



# Music @ Saint Bartholomew's

<http://www.stbartholomews.ie>

June 2014



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## Men's Voices Concert

Concerts provide a wonderful opportunity to showcase the magnificent musical tradition of our choirs for a wider audience. The Gentlemen of the Choir gave their first standalone concert in Saint Bartholomew's on Friday 4th April, an event greatly enjoyed by those in attendance.

Given the time of year, the programme was specifically tailored to include appropriate music for Lent, Holy Week

and Easter, and featured the complete *Lamentations of Jeremiah* by Thomas Tallis – sung one voice to a part by Tristan, David, Richard, Des, and Killian – as well as music by William Byrd, Maurice Duruflé and Robert White.

A change of musical pace was provided in the guise of Jones's *Morte Christe*, borrowed from the library of Dublin's Clef Club, and two magnificent organ solos performed

by David Greal.

The event was well supported and is one of several ongoing efforts being made to engage in fund-raising for the choirs of Saint Bartholomew's.

We are very grateful indeed to Tristan Russcher and David Greal for the time and energy which they generously invested in preparing us for this concert. May it be the first of many more!

Des Ryan

## Trip to Killiskey

On Sunday 25th May the girls and men made the journey to Nun's Cross Church, Killiskey, Wicklow to sing Choral Evensong by kind invitation of the Reverend Ken Rue.

We decided to make a day of it, enjoying a fantastic lunch laid on for us by Robin and Julie Heather in the Wick-

low Sailing Club, before taking in some of the sights and sounds of the Wicklow Arts Festival.

Evensong consisted of Henry Purcell's setting of the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in G minor*, Smith responses and Parry's monumental anthem, *My soul, there is a country*, a big undertaking for any choir. One

of the many highlights of the service was the verse section of the Purcell canticles, expertly sung by Kiah and Isabelle, and our male soloists Killian, Emmet and Robin. A great day was had by all and we look forward to a return visit in the future.

Tristan Russcher



## Out with the old...

This term we are very sorry to say goodbye to a number of choristers who have been singing in the choir for many years. From the boys' choir we say farewell to Peter Corcoran and Andrew Jones. Both boys were valuable members of the choir and will be sorely missed by their colleagues. Peter was an excellent role model as Senior Chorister and led his side of the choir with professionalism, whilst Andrew led the whole choir in his role as Head Chorister. Andrew's voice is well known to parishioners this year, with some amazing performances of the *Benedictus* from Haydn's *Little Organ Mass*

and William Byrd's *Teach me, O Lord*. We wish both boys the best of luck starting secondary school in September and hope to see them return to the choir in the near future.

We also say a very big 'thank you' to our Head Chorister of the girls' choir, Sallyanne McCarthy. Sallyanne will be in her final year of school in September so will be stepping down as Head Chorister to focus on her studies. She has been the leader of the girls' choir for two years and has been a wonderful role model for the other girls in the choir. She has excelled at every challenge given to her, including gaining her

Gold Voice for Life award last year, and we wish her the very best for her final year of school. Sallyanne will of course remain a member of the 'wider family' of choristers and we hope to have her join us at some of the bigger choir events of the next academic year.

As we say goodbye to some, we say hello to others. Our new probationers this year are Milan Moran and Ben O'Brien in the boys' choir and Sarah Colgan in the girls' choir. We are very pleased to welcome our new recruits and hope they enjoy singing in the choirs for many years to come!

Tristan Russcher

## Easter Highlights

As usual, Holy Week this year was busy for the choirs of Saint Bartholomew's. At the celebration of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday the girls and men sang Duruflé's contemplative setting of *Ubi Caritas* and de Sevarac's simple but effective *Tantum ergo*. The boys and men sang the wonderful music of Tomas Luis da Victoria on Good Friday, including his polyphonic settings of the *Passion according to St John*, *O vos omnes* and

the *Reproaches*. Following the *Exultet* at the Easter Vigil, this year sung superbly by our own Robin Heather, the boys and men celebrated the resurrection with one of the highlights of the French Romantic repertoire, Vierne's *Messe Solennelle*.

