

# CAPELETTA

*No 15, August 1998*

## *Editor's Notes*

The end of yet another Summer (if you can call it that) is already in sight, and the first Capel Choral practice of the 1998/99 LHMF Season is mere weeks away. Just think, next year's Festival will be the last one this Millennium (or last but one depending if you subscribe to the view that the new Millennium actually starts on the 1st January 2001 - a lot of argument would have been avoided if the calendar makers had inserted a year '0' between 1BC and 1AD!).

However, last Season promised much in the way of results at the Festival, but sadly they were not realised. I think we sang very well in the Competitions; if it hadn't been for the false start in the Mozart which rather blew our confidence, I think we would have done much better.

1998 is of course the 40th anniversary of the death of the LHMF's founding conductor, Ralph Vaughan Williams. You may remember that I wrote in *Capelletta* some time ago about a visit to Down Ampney in Wiltshire, RVW's birthplace. This year Gill and I visited it again, but in rather different circumstances - we were in a slow moving queue of cars heading for an air display at nearby RAF Fairford. As we approached the village we saw, beside the '30 limit' sign, a board proclaiming 'Down Ampney, birthplace of composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958'. It would be nice if Dorking acknowledged its much longer association with RVW in a similar way.

Here's to an enjoyable 1998/99 Season.



## *Dates for 1998/99*

September 7th	First practice of Season
October 9th	Leith Hill AGM, Christian Centre, 8pm.
December 12th	Capel Christmas Concert
December 14th	Capel Christmas Dinner
January 30th	Group A Combined Rehearsal
February 20th	Group A Combined Rehearsal
March 7th	St Matthew Passion
March 27th	Group A Combined Rehearsal
Thursday 8th April 1999	Group A (Division I) Festival Day

## *Full Chorus Music for 1998/99*

For the Coronation of King George II in Westminster Abbey in 1727 Handel was commissioned to write four anthems for use at strategic points in the service. Handel had first come to England in 1711 and he later made London his permanent home, becoming naturalised in 1726. It says much for the impact which his music had made on English society and its reputation, that Handel, rather than a native English composer, was given this 'plum' job of composing for such a public, national occasion.

Handel made the most of his commission. *Zadok the Priest* was written to be sung during the anointing of the new king, and is a piece with enormous impact and sense of occasion. It is sometimes in eight parts, giving added sonority, helped by the full orchestration including three trumpets and timpani. Although, apparently, the first performance did not go well, the piece soon achieved enormous popularity and has been sung at every subsequent Coronation, as well as on innumerable other occasions.

The second anthem, *The King shall rejoice*, sung at the crowning itself, is less familiar but is still a fine and rather larger scale chorus in several sections, and now for 4 or 6 parts. A fully scored stately opening leads to a limpid 3/4 section, 'Exceeding glad shall he be', a further section with much continuous quaver movement and a concluding fugal 'Alleluia' which reaches a convincingly massive climax.

The short setting of the *Te Deum* which Haydn wrote in 1799 for use in the court chapel at Esterhazy is vintage Haydn with the charm, happiness, vitality and integrity expected from this composer. Many of us will recall singing this piece at our 1996 Christmas concert and it will be enjoyable to look at it again.

The third major work is a 20minute song cycle for chorus and orchestra written by Christopher Brown, and entitled *The Circling Year*. This was written in 1988 and was commissioned by the British Federation of Young Choirs who gave the piece its first performance. The composer (b.1943) studied with both Lennox Berkeley and, in Germany, with Boris Blacher, and much of his considerable output has been vocal. He writes accessibly, tonally, and with skill and effect. This song cycle sets, as the title suggests, poems about the seasons and the passing of time. As a Prologue comes an invigorating and pleasantly modulated 6/8 setting of the New Year Carol 'Here we bring new water', more familiar in Britten's, simpler arrangement. It returns, more fully scored, as an Epilogue. The second poem, a translation of a Navajo Indian chant, is probably the most complex movement, though set at a slow tempo. 'Wild Iron', a poem by Allan Curnow, heavy with consonanted accents is set suitably rhythmically in two parts. There follows an unaccompanied setting of Blake's 'Ah, sunflower!' in which tuning will need much care. Two Tennyson poems are used for the final songs of the cycle, 'The Golden Year' and the celebrated 'Ring out wild bells', each receiving characterful settings, the first in a flowing 3 parts, the second firmly rhythmic and with some well-placed unison singing and effective bell-like effects.

This work, though contemporary, is very accessible and should prove possible, enjoyable and worthwhile to rehearse as well as providing sensitive settings of some strong, less familiar texts.

Alan Drake

## *Music for 1998/99*

Full Chorus	Two Coronation Anthems	George Frederic Handel
	Te Deum	Josef Haydn
	The Circling Year	Christopher Brown
Madrigal	Come Away Death	Ralph Vaughan Williams
Part Song	Hoedown	Arr. Luboff
Men's Song	King Hal	Gordon Langford
Women's Song	The Ships of Arcady	Head
Ensemble	In these delightful pleasant groves	Henry Purcell

## *Come and Sing*

On Saturday 27th June we held a summer Come and Sing event. It followed a very successful first venture into this area of singing last season. Unfortunately, having received an optimistic level of initial support for this year's venture, numbers actually singing on the day were less than we had expected and hoped. Those who did not come missed out on a very happy event and successful combination of the musical and the social.

