



Music @ Saint Bartholomew's

<http://www.stbartholomews.ie>

June 2012



- Friends of the Choir
- A lifetime of services
- Concerts and more!

Friends of the Choir

Music has been a key feature of our unique form of worship at Saint Bartholomew's since its consecration in 1867. Our choir of boys and men is one of three such choirs surviving in Ireland today, and continues to flourish. During the last decade, we have expanded our musical foundation with the addition of a girls' choir, and an extensive and varied concert programme. Both choirs contribute uniquely to the continuing worship of the Anglican community in Dublin.

Our music costs in the region of €60,000 per annum to maintain, an amount which has been borne by the church for many years. Unfortunately, the present economic situation has resulted in a substantial drop in parish income, to the point that the choir will need to cover a larger portion

of its own expenses if it is to be maintained at the present level. It was with this in mind that we have decided to launch the *Friends of the Choir* scheme, which we hope that all interested parties will consider joining.

Standard membership is charged at €75 per annum, and includes acknowledgement by name in all choir concert programmes and on the web site if desired; a complimentary copy of any new recording produced by the choir, and two issues of *Music @ Saint Bartholomew's* magazine by post.

Gold membership is charged at €150 per annum, and includes all of the above, plus two complimentary tickets for all choir concerts held at Saint Bartholomew's, as well as a special CD (not available elsewhere) which features highlights from the services and

concerts sung by the choir over the previous calendar year.

A printable membership form can be downloaded from our web site: <http://www.stbartholomews.ie/choirfriends>. Online purchasing is also available at the same address. If you would like further information then please contact the Parish Office on 01-6688522, or by e-mail to admin@stbartholomews.ie.

In addition to our new Friends scheme, we are exploring a number of additional fundraising ideas for the next few years, but we need more. If you have an idea – and better yet, if you're prepared to implement it – then please speak to me either at the church or send an e-mail to richard@indigo.ie. I look forward to hearing from you.

Richard Bannister

Feis Ceoil

Saint Bartholomew's has been used a venue for the Feis Ceoil from time to time since its debut some one hundred and sixteen years ago, thanks to its fine organ and its wonderful acoustic.

Organ competitions

resumed in the church after the completion of a major rebuild in 2001, work which was supervised by the then director of music Malcolm Wisener.

This year the organ adjudicator David Titterington

has again sampled our organ, and pronounced it a very fine instrument. Famous organists such as Stephen Cleobury and Catherine Ennis have also played on it, while adjudicating the competitions.

Don Cazzini

A lifetime of services

The choir held a special celebration on the evening of Sunday, 25th March to mark Bobby Barden's eightieth birthday.

Bobby has clocked up an incredible seventy years singing with Saint Bartholomew's Choir, having joined us before the end of World War Two. He has been singing for almost five decades longer than the next

timbre can be heard in all the recordings of the choir we have, some of which date back to the 1980s!

The evening began with a Solemn Evensong, featuring Howells *Collegium Regale* (now a classic of the church music repertoire, albeit one composed some three years *after* Bobby became a chorister!)

and Chilcott *God so loved the world*, the latter with a beautiful solo sung by Sallyanne McCarthy, who stood in as soloist at the very last minute.



longest serving member, and since before all but one of our current members were born. In a few years from now he will have been attending Saint Bartholomew's for just under half the lifespan of the church. He has worked with ten Vicars, seven Directors of Music, and an unquantifiable number of choristers. Bobby's voice was described by one former director of music as "the sound of Saint Bartholomew's" – and it's quite true; Bobby's unique

The intended hymn was replaced with "Were you there when they crucified my Lord", which has been a particular favourite of Bobby's for many years.

After the service, there was a reception in the parish room with wonderful food supplied by Amos McGrath. Tristan and the Vicar spoke briefly to congratulate Bobby and to wish him many more years among us.