We were once again delighted to welcome members of the RTE orchestras to join us at our celebration of Easter Day. This year the girls and men performed Mozart's

*Coronation Mass* K317. This setting was given its premiere in Salzburg Cathedral on Easter Day in 1779 and is one of Mozart's most beloved *Missa Brevis* settings. The girls and men lifted the roof in the *Hallelujah* chorus from Handel's *Messiah*, once again beautifully supported by the orchestral ensemble consisting of strings, trumpet, timpani and organ.

Tristan Russcher

## Symphonie-Passion

Palm Sunday this year saw our Assistant Director of Music, David Grealy, give a performance of Marcel Dupré's *Symphonie-Passion*. The work was first performed by the composer as an improvisation on the organ of the Wanamaker Hall in Philadelphia – the largest organ in the world – before being performed as a complete work in Westminster Cathedral in 1924. It is among the most popular of Dupré's compositions, both because of its use of familiar tunes, including *Adeste Fidelis* and the chant hymn, *Adoro Te Devote*, and be-

cause the themes of the four movements – Advent, Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection – provide ample opportunity to show off the broad expressive range of the organ. The performance was attended by a modest but appreciative audience, and allowed the organ to play a role as a solo instrument alongside the solemn celebrations of Holy Week.

We wish David the best of luck as he prepares to compete in the Dublin International Organ competition later this month.

Tristan Russcher

## Fun at Christmas

The choristers were brought to Christmas Wonderland in early January. This year each visit began with a 45 minute illusion show, followed by two hours of unlimited rides at Funderland. This writer particularly enjoyed watching a few of our bravest choristers (and one Director of Music) tackling the *Inversion XXL* – a huge spin ride rising over 40 metres into the air.

A selection of photographs from the trips can be found in the centre spread of this magazine.

Richard Bannister

## Keeping the repertoire fresh

Each term I strive to find a suitable balance of music for the choir to sing. While planning the music list for the coming term, I have to juggle factors such as important feast days, availability of singers, liturgical themes for each Sunday and, most importantly, available rehearsal time. All of this has to be done well in advance. I am currently, for example, preparing the music list for Christmas!

In addition to the repertoire which parishioners hear regularly in Saint Bar-

tholomew's, I try to inject some new music each term in an effort to avoid things getting too stale. This term the boys and men tackled the superb anthem by Charles Villiers Stanford, *Ye choirs of new Jerusalem*, a wonderful setting of the famous Easter hymn. A demanding sing, to say the least, but our choristers rose to the occasion, learning it in only two weeks.

The girls and men were given the pointy end of the stick, Patrick Gowers' setting of the Ascensiontide

anthem *Viri Galilaei*, written for two organs and split into sixteen vocal parts, four of those in the soprano line! Whilst this work is one of the biggest challenges I have given to the choir, the performance at the Eucharist on Sunday 1st June was electrifying.

Both of these works will be sung at our summer concert on 22nd June and I'm sure will be received well by our audience.

Tristan Russcher



## Table Quiz and Auction

The eleventh annual Table Quiz and Auction in aid of the Choir fund was held on Thursday 8th May in Saint Mary's College Rugby Club in Templeogue.

The winning team this year was comprised of Niamh Harty, Killian Rogan, Damien Kiberd and Emmet Kiberd – who scored an impressive 58 points out of 80. Second place was taken by Barry Farrell, Bernard Ward, Margaret Ward and Helene Ward.

We are extremely grateful to Michael Fanagan and the house committee of Saint Mary's RFC for providing us with a venue free of charge. Richard Bannister sponsored the prizes for the winning teams, produced the answer sheets, and collated the scores. The questions were set for us by Frank Bannister who has handled this role for several years now.

This year we introduced spot prizes for the most entertaining wrong answers, including the two regions of Belgium being Flanders and *Swann*, the President of UCD being *Ming the Merciless*, and *Father Andrew's Sermon* being the literary work that ended with "It was the devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan."