The works to be sung were Stanford's *Songs of the Fleet*, and choruses from Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. The singers (a number of whom had been able to put in some preliminary practice on previous Mondays) met mid-afternoon and we rehearsed both works. The Stanford songs, all settings of poems by the composer's contemporary, Henry Newbolt, are scored for chorus, baritone solo and piano accompaniment. Our original soloist had to withdraw at the last moment due to illness, but his place was courageously and very effectively taken by Bob Gray. There was time to rehearse the songs thoroughly and even to come to terms with mood as well as flow. We then found that it was quite possible to sing most of the choruses from *Carmina Burana* - an ideal situation.

After a tea break we returned for the 'performance' at 7pm. The Stanford songs came first and the salt-sea flavour was enhanced by the sound effects of a heavy thunderstorm outside. Bob sang his solo lines with dramatically musical effect and verve much appreciated by the audience and the always well-crafted choral lines came over well. Anthea's accompaniment was, as usual, considered and helpful to soloist and chorus alike.

As a break between the two main items, Bob then sang three solo songs from his repertoire including two of Stanford's companion cycle *Songs of the Sea*, again accompanied by Anthea.

The choruses from *Carmina Burana* concluded the concert and caught the infectiously rhythmic spontaneity of this piece with its ever-changing tempi and vocal moods and styles. Nick Ward added one of the solo baritone numbers and Anthea played two of the orchestral interludes and the whole group of choruses was enthusiastically received by the audience. Thanks indeed to Anthea, Bob, and Nick for their individual contributions to the concert and to all the singers for taking part in a most positive and active way.

Then followed a splendid buffet supper organised and prepared largely by Liz Weavin and Margaret Dale and eaten at tables already attractively laid up in the hall. So enjoyable and much appreciated was the supper that everyone took a long time over it, relating and talking as well as eating and this very happy social mood brought our second 'Come and Sing' to a most satisfactory conclusion.

Alan Drake

## *Combined Rehearsals*

The Festival Conductor, Brian Kay, has expressed concern about poor attendance at the Combined Rehearsals for the Festival concerts and that this is having a detrimental effect on the standard of performances at the Festival. He has therefore emphasised that anyone not attending all the rehearsals will not be allowed to sing in the concert, unless notification is given to him in writing with a valid reason for non-attendance - holidays will not be accepted as an excuse.

I understand that Capel's attendance record has been very good in the past, but the Committee felt that the requirement for 100% attendance should be spelt out. Brian's stand does not represent any change in policy - he is only trying to make us aware of the Festival rules.

The Combined Rehearsals are on 30th January, 20th February and 27th March 1999. I know I would be devastated if I was refused permission to sing at a Festival concert. You have been warned!



In the **Chairman's Report** Christine Wallace hoped that the choir were not too disappointed to have only achieved two Second Place certificates in the Festival Competitions. She also reported that Pam Hinks had advised the choir that the Parish Council would be co-ordinating all Millennium events in the area, but no supporting funds would be made available. Christine also asked if the choir would be interested in holding more **'social' events** and suggested setting up a sub-committee to organise these. She also asked for ideas for improving the choir's performance at future Festivals.

In his **Conductor's Report** Alan Drake said that the choir had enjoyed the year's music, and had sung well at the Festival. There had been very little to choose between the abilities of the competing choirs. The Ensembles had also sung well. He hoped the choir had enjoyed the Festival day.

In her **Treasurer's Report** Liz Weavin presented the accounts. The choir had had a good year and now had funds in hand, largely due to the fund raising and selling on music scores, teas, raffle, *etc.* Social events had not been as profitable as in previous years.

It was proposed that the Committee should set the **choir subscription** when the music costs for the coming season were known, at a meeting prior to the 1998/99 season. The choir should be notified as soon as possible.

Gill Moir was elected as **Librarian**, Ken Richardson was elected **Bass Representative**, Sally Connor was elected **Alto Representative**. The other Officers were returned *en bloc*. Alfreda Sparkes volunteered to organise the tea rota.

Bob Gray raised the matter of **'Mentors' for new choir members**. The Chairman suggested that the Committee should further discuss this and put together an introductory 'pack' for all new choir members in the future. The suggestion found favour, and the Committee will report further when the form of the pack is decided.

The **Christmas Concert** would be held on Saturday 12th December, and the **Christmas Dinner** would be held on December 14th at Christine Wallace's home, which was much enjoyed last year.

**A Silent Auction** would be held at St Teresa's as a Leith Hill fund-raising event on Saturday 3rd October. Christine Wallace gave details of the event and asked choir members to give some thought to what could be auctioned. Electrical items would not be accepted.