Richard Bannister

Congratulations

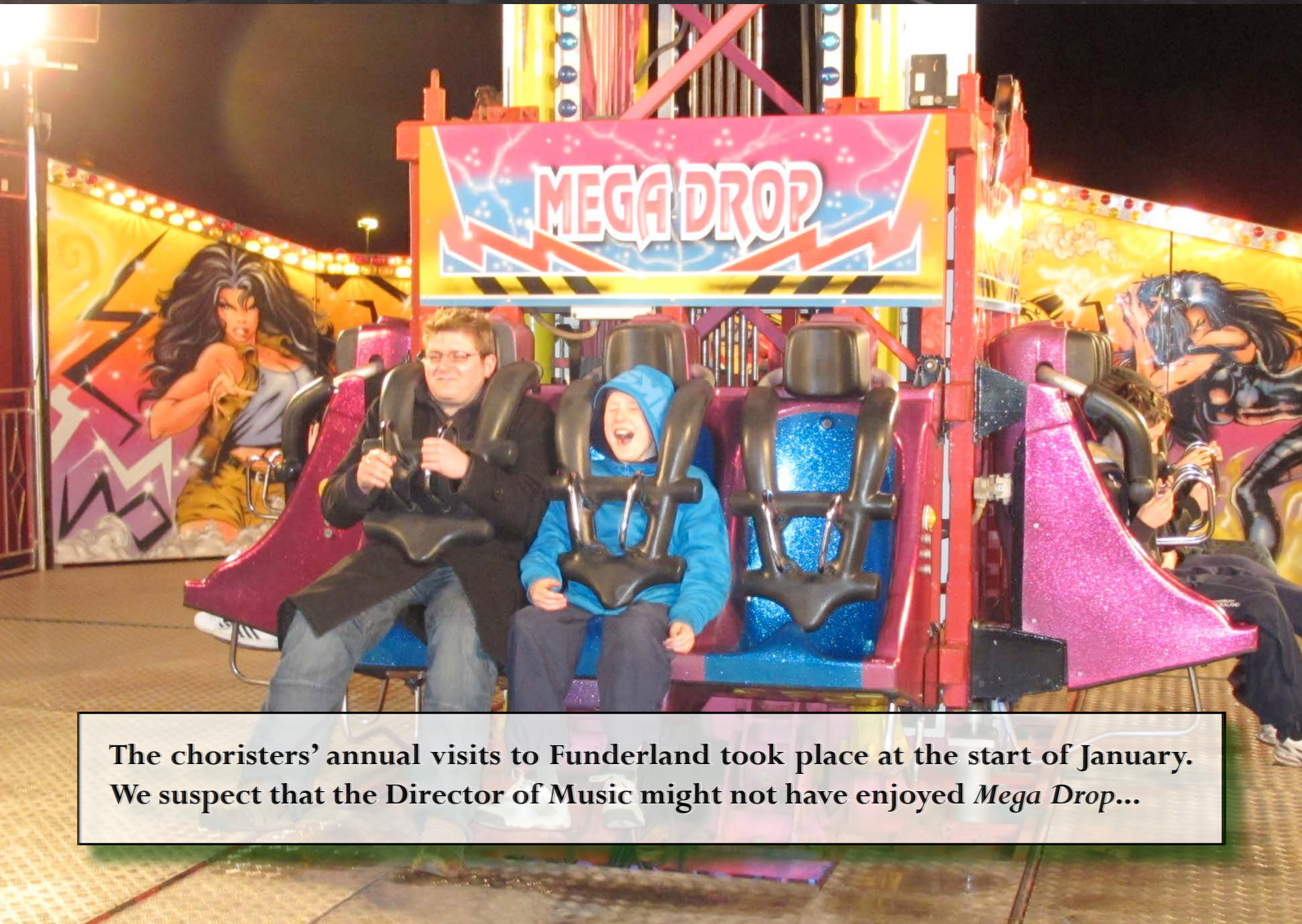
Chris Murphy, an occasional singer with the choirs at Saint Bartholomew's (*as well as with most of the other choirs in Dublin*), recently won the Messiah Cup, an award for oratorio singing which is presented annually at the DIT Conservatory of Music.