The auction generated plenty of interest, and we are most grateful to all who sponsored the lots: Wines Direct, Mullingar; The Wicklow Wine Company; Lumley's Bakery Inchicore; Pdraig O'Rourke and Elaine Girard; Robin Heather; and Tim Thurston.

The raffle table was heaving with prizes, and our corporate sponsors included Butlers Medical Hall, Super-Valu, and Bridge Street Books

(all based in Wicklow Town), Lumley's Bakery, and the Leinster branch of the IRFU, who donated a large bag of rugby related prizes to Evelyn Foley. We also acknowledge the generosity of all those parents and choristers who donated prizes and helped make our evening a huge success.

While acknowledging that the venue and date did not suit everybody this year, and the closeness to school examinations was unavoidable, we are looking for ways to accommodate more people next year, and to garner more support especially from members of the Vestry and members of our Sunday congregation. A huge amount of work goes into the organisation of this quiz, and we could raise a lot more money if more people came to support us!

Robin Heather



## Guide to the Organ

It can be difficult for a non-organist to appreciate the challenge that a church with the rich and varied musical life of Saint Bartholomew's places on the organ builder. While a Bach fugue or Mozart mass demands clarity and brightness from the organ, romantic repertoire needs expression and an instrument that can make subtle changes from soft to loud. The best way to accompany a choir is completely different to how the organist leads a congregational hymn. These considerations, along with the small size of the chamber in which the organ is contained, informed the rebuild undertaken by Trevor Crowe just over ten years ago. The result is one of the finest instruments in Dublin.

The Great division, the loudest of the organ's three manuals (keyboards), was moved to the north transept facade of the organ. As well as allowing the Great to be heard the whole way down the nave (almost as clearly as the chatter of church wardens at the West End can be heard at the organ console), this new position also provides clarity and immediacy that makes it very suitable for leading congregational hymns.

To the front of the Great are the Bombardes. These trumpet stops are voiced loudly, and are intended to stand out for the rest of the instrument, rather than to blend in – hence their not-so-subtle name!

The Choir division occupies the former position of the Great organ, just above the cantoris choir stalls. This placement allows it to support the choir without being too audible from the nave. While the Choir division contains a range of foundation stops that are suited to choral accompaniment, it also contains some high-pitched stops that are a legacy of the 1962 rebuild, when such stops were in fashion. These can be especially useful for baroque repertoire, where they help add clarity and brightness. In the English romantic organ, the Choir was the traditional home for solo and orchestral imitation stops. Thus, the Choir division in Bart's also has bright flute stops and a clarinet, which is frequently heard as a solo stop.

The Swell division gets its name from the fact that it is enclosed behind a series of shutters which can be opened and closed from the organ

console, thus allowing the organist to control its volume. For this reason it forms the backbone of most choral accompaniment, particularly in the English and French romantic repertoire, as it makes it possible to achieve a colourful sound without drowning out the choir. The Swell's location higher up and at the back of the organ also makes it possible to create the effect of distance from the listener, something which is very useful in the relatively dry acoustic of Saint Bartholomew's.

The Saint Bartholomew's organ's stature as an instrument means that it is in heavy demand among Dublin's organists. It is used annually for the *Feis Ceoil* organ competitions in March, as well as for exams, teaching and practice throughout the year. This month will see it feature in the Pipeworks Organ Festival, as members of the festival competition jury, including Dame Gillian Weir, will be giving masterclasses from June 21st to 23rd.