Enid Moore asked for a review of the policy on **singing without music copies** at the Festival competitions and that a final decision be made at least two weeks before the Festival, after consultation with the choir. This matter would be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

Ian Moir said that some thought should be given to **how the choir presents itself** on the stage at the Festival competitions. Ian also asked if the choir wished *Capelletta* to continue in the same format as now, and if so would the choir contribute more copy to make it more interesting.

In answer to a question it was stated that the choir's **music folders** were not being used because they were splitting, and were generally felt to be too cumbersome. An alternative was being investigated.

## *'Desert Island Discs'*

Christine Wallace suggested a little while ago that I include a feature in *Capelletta* along the lines of BBC Radio's 'Desert Island Discs' and in the August 1996 edition I invited choir members to write an article about their favourite music, composers and artists. As I don't seem to have been exactly overwhelmed by contributions, I'll kick off with a few of my own favourites.

When I think about my favourite pieces of music, I find that many of them made an impression on me in the first few years after I 'discovered' classical music. I think one has a much more open and unbiased ear early in life; if I heard them for the first time more recently I think that I would not be so receptive to some works which I grew to love many years ago.

My father was a great fan of Gilbert and Sullivan and took me to some productions of the 'Savoy Operas' before I was 12 - I enjoyed them immensely, and drove my parents to distraction trying to whistle the tunes.

However, the first piece of music which really gave me that spine-tingling excitement was after I started at grammar school (Strodes at Egham). Of the pieces which our music master played to an unruly bunch of 11 and 12 year-olds, I chiefly remember Benjamin Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* and Vaughan Williams' *Overture to The Wasps*, but the work which has always stayed with me is Gustav Holst's *St Paul's Suite*. This marvellous example of writing for a string orchestra concludes with a 'Dargason' in which the jaunty country dance is interwoven with *Greensleeves*. This is the movement which gave me my first experience of the 'tingle factor' - part way through it the violins go soaring skywards, and then come dancing down again. The violin variation in the Britten has a similar effect.

I also discovered Brahms at an early age. I first heard the theme of the last movement of the *1st Symphony* as the introductory music to a BBC Children's Hour programme called 'Music at Random' (I used to wonder where 'Random' was!), but I didn't get to know the whole work until much later. It was Brahms' *4th Symphony* which made a real impression on me - I listened to a 'Prom' performance of the work with Sir Malcolm conducting. I still find the work magical and intensely moving; the first movement seems to drift into one's auditory consciousness as if it has been playing for some time, and then the composer develops the almost sparse material and builds it up to one of the greatest codas I know. I bought the Concertgebouw/Van Beinum recording in the 60's and I still have it.

I have never been terribly adventurous in my quest for new musical experiences, but I did go through a period when I deliberately listened to new works just because they were new. Two choral works which come to mind are Britten's *War Requiem* and Penderecki's *St Luke Passion*. I also came to enjoy the music of Shostakovich at this time. His *1st Cello Concerto* was written in 1959 and I heard the Rostropovitch recording soon after; I was captivated by its rhythmic energy and the way the work grows out of the 'DSCH' signature motto which appears in other works by the composer.

Looking back, I seem to have encountered much music through radio and television - such as the scherzo of Bruckner's *7th Symphony* used as the title music of a TV production of 'The Prisoner of Zenda', or Holst's *Perfect Fool* overture, used for a Children's Hour reading of 'The Hobbit'. Then there was Schubert's *Fantasia in F minor* which turned up with a Book at Bedtime reading of 'Silas Marner'. The deep sadness of the opening theme was completely apposite for the story, and gave me no rest until I found what the music was. I love it still.

Last, but by no means least, a work which I don't remember the occasion of my first hearing it, but a work of tremendous youthful energy, the *Octet* by Mendelssohn. I still find it amazing that it was written when the composer was only 16 and, I think, even surpasses anything the young Mozart wrote. It is a work which one feels was absolutely inspirational, and the young Mendelssohn merely had to write it down.

There are many, many more favourites which I could mention, and I realise I have only included two choral works - there is even some pop music which I could include as all-time favourites, but space does not allow in this *Capelletta*. I look forward to reading about your favourite music - over to you.....



## ***Capel Choral Society Committee***

For the benefit of new members, and some not so new, the Choir Committee now consists of:

Chairman:	Christine Wallace	Soprano Representative:	Alfreda Sparkes
Secretary:	Anne Vanner	Alto Representative:	Sally Connor
Treasurer:	Liz Weavin	Tenor Representative:	Ian Moir
Conductor:	Alan Drake	Bass Representative:	Ken Richardson
Accompanist:	Anthea Smallwood	Press and Publicity:	Ian Moir
Music Librarian:	Gill Moir		

If you need any help, or have any matters to raise, speak to your Voice Rep.

### ***LHMF 'Own Choice' Class***

Alan Drake would welcome any suggestions from the Choir on music suitable for our 'Own Choice' piece for the Festival. Remember that, in theory at least, the piece should last a maximum of three minutes.

***George Frederic Handel***