Chris performed "O thou that tellest glad tidings to Zion" from Handel's *Messiah*, competing against a number of other students for the award. The adjudicator, well known Irish soprano Suzanne Murphy, praised Chris for "getting the meaning of the song across to the audience perfectly."

Just as this magazine went to press, we learned that Chris has been accepted into the Palestrina Choir at the Pro Cathedral. We wish him the very best in his future singing endeavours, and hope to see him back in Saint Bartholomew's in the not too distant future.

Richard Bannister





The choristers' annual visits to Funderland took place at the start of January. We suspect that the Director of Music might not have enjoyed *Mega Drop*...

A working holiday (1)

The Director of Music has recently returned from three weeks working in Muscat, Oman. Music @ Saint Bartholomew's asked him to tell us something about his experiences.

On Easter morning this year I received a Facebook message from my first organ teacher, Ian Hockley, stating "Help! I desperately and urgently need a pianist to come to Muscat for three weeks!" Knowing that Ian worked for the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra and was one of the Sultan's closest musical aides, my interest was piqued. My only problem, however, was that I was leaving for Florida the following morning for a two week vacation, and would only just be off the plane, and back on to the next one to Abu Dhabi, playing for a wedding, and directing a weekend at Saint Bartholomew's in between!

Despite the quick turn-

around, I found myself in Muscat International Airport at 2:00am in the morning of 24th April amidst a 40°C sea of Arabian clothes and voices. I was greeted by a local, who didn't speak a word of English, but walked me through the process of hiring a car, and pointed me in the direction of where I was staying. Unknown to me at the time, I would be staying in one of the Sultan's palaces, the mess hall for the Royal Guard of Oman. Two giant crystal lions greeted me at the gates, followed by an opulent hall entirely of rose marble, with a scale model of Mecca made from solid platinum as a centerpiece. I had arrived in the Middle East.

The members of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra train their whole lives with the sole aim of one day becoming members in this, His

Majesty's private orchestra. The vast campus exists solely for the purpose of preparing students to the high standards demanded by the orchestra, much like a music college. The teachers are recruited from the finest institutions in Europe and are experts in their respective fields. A shortage of *repetiteurs* on campus was the catalyst for my sojourn, and for the next three weeks I would be accompanying and helping to prepare a number of students for Associated Board exams- one cellist for grade eight and two violists for the Fellowship diploma, the highest AB performance diploma attainable. Six hours after getting off the plane, and after only a wink of jet-lagged sleep, I was thrown straight into rehearsals, sight-reading repertoire which included the Brahms *F minor* and Glinka *D minor* viola sonatas, Mozart's



A working holiday (2)

Kegelstadt Trio, Brahms' *D minor* cello sonata and Schumann's *Fairy Tales* for piano, viola and clarinet.

After recovering from this initial shock I soon settled in to the ROSO way of life. This consisted of waking at 6:30am in order to start rehearsing the instrumentalists at 8:00am and working non-stop until 2:00pm, at which point it became necessary to break from the overwhelming heat and make a dash for the pool. After a brief *siesta* we would often rehearse again in the evening, sometimes going through to 10:00pm. This routine continued for six days each week, only stopping to rest on the Islamic holy day, Friday. The heat during my stay was mild for an Omani May, only reaching a high of 48°C and dipping as low as 30°C on one occasion, but the climate greatly ap-

pealed to my Australian blood.