*A number of different recordings of the organ can be found on the parish web site, including some serious offerings and several not-too-serious!*

David Grealy





**Vox Humana**



**Great**



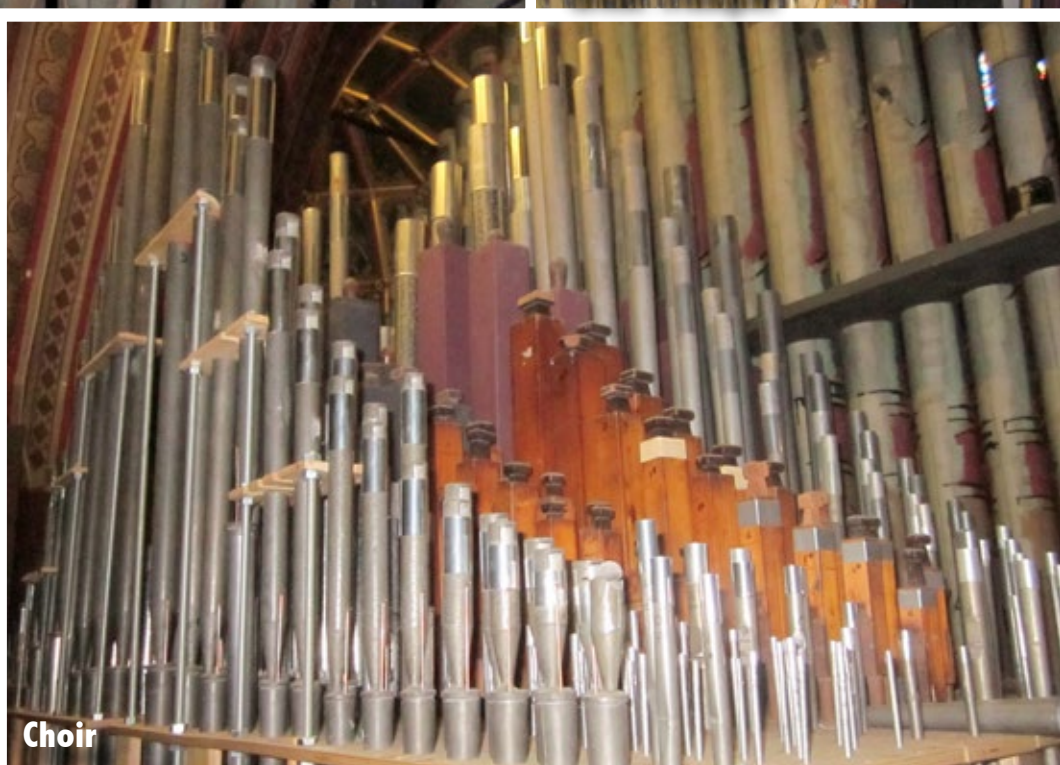
**Choir Facade**



**Great Trumpet**



**Sub Bass / 32**



**Choir**





The Ground



Cyclone



Heartbreaker



Ghost Train



Ice Jet



Wild Mouse





Waltzer



King Frog



Wacky Worm



Extreme



Jungle River



Take Off







## Visit from Hildesheim

This time last year we were approached by the director of the Hildesheim Knabenchor about the possibility of us hosting their children's choir during their prospective tour to Ireland in 2014. Hosting an entire choir is generally quite an endeavour, and I was a little concerned once I learned the size of the ensemble, which included an orchestra! But tempted with the prospect of our boys and men possibly making a return visit, I decided to approach our choir families and see if we could make it work.

Luckily we had enough

families who were as enthusiastic about the idea as I was, and in the week before Holy Week, we were very pleased to play host to the choristers, who conveniently were in the same age range as our own choir members. As we can see in the pictures across the choir had a great time, getting to see many of the wonderful sights on the island.

The highlight of the Knabenchor's many superb performances took place on Friday 12th April in Saint Bartholomew's, when they performed Part II of Handel's

*Messiah*. This would be a big undertaking for any choir, let alone a chorus of children for whom English was not a first language!

Their achievement was made all the more impressive as it was accompanied by their own in-house orchestra, which was travelling with them. As the tour was so successful we are pleased to announce that our boys and men will be travelling to Hildesheim on a return visit in October this year, hopefully to rekindle the good relationships made in April.

*Tristan Russcher*









## The Office Hymns

Hymns have been part of Christian practice and worship from the beginning. The scriptures tell us that the disciples sang hymns together. Sometimes they would have been a psalm set to music, or maybe a portion of scripture, similar to how we set the *Magnificat* to music.

