proves to be not as good as we would like. Producing a new mix and a fresh edit takes Brian and Tristan almost three hours, which they are just finalising as Richard arrives in the building with take-away curry for all. Subsequently, the Stainer is edited in depth, polishing up a few rough edges. It is pretty late by the time we are finished, but all decide to get Saint Clement sorted quickly. Fifteen minutes later, it's a wrap.

Filling the house with smoke (6)



The original mix of the Mozart had the soloist microphones left open throughout, resulting in somewhat (okay, very) overdramatic alto and tenor lines. During a late night editing session, running until almost 1:00am in the studio, the first four movements of the Mozart were remixed with the soloist microphones turned off for the chorus sections, resulting in a much more even sound.



Richard's living room is Dublin temporarily converted into an editing studio for the second edit of the Biebl, marking the first time in the history of Saint Bartholomew's that part of a CD has been edited on a big screen television.



Richard and Tristan thrash out the remaining content for the CD booklet.

Brian arrives at 8:45pm, and the rest of the evening is spent completing the second edit of the Mozart *Agnus Dei* - the last track to get to the second edit

stage. Just as we're finishing for the night, an email is received from Judy with recommendations for third edits. Much to the relief of all, this contains only some minor tweaks, which we agree to postpone for a week.



Over three consecutive nights, the final edit and master disc is produced. A late change in track order produces a title suggestion from Brian of "Mozart after Darke", but after much laughter, it is decided to stick with the existing title. Late on Saturday evening, Brian, Richard, and Tristan listen through the full disc from start to end. No issues are identified, and the final master is produced – and delivered, shortly after midnight, to duplication.



The final cost of the CD is worked out, and after considerable discussion

the team agree a sale price of €12. This gives us a break-even point of seven hundred and twenty discs, which means that anything sold above that will go

back into choir funds. Online sales go live on the web site, with the first order coming in just ten minutes after the page is uploaded.



Near disaster occurs as Richard spots that a chorister's name has been spelt wrong in the booklet. Fortunately the duplication company have yet to print that page, so there is time to correct. The file is amended and sent through.



Copies of the disc are received back from manufacturing in the early evening. These are immediately brought to choir practice as an unexpected surprise for the choristers.



The completed disc is launched by Tim Thurston at the annual Concert of Carols and Festive Readings. Tim says the disc is "a wonderful CD with some really excellent solo and choral singing".

Richard Bannister

My time in the choir

In June 2007, Malcolm Wisener came to my primary school to audition boys for Saint Bartholomew's Choir. He invited two friends of mine and me to join. I was the only one who took up his offer. I hardly got to know Mr Wisener, because shortly after I started, he moved to Cork, and Mr Parshall took over while the parish looked for a new Director of Music. Although I didn't know anyone in the choir when I joined, I quickly made friends. I was very enthusiastic when I started, and used to complain to my mother when I thought I would be late for rehearsals! In March 2008, Mr Wilson became the Director of Music, and he brought his own style to the choir. He started the points system, where individuals could earn points based on their behaviour and performance. The side with the most

points would win a prize at the end of term.

In April 2009 I went with the choir to Hereford. We sang in Hereford Cathedral for five days. We had a great time, particularly the night we had to walk home in a thunderstorm. Highlights included the trips to Drayton Manor Theme Park and to Clearwell Caves.

Christmas was always busy preparing for the Advent procession, Stanford concert and Christmas services. Every year after the Stanford concert, Robert Hilliard and I would have a competition to see who could eat the most mince pies. I never won! We always had Funderland to look forward to, as Richard Bannister organised a trip for us every year.

We recorded a CD in December 2009 to celebrate the twentieth Stanford concert. It was one of the few

times that the boys, girls and men got together to sing. We were really pleased with the finished version and my mum bought about eight copies of it for friends and relations. Last year, Tim Thurston played it on Christmas day on his radio programme, Gloria, on Lyric FM.

Mr Parshall became the Director of Music last year, and he encouraged me to study for the silver Voice for Life medal. Mr Russcher was the examiner, and it was funny that he later took over the reins when Mr Parshall left. I was sorry to see Mr Parshall go, as he had helped me in many ways.

I enjoyed my time in the choir and made lots of friends. I learned and sang lots of pieces of music. I was sad to leave, but wish Mr Russcher and the choir of Saint Bartholomew's the best of luck for the future.

Jake Foley



Choristers on Stage

December is always a busy month in Saint Bartholomew's, but especially so for four of the members of the boys' choir who participated in external concerts in Dublin.

Luke O'Reilly performed in the Chester Beatty Library on Thursday 1st December for the Occasional Singers' Festival of Carols and Readings. Despite suffering from a chest infection at the time, Luke sang the solo from Harold Darke's setting of *In the bleak midwinter* and joined the famous actor Bill Golding in a series of readings. Luke received a standing ovation at the concert, and he should be hugely congratulated for his achievement.

Three of our boys, Gavin Jones, Alexander Coghlan and Elias Dempsey, joined Culwick Choral Society on 8th December in the National Concert Hall for their performance of Britten's *St Nicholas*. Our choristers played the role of 'three pickled boys' in the oratorio, and Gavin sang the solo of 'Young Nicholas'. The boys received rapturous applause and helped to spread the good news of Saint Bartholomew's!

Tristan Russcher

Come and Sing

On Saturday, 12 November, over one hundred singers gathered in Saint Bartholomew's Church to sing Fauré *Requiem* and Mendelssohn's *Hear my prayer*. The performance at 5pm was preceded by a rehearsal, and an opportunity to meet new people, and to catch up with old friends. We were delighted to welcome singers from as far afield as Waterford and Newry, as well

as many people from the Dublin area. The afternoon was conducted by Stuart Nicholson, and the organist was Tristan Russcher. Soloists Jeffrey Ledwidge and Rachel Talbot were joined by a number of the choristers from Saint Bartholomew's. The RSCM committee is already making plans for a future event, building on the success of this one.