Members of the orchestra are chosen from an early age from the general population if they show an aptitude for music. Being chosen is akin to winning first place in the lottery of life – all future schooling and musical tuition is paid for, in full, by Sultan Qaboos; and after becoming a full member of the orchestra, each player is given generous amounts of land, a house and a decent salary. His Majesty regularly rewards young students who attain high marks for their instrumental exams – one of the violinists received a Mercedes-Benz 4WD for achieving a distinction in his grade five violin exam (even though he didn't possess a driving license at the time). One of the Sultan's many hobbies is touring the Gulf on his royal yacht, the third largest privately owned sea vessel

in the world. The orchestra is regularly invited on his cruises for his musical entertainment.

Since coming to power in the 1970s, Sultan Qaboos has transformed Muscat from a barren land of Bedouin tents into the thriving city it is today, funnelling all profits from the vast oil reserves into creating the country's infrastructure. It is a land on the verge of exploding prosperity, in exact contrast to the current economic climate of Europe. Its cities will rival those of the UAE within the next decade. Muscat's new airport, when completed in 2014, will be the largest in the world. The reigning Sultan is adored universally by the populace due to his enormous generosity and leadership skills. He manages not only to maintain good relationships with the Western leaders, but also with the leaders



A working holiday (3)

of Oman's politically volatile neighbours, including Qatar, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Although my trip to Muscat was almost entirely devoted to business, I managed to find enough time to absorb the atmosphere of the traditional souks in Muttrah, to go

snorkelling along the reefs of Alwadi beach, and to visit the desert oasis of palm plantations in Nizwa. It was a short, busy and eye-opening experience. It was a joy not just to observe a completely different culture but to work within it and experience first-hand the legendary

Omani hospitality. It is also an experience which I have been invited to repeat next year.

Muscat could also be a potential location for a future choir trip. We might need to do a bit of fundraising first, though...!

Tristan Russcher

Gaudete Singers Concert

The Gaudete Singers presented us with a superb concert of two rarely-heard mass settings in very different styles, united by their instrumentation. Anton Bruckner's *Mass no. 2 in E minor* (presented in its 1896 version) is scored, unusually, for woodwind, brass, and eight-part choir (no strings). At several points the vocal writing is a clear homage to the sound world of Palestrina but is often juxtaposed with the ultra-chromatic harmony of the late Romantic period.

The *Mass*, by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), is in stark contrast to Bruckner's setting of the Mass Ordinary. It has similar orchestration, but there the similarities end. The first sketches of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* were made in 1944,

by which time Stravinsky lived in the USA and was trying to evolve a new style following his departure from Europe.

Stylistically the *Mass* is an important work in the evolution of Stravinsky's final style as exemplified in *The Rake's Progress*. It was written without commission, and its completion was delayed, probably as more lucrative and pressing projects competed for his attention. Stravinsky wanted to write a mass that was performable in a liturgical context, based on church idioms – syllabic word-setting, *fauxbourdons*, homophony, the text always being clear – and whose effect would be “cold, severe and lofty”. The work is fiendishly difficult to sing

due to its complex rhythms and additive harmony, but the Gaudete singers managed a very convincing performance.

The two mass settings were framed by examples of polychoral writing of the Renaissance and early Baroque periods, including works by Gabrieli and Schütz. The performance of Giovanni Gabrieli's *Confitebor tibi, Domine* was particularly effective, written for thirteen individual parts grouped into three choirs, each with its own group of accompanying instruments. The singers effectively utilised the wonderful space of Saint Bartholomew's, positioning the three choirs in different locations.