There are hymns sung at football and rugby matches, sometimes gleaned from bawdy old pub songs (with new words of course!); and today hymns are still being written, sometimes borrowing from something old, at other times borrowing from something brand new.

At Choral and Solemn Evensong we sing the lowly Office hymns, often overlooked, and sometimes maligned for their lilting yet difficult tunes. The Office hymns as part of the 'office' of Evensong tie in with the season in which we find ourselves in the church.

They are repeated Sunday after Sunday within particular seasons, and their tempo is considered, with a peculiar stillness. Very often they rely on old plainsong chants, so most of them are instantly recognizable as being Office hymns, and we are blessed that

our choirs both know and sing them extremely well. They have a beauty and a simplicity to them, such as the simple requests made through the hymn for peaceful sleep:

*Before the ending of the day  
Creator of the world we pray  
That thou with wanted watch wouldst keep  
Thy watch around us while we sleep.*

Many hymns are also vehicles for theology, doctrine and church teaching. While they retain simplicity, they can also carry a great theological weight, providing insight into a particular season or feast, for example the expression of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Office hymn of Pentecost.

*Thy blessed unction from above  
Is comfort, life, and fire of love;  
Enable with perpetual light  
The dullness of our blinded sight*

*Anoint and cheer our soiled face  
with the abundance of thy grace;  
keep far our foes, give peace at home;  
where thou art guide no ill can come.*

These verses describe the movement of God from above, down to us; the workings of the Holy Spirit in us; how we see and know it in love; and the light it brings through the Gospel to help us see more clearly and know of the things

that are of worth and what truly matters in life.

The words hint at anointing, drawing in all those parallels in scripture of the anointing of kings and prophets, presenting humanity as a crowning glory of God's creation and being anointed for a special task. In very few words these hymns can express a whole myriad of theological thought, of scriptural references and religious allusions.

The Office hymns are some of the most ancient Christian hymns we have. They are sometimes identified as the words and poems of particular saints, but for the vast majority we do not know who the writers are. They have been used for many centuries, most of them dating back to a period between 500-700 AD, and the fact that they have stood the test of time and that we still sing them today reveals something of their lasting power and depth.

The next time you happen to be at Evensong, take a closer look at these very beautiful hymns which are paradoxically simple and yet so rich.

*Andrew McCroskery*







## Opportunities to Sing

We are currently looking for a small number of boys and girls to join the choirs of Saint Bartholomew's Church. Members of our choir receive a full scholarship, which includes all learning materials as well as individual tuition in the theory of music and vocal techniques from expert professional musicians.

Rehearsals take place on Wednesday and Friday evenings, and each choir sings one sung service on a Sunday, either at 11:00am or 6:00pm. The choirs also perform in

concert within Ireland and abroad and make recordings – a number of which are available on the iTunes Music Store.

Entry to the choir is open to all denominations and places are awarded through an audition process. If your son or daughter enjoys (or thinks they will enjoy!) singing and would like to join a group of like-minded choristers, please get in touch with me. No previous musical experience is necessary, though the ability to read music is helpful.

*Tristan Russcher*

## The "Bell" Evensong

A special service of Choral Evensong was held on Sunday March 9th to celebrate the resurrection (!) of the church clock and bells.

The music was themed for the occasion. The anthem was Purcell's *Rejoice in the Lord Alway*, known as "the bell anthem" because of its descending scales in the organ part. The final hymn was the text *Let bells peal forth*, sung to the tune Woodlands. The organ voluntary was *Carillon de Westminster* by Louis Vierne, a piece based on the Westminster chimes that we

have at Saint Bartholomew's.

Members of the local community were invited to the service through the two residents' associations in the area, and a reception was held in the South transept after the service. A number of those present commented afterwards that it had being their first time in the church, despite living in the area – a fine opportunity for us to promote the church, its liturgy and its music to a whole new audience.

*David Greal*

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### Submissions

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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