Mark Bowyer

Safeguarding Trust

The Church of Ireland has a policy document entitled *Safeguarding Trust*, which can be found online on the Church of Ireland website. A number of copies are held in the parish, one of which is available to the public in the vestry of the church. The document sets out a code of practice to protect the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults in our care. In this parish we aim to keep the policy under continual review, and, from time to time make you as parishioners aware of it, and of our commitment to it. If you ever have cause to be concerned about the welfare of any child or vulnerable adult within the parish, you can con-

tact any of the panel members in confidence. The panel members are Niamh Harty, Bernard Ward and Andrew McCroskery. These names and telephone numbers are available on a sheet on the notice board in the church porch. The panel is not only for the reporting of concerns, but also serves as a point of contact for suggestions. Please don't be afraid to contact us if you feel that there is an area of child welfare in the parish that needs revision, or an area where we could improve. In the meantime, I encourage you to familiarise yourself with the contents of the Safeguarding Trust policy.

Andrew McCroskery

Sebastian Adams

Many of you might remember Sebastian Adams, who was a chorister here from 1999-2004, even leading cantoris towards the end of his time in the choir. Sebastian is now attempting to forge a career as a composer, with a sideline playing the viola. Although only in second year at college (studying composition in the Royal Irish Academy of Music), he has already had success as a composer, winning the prestigious West Cork Chamber Music Composition Prize ear-

lier this year. This meant that his string quartet was performed in Bantry as part of West Cork's world renowned Chamber Music Festival. In the spring, Sebastian is to have the considerable honour of having a work performed by Crash Ensemble, Ireland's premier contemporary music group. Other performers who have played his work include Bill Dowdall, Rhombus Jazz Quintet and, of course, his father, David Adams, one of Ireland's top organists.

As a viola player Sebastian is in demand as both an orchestral and chamber music player. He is a founding member of the Milesian Quartet, who specialise in playing contemporary Irish music. Although he does not sing much at the moment, he maintains a huge interest in sacred choral music, and credits Saint Bartholomew's with sparking his love of music, and his aptitude for it. You can see for yourself at <http://sebastianadams.net/>

Bobby Barden

Dublin Symphony Orchestra Concert

The third DSO concert to take place in Saint Bartholomew's took place on the evening of Saturday December 3rd.

The menu on offer was an all German affair, commencing with the overture to *Der Freischütz* by Carl Maria von Weber. The orchestra was quickly in its stride under the baton of their conductor, Fergus O'Carroll. This was followed by Johannes Brahms *Variations on a Theme* by Papa Haydn. It is said to be the first set of variations for orchestra in the history of music, and was first performed by the Vienna Philharmonic under the baton of Brahms himself. This

historical baggage did not inhibit the DSO in any way as they gave a very pleasing performance to this lovely work. The final piece in the first half of the concert was the *Concerto for Viola & Orchestra* by Georg Philipp Telemann, with soloist Bogdan Rusin.

The second half of the programme was devoted to Brahms' *Symphony No. 4 in E minor*. This was the highlight of the evening. The first movement begins in an understated way with the violins and woodwinds to the fore. Brahms then expands the theme into an intricate musical exposition ending powerfully with an E minor

chord played by the whole orchestra. The second movement begins with a sparse melody by the horn, picked up immediately by the rest of the woodwinds over a delicate pizzicato accompaniment by the strings, before the strings take over the melody. The third movement is very joyful compared to the foreboding E minor key of the first and last movements. The finale begins with the trombones, horns and woodwinds, and developed in three quarter time, finally concluding with a coda which steamrolls to its conclusion. All in all a most enjoyable evening.

Bernard Ward

Boys Solo Service

On Sunday the 23rd of October, the boys' choir sang - as far as we know - their first ever solo service. The mens' choir were absent because they were on CD recording duty with the girls during that weekend. However, the lack of adults was barely noticeable, as there was a handsome turnout for the boys. The main reason for doing such a service was so the boys could feel ownership of a service - and to show the congregation how good the boys really are!

We sang the rather technical *Missa Brevis in D* by Ben-

jamin Britten for a three-part boys choir, conducted as usual by Mr. Russcher and accompanied by Mr. Grealy. The music is one of the most difficult pieces in the choral repertoire - it incorporates three-part harmony, imitation and difficult rhythms. There were two solos sung in the *Benedictus* by Jones major (Gavin) and Jones minor (Andrew). It went very smoothly, and we were delighted to hear the good reviews from the congregation afterwards. We all clapped ourselves on the back!

Liam Newman

Gloria - The Book

Tim Thurston, former member of Saint Bartholomew's Choir, is now best known for his programme, *Gloria*, broadcast every Sunday morning on RTE's Lyric FM, and streamed around the world via the Internet. Tim has recently written a book, *Gloria: An introduction to 1000 years of European sacred music*, which was launched in the Long Room at Trinity College on Wednesday, 30th November. This event was attended by almost two hundred guests, including many well-known figures from the literary and musical communities

in Dublin, and several of our parishioners.

The book is illustrated with images of sacred art from Trinity College, the Hunt Museum and the National Gallery, and includes a CD of music selected by Tim, taken from the Hyperion Records catalogue.

Gloria is available from most major bookshops, priced at €20. It can also be ordered online from <http://www.associatededitions.ie>. A video interview with Tim can also be found at <http://tinyurl.com/cbtr2o7>.

Bobby Barden

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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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