Tristan Russcher

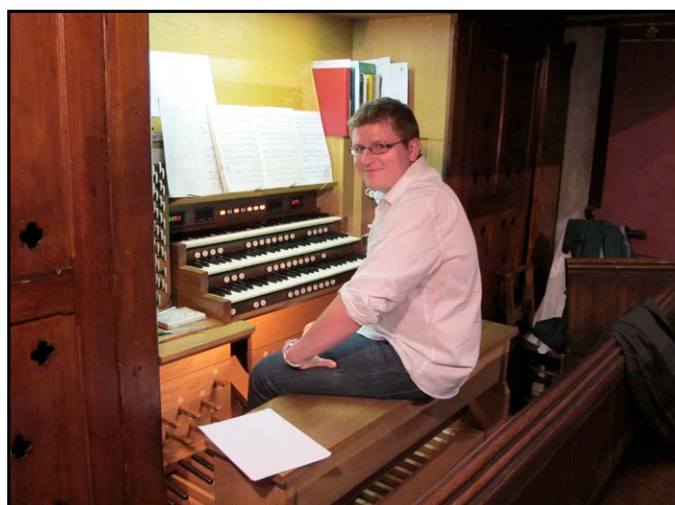
Christus

Mystical, frustrating, invigorating, passionate, irritating, unsettling: *Christus* by Francis Pott is all of these things to the listener hearing it for the first time. Comprised of five movements, this is a work that is both thoroughly modern and yet borrows from many other places and sources. In the swirl of notes and motifs you can hear echoes of plainchant, Renaissance music, Victorian Romanticism and maybe even a little Gothic horror! It is a work that reminded me of just how much

I still have much to learn in terms of listening to music. In fact, it taught me and is still in a sense teaching me how to listen to music all over again.

Christus begins as a great wave at sea that left me feeling totally lost - rushing at you like a tsunami of sounds and motifs, chorales and swirling notes. It's not a great rousing Passion Narrative like Bach's great Gospel works, yet in some sense it is in a similar vein. This is about the journey of a soul, a very special soul, and ultimately the journey of our souls.

The work as a journey is not an easy one to take, but it is deeply moving in its central *Crucifixus* section. There, every vexation is met, every suffering acknowledged, every grievance, disappointment, restlessness and unease finding



its expression and fulfilment in the suffering God, who continues to battle valiantly for our souls; and this is where the work fulfils its own swirling momentum - in its final act of resurrection. Francis Pott himself wanted to give expression to the struggle for resurrection, rather than orchestrating a foregone conclusion. Here the same motifs are heard again - but this time you are ready to hear them. A herald lights the way for good to begin its triumph over an evil that threatened to consume everything; and up through the grime

wends a light to everlasting habitation.

This is certainly not an easy work and in many respects I felt it was more to be experienced than examined. For some I'm sure it will only ever be a great cacophony of sound.

If Renaissance music is black coffee, this is black coffee served with dark chocolate - heaven for some, a deep turn off for others! We are fortunate enough to have a director of music who is accomplished enough to play this gargantuan work, for which he

is to be greatly commended. Sometimes we take a risk with music - one person's rapturous delight and religious experience is another man's poison - but in this instance, *Christus* actually touched a deep religious nerve inside me and I'm grateful that I made the effort to hear Tristan play it.

Tristan will be giving a second performance of Christus in the Ulster Hall, Belfast on October 9th 2012. Tickets cost £12.50 and are available online from www.ulsterhall.co.uk.

Andrew McCroskery

Vanbrugh Quartet visits Saint Bartholomew's

Few things in music are as rewarding and inspiring as a string quartet, especially one performed with sensitivity and skill. We were fortunate in Saint Bartholomew's to host the Vanbrugh Quartet as part of the Easter Series of Concerts, on Wednesday 4th of April.

It was refreshing to see such a large audience, and in particular many of the young choristers seated not too far from the action, savouring perhaps their first taste of chamber music of this kind. And what an opportunity that was!

Haydn originally composed *The Seven Last Words* for woodwinds, brass, strings and percussions, but subsequently arranged it also for string quartet. Typically, each of the seven words of Christ (all excerpted from the four gospels) is announced, followed by a brief

sermon. Indeed, the music was meant to provide a musical transition period between the spoken words. In this instance, however, the nine movements were played one after the other without break, providing an unusually intense experience for the listeners, and, perhaps, a little more stress for the players, as this is not a mean feat!

As expected, Greg and the gang approached Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Jesus Christ*, Op. 51 with empathy and resourcefulness, exploiting well the distinctive acoustic of the church, producing subtle contrasts and gorgeous phrasing in the music, and making those sixteen strings sing like an ensemble of first-class vocalists.

Starting their performance with a *maestoso* and *adagio* introduction, the Vanbrugh

Quartet set off on a musical journey, which moved through moments of extraordinary delicacy, bubbling *pizzicato* passages, sombre and sorrowful *lento* melodies, culminating in the final earthquake in C minor, played *presto con tutta forza*.

When the last *fff* note died away somewhere in the vaults of the church, it was clear that we had witnessed something special: a performance in which the players had balanced with supremacy the work's religious significance and emotional content with a deep understanding of the music conventions so firmly rooted within the Classical tradition.

We can only look forward to having more of this in the future.

Paolo Cordone



Girls' Choir Trip to Wicklow

On Sunday 17th June, the Girls and Gentlemen of the Choir travelled to Wicklow to sing a service of Choral Evensong in Nun's Cross Church, Killiskey, Co. Wicklow. The choir last visited Nun's Cross just over ten years ago, when the boys and men performed a concert which raised almost €1000, an amount that was divided equally between the Music Fund at Saint Patrick's Cathedral Armagh and the Killiskey Parish restoration fund.

The day started with a lunch reception in Wicklow Sailing Club (home of the Round Ireland Yacht Race), hosted by Robin and Julie Heather. Once fed and watered the girls and adults made their way to Wicklow Gaol for an experience of life in a Victorian institution. The Gaol has been the centre of a lot of the "ghost" watching programmes in both

the USA and Europe, and is regarded as one of the most haunted buildings in this country. The group were greeted by a rather austere Gaoler in period costume, who immediately made us feel most unwelcome, and advised that escape from Gaol was definitely not an option.

After our tour of the Gaol, it was time for rehearsal. Nun's Cross Church is a typical 'first fruits' church with square tower standing in its own grounds in Nun's Cross, adjacent to the Nun's Cross National School, to the West of Ashford Village. Major restoration work has been carried out on the building over the last few years, which, coupled with the addition of new lighting, has turned it into a wonderful space for services and concerts alike.

The Parish of Wicklow

and Killiskey has a record number of children going forward for confirmation in October, and, as part of the preparation process, it was decided that it would be a good experience for the candidates to take part in several different Church Services. Sadly, the Service of Choral Evensong is rarely heard in rural churches, and the appreciative congregation enjoyed the service. The music for the service included the Setting of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis in B Flat* by CV Stanford, and the anthem, *O God thou art my God* by Henry Purcell, as well as some well known hymns.

Following the service we were treated to a sumptuous tea in the nearby National School. We would like to thank Canon John Clarke (Rector) and Reverend Ken Rue (Curate) for facilitating our visit.

Robin Heather

AIB Choral Society

The AIB Choral Society was founded ten years ago by Bruce Middleton, a former chorister in Saint Bartholomew's. On Wednesday May 23rd, the Society gave a concert at the

Royal Hospital Kilmainham, directed by Elizabeth Hilliard (sister of Robert), including a varied programme with everything from *Loch Lomond* to Fauré. The programme notes reminded the audience

that most of the choir's early performances took place in Saint Bartholomew's Church. We wish them the very best for the future.

Bobby Barden





Table Quiz and Auction

Nine years ago a small group of choir friends, accompanied by the then Director of Music Malcolm Wisener, sat down to discuss ways of paying the bills that were coming in for the upcoming choir trip to Paris.

A number of ideas were discussed and implemented, one of which was a Table Quiz and Auction. The team behind the idea (Richard Bannister, Tony Conroy, Rita Creamer, Robin Heather, Niamh Harty, and Albert Horan) hoped that it would serve both as a fundraiser and as a social event to bring members of the choir closer together. The evening proved to be more successful than any of us could have imagined, and Richard and Robin have repeated the show every year since.

This year our usual venue of Merrion Cricket Club was unavailable, due to damage sustained in the flooding last October. As a result we moved to Old Belvedere Rugby Football Club, located a few hundred metres away.

The competition was particularly fierce this year, with the two leading tables

within a point of each other at the end of round six. The eventual winners, two Kiberds and two Keenans, came in with fifty-nine points out of a possible eighty.

The writer always enjoys correcting these quizzes,



as some of the teams come up with some interesting alternative answers to questions. This year we offered a spot prize to the best answer for Micheál Martin's profession before becoming a TD, which was won by the Director of Music's table with "Car Salesman (Used)". A question asking which number commandment "Thou shalt do no murder" is, as recorded in the book of *Exodus*, was answered incorrectly by a table which included the Vicar! Another team answered two different questions about composers as "Peter Macintosh",

referring to the pen name of the Director of Music from 2008-9. There was also a team who illustrated all their answer sheets with colourful drawings.

The overall tally for the night was €2052, a particularly respectable amount given the current economic climate, and one that we should all be proud of. This would not have been possible without those who donated prizes and auction items for the evening: Richard Bannister, Belinda Buckley, Hugh Considine, Gilles Fabre, Michael Fanagan,

June Heather, Robin Heather, Albert Horan, Peter Jones, Terri Kiberd, John Maguire, Des Ryan, Charlie Smith, and Tim Thurston. We would also like to thank our corporate sponsors: Bertie's Bistro (Wicklow), Bridge Street Books (Wicklow), Butler's Medical Hall (Wicklow), the Castlecourt Hotel, Fanagan Funeral Directors, Office.ie, SuperValu Wicklow, the Wicklow Wine Company, and Winesdirect.ie (Mullingar). Please do support our sponsors if you can!

Richard Bannister

Lamentations of Jeremiah

On the evening of Tuesday 3rd April – the Tuesday of Holy Week – a special concert performance of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* by Thomas Tallis took place in Saint Bartholomew's. What a rare treat it was to hear this sublime work performed in its entirety in the splendid setting of the Church!

The work is a five-voice setting and in this concert each part was performed by just one singer. Killian Rogan sang Alto; the first and second Tenor parts were performed by David Grealy and Emmet Kiberd respectively, with Brian Gageby singing Bass I and Richard Bannister Bass II. This balance of voices created a quite exquisite ensemble, allowing for a remarkable clarity of line and evenness of timbre, with each voice sounding distinctively so as to hold its own throughout, and yet all the while forming just one part of the complex interlocking contrapuntal strands of this rich musical tapestry.

As I sat in the forty-strong audience listening to this very fine account of Tallis's beautiful and haunting score, I reflected on how appropriate

this Holy Week performance was in terms of timing, setting and the choice of work.

It is widely believed that Tallis composed the *Lamentations* primarily for performance during Holy Week, although not as part of any formal liturgy. Instead, as was apparently the case with many compositions of his fellow countryman, William Byrd, it is likely that Tallis intended that a small gathering of musicians would sing the *Lamentations* privately – with one voice to each part. Against the evocative backdrop of Saint Bartholomew's in the fading light of a Tuesday evening in Lent, the glorious music of Tallis provided an ideally contemplative setting for the start of Holy Week and the services which were to follow over the subsequent days.

All those in the audience were clearly transported and a great debt of gratitude is owed to the five singers for providing us with a very special evening of music. They also managed to raise over two hundred euro for the choir fund. Hopefully they can be prevailed upon to make this an annual event?

Des Ryan

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Submissions for future issues of this magazine and all enquiries about advertising should be sent to the editor.

Friends of the Choir

This magazine is sent by post to friends of the choir; for further details, contact the Administrator, Claire McIlrath on 01-6688522 or admin@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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